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Introduction to Estranged yet Entangled: Perspectives on East German History

DIERK HOFFMANN, HERMANN WENTKER, AND JONATHAN R. ZATLIN

Recent debate over the place of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in German and European history has been marked by the revival of Cold War oppositions. In these discussions, the West is often portrayed as the source of today's problems, whether it is the continued gap in wealth and income between western and eastern Germany or the relative lack of East German representation among the institutional elites in post-unification Germany. In the heat of discussion, it is easy to forget that in the early 1990s, immediately following the collapse of the GDR, both East and West Germans were much more concerned about dismantling communist power and the Stasi's far-flung networks. After all, the Peaceful Revolution of 1989 dislodged communist elites from their positions of power, but the formation of new elites in eastern Germany was contingent on the transfer of West German social, economic, and legal arrangements to the former GDR. In other words, the development of civil society in the East German federal states was tangled up in the eastward transfer of democratic institutions.

Despite this dialectical relationship a number of recent publications have presented a rather simplistic view of East German history. A prominent example is Katja Hoyer's widely discussed book, *Beyond the Wall: East Germany, 1949–1990*, which was promoted by her publisher as a "groundbreaking and new perspective on life in the GDR."[1] In the preface to her study, the author confidently promises "a new history of the GDR that displays this vanished country in all of its aspects—from high politics to everyday life."[2] In the English-language media, the book was greeted with near-euphoria and lauded as a corrective to the "Cold War caricatures" of the GDR. In contrast, its reception in the German media was mixed, while the German academic community greeted it with scathing criticism.[3] In trying to make sense of the book's divided reception, the

US historian Andrew Port identified two cultural reasons for the positive response by the English-language press: the reviewers' relative ignorance about the GDR and "a longing for an alternative to the dominant socioeconomic system of the West after the fall of the Berlin Wall."[4] The idea that discontent with the present shapes representations of the past is just as true for German portrayals of the GDR. On this point, Martin Sabrow observed that the prevailing image of the GDR as a dictatorship has been increasingly rejected by former citizens of the GDR because it does not correspond to what they remember about their experiences. The "memory of dictatorship" (*Diktaturgedächtnis*), dominating the public sphere deviates from the "memory of adaptation" (*Arrangementgedächtnis*), a representation East Germans justify by arguing they lived the "right life in the wrong system."[5] One possible way to resolve this dichotomy is to take refuge in "a historicization of the GDR" that is free of political agendas and that "foregrounds the dictatorial normality of socialist rule."[6]

Old Divisions, New Insights

Historians have painted a complex and colorful picture of East Germany through methodological innovation and the creative use of sources. From this perspective, it is possible to identify four major historiographic trends among scholars of the GDR, which we outline below with the caveat that our presentation is by no means exhaustive.

The first trend is distinguished by efforts to integrate both German states into a larger and more unified history of Germany after 1945. This approach often draws on previously existing conceptualizations of German-German division as incomplete, but is shaped in particular by Christoph Kleßmann's plea for an "asymmetrically intertwined parallel history" of the two German societies.[7] Alongside sophisticated dissertations, there are now whole book series devoted to German-German history, a methodologically demanding task if there ever was one. Most notable is Petra Weber's *Getrennt und doch vereint: Deutschdeutsche Geschichte 1945–1989/90* (*Divided but Connected: German-German History 1945–1989/1990*), an impressive interweaving of West with East German history that appeared a few years ago.[8] Studies that aim to integrate these two very different societies into one history tend to emphasize large-scale challenges shared by industrial societies, such as the economic crises after 1970 and the trend to globalization. After all, both the West and East German economies were, despite their differences, ultimately dependent on oil, the price of which rose dramatically during this period.[9] Both German states were also bound together by efforts to combat environmental pollution, which had emerged

by the 1980s as a political imperative on both sides of the Iron Curtain.[10] Even though denazification in the three Western occupation zones differed markedly from the process in the Soviet Occupation Zone,[11] moreover, both countries were forced to confront the fascist legacy. There were an estimated 8.5 million NSDAP members at the end of the war, not to mention those who had collaborated with, sympathized with, or benefited from the Nazi regime. Yet fascist attitudes and habits did not magically vanish with the end of National Socialist rule, but continued to inform political culture in both German societies long afterward. Nor did antisemitism in Germany simply disappear after the unconditional surrender of May 8, 1945. In this sense, the GDR was, like the Federal Republic, a "post-Nazi society."[12]

A second trend is focused on examining the position of the GDR within the Soviet Bloc. After all, the Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (SED—Socialist Unity Party of Germany) depended directly on the Soviet leadership in Moscow for its power, a fact that became emphatically clear during the popular uprising of June 17, 1953, when only the violent intervention of Soviet troops stationed in the country was able to preserve the party's rule.[13] As a result, the GDR was able to pursue an autonomous foreign policy only "within narrow limits," constrained as it was both by directives from the Soviet Union and the indirect influence of West Germany.[14] Nevertheless, the GDR built up a complex network of relationships with other Eastern Bloc states, marked not only by cooperation and rapprochement but also by demarcation. A large number of studies have been devoted to analyzing official rituals of socialist friendship as well as propagandistic images of the capitalist enemy.[15] One regional study of Leipzig, for example, explores daily contact between Germans and Poles. Although their informal interactions initially adhered to politically prescribed rules, this exchange soon developed a dynamic of its own, growing to include vibrant cross-border black markets. Despite considerable efforts to crack down on this illegal trade, East German authorities were unable to "contain or even prevent" the transnational demand for shortage goods.[16]

Even diplomatic relationships between otherwise close allies were not impervious to strain. During the first two decades after the defeat of the Nazis, for example, the much-celebrated "socialist friendship" between the East German and Czechoslovak peoples resulted in a dramatic increase in state-organized cultural and social cooperation. In the late 1960s, however, the SED leadership's fear of "negative influences" emanating from its reformist neighbor led to serious tensions between East Berlin and Prague.[17] In contrast, diplomatic relations with Romania were marked by what researchers have called the "weak media presence of the GDR." In a bid to cultivate better ties to West Germany,

the Ceaușescu regime simply refused to print the SED's numerous criticisms of the Federal Republic.[18]

A third trend in East German historiography emphasizes the peculiar dynamics of the GDR's own development. Despite the intimacy of the two Germanies' entanglement with each other, it is necessary to study their respective histories independently of each other if we are to gain more insight into their divergent political, economic, and social systems. As a result, the previously existing impulse to study the Federal Republic on its own terms has now been applied to the GDR as well.[19] The recent "rediscovery" of the state in German studies has led to renewed analysis of institutional actors. In the last decade, scholars have produced important studies of East German state actors, from the Ministry of the Interior, Ministry of Health, and the Ministry of Agriculture to the central economic administration, and a study of the Ministry of Transportation is nearing completion.[20] Moreover, new research has forced a reassessment of older assumptions that a small group of SED members promoted by the Soviet Union—"Moscow cadres"—came to power with the support of a tightly controlled party apparatus.[21] After having shed light on the SED's early history, moreover, scholars have concluded that the communist party's development must be understood "not only as political history but as social history as well."[22] East German society, especially in the 1950s, was characterized by a high degree of social mobility, as the SED sought to replace the country's elites in deliberate fashion.[23] Precipitated by land reform and the nationalization of numerous commercial enterprises, unexpected opportunities for workers' advancement opened up,[24] even if it quickly became apparent that professional qualifications played "at times only a subordinate role" in promotions.[25] Finally, recent studies of everyday life and cultural history, women's and gender history, memory culture, and the history of homosexuality have opened up new intellectual vistas on East German society.[26] Beginning in 1957, for example, the GDR adopted a comparatively less repressive approach toward male homosexuality than West Germany, even removing Paragraph 175, which made homosexuality a criminal offence, from its criminal code in 1968.[27] To a large extent, however, this liberalization remained formal; both male and female homosexuals continued to suffer persecution in the GDR.

Although the GDR ceased to exist as a separate state on October 3, 1990, its history continued in many respects. Accordingly, the fourth observable trend in East German scholarship systematically explores the legacy of the GDR in post-unification Germany. The transformative impact of the SED's social policies on social structures and cultural values were far-reaching and extended well beyond 1989/90, a fact that militates against viewing unification as a complete

break with the past. The right to work, guaranteed by the GDR's constitution, was even adopted by civil rights activists and included in the Social Charta of the Round Table (Sozialcharta des Runden Tisches) in early 1990.[28] The political, economic, social, cultural, and psychological upheavals triggered by the collapse of communist rule in East Germany and Eastern Europe—along with their reverberations in West Germany, which have been described as a co-transformation—have long been the subject of transformation research, traditionally the domain of political science, economics, sociology, and anthropology. Now that many confidential documents have been declassified and state records are accessible to the public, however, historians are in a position to provide better informed accounts of East Germany's transformation.[29] As a result, scholars have begun to recognize the revolutionary period between the popular protests in the fall of 1989 and the aftermath of the GDR's last elections in the spring of 1990 as an autonomous stage in East German history rather than a mere prelude to German unification. The focus has thus shifted to the introduction of the mechanisms of parliamentary democracy, as well as to how East Germans envisaged such a democracy and what expectations they had of the future.[30] Analysis of the files of the Treuhandanstalt, the agency responsible for the privatization of East German enterprises,[31] has brought important insights into the process of economic regime change as well as the role of economic actors such as trade unions in the transition from socialism to capitalism.[32] Recent work analyzing the transformation of various regions and economic sectors likewise offers a more nuanced view of the privatization process.[33] Lastly, a number of valuable studies have focused on East German memory culture, on popular experience of the watershed year of 1989/90, and on the surge in xenophobia and the wave of arson attacks on immigrants in the early 1990s.[34]

Five Arguments, Five Reflections

This volume seeks to demonstrate the potential these approaches to East German history offer by selecting a few representative topics. The five articles were all published in *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, the leading German-language journal for contemporary history, over the past twenty years. Each article is devoted to a different period in East German history; we have arranged them in chronological order and paired them with commentaries written by North American historians.

The volume opens with a surprising case study by Peter E. Fäßler: a story of East German mine operators who continued to employ West German skilled workers even after the onset of Cold War hostilities. This regional labor market

managed to survive not only World War II, but also the division of Germany because the economically weak region of Upper Franconia was unable to offer the slate miners meaningful alternatives to their daily commute to Thuringia, while the Thuringian slate-mine operators could not find enough East German workers to take the Franconian miners' place. Together, the East German demand for West German labor and the West German lack of employment opportunities compelled state officials on both sides of the political conflict to reach an economic arrangement that was mutually beneficial.

The document unearthed by Andreas Malycha brings the central dilemma of the Honecker era into focus: the weakness of East German economy, which was unable to sustain a costly consumer-oriented policy. The frank criticism of Honecker's economic and social policies articulated by Gerhard Schürer, the longtime head of the Staatliche Plankommission (SPK—State Planning Commission), makes for fascinating reading. The fact that Schürer dared to go behind Honecker's back and convey his misgivings to the Stasi, moreover, underscores the gravity of the GDR's economic decline. In his article, Malycha demonstrates that Schürer and others were aware by the mid-1970s that the GDR simply could not afford higher levels of consumption. Because SED leaders had tethered their legitimacy to higher living standards, however, they felt politically bound to pursue economically unrealistic policies. Unwilling to "risk the passive loyalty of the majority of the people," Honecker rightly worried that the austerity measures proposed by Schürer might foment popular discontent.[35] Instead, Honecker tried to pay for higher consumption levels through export surpluses, which was more wishful thinking than economic reality. Ironically, Honecker's fear of political instability supplanted sober analysis with the very pipe dreams that contributed to the GDR's collapse.

In his response to Malycha's thesis, Jonathan R. Zatlin warns against any personalization of the policy conflict that casts Honecker (and Economic Secretary Günter Mittag) as villains and Schürer as a hero. Such an explanation, he writes, would be misleading. Although Schürer voiced his objections at various times, he did not actively oppose Honecker. Nor was he willing to risk his own position of power. The deeper issue, Zatlin argues, was that these disputes were "manifestations of the institutional arrangements and affective allegiances that shaped the East German dictatorship." In the end, the SPK was a politically powerless authority faced with an economically unsolvable task.[36]

The article by Christian Schemmert and Daniel Siemens on educating future journalists at the University of Leipzig illustrates just how strongly the Ulbricht era was dedicated to the establishment of a dictatorship. The article highlights the SED's efforts to control content creation in support of its rule. The task of the

media in the GDR was less to inform the public than to bring public opinion into line with the aims of the regime, which meant that it was absolutely essential to train a new generation of reporters who were politically reliable and could make communist policy appear convincing. And yet, party leaders were divided over which academic personnel and pedagogical approaches would bring the most success. For much of the 1950s, the party's efforts were overseen by Hermann Budzislawski, a German who had emigrated to East Germany from the West.[37] Although he showed a willingness to adapt to the party's goals, Budzislawski nevertheless placed emphasis on cultivating professional skills and journalistic expertise, an approach supported by Albert Norden, head of the SED Central Committee's Agitation Department. In contrast, Central Committee Secretary Kurt Hager and the leader of the Leipzig SED district, Paul Fröhlich, believed the purpose of journalism was simply to convey ideological content. These two hardliners ultimately prevailed: Budzislawski was dismissed in 1962 and the curriculum redesigned so that classes in Marxist-Leninist ideology accounted for a quarter of all courses. Surprisingly, the Ministry for State Security (MfS or Stasi) exerted less influence over Leipzig University's School of Journalism than scholars have previously assumed, with students even displaying a certain degree of defiance ("Eigen-Sinn") in their dealings with the Stasi.[38] Nevertheless, students were acutely aware of the Stasi's powerful reach. The authors attribute the general ideological conformity of the roughly 2000 journalists trained between 1954 and 1968 partly to the fact that many of them, as members of the postwar generation, were genuinely committed to "building socialism." The financial security provided through scholarships also fostered loyalty. But direct and indirect forms of intimidation, ranging from peer pressure and psychological harassment to threats of expulsion or dismissal, also had a substantial impact on the students living together in dormitories.

In his commentary, John Connelly reflects on the degree of autonomy that students and instructors enjoyed, concluding that their freedom of action was increasingly constrained during the 1960s. Connelly's appeal for a more careful periodization leads him to argue for greater differentiation when analyzing support for "building socialism" as well as for greater comparison with Eastern Europe.

Like Peter Fäßler's article on Western workers in Thuringia, the two articles on environmental pollution—one on border waters as an environmental issue involving both states; the other on the *Katzendreck* (cat pee) smell affair—foreground the peculiar dynamic of German-German division: the duality of estrangement yet entanglement. Those tensions shaped the development of both German polities, but they did so asymmetrically. More so than for the Federal

Republic, the GDR's existence was inconceivable without reference to the other German state.[39] Despite the GDR's attempts to sever its relationship with its western counterpart, the two Germanies were greatly influenced by their intense rivalry, whether it took the form of mistrustful scrutiny from afar or official and informal contacts up close.[40] This ambivalence was observable immediately after the founding of the two states in 1949, when the GDR claimed that it embodied the better Germany, the one that would ultimately prevail over the other. That is, SED leaders defined the GDR not simply in terms of its West German rival, often conflating the Federal Republic with the Nazi dictatorship, but promised a victory over its capitalist counterpart in the distant future. The GDR thus embarked on a competitive struggle with an uncertain outcome. Personal ties between Germans on both sides of the Iron Curtain worked to mitigate this official and sometimes bitter competition, at times playing a considerable role in the development of both states. The asymmetry in living standards and personal liberties between the two Germanies, moreover, became increasingly obvious, leading East Germans to take their cues from West German society rather than vice versa. Although jobs in the East were secure, the greater political freedom and material prosperity offered by the West appealed more than the dictatorial constraints that seemed to produce constant economic shortage.

As the example of West German workers in the Thuringian slate mining industry illustrates, the gap between the two societies was not yet so marked in the 1950s. In the early part of the decade, these jobs were of existential importance to the skilled workers of northern Bavaria. As Lauren Stokes points out in her commentary, not only the workers but their families, too, were oriented toward Thuringia in their daily lives, especially when it came to shopping and medical care. This interdependence between the mine operators and the skilled workers led to two agreements, the *Coburger Sonderabkommen* (Coburg Special Agreement) of 1950 and the *Lehestener Vereinbarung* (Lehesten Agreement) of 1955, which allowed for cross-border employment despite the German-German divide. Similar conditions existed in Berlin, with cross-border commuters traveling in both directions until 1961. No special agreements were in fact necessary for Berlin because borders between Allied sectors remained open up to that point.[41] Peter Fäßler's article, however, demonstrates that political isolation ultimately triumphed over economic cooperation as the GDR gradually restricted cross-border traffic and eventually brought it to a halt. In contrast, economic prosperity rendered political cooperation less important for workers in the Federal Republic, as the West German economic boom eventually reached Upper Franconia and local workers could find better employment closer to home.

Environmental issues do not simply end at borders, and pollution provided

another occasion for contact between East and West Germany. Once again, however, asymmetrical developments shaped the dynamic of entanglement and estrangement peculiar to these neighbors. While the GDR regarded the border with the Federal Republic as a clear demarcation between two independent states as prescribed by international law, the Federal Republic viewed it as a transitory boundary between two territorial units within Germany (which is why it was always referred to as the "inner-German border" in West Germany). It is no wonder, then, that a similarly lopsided perspective dominated discussion of shared waterways. Nearly all of the polluted rivers that originated in the GDR drained westward, which lead East German negotiators to identify West Germany's interest in cleaner rivers as a source of leverage that they could use to assert their own interpretation of the border's status. For that reason, the GDR demanded that the Federal Republic recognize the GDR as a sovereign state under international law before it would discuss any measures to remediate the pollution. Until 1972, when the two states recognized each other under the Basic Treaty, no negotiations over riverway pollution took place. Because the treaty entailed recognition of the GDR as a state but not within the context of international law, however, the GDR continued to obstruct any agreements.[42]

Astrid M. Eckert's article focuses on shared waterways as a German-German environmental issue, using the example of German-German negotiations over the desalinization of the Werra River (which also affected the Weser further downstream). But the GDR could not simply think in terms of international law because it, too, suffered from cross-border pollution, as saline waste from West German potash production had been seeping across the border. Once again, the entangled relationships between the two states outweighed their estrangement from each other: Negotiations were interrupted at times but never entirely broken off.[43] Over time, the GDR's priorities also shifted. Although SED leaders initially sought concessions from the Federal Republic in terms of diplomatic recognition, they later focused on obtaining advanced environmental technology and having West Germany pay for it. As the GDR's demands for access to green technology and financial transfers moved to the foreground, its contested political status receded into the background. Over time, the East and West German negotiators achieved a degree of rapprochement. The salinity of the Werra, however, was not significantly reduced until after unification.

In his commentary, Eli Rubin explicitly challenges the "green legend" that places sole blame for pollution on the East and implicitly exonerates capitalism in the process.[44] He makes three key points: First, the GDR lacked the capital needed to modernize its industrial plants, which led in turn to greater environmental damage. Second, Western industrialized nations used their economic

position to outsource environmentally harmful production methods and waste both to the Global South and to socialist Eastern Europe. From the GDR's perspective, this amounted to "greenwashing" on the part of West Germany, a situation the East exploited to obtain expensive, high-end environmental technology from the West.[45] And third, Rubin rightly argues that the division of and mutual antagonism between the two German states came at the expense of the environment: because they failed to agree on necessary remediation measures, pollution continued unabated. In the case of the Werra, alkali salt pollution remains a serious problem even today.

The article by Bodo Mrozek and Doubravka Olšáková on the cat-pee-smell affair expands the German-German perspective to include Czechoslovakia. The crisis was triggered by air pollution in the tri-border region of West Germany, East Germany, and Czechoslovakia. Industrial emissions drifting into Bavaria sparked the dispute, perceived as they were as an olfactory nuisance. The spread of the odor prompted complaints from the public, leading to political action. The article combines approaches grounded in political history and in sensory studies. It analyzes the consequences of the stench drifting across the border into northeastern Bavaria on diplomatic activity and industrial policy in the Federal Republic, Czechoslovakia, and the GDR. Equipped with objective evidence of airborne emissions that underpinned subjective impressions, the CDU/CSU parliamentary group requested that the federal government open an official inquiry into the matter. Rightly suspecting that the source of the pollution lay in Czechoslovakia and East Germany, the federal government lodged complaints with their neighbors. The Bavarian state government also became involved, exerting pressure on both the federal government and the GDR. Initially, the governments of Czechslovakia and the GDR stonewalled on the matter, seeking to keep reports of environmental pollution under wraps even as they acknowledged internally that they knew where the foul odors were coming from. It was not until the mid-1980s that cooperative solutions began to emerge, with West Germany willing to provide financial assistance as it had done in the case of the polluted rivers.

As Julia E. Ault explains, including the sensory dimension of airborne contamination demonstrates that environmental pollution in the region overlapping Bavaria, the GDR, and Czechoslovakia represented a cross-border issue that forced all parties to act. Because forest dieback had become a hot-button issue in the Federal Republic during the 1980s, the CSU felt it could take up the problem of foul odors. While the cross-border relationships prompted by the cat-pee-smell affair were indeed unequal in nature, they illustrate that the GDR, for all its isolationist policies, was not in fact sealed off from the outside world.

Although scholars may regard contemporary history with some trepidation, especially when the outcomes of so many social processes remain open, these articles and commentaries demonstrate that methodological rigor and the creative identification of sources can shed new light on familiar topics. Even more importantly, the authors demonstrate that taking the GDR seriously as an autonomous historical actor (rather than as a mere footnote of history) opens up new perspectives on German-German history as much as it informs us about developments behind the Iron Curtain. As is often the case, public discourse about the past is often animated by current events to romanticize the past. Rather than rely on the vagaries of collective memory, scholars must remain committed to reconstructing the history of the GDR. It is the aim of this joint project, predominantly featuring the work of historians from Germany and the United States, to contribute to this effort.

Ambivalences

Together, these articles and the reflections on them remind us that the division of Germany was never as complete as it seemed. Even the degree of hostility East and West Germans directed at each other betrayed their preoccupation with one another. After the defeat of the Nazis, Cold War tensions shattered once-national institutions, unraveling them along ideological lines. In contrast to the relatively frictionless reconstitution of Austrian institutions out of National Socialism's "Greater Germany," the emergence of the East and the West German state out of the ruins of the "Third Reich" had little historical precedent. For the first time, the contours of political conflict took on topographical form, as the competition between communism and capitalism in Germany now corresponded to a discrete geographical division. Neither the territorialization of this rivalry, however, nor the increasing clarification of its boundaries did much to mitigate the turbulence of the German-German breakup. To stand Willy Brandt's epigrammatic observation about German unification on its head, what had grown together was now torn asunder.

As the contributions to this volume remind us, however, these parallel histories intersected more often than Cold War rhetoric suggested. Even when the two Germanies were the most estranged, they remained very much entangled with each other. The very same anticommunism that led West Germans to dismiss the SED's rule as illegitimate, for example, also formed the basis of the Federal Republic's western integration—and by extension, the division of Germany.[46] Take the introduction of the deutsche mark (DM) in 1948, which arose out of liberal monetary theory as a method of taming inflationary pressures, curbing

black market activity, and encouraging economic growth.[47] But the unilateral imposition of a new currency in the western zones (and with it the social market economy) also contributed to German-German tensions, uncoupling previously integrated regional markets and precipitating the creation of two antagonistic states. Meanwhile, the "economic miracle" supposedly unleashed by West German monetary policy facilitated the development of a discrete West German identity, as pride in the success of the social market economy and the strength of the DM offered a politically acceptable form of nationalist satisfaction, leading many in the Federal Republic to arrange themselves with the two-state status quo. By the 1980s, the GDR seemed further away than it really was to many, even as its proximity continued to shape the contours of West German conversation. For others, the West German polity remained incomplete without East Germany; in much the same way that Bismarck's Germany had failed to include Austria, a certain restlessness accompanied their attitude to the smallest of "small German solutions." Like a phantom pain, the GDR functioned as an adversarial other against which West Germans could measure the successes and failures of liberal democracy.

A similar combination of attraction and repulsion coursed through East German society. In contrast to West Germany, however, attitudes toward German unification were more neatly divided between the rulers and the ruled. The SED's antipathy toward the Federal Republic—an entity that party members correctly viewed as a serious threat to their power—led the party to pursue a policy of radical autonomy from the other Germany. In retaliation for the introduction of the DM, for example, the SED and their Soviet patrons sought to finalize the territorial separation of the two Germanys by uniting Berlin under communist control. Through an impressive feat of airborne prowess, the Americans and British managed to thwart this plan to starve West Berlin into submission, successfully circumventing the blockade through a sustained airlift.[48] Despite the failure to eliminate this outpost of capitalism in the heart of the communist East, the SED nevertheless continued its efforts to sever connections with the Federal Republic, culminating in the 1961 construction of the Berlin Wall. By closing off the last escape route to the West, the SED completed the territorial division of Germany in a most spectacular way. Overnight, party leaders put an end to the labor exodus to the West that had proved so costly to the planned economy. Perhaps more important, the Wall rescued German communism from the embarrassing spectacle of its own unpopularity, as East Germans could no longer "vote with their feet" against the regime and leave the GDR.[49] To their chagrin, however, East German officials soon found that the "antifascist protective wall" did not entirely insulate the GDR from the West. The spectacular

deaths of those shot while trying to escape the GDR, for example, brought East and West Germans together in their anger at the regime's heartlessness.[50]

As the contributions to this volume remind us, however, the Wall was not impregnable. Despite the SED's efforts, the German-German frontier was not as fixed or fast-frozen as the cartographical line, the diplomatic word, or even the border patrol would have it. On the contrary, the flow of workers, finances, waterways, and wind defied otherwise impassable borders. Nor could Cold War topography block electromagnetic radiation; instead, West German radio and television signals penetrated well into the GDR (except for the areas around Dresden and Greifswald, sarcastically dubbed the "Valley of the Clueless" by East German wags). Trends in fashion and music, from classical to rock, as well as the emancipatory consequences of 1968 wafted back and forth across the barbed wire, from anti-nuclear protests to the church-based peace movement. Despite strict controls at border crossings, moreover, organized smuggling rings managed to move large amounts of cigarettes, alcohol, and narcotics around the wall.[51] Most ominously, the DM, that token of West German identity and power, found its way into the hands of ordinary East Germans, leading the conservative *Bild-Zeitung* to proclaim rashly in 1986 that "the West German mark has unified the nation."[52]

Soon after its construction, moreover, communist authorities began breaching the Wall for their own purposes. Some of the exceptions to the Wall's impenetrability were motivated by the party's need to mollify the population's anger at what amounted to their imprisonment. As early as 1964, the SED began allowing some retirees to visit the West. After the two countries recognized each other as sovereign states in 1972, moreover, the SED gradually relaxed travel restrictions, permitting West Germans to visit the GDR on day visas and eventually allowing some East Germans to visit the Federal Republic for urgent family matters. On the whole, however, the decision to allow limited egress to "fascist" West Germany only undermined the ideological solidity of the Wall. It is no wonder that demands for complete travel freedom were central to the popular upheaval that eventually toppled the wall in 1989.

Most of the SED's concessions, however, arose out of economic rather than political necessity. Like most Soviet-Bloc nations, for example, the GDR obliged western visitors to buy a minimum amount of communist currency on a daily basis, which provided the GDR with a much-needed hard-currency revenue stream. But the GDR did not simply import Western currency. It also imported West German garbage, which the Federal Republic was eager to dispose of despite its superior waste management infrastructure.[53] Not infrequently, the SED's need for hard currency converged with West German profit-seeking,

sometimes leading to agreements that demonstrated a shocking disregard for East German life by both sides. West German pharmaceutical firms, for example, lined up to pay the SED for the right to test drugs on East Germans, not least because communist officials did not require them to implement the costly safety protocols that had become standard in the West.[54] Under Honecker, coziness with the class enemy did not stop at reselling Western consumer goods to East Germans. The socialist state also invited West German corporations to profit from cheap East German labor, working with Salamander, Adidas, Bosch, and Beiersdorf, manufacturer of the best-selling Nivea hand and body lotions.[55] Even as the SED continued to upgrade the physical barriers dividing Germans, then, the emergence of détente, the limitations of economic planning, and Honecker's emphasis on consumption generated multiple touchpoints with West German capitalism. Quite aside from the ethically dubious and ideologically suspect premises of this contact with the Federal Republic, the interaction between East and West Germans slowly but surely undermined the regime's arguments for East German autonomy.

For its part, the West German state's entanglement in the GDR's internal affairs hinged on competing political imperatives. On the one hand, reunification remained central to West German political culture despite the begrudging recognition of the GDR's sovereignty. West German irredentism was enshrined in the Basic Law, so named because it was conceived as a provisional constitution pending the restoration of national unity, explicitly providing for a legal path by which German territories could (re)join the West German polity. On the other hand, West German paternalism, which combined a real concern for the well-being of East Germans with the need for propaganda triumphs over its communist rivals, militated for alleviating the hardships imposed by communist control. In line with its principles, for example, the Federal Republic did not regard East Germans as foreigners: according to the Basic Law, they automatically had (West) German citizenship. The long-term effectiveness of this position facilitated reunification, but in the short term it also led West German governments to prop up communist rule. For example, West German authorities provided "welcome money" to help East German tourists finance their visits to the Federal Republic, relieving the GDR of the need to finance those trips. Most problematic was the West German willingness to purchase the freedom of East German political prisoners. Ransoming them back certainly rescued innocents from political reprisal, but the practice stood in stark contradiction to West German ethical argumentation and financial interests. After all, trading people for money legitimated a form of human trafficking, was highly remunerative for the GDR, and encouraged communist officials to regard their own citizens not

as people but rather as a revenue stream. Unsurprisingly, both German states sought to conceal this trade from their citizens.[56]

For many East Germans, this sordid tug-of-war between SED and West German elites tarnished both sides' ideological claims. But even in this sense, West Germany functioned for East Germans like a foghorn in the mist. SED members heard the call of the West as a siren's song and shut their ears for fear their existential foes might lure them onto the shoals of the counterrevolution. For most East Germans, however, the ring of West German liberalism sounded tantalizingly close yet impossibly far, which allowed the Federal Republic to figure as a standing criticism of socialist shortcomings, the enticing if elusive inverse of "real-existing socialism." Even though most East Germans recognized that West German television broadcasts reflected aspirational rather than realistic depictions of capitalist prosperity, they nevertheless watched Western television shows enthusiastically—and the advertisements for West German products that accompanied them.[57] Accordingly, the elective affinity for things West German was expressed most concretely in the popular demand for capitalist consumer goods, which were sought after not simply because they were often superior in quality to socialist products, but also because they referred to a faraway world of supposed ethical and economic plenty.

It stands to reason, then, that East Germans in 1990 wanted to finalize the currency reform of 1948 and have the DM come to them, rather than experiment with a kinder, more gentle socialism. Perhaps they believed, as West German policymakers did, in a second economic miracle—Chancellor Helmut Kohl's "flourishing landscapes." Perhaps they thought the DM itself would bring with it that fabled world of political freedom and economic bounty. Unfortunately, the reality of reunification has been less melodious and more mundane than the music that once floated across the wall. But then, fables are just that, and the Cold War produced a lot of them. Today, when the drumbeat of nativist voices is demanding the construction of higher walls to international trade, bigger barriers to the movement of people and ideas across borders, and the dissolution of global institutions, it is helpful to recall that the binary logic that maintained the division of Germany was eventually undermined by non-binary forces, whether it was the cascade of rivers, the rushing of the wind, the flow of information, the sound of music, or the defiance of ordinary people.

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Notes

Translation by David Dichelle

1. "Diesseits der Mauer," Hoffmann und Campe, accessed January 30, 2025, https://hoffmann-und-campe.de/products/63884-diesseits-der-mauer?variant=43749548753164.

2. Katja Hoyer, *Beyond the Wall: East Germany, 1949–1990* (London: Allen Lane, 2023).

3. See reviews of Katja Hoyer, *Diesseits der Mauer*, by Hermann Wentker, in *sehepunkte* 23, no. 7–8 (July–August 2023), https://www.sehepunkte.de/2023/07/38095.html; by Jens Gieseke, in *H-Soz-Kult*, August 31, 2023, https://www.hsozkult.de/publicationreview/id/reb-135972; and by Gunilla-Friederike Budde, in *Historische Zeitschrift* 319, no. 3 (2024): 751–53.

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6. Ibid., 28.

7. Christoph Kleßmann, "Spaltung und Verflechtung: Ein Konzept zur integrierten Nachkriegsgeschichte 1945 bis 1990," in *Teilung und Integration: Die doppelte deutsche Nachkriegsgeschichte als wissenschaftliches und didaktisches Problem*, ed. Christoph Kleßmann and Peter Lautzas (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2005), 20–37, here 34.

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9. Henning Türk, *Treibstoff der Systeme: Kohle, Erdöl und Atomkraft im geteilten Deutschland* (Berlin: be.bra, 2021), 156. See also Rainer Karlsch and Raymond G. Stokes, *"Faktor Öl": Die Mineralölwirtschaft in Deutschland 1859–1974* (Munich: C.H.Beck, 2003).

10. Astrid M. Eckert, *Zonenrandgebiet: Westdeutschland und der Eiserne Vorhang* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2022), 175. On the negotiations between Bonn and East Berlin, see Sophie Lange, *Deutsch-deutsche Umweltpolitik 1970–1990: Eine Verflechtungsgeschichte im interna-*

tionalen und gesellschaftlichen Kontext des Kalten Krieges (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2023). On the international context of East German environmental protection, see Julia E. Ault, *Saving Nature under Socialism: Transnational Environmentalism in East Germany, 1968–1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2023).

11. See, for example, Andrew H. Beattie, *Allied Internment Camps in Occupied Germany: Extrajudicial Detention in the Name of Denazification, 1945–1950* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press 2020); for an older presentation and documentation, cf. Clemens Vollnhals, ed., *Entnazifizierung: Politische Säuberung und Rehabilitierung in den vier Besatzungszonen 1945–1950* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1991).

12. Mary Fulbrook, "Die fehlende Mitte: Die DDR als postnazistischer Staat," in *Die DDR als Chance: Neue Perspektiven auf ein altes Thema*, ed. Ulrich Mählert (Berlin: Metropol, 2016), 89–97, here 93. Cf. Alan McDougall, "A Duty to Forget? The 'Hitler Youth Generation' and the Transition from Nazism to Communism in Postwar East Germany, 1945–49," *German History* 26, no. 1 (January 2008): 24–46; Mary Fulbrook and Andrew I. Port, eds., *Becoming East German: Socialist Structures and Sensibilities after Hitler* (New York: Berghahn, 2013).

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16. Daniel Logemann, *Das polnische Fenster: Deutsch-polnische Kontakte im staatssozialistischen Alltag Leipzigs 1972–1989* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2012), 333. On the unofficial contacts between citizens of the Eastern Bloc, see Włodzimierz Borodziej, Jerzy Kochanowski, and Joachim von Puttkamer, eds., *"Schleichwege": Inoffizielle Begegnungen sozialistischer Staatsbürger zwischen 1956 und 1989* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2010).

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18. Peter Ulrich Weiß, *Kulturarbeit als diplomatischer Zankapfel: Die kulturellen Auslandsbeziehungen im Dreiecksverhältnis der beiden deutschen Staaten und Rumäniens von 1950 bis 1972* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2010), 389.

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21. Rüdiger Bergien, *Im "Generalstab der Partei:" Organisationskultur und Herrschaftspraxis in der SED-Zentrale (1946–1989)* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2017), 518. See also Andreas Malycha, *Die SED in der Ära Honecker: Machtstrukturen, Entscheidungsmechanismen und Konfliktfelder in der Staatspartei 1971 bis 1989* (Munich; De Gruyter, 2014).

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27. Michael Schwartz, *"Eine Schmach verschwindet": Der lange Weg zur Beseitigung des Sonderstrafrechts für Homosexuelle in Deutschland 1968/69 bis 1989/94* (Berlin: B&S Siebenhaar Verlag, 2024).

28. Klaus Michael Rogner, *Der Verfassungsentwurf des Zentralen Runden Tisches der DDR* (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1993), 39–44.

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31. Dierk Hoffmann, ed., *Die umkämpfte Einheit: Die Treuhandanstalt und die deutsche Einheit* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2022); Andreas Malycha, *Vom Hoffnungsträger zum Prügelknaben: Die Treuhandanstalt zwischen wirtschaftlichen Erwartungen und politischen Zwängen 1989–1994* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2022).

32. Christian Rau, *Die verhandelte "Wende": Die Gewerkschaften, die Treuhand und der Beginn der Berliner Republik* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2022).

33. Wolf-Rüdiger Knoll, *Die Treuhandanstalt in Brandenburg: Regionale Privatisierungspraxis 1990–2000* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2022); Eva Lütkemeyer, *Wendemanöver: Die Transformation der ostdeutschen Werftindustrie 1989/90–1994* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2023); Rainer Karlsch, *Das Chemiedreieck bleibt! Die Privatisierung der ostdeutschen Chemie- und Mineralölindustrie in den 1990er Jahren* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2024).

34. Kerstin Brückweh, Clemens Villinger, and Kathrin Zöller, eds., *Die lange Geschichte der "Wende:" Geschichtswissenschaft im Dialog* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2020); Christiane Kuller et al., "'Also wenn man es jetzt mal resümieren wollte . . .': Lebenserinnerungen an die DDR, den politischen Umbruch von 1989/90 und die Transformation der ostdeutschen Arbeitswelt; Ein Werkstattbericht," in *Jahrbuch Deutsche Einheit 2023*, ed. Marcus Böick, Constantin Goschler, and Ralph Jessen (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2023), 225–50; Till Kössler and Janosch Steuwer, eds., *Brandspuren: Das vereinte Deutschland und die rechte Gewalt der frühen 1990er Jahre* (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2023); Esther Adaire, "'This Other Germany, the Dark One': Post-Wall Memory Politics Surrounding the Neo-Nazi Riots in Rostock and Hoyerswerda," *German Politics and Society* 37, no. 4 (2019): 43–57; Jonathan R. Zatlin, "Scarcity and Resentment: Economic Sources of Xenophobia in the GDR, 1971–1989," *Central European History* 40, no. 4 (December 2007): 683–720.

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41. Frank Roggenbuch, *Das Berliner Grenzgängerproblem: Verflechtung und Systemkonkurrenz vor dem Mauerbau* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2008).

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53. Weber, *Getrennt und doch vereint*, 990–92.

54. Zatlin, *Currency of Socialism*, 188–89.

55. Pavel Szobi, "Lizenz- und Gestattungsproduktion westdeutscher Unternehmen in der ČSSR und der DDR," *Jahrbuch für Wirtschaftsgeschichte* 58, no. 2 (2017), 467–87.

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"Saboteurs" or "Activists"?

West German Workers in the GDR, 1949–61

PETER E. FÄßLER

When the German Democratic Republic (GDR) sealed its borders with West Germany at the end of May 1952, not only did regular border traffic come to a halt, but the regulation of cross-border workers also changed. Surprisingly, East German authorities allowed approximately 200 Bavarian skilled workers to resume their traditional occupation of slate mining in the southern region of Thuringia under what was called the *Lehestener Vereinbarung*. These workers continued their mining operations at the Volkseigener Betrieb (VEB—publicly owned enterprise) Schiefergruben Lehesten until September 1961, when construction of the Berlin Wall made their work impossible. The article examines the political reasoning leading to the suspension of West Germans traveling to the GDR to mine slate, which preoccupied East German officials at the highest levels, and frames the GDR's decision in terms of German-German politics. The article highlights the classic conflict between party ideologues and economic pragmatists that characterized the socialist system of rule. In the end, however, the ambitions of both groups were circumscribed by the GDR's difficult economic situation.

On May 27, 1952, the German Democratic Republic (GDR) instituted a "new border regime"[1] on the demarcation line. Characterized by barbed-wire fencing, restricted zones, and close monitoring by armed guards, it intensified the divide between the two Germanys and created an insuperable barrier for thousands of cross-border commuters. From that May day onward, farmers east and west of the line were prohibited from cultivating their fields on the other side. Commuters lost their jobs in the lignite mining district near Helmstedt, while the East German Harbke power station had to generate electricity for mining operations without its West German workforce. These measures were a reaction to the signing of the Bonn Convention (*Deutschlandvertrag*) the previous day and were intended to systematically isolate the GDR from West Germany. Indeed, after May 1952, interzonal—or more precisely, intersectoral—commuters were still to be found only in Berlin, where a cross-border labor

market existed between the western and eastern sectors of the city and, to a lesser extent, between West Berlin and the surrounding area.[2]

Yet the issue of *Neues Deutschland* for December 8, 1955, featured an article bearing the rather surprising headline "Bavarian Workers Wear the Activist Pin." It stated that "117 skilled workers from Upper Franconia [. . .] have been leaving their villages in the Franconian Forest every morning since January 1955 to make the frequently arduous journey of 18-odd kilometers to perform their daily work in the slate mines of Thuringia."[3] Fourteen of them, the article said, had been named "Activists of the Five-Year Plan" in recognition of their exemplary output at Volkseigener Betrieb (VEB—publicly owned enterprise) Thüringische Schiefergruben Lehesten. Furthermore, this unique case of cross-border commuting had allegedly been made possible by an agreement between representatives of the West German government and the GDR, reached after prolonged negotiations.[4]

The article did not, however, indicate why the Thuringian slate mines used Bavarian rather than local skilled workers. Moreover, there was no reference to any previous employment of the Bavarians by the company, on which the agreement might have been based. The article did not explain either why the GDR chose the beginning of 1955, of all times, to selectively revoke its "border security measures" of May 1952 and, at least at the regional level, to allow a rapprochement between the two German states. Can this move be interpreted as an indicator of a post-Stalinist thaw in *Deutschlandpolitik* (policy regarding the division of Germany), and as proof of the theory that the history of the inner-German border was like a "thermometer of the Cold War,"[5] which traced the fluctuations in the political temperature of the conflict? Or was it rather the case that the GDR was facing an almost irresolvable economic predicament characterized by labor shortages, production shortfalls, and resulting supply problems? And had this situation in fact forced the country to revise some elements of its general policy of isolation and to accept cooperation with West Germany? Moreover, the question of who had actually signed that agreement, given the federal government's policy of strict refusal to recognize the GDR, and hence an issue with weighty implications for *Deutschlandpolitik*, remains open. However, the assertion that the signatories were in fact government representatives of the two countries would seem at first glance to be wishful thinking on the East Germans' part and hence virtually out of the question.

Even this brief list of questions, ensuing from the extraordinarily sketchy and problematic nature of the *Neues Deutschland* article, suggests that a case study of cross-border labor relations on the inner-German demarcation line would raise many interesting aspects. Research into the topic appears all the more illuminating as the relationship constituted a specific form of East-West German contact.

The underlying accord, the "Agreement Concerning the Employment of Skilled Workers in Thuringian Slate Mines" (*Lehestener Vereinbarung*, Lehesten Agreement) of January 27, 1955, represented the only contractual arrangement of this kind outside the Berlin Accord (*Berliner Abkommen*) of September 20, 1951.[6]

In the following discussion, previously unexplored sources will be used to shed light on the political and economic factors behind the employment of Bavarian skilled workers in the slate mines of southern Thuringia between 1945 and 1961. The main research questions are: Which entities were involved in the decision-making process? What specific objectives did they pursue, and to what degree did they succeed? At the same time, it should be remembered that both the objectives of the entities involved and their respective ability to get things done could vary considerably depending on the political and economic climate.

The research focuses on power relations and internal processes in the GDR, since far more entities with disparate interests were involved there than in the Federal Republic, where the interests of the regional, state, and federal authorities largely coincided. In addition, intergovernmental aspects of *Deutschlandpolitik* will be considered.[7]

To date, quite a range of disciplines have explored the wide variety of ways in which Germany's partition affected the border zone. Economists, transportation experts, and economic geographers have studied primarily economic and infrastructural dislocations,[8] while historians have devoted increased attention to the topic since the reunification of Germany in 1990, especially in studies of local and regional history.[9] The case to be analyzed here—cross-border labor relations in the Kronach–Saalfeld area—has, however, thus far been neither described nor interpreted historically in a broader context.[10] Instead, the available literature contains misleading statements that obscure the significance of the course events took.[11]

The Partition of Germany and Its Effects on Slate Mining in Southern Thuringia near Lehesten and Probstzella, 1945–49

The demarcation line between the US and Soviet occupation zones took effect when the US Army withdrew from Thuringia and western Saxony during the night of July 1 and early morning of July 2, 1945. The resulting closure of the border dealt a particularly heavy blow to Upper Franconia and southern Thuringia, since the two regions had previously cultivated close and long-standing economic, political, and denominational ties.[12]

The economic links of interest in this case study existed at several levels. The infrastructure, specifically the main highways and rail lines, ran north–south,

connecting the Leipzig industrial area with Franconia, and in particular linking the area south of Saalfeld with Kronach District.[13] This had enabled complex economic relations to develop,[14] first and foremost the exchange of a wide range of commodities across the Bavarian-Thuringian border. For example, Bavaria acquired local raw materials such as kaolin and slate from Thuringia, and in turn delivered primarily consumer goods and durables. Economic ties were especially close in the textile sector, where cross-border collaboration took place at various stages of production.[15]

In addition to the joint markets for goods, there was also a cross-border labor market. Because agricultural production in Upper Franconia was at the minimum subsistence level, the population sought additional income elsewhere, including in the glass, porcelain, and slate factories of southern Thuringia. Since the mid-nineteenth century, Bavarian slate miners had worked in the southern Thuringian slate mines, which were among the major regional employers.[16]

As a result of the division of Germany in 1945, Upper Franconia was largely cut off from the industrial region of Central Germany, and it lost access to conveniently located important raw materials such as lignite, kaolin, and slate, and instead was forced to accept an increase in freight costs of up to 147 percent.[17] Moreover, the region now found itself on the periphery in terms of transportation infrastructure, which weakened its status as an economic location.[18] All these factors resulted in high unemployment, which rose from roughly 9 to 18 percent during the 1948–50 period, well over the West German average.[19]

The negative economic consequences of Germany's division also affected slate mining in southern Thuringia, which has the largest deposits of clay slate in Europe.[20] The center of Thuringia's slate mining industry is the "German slate city" of Lehesten, which has Europe's largest quarry, or open-pit slate mine.[21] Other significant slate mines are located in the neighboring villages of Schmiedebach and Röttersdorf, and slightly north of Lehesten near Probstzella. The "blue gold," as slate is popularly known, had helped the region attain a level of prosperity that easily surpassed the standard of living in neighboring areas. Mining of roofing and wall slate, which accounted for the largest segment—80 percent—of the slate product range, was a major line of business in the region before the war and provided jobs for approximately 2,300 workers.[22] The Steinach mines, located to the Northwest, dominated the world market for pencil slate until 1914, when Portuguese competitors began to play an increasing role.[23] A sad low-point in the history of Thuringia's slate mines in the Lehesten area was the opening of the "Laura" subcamp, a branch of the Buchenwald concentration camp, in Schmiedebach, a district of Lehesten. During World War II, approxi-

mately 1,200 prisoners worked in the tunnels of the slate mine producing oxygen for testing the V2 rocket engines.[24]

As of July 1945, the ban on cross-border commuter traffic deprived the slate mines in Lehesten, Schmiedebach, Röttersdorf, and Probstzella of the skilled workers who lived in the neighboring Bavarian administrative district (*Landkreis*) of Kronach. With their help, it had been possible in mid-June 1945 to resume slate production for a short time, before it once again came to a standstill after the invasion of the Red Army on July 2, 1945.[25] Production only resumed normal operations in August 1945. For more than twelve months, the experienced skilled slate workers from Bavaria were prohibited from returning to their traditional places of employment. The plant managers were keenly aware of their absence, especially during the difficult and technically demanding mining of slate underground.[26] Only after Directive 42 was issued by the Allied Control Council on October 24, 1946, did occupation law provide a basis for small-scale border traffic, including employment relationships across zonal borders.[27] In the period that followed, the number of Bavarian miners employed by VEB Schiefergruben Lehesten[28] continued to grow and reached a peak of 301 in 1949. With a total of 1,423 employees in the Thuringian slate industry, of whom 1,136 were production workers, the Bavarians represented a share of more than 20 percent.[29]

It can be assumed that the responsible Thuringian state authorities, as well as the local district (*Kreis*) and state (*Land*) leadership of the Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (SED—Socialist Unity Party of Germany), favored the employment of West German workers. Otherwise, they could have refused the permission required by Thuringia's Law on the Transfer of Mineral Deposits and Mining Operations into the People's Hands, dated May 30, 1947, which nationalized the slate mines.[30] But because skilled workers were constantly in short supply,[31] and cross-border commuters were not yet deemed to constitute a political infiltration risk, nothing mitigated against continuing the traditional Bavarian-Thuringian employment relationships. From the West German point of view, high unemployment figures meant that there was likewise a great interest in job opportunities for skilled slate workers from the Kronach administrative district. Given that this type of border traffic was politically desirable for both sides, including as a means of strengthening the "national idea," there were no difficulties at all during the 1946–48 period.

The employment of West German workers in the slate mines was not seriously questioned until the adoption of currency reforms in June 1948. With the introduction of two different nonconvertible currencies in the West German zones and in the Soviet occupation zone (SOZ), a problem arose: How were the wages

and social insurance contributions of the West German workers employed in the SOZ—thus far paid in Reichsmarks—to be paid in future? Payment exclusively in ostmarks was impossible, if for no other reason than that the Bavarian miners would hardly have accepted wages paid in East German currency, since these would not have enabled them to make a living in the Federal Republic.[32] Therefore, a trading agreement was concluded whereby VEB Schiefergruben Lehesten would deliver predetermined quotas of roofing and wall slate to the Paul Meyer trading firm, based in Coburg. The firm, in turn, would use the revenue from sales in the West German occupation zones to pay the workers' wages and social insurance in deutsche marks.[33]

However, the interruption to inner-German trade from June 1948 to May 1949, a consequence of the Berlin Blockade, endangered this practical way of dealing with the monetary problem.[34] From then on, the interzonal deliveries of slate to the Paul Meyer company could, in principle, be prohibited at short notice. Thus, on March 12, 1949, the Lehesten plant manager anxiously warned the mayor of the town of Reichenbach in Upper Franconia that the West German authorities were considering banning the slate exports. If this happened, 132 skilled workers from Reichenbach alone would have to be dismissed, because it would no longer be possible to pay them in deutsche marks. Surely, the manager stated, this would mean a serious economic setback for the slate plant, but doubtless for the town of Reichenbach as well, which could not guarantee that the affected workers would find jobs commensurate with their qualifications. Moreover, the measure would depress the entire economic area still further, to the detriment of those on both sides of the border. The manager's letter closed with a request that the mayor intervene with the appropriate authorities.[35] It must be assumed that the local and regional office-holders in the Kronach administrative district, in view of the high unemployment and the structurally determined economic disadvantages for their region, did their utmost to preserve the job opportunities in the slate mines of Thuringia. In fact, they succeeded in continuing the monthly slate deliveries as payment equivalents even during the period of languishing trade between the zones. The Bavarian workers were thus able to commute across the border to Thuringia throughout the first Berlin crisis.

The Coburg Special Agreement of January 24, 1950

Economic contacts between the occupation zones were restored to a reliable political footing only after the signing of the so-called Jessup-Malik Agreement on May 4, 1949. Then, on October 8 of that year, the Frankfurt Agreement (*Frankfurter Abkommen*) created a new legal basis for interzonal trade between

the two newly founded German states.[36] Given that Germany's dual statehood was now a fait accompli, it followed that other types of inner-German cooperation would likewise require legal documents. In line with this, representatives of Thuringia's state government and the Bavarian Ministry of Economic Affairs signed the so-called Coburg Special Agreement (*Coburger Sonderabkommen*)[37] in the eponymous Upper Franconian city on January 24, 1950, thus for the first time making contractual provisions for the continued employment of approximately 300 West German skilled workers in the slate mines near Lehesten and Probstzella on East German territory. They were entitled to the same wages as their Thuringian fellow workers, although their compensation, including the non-wage labor costs, was to be paid exclusively in West German marks. Because the employer, VEB Thüringische Schiefergruben Lehesten, lacked access to the West German currency required to do this, the problem was overcome by "following previous practice" and using the sales revenue from a monthly delivery of 250 metric tons of roofing and wall slate to the Federal Republic at the current market price. These earmarked deliveries of goods did not count among the goods quotas stipulated by the Frankfurt Agreement, and therefore they were not reflected in the inner-German balance of trade. At the express request of Vereinigung Volkseigener Betriebe (VVB—Association of State-Owned Enterprises) Mineral und Erz,[38] the exclusive right to sell the slate in West Germany was assigned to the Coburg-based Paul Meyer company. The Free State of Bavaria undertook to issue the requisite pro forma payment authorizations for the slate punctually, while the Thuringian state would provide the necessary accompanying documents and ensure trouble-free clearance at the border. As agreed, the slate transports passed through the official border checkpoint at Probstzella-Ludwigstadt, and also through the unofficial border railroad station at Steinbach am Wald, built exclusively for this purpose. If contractual conditions changed substantially, particularly with respect to the number of employees or the market prices for roofing and wall slate, new negotiations were envisaged. The negotiating parties stipulated that the Coburg Special Agreement would only last until March 31, 1951.[39]

The fact that what had previously been a customary law practice was now laid down in writing demonstrates that the Free State of Bavaria and the State of Thuringia had to take into account the fundamentally changing framework of *Deutschlandpolitik* since 1948 in order to protect their regional economic interests. The currency reforms and the interruption of interzone trade had already made it clear in summer 1948 that the cross-border employment relationships were fragile. For this reason, the establishment of two German states in 1949 necessitated a legally clear set of rules.

In terms of *Deutschlandpolitik*, labeling the contractual framework a "special agreement" (*Sonderabkommen*) was a politically explosive move, since an *Abkommen* potentially has a constitutional dimension as well. As is well known, the GDR repeatedly attempted through such contractual channels to acquire the status of a recognized subject of international law.[40] The conclusion of the Frankfurt Agreement one day after the establishment of the GDR had already caused Konrad Adenauer great concern.[41] The Munich State Chancellery had probably already been aware that signing the Coburg Special Agreement could imply de facto recognition of the GDR. Because a contractual arrangement entered into at substate level is usually termed a *Vereinbarung* (an agreement) or, even more vaguely, an *Abmachung* (an understanding), the Bavarian state government, in an official letter dated March 27, 1950, approved the terms of the Coburg Special Agreement, but now began referring to it as the "Coburg Understandings" (*Coburger Abmachungen*).[42] In contrast, the Thuringian state government and later on the Berlin Ministerium für Außenhandel und Innerdeutschen Handel (MAI—Ministry for Foreign Trade and Inner-German Trade) insisted on the official version and stood by the term *Sonderabkommen*.[43] Fundamentally, however, it may be said that this was of only minor significance for the recognition issue, since the Coburg Special Agreement was entered into at federal state level rather than national level.

Disputes in the GDR over the Coburg Special Agreement, 1950–54

At least for 1950 and 1951, the Coburg Special Agreement proved to be a solid and practical legal agreement. The total number of Bavarian skilled slate workers in Thuringia's slate mines leveled off at 225.[44] Depending on the mine, the Bavarians represented between 35 and 50 percent of the skilled workforce, while they even accounted for as much as 66 percent of those in key production work, as slate splitters.[45] They played an important role within the company, because final production was largely within their area of expertise.[46] Moreover, by participating in the in-house training of apprentices, they ensured that valuable technical skills would be passed on to the next generation.[47]

For these reasons, the company managers were interested in a renewal of the Coburg Special Agreement. As neither the SED leadership nor the GDR government nor the Thuringian state government raised objections to the Coburg Special Agreement, delegations from Bavaria and Thuringia met on April 27, 1951, to negotiate the terms for an extension.[48] The most important new feature agreed upon was that henceforth only the base wages would be paid in West German currency, whereas additional pay, bonuses, special benefits, and sick pay

would be paid in East German currency. This arrangement was effective until December 31, 1951, and when it expired was to be automatically extended for one year, unless objections were raised.[49] Somewhat surprisingly, however, in the course of 1951 the SED leadership and the government in East Berlin changed their opinion of the Coburg Special Agreement. Heated arguments arose, motivated by economic and *Deutschlandpolitik* considerations.

The main objection of an economic nature was that significant amounts of West German marks were required to pay the Bavarians. In May 1950 the wages and non-wage labor costs that the state-owned slate quarries at Lehesten and the nearby slate plant in Röttersdorf incurred for 169 West German workers totaled approximately 28,800 West German marks per month.[50] Projected for the total number of 225 West German employees, this meant that just under half a million West German marks had to be generated each year. While the monthly delivery of 250 metric tons of roofing and wall slate to the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) guaranteed this financing, this also meant that 18 percent of the annual production of high-quality roofing and wall slate had to be set aside for this purpose.[51]

The SED leadership and the government in East Berlin tried hard to minimize the volume of West German marks being paid out, both against the will of the plant management and in opposition to the partially dissenting Thuringian state government. Basically two strategies were conceivable at that point: either compensate the West German workers wholly or partially in East German marks, or gradually replace the West German workers with an East German workforce. Both strategies would turn out to be problematic.

On May 28, 1951, the Secretariat of the SED Central Committee (CC) ordered the payment of West German marks to the Bavarian miners to cease immediately.[52] Its directive proved to be poorly thought through, however, as it constituted an unjustifiable breach of the agreement. Moreover, it was a violation that the GDR could not afford, in view of the acute crisis in economic relations with the Federal Republic.[53] In addition the Bavarians presumably would have immediately failed to report for work, which would have rendered an additional objective of the directive—an increase in the economic efficiency of the slate mines[54]—completely unattainable. Interestingly the directive of the CC Secretariat was not implemented. Ultimately the East Germans abided by the abovementioned financial restrictions, which they had successfully persuaded the FRG representatives to accept in the negotiations on April 27, 1951. It is not clear why the CC Secretariat's order was not carried out. Possibly it was circumvented locally by both the Thuringian state government and VVB Schiefer, Steinach. Regional arbitrariness was well known to play an important role in the system of the early

GDR, a symptom that the SED leadership sought to eliminate by abolishing the GDR's federal states (*Länder*) in 1952 and centralizing the apparatus of state.

The other pathway to a decrease in the West German marks being paid out—a reduction in the number of Bavarian workers and their replacement by local miners, as planned by the SED leadership and the Ministry of Heavy Industry[55]—proved to be hardly practicable. The first endeavors of this kind date from 1949. At that time the management of VVB Mineral und Erz, together with the state government of Thuringia, had decided, as a first step and for foreign exchange reasons, to lay off approximately fifty Bavarian workers engaged in ancillary activities who were thus technically nonessential.[56] Yet even replacing this low-skilled section of the workforce with Thuringians from the employment offices in the surrounding districts proved to be extremely difficult. The labor market in the local administrative districts of Saalfeld and Lobenstein had almost no available capacity, owing to the workforce requirements of the Maxhütte steel plant in Unterwellenborn and the spun-rayon factory in Schwarza.[57] The situation was aggravated by the physically demanding and hazardous nature of slate mining, which deterred many potential employees from engaging in this work. Furthermore, the acute housing shortage in Lehesten made it difficult for out-of-towners to find accommodation there.[58]

If the labor force problem was already insoluble in 1949, it would become increasingly dire in the years that followed. The additional labor demand in the Thuringian slate mines was estimated to be 600 to 800 workers for 1950. This reflected, in part, a desire to limit the production backlog of 1,500 metric tons at midyear to 2,000 metric tons by the end of 1950.[59] Furthermore, approximately 225 additional workers would have arrived in 1951 as replacements for the Bavarian miners. The CC Secretariat's idea that the personnel shortage could be avoided by means of targeted workforce management within the GDR[60] therefore disregarded the reality of the regional labor market.

It was evident that, in the short term, it would be impossible to recruit a sufficient number of replacements for the well-trained skilled workers. Given this circumstance and the roughly 15 percent increase in the production plan—to 20,250 metric tons of roofing and wall slate for the year 1951—the enterprises in question realized early on that the production target stipulated by the plan could not be reached without the Bavarian core workforce.[61] Thus VVB Schiefer, Steinach, urgently requested that these skilled workers be retained, presenting business and economic arguments alongside political and ideological ones in support of this demand. The employment of Bavarian skilled workers, it alleged, offered two advantages: first, they produced valuable roofing and wall slate, urgently needed in the GDR; second, they were paid in the Federal Republic with

allocations of pencil slate, which was hardly in demand in the GDR, in contrast to the FRG.[62] Furthermore, the management emphasized the progressive political outlook of the Bavarians, many of whom belonged to the Kommunistische Partei Deutschlands (KPD—German Communist Party). Their political loyalty to socialism was allegedly also apparent in their support of the World Peace Council's campaign for a ban on atomic weapons, as 180 miners from West Germany had signed the council's petition for that purpose. Furthermore, it was argued, they expressed their inner solidarity with the GDR through their outstanding performance on the job. Their work efficiency was illustrated by the fact that, for every three metric tons of roofing and wall slate produced, only one metric ton had to be delivered to the Meyer firm as a payment equivalent, while two metric tons was available for the foreign or domestic market. On the basis of their performance, the company stated, the West German workers already included twenty to twenty-five people who had been awarded the status of activists and fifty who had earned the title "best worker" (*Bestarbeiter*).[63]

In summary the 1951 conflict over economic policy can be outlined as follows: the central party and government authorities[64] demanded a prompt dismissal of the West German workers, based on fundamental currency policy considerations, whereas the Thuringian state government and enterprises, with an eye to their production targets and actual production figures, fought to retain them. The regional entities, however, failed to produce convincing proof that employment of the Bavarians resulted in higher production and hence in an improvement in East Germany's trade balance with the FRG. Whether ignorance or ideologically motivated wishful thinking kept the party leaders from following the convincing reasoning of the enterprise, or whether the leaders, early on, were already favoring a course of division with respect to *Deutschlandpolitik*, cannot be fully clarified at present. What is certain, however, is that a compromise was taking shape that would pave the way for a core group of Thuringian skilled workers to be trained, thus allowing the share of West German workers to be gradually reduced to zero by the mid-1950s.[65] The intermediate goal was a reduction in the number of West German workers to eighty essential specialists by June 30, 1952.[66] This enabled the Thuringian Ministry of Economic Affairs on November 15, 1951, to approve the continued employment of 224 skilled slate workers until March 31, 1952, as requested by VVB Schiefer, Steinach.[67]

In addition to economic policy, the Coburg Special Agreement increasingly affected the SED leadership's *Deutschlandpolitik*, which advocated a closed border and political orientation toward the Soviet Union.[68] A major component of this strategy was a gradual curtailing of inner-German tourist traffic, including local cross-border traffic along the demarcation line.

A tightening of the GDR's entry regulations for West Germans had already taken effect in 1950,[69] and on July 28, 1951, the CC Secretariat resolved to prohibit all cross-border employment relationships in Saxony-Anhalt.[70] Naturally the Coburg Special Agreement, as well as the inevitable close contacts between West and East Germans it entailed, was at odds with the closed-border policy. A course of action presented itself in fall 1951. Owing to adverse weather and poor road conditions, it had been customary since the late 1940s for the Bavarian skilled slate workers to spend winter weeknights with fellow workers in the GDR and to return to their home villages across the border in Upper Franconia only on the weekends.[71] In the winter of 1950/51, in response to a press campaign, even SED offices and mass organizations had agreed to sponsor the miners and secure accommodation for them,[72] an arrangement that the border police tacitly tolerated.[73]

On October 17, 1951, in accordance with previous practice, the management of the Schiefergrube Schmiedebach asked the local district office of the East German police (Volkspolizei) in Saalfeld to permit ten specialized slate workers from Bavaria to remain in Schmiedebach during the winter months, on account of the anticipated bad weather conditions.[74] In an initial response on October 20, the office rejected this request on the grounds that it would violate the new provisions of July 1951 with respect to local cross-border traffic.[75] Nevertheless, given that this risked the enterprise failing to fulfill the production target stipulated by the plan, the regional police department found the matter important enough to ensure that it had the support of its superior authority in Weimar.[76] However, even the latter felt unable to assume responsibility for the matter, so on October 25 it appealed to the Main Administration of the German People's Police in Berlin, asking for a review of the question of where the Bavarian workers were to be accommodated.[77] Without waiting for the Berlin police authority to reach a decision, on November 12 the Thuringian Ministry of Internal Affairs granted permission for the Bavarians to spend winter weeknights in Thuringia. On November 15 it directed the Thuringian police authority to take corresponding measures.[78] The same day the Thuringian authority forwarded the directive to the local district office in Saalfeld, with the proviso that the workers would have to be informally registered in Schmiedebach and would not be allowed to leave the town.[79]

What had been allowed on a small scale in Schmiedebach was also to be made possible for the other 200 Bavarian skilled workers in the slate mines of Lehesten, Röttersdorf, and Probstzella. But the agency in charge in Berlin, the East German State Secretariat for the Chemical, Mineral, and Soil Industries (Staatssekretariat Chemie, Steine und Erden), with an eye to the general party

line regarding *Deutschlandpolitik*, could not contemplate such a step, and it promptly intervened in the matter. On December 5, 1951, it denied the request and also revoked the approval already granted by the Thuringian state government for the Schmiedebach slate mine.[80] The negative decision then made its way down through the police authorities in Berlin, Weimar, and Saalfeld,[81] and reached the enterprise's management, union, and employees on December 17.[82] In defiance of the prohibition, the plant manager of VEB Schiefergruben Lehesten allowed the Bavarian miners to spend the night in rooms on the premises, which constituted a grave affront vis-à-vis the police authorities and the government. When on January 4, 1952, the border police "summoned"[83] him on account of this high-handedness—in reality, the summons was an "arrest"[84]—the miners spontaneously downed tools and demanded his immediate release. The same day the Thuringian executive committee of the Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (FDGB—Free German Trade Union Organization) intervened in the matter and sent an official letter to the Thuringian minister of the interior, expressly advocating that the Bavarian miners remain in the Lehesten slate quarries and continue to be allowed to stay overnight in rooms on the premises. The letter closed with the threatening information that the incident had already been reported to the federal executive committee of the FDGB in Berlin.[85]

The swift reaction of the workforce and the FDGB's state-level executive committee proved to be effective. The very next day the border police released the plant manager, and the spontaneous strike ended just as spontaneously as it had begun.[86] In a meeting on January 7, 1952, arranged by Thuringia's minister of the interior, the Thuringian state government and the leadership of the Thuringian branch of the FDGB agreed to ensure that the West Germans could continue working in the slate mines for the time being. Meanwhile the border police also let it be known that they did not regard the West German workers as a political or security risk.[87] Finally, the Thuringian minister of the interior assumed political responsibility and, without consulting Berlin, issued the overnight-stay permits.[88] The continued validity of the Coburg Special Agreement was thus ensured for the time being.

At the end of March 1952, however, when it was foreseeable that West Germany's integration into the Western camp could not be stopped even by Soviet offers of unification, Stalin changed his course with respect to *Deutschlandpolitik*. In conversations on April 1 and 7, he instructed Walter Ulbricht, Wilhelm Pieck, and Otto Grotewohl to ensure that the inner-German border be closed to local cross-border traffic.[89] From April 15 to 25 the Soviet Control Commission (SCC) investigated the local district police offices with regard to their border surveillance practices. In the case of the Saalfeld district office, which was responsible

for VVB Schiefer, Steinach, the SCC complained that 182 West German workers were still able to cross the border each day, even though the "occurrences in Schmiedebach"[90] were well known. Furthermore, beginning in January 1952, a directive from the inspector general of the German People's Police, Willi Seifert, called for the gradual confiscation of local cross-border permits. This directive had been poorly implemented to date, the SCC said, and should be complied with immediately.[91]

In early May 1952 the SCC ordered the closing of Thuringia's border with West Germany to permit holders, in accordance with Allied Control Council Directive 42. The special regulations for centers of industrial activity expressly mentioned the slate mining industry in southern Thuringia: "For the slate plant at Lehesten, measures are to be taken to the effect that, as of May 25, 1942 [*sic*], no workers from West Germany will be working [there] anymore."[92] On May 27, 1952, the government of the GDR issued the "Regulation on Measures along the Demarcation Line between the German Democratic Republic and the Western Occupation Zones of Germany,"[93] which was intended to prevent a "further infiltration of saboteurs, spies, terrorists, and subversives." As a result the Coburg Special Agreement was essentially finished, since the "special security measures along the demarcation line for the protection of the German Democratic Republic" allowed "no exception" to be made, "including for local cross-border traffic to the slate mines."[94] From this point on the slate mines around Lehesten, Schmiedebach, and Röttersdorf lay within the 5 km wide restricted zone and were subject to especially strict surveillance.

The "unilateral termination"[95] of the Coburg Special Agreement had two immediate economic consequences for the slate plants. First, they had to enter substantial amounts of West German marks in their balance sheets as a loss, since slate allocations that had already been delivered had yet to be paid for by Paul Meyer. These moneys were urgently needed, given the shortage of working capital. Only the operating division of Schiefergrube Schmiedebach complained about the deficit of 67,000 West German marks.[96] Second, VVB Schiefer, Steinach, was faced at short notice with a loss of labor it could not make up for, around 30 percent of the core workforce. In addition, if one factors in the existing production backlog, the outdated machinery, and the diminishing rock stratum,[97] an economic catastrophe was looming.

Seeking a way out of the crisis, the plant managements of the individual mines, together with government and party authorities, introduced a number of countermeasures. These included a strategy ordered by the Politburo to deliberately recruit nonspecialist workers using specially assigned "promotional brigades."[98] In a further step the in-house training of apprentices was intensified.[99]

Neither attempt to remedy the personnel shortage met with much success, however, and only 80 percent of the workforce quota was fulfilled in 1952.[100] Both the recruited workers, who proved to have insufficient "local roots," and the apprentices trained in-house mostly drifted away to other branches of industry after a short employment period.[101] The reasons given included tough working conditions, health hazards, poor accommodation, and inadequate meals—in other words, a whole array of adverse living conditions that made it extremely unattractive to remain in the remote border region. In particular the outflow of the apprentices—in 1953 alone, 27 percent of the trainees (53 workers) left the operating division in Lehesten[102]—meant not only a loss of laborers, but also a bad business investment in their training.

As a further measure to boost production, the personnel undertook extra shifts as part of a socialist "combat program."[103] Such ideologically disguised campaigns, initiated by the party and actually amounting to a wage decrease, were tolerated by the workforce only up to a certain pain threshold. Especially during the economic and political crisis of 1952–53, such a strategy harbored a substantial amount of social dynamite. Eventually the enterprise was restructured in a bid to get the individual slate mines to assume more responsibility for their operations and hence to increase the efficiency of production. On August 1, 1952, VVB Schiefer, Steinach, was dissolved, and VVB Thüringische Schieferwerke Schmiedebach was created in its place. The new entity combined the slate plants in Lehesten, Röttersdorf, and Schmiedebach, which were located close together.[104]

Nonetheless, despite this catalog of measures, the plant managers failed to improve the business framework. The labor shortage could not be resolved, nor were any investments made.[105] Production targets remained unfulfilled. The absolute output of slate decreased year after year. In 1953 only 50 percent of domestic demand could be met. Instead of the planned 1,400 metric tons of roofing slate, a mere 700 tons was produced, and the rising housing construction figures strongly suggested that the supply gap would if anything grow.[106] The resulting discontent in the population may also have been fueled by the fact that prime-quality slate was reserved for export to "capitalist countries," while only slate of low quality was available for domestic consumption.[107]

Furthermore, even in the highly important Western markets, there was a threat of a considerable slump in market share. Even the top-priority customers from the capitalist countries were having to tolerate longer delivery times. Despite the good quality of the Thuringian slate, buyers were not willing to keep paying high prices under these circumstances. According to Meyer, the company through which the sale of slate in the Federal Republic was transacted, not only were sales

threatening to slump at short notice, but the Thuringian slate producers were also in danger of being permanently driven out of the market by Western competitors.[108] For example, in the neighboring Bavarian border area, Meyer reported, an attempt had been made to open up new slate mines in order to provide work for the newly unemployed skilled slate workers, and at the same time to force the unpopular East German competitors out of the market. Furthermore, such a development would allegedly have had a negative effect on the GDR's trade balance with West Germany, since slate, an "economically important earner of foreign currency,"[109] was in danger of falling by the wayside.

The consequences of the termination of the Coburg Special Agreement can be briefly summed up as follows: The production shortfalls in the southern Thuringian slate sector contributed to an increase in the potential for social dissatisfaction and a rise in the trade deficit. Both factors, in turn, essentially had a destabilizing effect on the system, with the result that the crisis in the southern Thuringian slate industry dovetailed with the more general crisis in the GDR during 1952 and 1953.

In this situation, the plant management had only two ways out: comprehensive modernization and streamlining of production, or reinstatement of the Bavarian skilled workers. Since it was foreseeable that the financial means needed for essential innovations could not be raised anytime soon, the plant managers concentrated their efforts on reemployment of the Bavarians. It is surely no coincidence that the initiative for reactivation of the Coburg Special Agreement came about shortly after the uprising of June 17, 1953, and the associated course correction in the SED's economic policy. Subsequently the party and the government attached greater importance to aspects of supply in a bid to retain power. Now misgivings concerning *Deutschlandpolitik* and security policy could be more easily overcome.

On September 30, 1953, presumably in consultation with VVB Thüringische Schieferwerke Schmiedebach, the Mining Industry Section of the German Domestic and Foreign Trade Department (Deutscher Innen- und Außenhandel Bergbau) appealed to the MAI, which had responsibility for this organization. Once again, the trade department presented arguments in favor of rehiring the West Germans to work in the slate mines.[110] It chose this approach because the only plausible channel of communication available to the MAI for negotiations with West German representatives in this matter was the inner-German economic dialogue. The trade department's line of argument proved to be fruitful, especially since the ministry itself had been criticized by the party for the unfavorable trends in the foreign trade balance and the supply situation since 1952. The MAI's internal considerations centered on the following points:

1. The reemployment of the Bavarian skilled slate workers was expected to bring about a 40 percent increase in the production of roofing, wall, and pencil slate, as well as slate slabs.[111] In this way it would be possible to counteract the impending market-share losses in West Germany caused by inadequate delivery capacity and hence to improve the balance of trade in the GDR's favor.[112]
2. The anticipated surge in production would make it easier to meet the domestic demand for slate and thus to prevent social discontent.[113]
3. The greater utilization of production capacity originally intended to supply the global market would bring about an urgently required increase in the efficiency of the enterprise's operations.[114]
4. The "poaching" of Bavarian skilled workers could delay the establishment of competing slate mines in Upper Franconia and, in the long term, strengthen the market position of the Thuringian mines. In addition to this important trade aspect, there was also a significant political issue. Hiring West German workers from the area adjacent to the restricted zone was deemed to strengthen the standing of the GDR and could be put to excellent use as propaganda.[115]

Based on this line of argument, in 1954 the MAI intensified its efforts to reemploy the Bavarian skilled slate workers.[116] The East German government began to move toward a decision during the summer. The Ministry of the Interior gave its consent on July 16,[117] and the Ministry of Heavy Industry officially approached the MAI on July 28, asking that the sole channel for dialogue with the West German government be used to initiate talks on a resumption of the Coburg Special Agreement.[118] That month the MAI and the State Planning Commission agreed on the baselines for conducting negotiations with the FRG.[119]

The *Lehestener Vereinbarung* of January 27, 1955

On the sidelines of a routine session of the inner-German trade talks on August 8, 1954, the MAI's representative, Erich Freund, brought up the issue of a possible resumption of the Coburg Special Agreement in an unofficial conversation with Kurt Leopold, the head of the Treuhandstelle für den Interzonenhandel (TSI—Trust Authority for Interzonal Trade).[120] The topic was quite a sensitive one for the GDR, since it would involve a loss of face. After all, it had unilaterally terminated the agreement just two years previously, and it now ran the risk that its request would be interpreted as an admission of economic

weakness in the light of June 17, 1953. Nonetheless, Freund decided to test the waters as the MAI had found itself in a tight spot with respect to trade policy. In the negotiations over inner-German trade, the MAI had insisted that substantial quotas of slate deliveries be included in the lists of commodities, despite West German opposition. If the GDR now proved unable to fulfill its self-imposed obligations because of insufficient output, this would negatively affect its future negotiating position.[121]

After all, several indicators pointed to an affirmative response by the West German delegation. First, this position would be in the economic interests of local, regional, state, and federal authorities, because the effects of the GDR's "border security measures" had entailed substantial economic losses for the area of the Federal Republic adjoining the GDR.[122] Upper Franconia was especially hard hit by the blocking measures, and the regional labor market had suffered a structural employment crisis.[123] The administrative districts of Kronach and Coburg were threatening to sink into poverty, which was disastrous given that politically these two districts were intended to showcase life in the Federal Republic for the GDR to view.[124] A border zone scheme initiated by the West German government contained provisions to support the reemployment of the skilled slate workers of the Kronach district to the tune of DM 500,000. Attempts to establish new slate mines ultimately proved unsuccessful, however,[125] and the problem of the unemployed skilled slate workers remained unsolved.

Second, a request on December 3, 1953, from the Paul Meyer company to the Chamber for Foreign Trade (Kammer für Außenhandel) in Berlin had made the MAI aware that the Bavarian slate miners would rather work in the well-developed Thuringian slate mines than in the new Bavarian mines, where the condition of the rock stratum and hence the projected financial yield were unclear.[126] Third, this assertion was confirmed by letters that the Thuringian miners had received from their Bavarian colleagues.[127] Fourth, lower-level talks about this issue with the Bavarian side in May 1954 had made the East Germans additionally aware that all sides in the Federal Republic supported a resumption of the Coburg Special Agreement.[128]

The MAI could thus assume with some degree of certainty that the TSI would not decline a request to renew the agreement. Previous experience also indicated that the West German side generally took a very cautious approach to inner-German economic relations, both in the media and politically. Thus the risk of a public loss of face would probably be very small.

After Freund had gained the impression in his private talk with Leopold that West Germany was actually interested in a resumption of the Coburg Special Agreement, he added the item to the official agenda and proposed that negotia-

tions begin on September 1, 1954.[129] The formation of a special commission was quickly agreed upon.[130] The following sessions were characterized by bilateral constructive efforts to solve the problem. When it became apparent that a new agreement would not be ready to sign by the planned start of work on January 3, 1955, an unbureaucratic interim solution was agreed on December 24, 1954. In the first few weeks, the workers' pay would be advanced by Paul Meyer in Coburg or covered by the TSI with preapproved purchasing authorization. The first freight cars carrying slate would already be on standby and would be permitted to cross the border without purchasing authorization, an unusual step in strictly regulated GDR-FRG trade.[131]

Ultimately, on January 27, 1955, the negotiations produced the "Agreement Concerning the Employment of Skilled Workers in Thuringian Slate Mines" (*Lehestener Vereinbarung*, Lehesten Agreement),[132] which built on the basic provisions of the Coburg Special Agreement of January 24, 1950. It was agreed that 150 Bavarian skilled slate workers could resume their work in the slate mines at Lehesten and Probstzella. The performance-linked basic wage would be paid in West German marks, while all other special bonuses could be redeemed as vouchers, issued in East German marks, in state-owned stores (*HO-Läden*). The agreement was retroactively effective as of January 1, 1955, and was to end on June 30, 1956. It could also be terminated at the end of each quarter if three months' notice were given.[133]

The GDR sought to allow the West German workers in Thuringia as little leeway as possible, however, by introducing a number of contractual restrictions. They were obligated to keep to very specific travel routes and were forbidden to bring private cars or West German marks into the GDR.[134] The GDR thus sought to retain control over the cross-border workers and to keep their contact with the local population to a minimum.[135] At the urging of VEB Schiefergruben Lehesten, a regular bus service to the Lehesten slate quarry was arranged for the West Germans, beginning in November 1955.[136] In terms of political propaganda, this accommodative service was intended to provide evidence of the worker-friendly state of affairs in the GDR. At the same time, it resolved the previous problem of accommodating the Bavarians in Thuringia during the winter months.

Like the Coburg Special Agreement, the Lehesten Agreement was concluded through a series of letters,[137] as was the customary practice in inner-German agreements of a technical nature. The Lehesten Agreement was explicitly excluded from the 1951 Berlin Accord, even though the financial transactions were routed through the Deutsche Notenbank and Bank Deutscher Länder accounts that had been set up for the purposes of the Berlin Accord.[138] In the public notices issued by the Federal Ministry of Economics regarding the lists of goods for

interzonal trade, the invitation to tender for slate always expressly stated that purchasing authorization for this item would be issued only in the context of the Lehesten Agreement.[139]

One significant difference from the 1950 Coburg Special Agreement should be noted: the delegations on both sides were no longer at the federal state level but instead at central government level.[140] There are two possible reasons for this change that shed a revealing light on the centralization processes taking place in the GDR at that time, as well as the framework for *Deutschlandpolitik*:

1. Since the system of federal states had been abolished (and Thuringia hence dissolved as an administrative entity) in 1952, the GDR could no longer negotiate the Lehesten Agreement at the state level. In the new administrative structure, the successor authority was the district (*Bezirk*) headed by the district council. But the *Bezirk* did not have anything approaching the responsibilities and powers of the former state government and was hence only marginally involved in the negotiation of the Lehesten Agreement.
2. There is no doubt that negotiating with West German governmental authorities to reach agreements was consistent with the GDR's political strategy concerning relations with the Federal Republic. After all, the East Germans hoped that negotiating at this level might result in a gradual upgrading of their own status under international law. Presumably even if the East German federal states had continued to exist, the GDR would have insisted communication take place between the TSI and the MAI.

Like the Coburg Special Agreement, the Lehesten Agreement proved successful. In the period that followed, initially 30 and later 117 Bavarian skilled slate workers began working in the Lehesten slate mines. The teamwork with local colleagues ran smoothly, and the Bavarians' treatment by the East German border police was also unproblematic.[141] The West German workers, however, were critical of certain disagreeable working conditions, and they voiced their concerns to the plant management and the company party organization. After failing to receive any constructive response from their superiors, the workers petitioned Pieck, the president of the GDR.[142] On November 3 and 4, 1955, at his instigation, an "East-West Conference *en miniature*"[143] took place in Kronach, the Upper Franconian district administrative center. The purpose of the conference was to bring about improvements in the social situation of the West German workers.[144]

At the forefront of the negotiations were social security problems. Thuringia's health insurance funds agreed to extend their benefits to family members of the West German workers in the Federal Republic. With respect to child benefit (*Kindergeld*)—up to that point not provided to West German workers in the GDR—an agreement was also reached to the effect that the payments would be offset against the slate allocations. A request from the Coburg Employment Office concerning the hiring of an additional one hundred West German workers received an affirmative response from VEB Schiefergruben Lehesten. But the West German authorities declined the slate plants' offer to provide fifty apprenticeship positions for school-leavers from Bavaria. This came as no surprise, according to an opinion piece in *Neues Deutschland*, in view of the workforce requirements for Theodor "Blank's NATO army."[145] More likely, the refusal was primarily politically motivated by a desire to prevent young West Germans from being exposed to the ideological influences of East German socialism.

In spite of the reemployment of West German workers, the southern Thuringian slate mining business failed to see any improvement. VEB Schiefergruben Lehesten, in particular, remained a "problem child" over the years.[146] Closing the mines was seriously discussed in 1958. The operational report dated August 31, 1958, reveals that economic trends were "in no sense satisfactory" and that the economic situation was "serious." The target for production of construction materials was met at 83.4 percent overall, and in the Lehesten mines only 77 percent of the production target for roofing and wall slate was achieved. At that time the production backlog amounted to 2,870 metric tons of roofing and wall slate. The reason given was a labor shortage, with a deficit of approximately forty workers at the Lehesten plant alone.[147]

The poor business yield in turn discredited the Lehesten Agreement, which had been concluded precisely for the purpose of increasing the meager output. Faced with a failure to achieve the desired improvements in production, the SED began to conduct heated debates about the "West German worker issue" during the second half of the 1950s. Soon a relatively stable pattern of argumentation by the participating party authorities emerged. Representatives of the *Bezirk* and local district councils tended to emphasize ideological and political arguments, questioning the West German workers' political reliability and attributing the economic difficulties to insufficient or incorrect political awareness on the part of the plant management and workforce. Representatives of the enterprise's party organization, by contrast, emphasized the technical and economic constraints and underlined the Bavarians' reliability and loyalty to their employer.

Early on, the SED local district leadership in Lobenstein criticized glaring deficiencies in the political education of the workforce by the plant's party or-

ganization.[148] Flyers bearing the headline "Stop raising work quotas" ("Stoppt die Normschraube") had reportedly been distributed and discussed within the company. In addition a West German worker had publicly called for a work slowdown. Not a single comrade confronted him or disagreed with him. An investigation was necessary, it was asserted, to determine whether the plant was being infiltrated by some "paid elements, people who were expected to disrupt the ordinary course of business with hostile arguments."[149] As was customary in such cases, the accusation of espionage and sabotage was also leveled against the West German miners.

During an emergency meeting on September 30, 1958, at which the future of Schiefergrube Lehesten was discussed, representatives of the SED district leadership in Gera emphasized their belief that the catastrophic business situation must be due primarily to a "lack of political clarity." The fact that the eighty-six Bavarian workers "led the way in ideological orientation" was criticized in particular. At many workplaces there was said to be a dearth of comrades who could stand up to the West German workers during political and ideological discussions. Representatives of the party organization of Sowjetisch-Deutsche Aktiengesellschaft Wismut (SDAG Wismut—Wismut Soviet-German Joint Stock Company) loudly criticized the comrades at the Lehesten slate mines, whom they accused of "capitulationism" and "harmful pessimism." Allegedly the East Germans had passed up the opportunity to "engage in politics" with the West German miners "over there, so that they would become a threat over there." In addition, their socialist-run enterprise was said to be no different to a capitalist West German operation.[150] The management and industry officials had failed to realize that the enterprise had a direct influence on the West. The most primitive equipment and inadequate mechanization, it was said, frustrated all efforts to accomplish the political goal of making Lehesten a "beacon of socialism,"[151] shining its light far into the neighboring region of Bavaria. Furthermore, the work brigades in the slate mines completely lacked the "proper collective spirit," especially because the Bavarians made trouble and lacked socialist convictions.[152]

On the other hand, members of the Lehesten enterprise's party organization cited unprofitability, inadequate fulfillment of plan quotas, costly production, and a labor shortage as the main causes of the poor economic outlook. Moreover, the increase in the price of slate of only 50 percent compared with a 200 percent increase in production costs could not be offset in terms of the balance sheet. Once again, the party was responsible for these key data.[153] Furthermore, members emphasized that their West German fellow miners had stated that Adenauer had made a mistake with his policy and that in the course of the Geneva Conference German reunification had been within reach.[154]

Despite this harsh criticism—primarily ideological and motivated by *Deutschlandpolitik* considerations—directed at the employment of West German workers in the Thuringian slate mines, there was no change in the situation until the Berlin Wall was built. Even so, the number of cross-border commuters decreased rapidly in 1960 after a new electronics factory opened in the Upper Franconian town of Teuschnitz, offering good job opportunities for 600 to 800 workers.[155] In the event, the cross-border labor market—an expression of the internal economic unity of Germany—was gradually reduced in the wake of an "old branch of industry" being replaced by a modern one.

Yet it was not the trend toward modernization in the industry that put an end to the Lehesten Agreement, but rather, as in the case of the Coburg Special Agreement, policy measures in inner-German relations attributable to the Cold War. Seventy-two West German miners continued to work in the slate mines until 1961. As early as that summer, as part of the campaign to "free [the GDR] from [foreign] interference" (*Aktion "Störfreimachung"*), the option of doing without the Bavarian skilled workers was considered. It was clear, however, that the tight labor market in the GDR meant that finding suitable replacements, in terms of both numbers and expertise, was impossible.[156]

Even after construction of the "antifascist protection wall" began in Berlin on August 13, 1961, and the East-West conflict experienced its spectacular peak on the German stage, the remaining Bavarian miners continued to faithfully carry out their duties. However, only a few weeks after the Berlin Wall was built, a move by the GDR government heralded the end to this unusual chapter in inner-German relations. In an SED Central Committee directive issued on September 11, 1961, Willi Stoph called for the systematic termination of all contacts, links, and interconnections along the "dividing line between the socialist world system and the imperialist one."[157] The Presidium of the Council of Ministers was tasked with arranging for "the workers from West Germany employed in slate mining in Lehesten to be urged to move to the German Democratic Republic. If they were unwilling to do so, they would be replaced by suitable workers recruited from the districts of Suhl, Erfurt, and Gera."[158] The order of the Council of Ministers prompted the enterprise to speak with the seventy-two remaining Bavarian miners at a meeting of the workforce in the Lehesten slate plant on September 12, 1961. Forced either to relocate to the GDR and keep their jobs or continue living in West Germany and lose their jobs, not one of the West German workers at the meeting was willing to move with his family to the "workers' and peasants' state." As a result, they were dismissed with fourteen days' notice. The West German workers, however, downed tools immediately, disregarding the notice period.[159] On September 15, 1961, the Ziegelhütte border-crossing point was also closed.[160]

Conclusion

The employment of Bavarian skilled workers in Thuringian slate mines during the 1945–61 period represents an unusual, indeed unique, aspect of inner-German relations. Unique because, after 1952, this was the only place along the border where West German workers could still be found in the GDR.[161] Also unique were the two agreements established outside the framework of the Frankfurt Agreement and the Berlin Accord: the Coburg Special Agreement (1950) and the Lehesten Agreement (1955). If one traces the historical development from the Coburg Special Agreement (1950) through the Lehesten Agreement (1955) to the final closing of the border in 1961, the following points emerge:

1. *Deutschlandpolitik* dominated events and eclipsed both economic and business interests. The very inception of the Coburg Special Agreement in January 1950 must be viewed as a necessary reaction to the founding of two German states. Its termination in May 1952 was an unavoidable concession of economic policy to the isolationist course, determined by the USSR and supported by the SED, of *Deutschlandpolitik*. The same applies to the curtailment of the Lehesten Agreement in 1961, when the possibilities for FRG-GDR contacts were reduced to a minimum. In the final analysis this development indicates the decreasing significance of the national idea, according to which cross-border labor relations were an expression of de facto German unity and therefore should be retained.
2. In the wake of the uprising on June 17, 1953, arguments based on economic policy were only able to prevail over the basic East German *Deutschlandpolitik* strategy because the GDR's existential crisis, caused in part by material dissatisfaction, had unsettled responsible members of the SED and the government, and had induced them to pay greater attention to the general mood in society. After the thaw in *Deutschlandpolitik* that followed Stalin's death, economic lines of argument were partially in accord with the thrust of policy concerning Germany's division.
3. Top management at the slate mines remained consistently interested in employing the West German workers. Its position found support in the enterprise's party organization and, until 1952, in the Thuringian state government as well. Its thinking was guided primarily by production figures and sales opportunities in the West. No great importance was

attached to objections based on *Deutschlandpolitik* or security policy. The conduct of the representatives of the Betriebsparteiorganisation (BPO—enterprise party organization), who represented company interests even against higher-level party authorities, accords with the empirical findings of other BPOs.[162]

4. At the central political decision-making level in Berlin, the government was guided by the advice of the Secretariat or the Politburo of the SED Central Committee. The positions of the latter entities, in turn, reflected primarily considerations of *Deutschlandpolitik*. Only during the crisis phase in the wake of June 17, 1953, did economic arguments briefly take priority. Within the government the MAI took the initiative, for department-specific reasons, when an opportunity presented itself to prevail against the party's isolationist course with respect to *Deutschlandpolitik*.
5. On the West German side, economic, social, and political considerations played a role in the deliberations of the West German government, the Bavarian government, and regional and local authorities concerning the Bavarians' employment in Thuringia. The general macroeconomic conditions were acceptable—they were of little consequence anyway, for lack of assets—and the social advantages of inner-German cooperation in the crisis-shaken area adjacent to the GDR were as obvious as the advantages for relations between the two Germanys. The workers in question gladly made use of the job offers until 1960, because they lacked attractive employment alternatives. They quickly switched to a West German workplace, however, when the opportunity arose. In this case, economic modernization reinforced the political division of Germany.
6. Finally, it should be noted that the GDR sought to exploit both agreements for the purpose of obtaining recognition as an independent state. This goal was expressed both in the terminology used and in the level at which the agreements were negotiated and concluded. Nonetheless, the GDR was not particularly successful in this endeavor. In the terminological classification of the two agreements, the East Germans had to accept a downgrading from "special agreement" (*Sonderabkommen*) to "agreement" (*Vereinbarung*), although they were able in return to upgrade the negotiations from the federal state level to the central government level.

Undoubtedly the events surrounding the employment of Upper Franconian skilled laborers in Thuringian slate mines are a curiosity in the history of German dual statehood, a barely perceptible note amid the din of the Cold War. Nonetheless, the events show in an exemplary way that, despite the steadily increasing separation and alienation of the two German states, a revitalization of traditional structures and ties was possible under certain circumstances.

Notes

Translation by Kathleen Luft

1. *Gesetzblatt der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik*, no. 65, May 27, 1952, 405–6: *Verordnung über Maßnahmen an der Demarkationslinie zwischen der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik und den westlichen Besatzungszonen Deutschlands*.

2. Erika M. Hoerning, *Zwischen den Fronten: Berliner Grenzgänger und Grenzhändler 1948–1961* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1992).

3. "Bayerische Arbeiter tragen die Aktivistennadel," *Neues Deutschland*, December 8, 1955. The article was edited by Erich Freund, head of the Main Department for Inner-German Trade at the Ministry for Foreign Trade and Inner-German Trade (MAI); Bundesarchiv (Federal Archives) Berlin (hereafter BArchB), DL 2/1355, fols. 261–65.

4. Ibid.

5. Ernst Schubert, "Von der Interzonengrenze zur Zonengrenze: Die Erfahrung der entstehenden Teilung Deutschlands im Raum Duderstadt 1945–1949," in *Grenzland: Beiträge zur Geschichte der deutsch-deutschen Grenze*, ed. Bernd Weisbrod (Hannover: Hahnsche Buchhandlung, 1993), 70–87, here 71.

6. Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der ehemaligen DDR im Bundesarchiv Berlin (Foundation Archives of the Political Parties and Mass Organisations of the GDR in the Federal Archives) (hereafter SAPMO), DY 30/IV 2/6.10/199, Memorandum marked "strictly confidential" concerning the "Development of contractual relations in trade between the GDR and West Germany and West Berlin," September 21, 1961. No author is indicated; presumably it was Ernst Lange, head of the SED Central Committee's Department of Trade, Supply, and Foreign Trade.

7. Other interesting aspects of this case study—such as regional history, social history, and business history—are disregarded in favor of a more detailed analysis of the events in question. It would be worthwhile in the present case to trace the development of what Martinez called "alienated borderlands." See Oscar J. Martinez, "The Dynamics of Border Interaction," in *World Boundaries Series*, vol. 1: *Global Boundaries*, ed. Clive H. Schofield (London: Routledge, 1994), 1–15.

8. The following studies of economic geography should be mentioned in particular: Gerhard Schmidt-Renner, ed., *Wirtschaftsterritorium Deutsche Demokratische Republik: Ökonomisch-geographische Einführung und Übersicht*, 2nd rev. ed. (Berlin: Die Wirtschaft, 1960); Fritz Helbig, ed., *Der Regierungsbezirk Oberfranken* (Oldenburg: Stalling, 1964), here especially the contribution by Werner Buschmann, "Wirtschaft im Coburger

Land," 68–71; Gert Ritter and Joseph Hajdu, *Die innerdeutsche Grenze: Analyse ihrer räumlichen Auswirkung und der raumwirksamen Staatstätigkeit in den Grenzgebieten* (Cologne: Geostudien, 1982); Karl Heinz Braun, *Industrie im peripheren Raum—unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der Grenze zur DDR und ČSSR* (Bayreuth: Institut für Geowissenschaften, 1982); Frank-Dieter Grimm, "Veränderte Grenzen und Grenzregionen, veränderte Grenzbewertungen in Deutschland und Europa," in *Regionen an deutschen Grenzen: Strukturwandel an der ehemaligen innerdeutschen Grenze und an der deutschen Ostgrenze*, ed. Frank-Dieter Grimm (Leipzig: Deutsches Institut für Länderkunde, 1995), 1–16; Andreas Kagermeier, "Versorgungsbeziehungen über die ehemalige innerdeutsche Grenze: Dargestellt anhand eines regionalen Fallbeispiels aus Südthüringen/Oberfranken," in ibid., 32–50.

9. For an important collection of essays on this topic, see Weisbrod, *Grenzland*, with contributions by Christopher Kopper, "Zonenrandförderung und Verkehrspolitik im bundesdeutschen Grenzgebiet: Das Beispiel Niedersachsen," 95–109; Rainer Potratz, "Zwangsaussiedlung aus dem Grenzgebiet der DDR zur Bundesrepublik Deutschland Mai/Juni 1952," 57–69; Schubert, "Interzonengrenze." Also, Willi Kaufmann, *Die Spaltung Deutschlands und Wiedervereinigung von 1945–1990* (Bamberg: Bayerische Verlagsanstalt, 1995). The GDR's forced resettlement measures in 1952 and 1961 are another key research area. On this topic, see Inge Bennewitz and Rainer Potratz, *Zwangsaussiedlungen an der innerdeutschen Grenze: Analysen und Dokumente* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 1994); Ilona Rothe and Lutz Jödicke, eds., *Zwangsaussiedlungen in Deutschland: Erlebnisberichte, Dokumente; "Aktion Ungeziefer" Juni 1952, Aktion "Kornblume" Oktober 1961* (Erfurt: self-pub., 1992). The account by contemporary witness Alois Buckler, *Grenzgänger: Erlebnisse aus den Jahren 1947–1961 an der innerdeutschen Grenze* (Leipzig: Thomas-Verlag, 1991), is also worth reading. On the political dimensions of the drifting apart of the two German states, see especially Stefan Creuzberger, "Abschirmungspolitik gegenüber dem westlichen Deutschland im Jahre 1952," in *Die sowjetische Deutschlandpolitik in der Ära Adenauer*, ed. Gerhard Wettig (Bonn: Bouvier, 1997), 12–36; Gerhard Wettig, *Das Freizügigkeitsproblem im geteilten Deutschland 1945–1986* (Cologne: Bundesinstitut für Ostwissenschaften und Internationale Studien, 1986).

10. In his interesting dissertation, Zeitler mentions the problem of the cross-border employment of skilled slate workers only once in passing. See Peter Zeitler, *Neubeginn in Oberfranken 1945–1949: Die Landkreise Kronach und Kulmbach* (Kronach: 1000 Jahre Kronach, 1997), 425. Anette Dunkel's lengthy (to date unpublished) dissertation "Zur industriellen Entwicklung Thüringens im Zeitraum 1945 bis 1952" (PhD diss., Friedrich Schiller University Jena, 1994), accessible in the Thüringisches Hauptstaatsarchiv Weimar, makes no reference to the topic.

11. For example, Kaufmann, *Spaltung Deutschlands*, 59, speaks of sixty slate quarriers who commuted across the zonal border to Lehesten during the period 1948–52; the actual number was four times that. In addition, he fails to mention that these employment relationships existed both before 1948 and after 1955. In particular, he makes no mention at all of either the Coburg Special Agreement, dated January 24, 1950, or the Lehesten Agreement of Jan-

uary 27, 1955, both of them notable in the context of *Deutschlandpolitik*; indeed, there is no reference to either document anywhere in the current research literature.

12. Erwin Scheu, "Die wirtschaftsgeographische Gliederung Deutschlands," *Erde und Weltwirtschaft*, no. 1 (April 1927): 7–30; Braun, *Industrie*, 48; Kagermeier, "Versorgungsbeziehungen," 33.

13. Braun, *Industrie*, 49.

14. On the situation on the Bavarian side of the border, see Zeitler, *Neubeginn*, 424–28.

15. Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Grenzlandkammern, *Die Auswirkungen der Ostzonengrenze auf die anliegenden Gebiete der Bundesrepublik: Erkenntnisse und Vorschläge* (Braunschweig: Arbeitsgemeinschaft der Grenzlandkammern, 1951), 41–42. There was a comparable division of labor in the textile sector in the Vogtland region, which spans Bavaria and Saxony.

16. Kaufmann, *Spaltung Deutschlands*, 59; Markus Wolfrum, "Schiefer im Frankenwald," in *Schönere Heimat* 87, no. 1 (1998): 9–12, here 11; Zeitler, *Neubeginn*, 15–21.

17. Arbeitsgemeinschaft Grenzlandkammern, *Auswirkungen der Ostzonengrenze*, 16.

18. Ibid., 41–42.

19. Ibid., 50.

20. Ludwig Munzer, *Der alte Schieferbruch zu Lehesten im Thüringerwald: Ein Besuch desselben und seine Geschichte* (Saalfeld-Saale: Merzdorf & Frosch, 1926), 31; Wolfrum, "Schiefer."

21. Schmidt-Renner, *Wirtschaftsterritorium*, 91.

22. Thüringisches Hauptstaatsarchiv (hereafter ThHStA) Weimar, State of Thuringia, Ministry for the Economy and Labor, vol. 252, fol. 161. See also Johannes Müller, *Die thüringische Industrie: Eine wirtschaftskundliche Dokumentation, zugleich ein Beitrag zur Lehre von Standortfaktoren der Fertigindustrie* (Jena: Fischer, 1930), 36–37.

23. ThHStA Weimar, State of Thuringia, Ministry for the Economy and Labor, vol. 939, fol. 63, "The Situation in the Thuringian Slate Industry," July 3, 1950; BArchB, DG 2/8646, Memorandum from the Steinach plant management, May 28, 1954, "Production and Sales of Slate Pencils and Blackboards."

24. For an impressive autobiographical account by a Polish forced laborer, see Ryszard Kessler, *Die Hölle im Schieferberg: Erinnerungen an "Laura"* (Saalfeld: Schwarm Verlag, 1998).

25. ThHStA Weimar, Bergbehörde Erfurt, no. 1021, Operational report of the state-owned slate quarries at Lehesten, 1945.

26. Ibid.

27. *Amtsblatt des Kontrollrats in Deutschland*, no. 11, October 31, 1946, 64–65.

28. In mid-1947 the formerly private slate operations around Lehesten became state-owned enterprises.

29. ThHStA Weimar, State of Thuringia holdings, Ministry for the Economy and Labor, vol. 939, fol. 63, Report on the situation in the Thuringian slate industry, July 3, 1950.

30. ThHStA Weimar, State of Thuringia holdings, Ministry for the Economy and Labor, vol. 908, fols. 50–51. The sources, however, offer contradictory information as to whether all slate enterprises were expropriated and nationalized. According to some statements, approximately 30 percent of the production capacity was still in private hands in 1950, in some cases even in the hands of West German owners.

31. ThHStA Weimar, State of Thuringia holdings, Ministry for the Economy and Labor, vol. 3729, fol. 226.

32. Frank Zschaler, "Die vergessene Währungsreform: Vorgeschichte, Durchführung und Ergebnisse der Geldumstellung in der SBZ 1948," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 45, no. 2 (April 1997): 191–223, here 223.

33. BArchB, DL 2/1355, fols. 307–9, Bavarian Ministry of Economic Affairs to the State Government of Thuringia, Main Department for Inner-German Trade, March 27, 1950.

34. On the prohibition of inner-German trade during the Berlin Blockade, see Friedrich von Heyl, *Der innerdeutsche Handel mit Eisen und Stahl: Deutsch-deutsche Beziehungen im Kalten Krieg* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1997), 51.

35. Thüringisches Staatsarchiv (hereafter ThStA) Rudolstadt, Thuringian District Administration Saalfeld holdings (1945–52), Thuringian state slate quarries special group, file no. 7. The document does not specify the sender. The context and the archival location, however, suggest that the only plausible sender is the plant management in Lehesten.

36. BArchB, DL 2/464, fols. 20–46.

37. ThHStA Weimar, Minister-President, Main Department for Inner-German Trade, Foreign Trade, and Supply, no. 537, copy of the Coburg Special Agreement. BArchB, DL 2/1355, fols. 307–9, Bavarian Ministry of Economic Affairs to the State Government of Thuringia, Main Department for Inner-German Trade, March 27, 1950. The letter confirms the terms of the Coburg Special Agreement but for constitutional reasons calls it the "Coburger Abmachungen" (Coburg understandings).

38. This Association of State-Owned Enterprises also included VEB Schiefergruben Lehesten, with plants in Lehesten, Schmiedebach, and Röttersdorf. On April 1, 1951, these were combined to form VVB Schiefer, Steinach.

39. BArchB, DL 2/1355, fols. 307–9, Bavarian Ministry of Economic Affairs to the State Government of Thuringia, Main Department for Inner-German Trade, March 27, 1950. Copy; the end of the term of the agreement is given in the text as March 31, 1954. Numerous other documents, however, suggest that this is a typographical error. The correct date must be March 31, 1951.

40. Ulrich Dietsch, *Außenwirtschaftliche Aktivitäten der DDR* (Hamburg: Weltarchiv, 1976), 79–80.

41. Hans Booms, ed., *Die Kabinettsprotokolle der Bundesregierung*, vol. 1: *1949* (Boppard: Boldt, 1982), 105.

42. BArchB, DL 2/1355, fols. 307–9, Bavarian Ministry of Economic Affairs to the State Government of Thuringia, Main Department for Inner-German Trade, March 27, 1950.

43. BArchB, DL 2/1355, fol. 311, MAI, Main Department for Inner-German Trade, to the State Planning Commission, July 15, 1954.

44. Ibid.

45. ThHStA Weimar, Minister-President, Main Department for Inner-German Trade, Foreign Trade, and Supply, no. 537, Memorandum for the files, November 25, 1950, and fol. 234, Note for the files, April 13, 1951.

46. Ibid.

47. ThHStA Weimar, Ministry of the Interior, Thuringian Police Authority, vol. 175, fols. 213–14, Minutes of a meeting at the Thuringian Ministry of the Interior, January 7, 1952.

48. ThHStA Weimar, Minister-President, Main Department for Inner-German Trade, Foreign Trade, and Supply, no. 537. Bavaria was represented by the Ministry of Economic Affairs, the Coburg Public Health Insurance Company (AOK), the Coburg Employment Office, the Kronach district administrator, the president of the district government of Upper Franconia, and the Customs Border Commissioner's Office. Thuringia was represented by the state government of Thuringia, VVB Schiefer, Steinach, and the social insurance funds.

49. BArchB, DL 2/1355, fols. 303–5.

50. ThHStA Weimar, Minister-President, Main Department for Inner-German Trade, Foreign Trade, and Supply, no. 538.

51. ThHStA Weimar, Minister-President, Main Department for Inner-German Trade, Foreign Trade, and Supply, no. 537, Memorandum for the files, November 25, 1950.

52. SAPMO, DY/30/JIV 2/3 A/182, fol. 262.

53. On the crisis in inner-German trade, see Heyl, *Handel mit Eisen und Stahl*, 70–71.

54. SAPMO, DY/30/JIV 2/3 A/182, fol. 262.

55. ThHStA Weimar, State of Thuringia holdings, Ministry for the Economy and Labor, vol. 939, fol. 42, Letter from the Thuringian Ministry of Economic Affairs, Mining Department, September 18, 1951.

56. ThHStA Weimar, State of Thuringia holdings, Ministry for the Economy and Labor, vol. 3729, fol. 226, VVB Mineral und Erz, State of Thuringia, to the Mühlhausen Office of Labor and Social Welfare, December 13, 1949.

57. ThHStA Weimar, State of Thuringia holdings, Ministry for the Economy and Labor, vol. 3729, fol. 227, Thuringian Ministry for the Economy and Labor to the Sonneberg Office for Labor and Social Welfare, January 3, 1950.

58. Ibid., fol. 229.

59. Ibid.

60. SAPMO, DY/30/JIV 2/3 A/182, fol. 262.

61. ThHStA Weimar, Minister-President, Main Department for Inner-German Trade, Foreign Trade, and Supply, no. 537, Memorandum for the files, November 25, 1950.

62. ThHStA Weimar, Minister-President, Main Department for Inner-German Trade, Foreign Trade, and Supply, no. 537, VVB Schiefer, Steinach, to the Main Department for Inner-German Trade, January 19, 1951.

63. ThHStA Weimar, State of Thuringia holdings, Ministry for the Economy and Labor, vol. 3729, fol. 241.

64. In particular the Ministry for Heavy Industry/State Secretariat for the Chemical, Mineral, and Earths Industries, as well as the MAI, complied with the directives from the Secretariat of the SED Central Committee; ThHStA Weimar, State of Thuringia holdings, Ministry for the Economy and Labor, vol. 3729, fols. 256–57; ThHStA Weimar, Minister-President, Main Department for Inner-German Trade, Foreign Trade, and Supply, no. 537.

65. ThHStA Weimar, Minister-President, Main Department for Inner-German Trade, Foreign Trade, and Supply, no. 537, Memorandum for the files, November 25, 1950; ThHStA Weimar, Ministry of the Interior, Thuringian Police Authority, vol. 175, fols. 213–14.

66. ThHStA Weimar, Minister-President, Main Department for Inner-German Trade, Foreign Trade, and Supply, no. 537.

67. BArchB, DL 2/1355, fol. 306, copy.

68. See Creuzberger, "Abschirmungspolitik," 12–13.

69. BArchB, DO-1/11/936, fols. 66–67, Interim report concerning interzone travel from Inspector General of the Deutsche Volkspolizei (German People's Police) Seifert to Deputy Chairman of the Soviet Control Commission for Administrative Matters A. F. Kabanov, September 20, 1950; see also Creuzberger, "Abschirmungspolitik," 14.

70. SAPMO, DY/30/JIV 2/3 A/182, fols. 5–6; see also DY/30/JIV 2/3–199.

71. ThHStA Weimar, Ministry of the Interior, Thuringian Police Authority, vol. 175, fols. 213–15, Minutes of a meeting, January 7, 1952.

72. Ibid., fol. 217.

73. Ibid., fols. 213–15.

74. Ibid., fol. 205.

75. Ibid., fols. 205, 217.

76. Ibid., fol. 205.

77. Ibid., fol. 203.

78. Ibid., fol. 210.

79. Ibid., fol. 206.

80. Ibid., fol. 201.

81. Ibid., fols. 211, 204, 201.

82. Ibid., fol. 211.

83. Ibid.

84. Ibid., fol. 212.

85. Ibid.

86. Ibid., fol. 217.

87. Ibid., fol. 216.

88. Ibid., fols. 213–14, 208–9.

89. Creuzberger, "Abschirmungspolitik," 26–27.

90. ThHStA Weimar, Ministry of the Interior, Thuringian State Police Authority, vol. 176, fols. 80–105, here fol. 99. This refers to the previously mentioned arrest of the plant manager and the subsequent strike by the workforce.

91. Ibid.

92. Cited in Bennewitz and Potratz, *Zwangsaussiedlungen*, 221; see Creuzberger, "Abschirmungspolitik," 29.

93. *Gesetzblatt der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik*, no. 65, May 27, 1952, 405–6: *Verordnung über Maßnahmen an der Demarkationslinie zwischen der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik und den westlichen Besatzungszonen Deutschlands.*

94. BArchB, DL 2/1355, fols. 311–12. Apart from the Lehesten slate mines, West German workers were still employed only in the Harpke lignite-fired power plant; their replacement was arranged by the summer of 1952. On this topic, see SAPMO, DY 30/IV 2/13/10, fol. 25, Report concerning the current state of implementation of the measures on the demarcation line (*D-Linie*), July 7, 1952.

95. BArchB, DL 2/1355, fol. 308.

96. ThHStA Weimar, Minister-President, Main Department for Inner-German Trade, Foreign Trade, and Supply, no. 502.

97. BArchB, DL 2/1609, fols. 80–82, German Domestic and Foreign Trade Department (DIA), Mining Industry Section, to the MAI, Main Department for Export, Mining Division, September 30, 1953.

98. SAPMO, DY 30/IV 2/13/10, fol. 43, Interim report concerning implementation of the Politburo decision of May 13, 1952, Reporting Secretary Zaisser, confidential classified information.

99. BArchB, DL 2/1609, fols. 80–82, German Domestic and Foreign Trade Department, Mining Industry Section, to the MAI, Main Department for Export, September 30, 1953.

100. ThStA Rudolstadt, District Party Archive of the SED, Lobenstein District Leadership, IV/4/07/34, fol. 284, Minutes of the meeting of the Secretariat of the SED District Leadership in Lobenstein, December 19, 1952.

101. BArchB, DL 2/1609, fols. 80–82, German Domestic and Foreign Trade Department, Mining Industry Section, to the MAI, Main Department for Export, Mining Division, September 30, 1953.

102. ThStA Rudolstadt, District Party Archive of the SED, Lobenstein District Leadership, IV/4/07/50; BArchB, DG 2/4674, Operating plan, 1953.

103. ThStA Rudolstadt, District Party Archive of the SED, Lobenstein District Leadership, IV/4/07/34, fol. 10.

104. ThStA Rudolstadt, District Party Archive of the SED, Lobenstein District Leadership, IV/4/07/34, fols. 208–11; BArchB, DG 2/4567, Minutes of the meeting at VVB Schiefer, Steinach/Thuringia, July 23, 1952.

105. BArchB, DG 2/8805, Short analysis concerning the general repairs of VVB Schiefer, 1st quarter of 1952.

106. BArchB, DL 2/1609, fols. 80–82, German Domestic and Foreign Trade Department, Mining Industry Section, to the MAI, Main Department for Export, Mining Division, September 30, 1953.

107. Ibid.

108. BArchB, DG 2/4567, Letter from the head of the Instructor Group for Slate to the State Secretariat for the Chemical, Mineral, and Earths Industries, September 23, 1952.

109. Ibid.

110. BArchB, DL 2/1609, fols. 80–82.

111. Ibid., fol. 81.

112. Ibid., fol. 78.

113. Ibid.

114. BArchB, DG 2, Memorandum from the Steinach plant management, May 28, 1954.

115. BArchB, DL 2/1609, fol. 78.

116. Ibid., fol. 66, Freund (MAI) to the SED Central Committee, Department of Trade, Supply, and Light Industry, Foreign Trade Division, January 19, 1954.

117. Ibid., fol. 65.

118. Ibid.

119. BArchB, DL 2/1355, fols. 311–12, MAI, Main Department for Inner-German Trade, to the State Planning Commission, July 6 and 15, 1954.

120. BArchB, DL 2/1609, fol. 65, Handwritten note from Freund, August 8, 1954.

121. Ibid., fol. 61.

122. Federal Ministry for Inner-German Relations, *Die Sperrmaßnahmen der DDR vom Mai 1952: Die Sperrmaßnahmen der Sowjetzonenregierung an der Zonengrenze und um Westberlin*, facsimile reprint of the 1953 White Paper (Bonn: Bundesministerium für innerdeutsche Beziehungen, 1987), 19.

123. Bundesarchiv Koblenz (hereafter BArchK), B 136/697, f. 2,3, fols. 79–101, Report by the Upper Franconian Chamber of Commerce and Industry concerning the situation in the Upper Franconian economy, March 12, 1953, submitted to the Federal Ministry of Economic Affairs, forwarded to the Office of the Federal Chancellor, April 25, 1953. See Kopper, "Zonenrandförderung," 98.

124. BArchK, B 135/131, Position paper concerning the eastern border region of the Federal Republic. Submitted by the Working Group for the Eastern Border Regions of the Federal Republic and the Federal States of Bavaria, Hesse, Lower Saxony, and Schleswig-Holstein.

125. BArchK, B 136/697, f. 2, fol. 47, statement by the Working Group for the Eastern Border Regions of the Federal Republic and the Federal States of Bavaria, Hesse, Lower Saxony, and Schleswig-Holstein, submitted to the Federal Minister of All-German Affairs, February 2, 1953. On this topic, see also Kaufmann, *Spaltung Deutschlands*, 59.

126. BArchB, DL 2/1609, fol. 66.

127. ThStA Rudolstadt, District Party Archive of the SED, Lobenstein District Leadership, IV/4/07/50, Report concerning the examination of the political and ideological work of the Betriebsparteiorganisation (BPO—enterprise party organization) of VEB Schiefergruben Lehesten, conducted between April 27 and May 5, 1954.

128. ThStA Rudolstadt, District Party Archive of the SED, Lobenstein District Leadership, IV/4/07/59, Minutes of the meeting of the Lobenstein District Leadership, March 30, 1955.

129. BArchB, DL 2/1355, fol. 310.

130. The members of the Federal German delegation were chief negotiator Dr. Kurt Leopold (TSI) and representatives of the Bavarian Ministry of Economic Affairs, the Union of Mining (IG Bergbau), and the social insurance funds; the participants from the GDR were chief negotiator Dr. Erich Freund (MAI) and representatives of VEB Schieferwerke Schmiedebach, the DIAs for sales, the social insurance, the Lobenstein District Council, and the Free Federation of German Trade Unions (FDGB).

131. BArchB, DL 2/78, fols. 168–69, here fol. 169.

132. BArchB, DL 2/1647, fols. 69–73, Freund, MAI, Main Department for Inner-German Trade, to Leopold, Trust Authority for Interzonal Trade, January 11, 1955; BArchK, B 137/8211.

133. BArchK, B 137/8211.

134. BArchB, DL 2/1647, fols. 69–73, Freund, MAI, Main Department for Inner-German Trade, to Leopold, Trust Authority for Interzonal Trade, January 11, 1955.

135. ThStA Rudolstadt, District Party Archive of the SED, Lobenstein District Leader-

ship, IV/4/07/59, Minutes of the special session of the SED Lobenstein District Leadership, March 30, 1955.

136. See Kaufmann, *Spaltung Deutschlands*, 59.

137. SAPMO, DY 30/IV 2/6.10/199.

138. BArchB, DL 2/1647, fols. 69–73, Freund, MAI, Main Department for Inner-German Trade, to Leopold, Trust Authority for Interzonal Trade, January 11, 1955.

139. BArchK, B 102/20345, Notice 1 (B) concerning the fulfillment of the goods lists for 1956.

140. Certainly, it can be denied in strictly legal terms that the TSI was affiliated with the federal government. In everyday political dealings, however, it was clear in both the GDR and the FRG that the lack of affiliation was window dressing.

141. ThStA Rudolstadt, District Police Authority, holding 21, no. 36.

142. BArchB, DL 2/1355, fol. 255, Memorandum from Freund, October 13, 1955.

143. "Kleine Ost-West-Konferenz," *Die Zeit*, November 17, 1955. The title is a play on the "East-West conference *en gros*" (Geneva Summit) held in Geneva at the same time and attended by the foreign ministers of the "Big Four"—the United States, France, Britain, and the Soviet Union.

144. BArchK, B 137/8211, Note, November 29, 1955.

145. "Bayerische Arbeiter tragen die Aktivistennadel," *Neues Deutschland*, December 8, 1955.

146. ThStA Rudolstadt, District Party Archive of the SED, Lobenstein District Leadership, IV/4/07/101, Minutes of the office meeting of the district leadership in Lehesten, September 30, 1958.

147. Ibid.

148. ThStA Rudolstadt, District Party Archive of the SED, Lobenstein District Leadership, IV/4/07/85, Minutes of the office meeting of the Lobenstein District Leadership, May 24, 1957.

149. ThStA Rudolstadt, District Party Archive of the SED, Lobenstein District Leadership, IV/4/07/171, SED Local District Leadership for Lobenstein to the Gera District Leadership, Weekly report, July 7, 1955.

150. ThStA Rudolstadt, District Party Archive of the SED, Lobenstein District Leadership, IV/4/07/101, Minutes of the office meeting of the district leadership in Lehesten, September 30, 1958.

151. Ibid.

152. ThStA Rudolstadt, District Party Archive of the SED, Lobenstein District Leadership, IV/4/07/115, Minutes of the meeting on November 6, 1959, confidential classified information.

153. ThStA Rudolstadt, District Party Archive of the SED, Lobenstein District Leadership, IV/4/07/101, Minutes of the meeting in Lehesten on September 30, 1958, Attachment: Gen Boller, Lehesten operating division.

154. ThStA Rudolstadt, District Party Archive of the SED, Lobenstein District Leadership, IV/4/07/171, VEB Schiefergruben Lehesten Party organization to the SED Local District Leadership, Lobenstein, July 29, 1955.

155. ThStA Rudolstadt, District Party Archive of the SED, Lobenstein District Lead-

ership, IV/4/07/123, Minutes of meeting 28/60, July 29, 1960, confidential classified information.

156. ThStA Rudolstadt, District Government, Gera District Council, no. 1228, Lobenstein Local District Council to the Chairman of Gera District Council, August 5, 1961.

157. Cited in Werner Barm, *Achtung Sperrgebiet! Insider-Report: Staatsterror an der "Staatsgrenze West," Zwangsaussiedlung, Internierungslager, Stasi-Überwachung, "Schwarze Listen"* (Birken-Honigsessen: Immanuel-Kant-Verlag, 1990), 29.

158. Cited in Rothe and Jödicke, *Zwangsaussiedlungen*, 42–43.

159. BArchB, DC 20/4589, Letter from the head of the Main Department for Local Industry and Skilled Crafts and Trades to Willi Stoph, January 25, 1961, forwarding a report concerning implementation of the security measures in Lehesten (VVB Steine und Erden Meißen, Ministry for the Building Industry); Report from Gera District Council, chairman of the Thiele District Economic Advisory Council. A different version of the course of events, not supported by the sources, is found in Kaufmann, *Spaltung Deutschlands*, 59.

160. Kaufmann, *Spaltung Deutschlands*, 59.

161. This does not refer to the cross-border commuters in Berlin mentioned at the beginning.

162. Also the assertion by Lepsius in Theo Pirker et al., *Der Plan als Befehl und Fiktion: Wirtschaftsführung in der DDR; Gespräche und Analysen* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1995), 230.

Cold War Commuters

Resisting Politics and Securing Pensions across the German-German Border

LAUREN STOKES

Postwar Germany's Soviet zone of occupation infamously had fewer natural resources than the Western zones, but slate was an exception to the rule. Thuringia boasted Europe's largest slate quarry, which employed nearly a thousand workers mining and exporting the "blue gold" at its peak. Many of those skilled workers lived close by in Bavaria. Their long-standing commuting patterns had posed little problem until the imposition of occupation zones after German defeat; although they traveled no further, they had to cross an increasingly fraught demarcation line. Meanwhile, the quarry managers were eager to return to business as usual, and slate was a hot commodity in a Europe actively rebuilding from the war. The quarry managers' attempts to maintain their workforce are the subject of Peter Fäßler's article, which details the diplomatic negotiations that allowed a few hundred skilled workers from Bavaria to commute into the German Democratic Republic (GDR) for work all the way until September 1961.

This article was originally published in 2001, at the beginning of what would become a wave of scholarship on Central European borderlands.[1] That scholarship has consistently shown that local actors deal with the border differently than centralized states. One of the first publications was Daphne Berdahl's 1999 ethnography *Where the World Ended*, which described the "paradoxical human condition" of an East German border village.[2] Historians were also drawn to the former border region. Edith Sheffer's 2014 classic *Burned Bridge* concerned twin towns close to the slate quarry: Sonneberg and Neustadt bei Coburg. The latter is the "Coburg" of the agreement discussed in Fäßler's article.[3] Sheffer is one of many historians who have argued that the border gained salience through the actions of those who lived alongside it. Rather than simply being directed from a distant East Berlin or Bonn, the local inhabitants also produced the border

with their actions—as Sagi Schaefer puts it in another excellent study, the border "materialized through experience rather than imposition."[4] Fäßler's research illuminates another side of this scholarship: local responses were more flexible and pragmatic than national responses. It was the managers of the slate quarry who pushed for a pragmatic solution that would allow them to maintain its productivity, while more centralized actors prioritized ideological consistency over meeting local needs. Fäßler shows how local actors sought to maintain older, but now cross-border, economic links despite the pressures of German division.

How did the men who crossed the border experience the deepening division of the two political systems? What aspects of the division intruded into their consciousness, and which went unnoticed? We know that they understood the difference between currencies intimately; Fäßler shows that the commuter workforce initially balked after the June 1948 currency reform, when workers who lived in Bavaria demanded to receive the new Western mark in their salary packet rather than local currency. Once the quarry found a way to keep paying them in Western currency, the Bavarian workers were willing to continue, and did so through the first Berlin crisis, which persisted for nearly a year. In January 1950, Thuringia and Bavaria signed another agreement to allow the arrangement to continue. The quarry would export roof slate to the West to earn the hard currency to pay the workers. This arrangement persisted for another two years. During the 1952 operation to fortify the border, the mines fell under the 5 km "exclusion zone," and the Bavarian workers disappeared again. The plant managers worried that they would be pushed out of the market by Western competition permanently and renewed their efforts to retain their workers. In January 1955 the two states signed a new agreement—the "Lehesten Agreement"—to allow 150 Bavarians to continue their diplomatically fraught commute.

Fäßler focuses on how the arrangement met needs for actors in the East. Astrid Eckert's 2019 study of how the border impacted the West—and how borderland residents made sense of their situation—inspired me to ask why it appealed to people on the Western side.[5] I used recently digitized newspaper archives of the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* and the *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung* (*FAZ*) to see how West Germans discussed the same arrangement.[6] While the East had a quarry to make productive, the West had an unemployment crisis. In April 1955 labor officials from Coburg told the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* that they were struggling to find work for 17,000 unemployed people, and that "it would help us a lot if at least somewhat normal economic relationships with the Eastern Zone could be achieved." The officials cited the Lehesten Agreement as a positive example, one they hoped could be copied.[7] As for the slate workers themselves, they were largely older men between fifty and sixty. Two of them reached their fortieth work

anniversary at the quarry in early 1961.[8] The men were concerned about what it would mean to have to switch jobs so late in their career. They would go from being highly skilled engineers to being unskilled workers, and they worried about the impact not just on their wages but on their pension.[9] Their concern for their pension was presumably even more salient after the 1957 pension reform, which was based on the idea that West Germans should maintain their social status in retirement.[10] Leaving the quarry would mean descending the social ladder.

The Western authorities appear to have seen the commuting arrangement as a pragmatic solution to employing older men approaching the end of their working lives, but not as something they hoped to maintain in the long term—a perspective that may explain why the West rebuffed Eastern requests to train fifty young Bavarians as apprentices.[11] A second *Süddeutsche Zeitung* article about the workers from 1958 tried hard to wring politics out of the situation, even though "the people of Reichenbach don't like to talk about their work over there. 'If you keep your mouth shut, you get through quite well,' says one." The article politicizes the fact that some of the men stayed home on June 17—the "Day of German Unity" in the West, a normal workday in the East—and that none of them had considered moving closer to work. One of the men stayed on the Eastern side for 14 days and then "he appeared ruefully" to the police to reregister as a commuter.[12] A *FAZ* article from 1959 calls the village of Reichenbach, where most of the men lived, "Bavarian Siberia," and notes that the men's wives also had their work to perform in the East. The men received most of their wage in DM, but piecework bonuses were paid in credit for the local store, and so the women came with them on shopping days to make the family's purchases. The children even crossed over to visit doctors on the Eastern side, since that was where the families were insured. The *FAZ* journalist interviewed the mayor of Reichenbach, who was irritated by a "Berlin-based" headline dubbing the situation a "Red Rumble in Reichenbach" ("Roter Rummel in Reichenbach"). He protested his depiction as a Soviet sympathizer, telling the journalist: "I'm happy that my men are employed. What else would they do? They're not going to retrain." The article closes with another laconic quote from a worker: "I tell it like it is. Socially it's alright, but I have nothing to do with politics."[13] We learn from these articles that the men also navigated a set of Western ideas about what it meant to work across the border, resisting the national media's attempts to enlist them in larger political narratives.

Fäßler concludes his article in September 1961, when the period of pragmatic local solutions suddenly came to an end. The *Süddeutsche Zeitung* reported two weeks before the end of the exception that the Western police forbade twenty-three miners' children from crossing the border to be vaccinated against

polio—a detail that supports the claims of borderland historians that the West also actively created the border.[14] Fäßler's research finds Willi Stoph, chairman of the Council of Ministers, was the GDR official who insisted that the exception end, and who forced an ultimatum on the slate miners in September 1961. They would need to choose on which side of the border to live and work. There would be no more going back and forth. All seventy-two men chose to remain in Bavaria. They crossed the border once more to convert their remaining East German marks into goods. The mayor of Reichenbach promised to find them jobs quickly: "There is no lack of free positions . . . but they won't earn as much here as they did over there." An official from Upper Franconia promised to quickly process their insurance and pension claims, and to treat them "as if they had always worked in the West."[15] Clearly, the worry for workers was not political polarization but staving off downward mobility. In the fate of the slate miners, we have a telling example of how the emergence of the Federal Republic's corporatist welfare state and its alignment with a global anticommunist bloc affected a real working-class community.

What happened to the quarry after losing over seventy of its most experienced workers overnight? It proved to be the first blow of many. Three men died in an accident at the quarry in March 1963.[16] The explosive growth of the Spanish slate industry, beginning in the mid-1960s, also presumably represented a challenge for slate quarry managers.[17] By the end of the 1970s the quarry was running out of its finest stone, and by 1982 the Lehesten quarry was slated to be preserved as a "technical monument."[18] Lehesten had run dry, but it was now managed by a Volkseigener Betrieb (VEB—state-owned enterprise) with other quarries in its purview, and that VEB continued to operate through the end of East Germany. It presented its products at a trade fair for construction in Hannover in 1992, at which point the Treuhand trust, tasked with privatizing East German industry, was trying to find a buyer for the enterprise.[19] The local slate industry closed for good in 1999, but the former quarry can be visited today as part of Geopark Schieferland. Its website includes short video interviews with some of the East Germans who used to work at the quarry. Their narratives do not mention the commuters, but they do show that the border could be a stressful place to work, one where they were constantly being tested for their loyalty. One man recalls that a car with a Rostock license plate was parked near the entrance in order to test whether anyone would report it.[20] Another remembers worrying about his coworkers announcing their departure at the end of the day, especially when they were drunk and had stopped watching their words—this could be a surprisingly fraught enterprise, because "the phrase 'I'm out of here' [*Ich haue ab*] was known to be used by border crossers."[21] These recollections, taken in the early

2000s, echo Jason B. Johnson's description of the village of Mödlareuth, where residents felt that "the border was imposed by outside authorities and distant metropoles."[22] Their testimonies have no trace of pragmatism, only of paranoia, suggesting that, after the commuters left, the quarry also became subsumed by the ideological polarization the latter had refused.

Fäßler's article accords with the larger findings of borderlands studies when he interprets the commute of the quarry miners as "a revitalization of traditional structures and links" even as the two German states experienced widening political division. He echoes the judgment of journalist Klaus Dreher, who in a 1962 article for the *FAZ* dubbed the commuters of Lehesten "the last example of a sensible regulation at the border."[23] With the benefit of hindsight, we can simultaneously understand the slate-for-miners deal as one of the last examples of sensible, workaday cross-border cooperation—just as Dreher would have it—and also an early example of a trend that would persist through the end of the GDR: East German authorities bartering their country's resources for Western currency. There was a certain logic in this particular exchange. The slate miners were a small group of technological experts whose specialist knowledge of the process of production made them the people who could turn a deposit of slate into an exportable commodity. To make the mine productive, Eastern authorities traded some of the slate for access to the currency that the skilled slate miners demanded in exchange for their irreplaceable expertise. But East German bartering with the capitalist West would not stop with Thuringian slate. Starting in 1962, East Germany charged the West hard currency to secure the release of political prisoners.[24] By the 1980s East Germany was bartering resources like cobblestones, high-grade pork products, and blood plasma in exchange for Western currency.[25] It also began to change its own border policies in response to financial inducements from the West: relaxing travel regulations, dismantling landmines on the border, and even enforcing West German visa regulations on third-country nationals.[26] By 1989 East German leaders would agree to open their borders in the hopes of staying creditworthy—but lost the country before the loan came in.[27] It took decades to get from roofing slate for hard currency to border policing for loans, but those steps are a central theme of the East German story. From this perspective, the Lehesten Agreement is worth revisiting not only for its own sake, but also because it is simultaneously an ending—the story of the last commuters across the border—and a beginning, the first glints of how opportunistic East German border policies enabled unacknowledged yet increasingly pervasive communist participation in the capitalist world economy.

Notes

1. For a broader overview of German Democratic Republic border scholarship, see Ned Richardson-Little and Lauren Stokes, "Bordering the GDR: Everyday Transnationalism, Global Entanglements and Regimes of Mobility at the Edges of East Germany," *Central European History* 56, no. 2 (June 2023): 159–72.

2. Daphne Berdahl, *Where the World Ended: Re-unification and Identity in the German Borderland* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press, 1999).

3. Sheffer mentions the quarry workers only in passing, and not the agreement that allowed them to cross the border. Edith Sheffer, *Burned Bridge: How East and West Germans Made the Iron Curtain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 89, 134.

4. Sagi Schaefer, *States of Division: Border and Boundary Formation in Cold War Rural Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 2.

5. Astrid M. Eckert, *West Germany and the Iron Curtain: Environment, Economy, and Culture in the Borderlands* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019).

6. For more on text-searchable digital sources and the ways that they have changed historical method, see Lara Putnam, "The Transnational and the Text-Searchable: Digitized Sources and the Shadows They Cast," *American Historical Review* 121, no. 2 (April 2016): 377–402. Both of the papers I was able to use are national newspapers, and presumably more "local" papers would offer even more nuance—the closest local papers, the *Fränkische Tag*, the *Coburger Tagblatt*, the *Lichtenfelser Tagblatt*, and the *Neustädter Tageblatt*, even wrote an open letter to the Soviet zone asking to open the border crossing near Lehesten. "Offener Brief an die Zone," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, February 18, 1960.

7. "Der ganze Kreis ist Auffanglager," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, April 5, 1955.

8. Dieter Hildebrandt, "Das einzige Loch im Eisernen Vorhang," *FAZ*, November 17, 1959, and "Kleine Bayerische Chronik," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, May 27/28, 1961.

9. Western press repeatedly mentions the pension as a particular concern. "Die Rente, nicht die Politik . . .," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, November 22, 1960; "Grenzübergang für Schieferarbeiter," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, November 30, 1960; and "Nur ein Gleis und eine Straße . . . führen aus dem Kreis Kronach nach Thüringen: Jahrhundertealte Beziehungen unterbrochen," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, June 16, 1961.

10. Cornelius Torp, "The Adenauer Government's Pensions Reform of 1957—a Question of Justice," *German History* 34, no. 2 (June 2016): 237–57.

11. Peter E. Fäßler, "'Diversanten' oder 'Aktivisten'? Westarbeiter in der DDR (1949–1961)," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 49, no. 4 (October 2001): 613–42, here 637. An English translation of Fäßler's article appears in this volume as "'Saboteurs' or 'Activists'? West German Workers in the GDR (1949–61)."

12. Ernst Bäumler, "Eiserner Vorhang mit Vorhängeschloss: Unter strenger Kontrolle fahren die Männer des Dorfes Reichenbach täglich zur Arbeit in die Sowjetzone," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, October 3, 1958.

13. The quote is rendered in dialect, perhaps to emphasize the man's relative remoteness from the national context and its charged debates: "Ich sag's, wie's ist. Sozial sind die prima,

aber mit der Politik hob i nix z'tun." Dieter Hildebrandt, "Das einzige Loch im Eisernen Vorhang," *FAZ*, November 17, 1959.

14. "Polizei verhindert Polio-Impfung," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, September 4, 1961.

15. "Der Arbeiter-und-Bauern-Staat kündigt: Westdeutsche werden in Thüringens Schieferbrüchen nicht mehr beschäftigt," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, September 14, 1961. The very next article on this page is about increased "Grenzland-Hilfe" from the federal state, underscoring the context for the West German reader—the closure of the border meant that seventy older workers had lost their jobs in an economically depressed region. "Verstärkte Grenzland-Hilfe: Haushaltsentwurf für das Wirtschaftsministerium sieht mehr Zuschüsse vor," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, September 14, 1961.

16. The accident was reported in both East and West German press. "Schwerer Unfall in den Schiefergruben Lehesten," *Berliner Zeitung*, March 27, 1963, and "Drei Bergleute verschüttet," *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, March 27, 1963.

17. Elvira Lindoso Tato, "La industria de la pizarra Española en perspectiva histórica," *Investigaciones de Historia Económica—Economic History Research* 11, no. 1 (February 2015): 52–61.

18. "Trotz Wind und Wetter: Schiefer aus Lehesten—seit mehr als 500 Jahren," *Neue Zeit*, April 7, 1982, and "Schiefergrube bleibt als Schauanlage erhalten," *Neues Deutschland*, March 27/28, 1982.

19. "'Blaues Gold' ist auf vielfache Art nutzbar," *Neue Zeit*, February 5, 1992.

20. Klaus Mäder interview on *Menschen im Schieferbergbau*, accessed December 26, 2024, https://menschen-im-schieferbergbau.de/im-grenzgebiet.html.

21. Werner Liebeskind interview on *Menschen im Schieferbergbau*, accessed December 26, 2024, https://menschen-im-schieferbergbau.de/im-grenzgebiet.html.

22. Jason B. Johnson, *Divided Village: The Cold War in the German Borderlands* (New York: Routledge, 2017), 4.

23. "Das Grab eines unbekannten Soldaten am Dreiländereck," *FAZ*, May 18, 1962.

24. For the prisoner exchange: Jan Philipp Wölbern, *Der Häftlingsfreikauf aus der DDR 1962/63–1989: Zwischen Menschenhandel und humanitären Aktionen* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2014).

25. Jonathan R. Zatlin, *The Currency of Socialism: Money and Political Culture in East Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007), 92–100. For pork products: Thomas Fleischman, *Communist Pigs: An Animal History of East Germany's Rise and Fall* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2020). For blood plasma: Rainer Erices, "The East-West Blood Trade: How the German Democratic Republic Obtained Foreign Currency with Blood Products (1983–1990)," *Wiener Medizinische Wochenschrift* 168, no. 15/16 (2018): 384–90.

26. Zatlin, *Currency of Socialism*, 136–48. For enforcing visa regulations on third-country nationals: Lauren Stokes, "Racial Profiling on the U-Bahn: Policing the Berlin Gap during the Schönefeld Airport Refugee Crisis," *Central European History* 56, no. 2 (June 2023): 236–54.

27. Fritz Bartel, *The Triumph of Broken Promises: The End of the Cold War and the Rise of Neoliberalism* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2022), 259–91.

Unvarnished Truths

A Confidential Conversation between Gerhard Schürer, Chief Economic Planner of the GDR, and the Stasi in April 1978 about the SED's Economic Policies

ANDREAS MALYCHA

The document discussed in this article provides evidence of a central conflict within the Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (SED—Socialist Unity Party of Germany) Politburo in the 1970s. During a conversation in April 1978, the chief economic planner, Gerhard Schürer, and a Stasi officer discussed the problems besetting the German Democratic Republic's (GDR's) economy openly. There is little documentation of the views held by top party leaders on internal party conflicts, especially over macroeconomic and sociopolitical conditions. That discussion exposes the tensions in the Politburo over the economic policy changes made at SED chief Erich Honecker's behest at the Eighth Party Congress. Schürer was one of the Politburo members who advocated revoking Honecker's expansive social policies and curbing consumption rates in favor of investments in production. Despite the observable limits of East German economic performance and the deficiencies of the command economy, Honecker clung to his strategy of stabilizing the SED's rule through a social policy the GDR could not afford. Schürer's conversation with a leading Stasi officer was part of an effort to induce Honecker to change his economic policies by appealing to the Minister for State Security, Erich Mielke.

For a long time the mechanisms by which the inner coterie of the leadership of the Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (SED—Socialist Unity Party of Germany) formed opinions and took decisions remained hidden from researchers because the relevant archival materials were either inaccessible or lacking altogether. The conflicts that emerged within the Politburo during the 1970s regarding the party's economic policy were analyzed for the first time in a series of interviews with economic experts from the highest planning authority of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) conducted during the 1990s,[1] and later verified and confirmed as applying likewise to the 1980s by archival materials that had in the meantime become accessible.[2] This provided clarity

about the intentions, motives, and methods that formed the background to debates over whether, and under what economic conditions, social policies that after 1971 seemed to be getting out of hand could be financed and sustained. The foreign trade balance and the continually increasing volume of debt vis-à-vis Western countries lay at the center of the conflict from the outset.[3]

In recent publications the focus has been on the internal analyses of key macroeconomic issues by the Ministry for State Security,[4] specifically by Hauptabteilung (HA—main department) XVIII, which was responsible for the "operational" security of central economic sectors.[5] The assessments carried out by the department beginning in 1974 and led by the economist Alfred Kleine, who held the rank of major general, document how precisely fundamental issues regarding the planning mechanisms and structural deficiencies of the GDR economy were described in the 1980s. Information from the department heads of the Staatliche Plankommission (SPK—State Planning Commission) and political staff from the Planning and Finance Department of the Central Committee of the SED also served as important sources in this context.[6]

With the benefit of reports from its key unofficial collaborators (Inoffizielle Mitarbeiter—IMs), HA XVIII arrived at an assessment of the economic situation that was unusually realistic within the information-gathering system of the GDR.[7] The question remains, however, of what was done with these politically controversial analyses. Reports from the Zentrale Auswertungs- und Informationsgruppe (ZAIG—Central Evaluation and Information Group) of the Ministry for State Security (MfS or Stasi) indicate that Erich Mielke, the head of the Stasi, did not wish to burden SED General Secretary Erich Honecker with the truth about the country's economic situation.[8] The reports that ZAIG forwarded to the SED leadership concerning selected ongoing difficulties in specific enterprises and economic sectors were self-censored, and as such only of limited value. The MfS did not provide the Politburo with any comprehensive analysis of the underlying causes of the problems, despite the wealth of detailed information it had obtained from the enterprises in question. Instead, its reports to the party leadership were limited to information concerning "incidents" in state-owned enterprises, assigning responsibility for specific shortcomings to individual plant directors in order to present itself as a kind of supervisory authority over the economic apparatus.[9]

The document reproduced here reveals what the leadership of HA XVIII was actually aware of through both its unofficial collaborators and its official economic channel. The document contains testimony dating from 1978 by a leading GDR official concerning economic problems that were commonly believed to have become acute only in the 1980s.[10] It reveals for the first time how

the negative effects of decisions made at the Eighth Party Congress in 1971 led, as early as 1978, to intense discussions and wide-ranging proposals for rectifying the situation both within the Politburo and among leading economic experts. The notes on these meetings thus provide remarkable insights into a central conflict within the SED leadership in the lead-up to the growing economic crisis of the 1980s, one which has so far only been addressed in accounts by contemporary witnesses and in selectively published documents.[11]

The Balance of Payments: An Unresolved Problem

On April 24, 1978, Gerhard Schürer, the chairman of the State Planning Commission, held a frank discussion with Lieutenant Colonel Horst Roigk, the head of HA XVIII/4 of the Ministry for State Security,[12] responsible for monitoring central economic management and planning bodies[13] and hence the right addressee. The discussion centered on the SED's economic policy, Günter Mittag's position in the higher echelons of power as Central Committee secretary for the economy, and Schürer's personal relationship with Mittag and Honecker, as well as internal squabbles within the top state planning authority.

The occasion for the April 24 conversation between Schürer and Roigk was a meeting on April 21 of the leadership of the State Planning Commission—also attended by Schürer's deputies and the department heads—regarding the key points of the GDR's economic plan for 1979. The draft plan presented by the commission had, however, been rejected by Honecker, Mittag, and Willi Stoph because issues concerning the balance of payments, which were supposed to be resolved during the course of 1979, had allegedly not been taken into account. Since 1971 the imbalance of payments had been one of the central problems whose resolution was essential for the survival of the GDR.[14] Honecker and Mittag saw an increase in economic productivity and a corresponding upswing in exports to the "non-socialist economic area" (Nichtsozialistisches Wirtschaftsgebiet—NSW) as the only means of slowing down or reducing the continually growing foreign debt. And yet various resolutions intended to reduce or halve the negative balance—that is, that of receivables and liabilities—were never implemented.[15] The debt rose from approximately 2 billion Valutamarks (VM—convertible marks)[16] in 1970[17] to over 22 billion VM in 1979.[18] Especially after 1972, debt to the West grew continuously, particularly in convertible currencies, owing to the faster increase in liabilities compared to receivables, which necessitated bridge financing in the form of cash loans to cover upcoming repayment installments and interest.

Schürer had already warned back in November 1972 of a growing debt to

the West that could lead to acute repayment difficulties.[19] He was concerned, however, not only about the rapidly increasing negative balance of receivables and liabilities, but also about the expanding cash deficit. He attributed this development mainly to "steadily rising imports from the NSW—particularly in convertible currencies—that are not matched by corresponding exports. For several years, moreover, export plans have not been met, while import plans have been surpassed."[20] The steadily increasing cash deficit had already become a serious problem at the time. By the end of 1979, it had risen to 3.3 billion VM, since the available cash was no longer sufficient to cover cash expenses due (loan repayments, interest payments).[21] In order to address this problem, new cash loans had had to be taken out under increasingly unfavorable conditions, resulting in a rising interest burden. Hence the SPK, the Foreign Trade Bank (Außenhandelsbank) of the GDR, the Ministry of Finance, and the Central Committee's Department of Planning and Finance were concerned about a rapid expansion of the cash deficit that by the late 1970s would no longer be able to be balanced. Despite ongoing warnings from the SPK that debt to Western countries would soon become unmanageable,[22] as well as renewed Politburo resolutions,[23] the increase in foreign debt could not be halted even by the 1980s.

The Politburo of the Honecker era, however, did not deviate from its course. It doggedly relied on a continuously rising trade surplus with the West, which was viewed as the key to managing the balance of payments problem right up until 1989. However, the principle that the Politburo adopted in January 1973 to cover the imports necessary for the economy, service expenditures, and payments due through growing exports was never followed.[24] Debt reduction and the intended increase in exports could only succeed within the framework of Honecker's economic policy if above-average growth rates in industrial goods production were to be achieved—something that was deemed unrealistic even by the planning authorities and ministries, given the economic conditions. In reality the GDR never achieved its planned export surplus in relation to the Western industrialized nations, which resulted in a major burden on the balance of payments by the end of the 1970s, with the constantly looming threat of insolvency.[25]

Controversy over the SED's Economic Policy

When these problems came to the fore in the mid-1970s, fundamental disagreements on the economic policy that had been pursued since 1971 soon followed. Honecker and the majority of the Politburo had linked the end of economic reforms and a return to the economic planning system of the 1950s

with a new dimension of social policy.[26] It was no longer the modernization of the industrial base and the promotion of research and development, but rather social policy that was to serve as the means of stabilizing power. As had been the case before, the primary criterion in the decision-making process was an increase in the acceptance of party rule among the people.[27] This was a conscious choice made in the knowledge that the economy would be overburdened, and thus ultimately despite the threat this posed to the medium- and long-term stability of the GDR. While leading economists and experts in the highest planning authority doubted the expediency of this strategy, there was initially no one in the Politburo who openly voiced concerns about it after Honecker came to power.

The initial silence in the Politburo was not least the result of drastic personnel changes in the top echelons of the state and economic administration, which led to considerable uncertainty in the Politburo regarding Honecker's future cadre policy. On October 3, 1973, on Honecker's initiative, Horst Sindermann was selected as chairman of the Council of Ministers, Stoph as chairman of the Council of State, and Mittag as first deputy chairman under Sindermann. For Mittag, the former proponent of the New System for Economic Management and Planning, his removal as Central Committee secretary for the economy and reassignment to the Council of Ministers was a reprimand, a warning shot, and a probationary period all in one. Having already lost his seat on the State Council in 1971, Mittag only regained membership in 1979 and became deputy chairman of the State Council in 1984. The Tenth Central Committee Meeting on October 2, 1973, appointed Politburo member Werner Krolikowski to succeed Mittag as secretary for the economy, even though Krolikowski understood more about agitation and propaganda than about economics. Schürer was also among the new candidates for the Politburo.

In dismissing Mittag, Honecker was eager to demonstrate his love of power. Only in late October 1976 did he reappoint Mittag to the position of Central Committee secretary for the economy, which came as quite a surprise and is difficult to explain. Mittag's opportunism certainly falls short as an explanation on its own.[28] While Mittag appeared to the outside world to be a loyal follower of Honecker, there were undoubtedly internal tensions between the two. Krolikowski, who had to vacate the post of Central Committee secretary for the economy in favor of Mittag and content himself with the office of first deputy chairman of the Council of Ministers, subsequently became one of the staunchest opponents of the party's economic course.

In their deliberations on how to overcome the structural problems of a planned economy, Schürer and his deputies frequently made reference to the

economic reform of the 1960s, which had been terminated toward the end of the decade owing to serious supply impasses with regard to both consumer goods and the needs of large enterprises.[29] Honecker did in fact initially succeed in overcoming the supply crisis that broke out in 1970, which had resulted from unrealistic industrial growth targets. He and a majority in the Politburo viewed this success as a sign that the new economic strategy was sound and they therefore launched ambitious social projects at the same time,[30] while neglecting research and development in important areas of technology.[31] This shift in policy can be seen as one of the reasons for the crisis that later erupted, which the chairman of the State Planning Commission repeatedly addressed in internal analyses from 1975/76 onward.[32] Honecker's concept of the unity of economic and social policy was incompatible with any economic, scientific, or technological innovative momentum. His strategy of ignoring the ongoing scientific and technological revolution while still implementing costly social policy in order to stabilize the ruling system bore the risk of ending in complete failure.[33]

Honecker's social policy was supposed to be based on the principle that such benefits, especially Western consumer goods imported using foreign currency funds, could only be distributed if the economic basis for them was sound. In practice, however, little consideration was given to economic conditions. Any focus on performance was increasingly replaced by a sense of entitlement, as reflected in the party distributing the promised benefits more quickly than the economic situation warranted.[34] As Honecker refused to compromise on his social policy—particularly the goal of keeping consumer prices stable and rents low—the ministries received ever higher planning targets that they could only meet by massaging the statistics. Furthermore, money had to be procured from the West in increasing amounts and with ever greater frequency. By 1976 the SED's economic policy had already set in motion an internal and external debt mechanism that would run out of control in the years to come, as social benefits could not be financed through the state's own economic power. The shift in economic policy during the Honecker era represented an effort to compensate for domestic shortfalls that could not be made up by trade with the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON) by expanding trade relations with Western industrialized countries—an effort that was ultimately futile.[35]

Honecker reacted with increasing harshness to criticism of his economic and social policies, especially to comments critical of the balance of payments. During a personal conversation with Schürer in early April 1976, Honecker decisively rejected Schürer's proposals for drastic import reductions during the five-year plan for 1976 to 1980.[36] Schürer had warned that the plan foresaw an interest burden of between 9 and 10 billion VM. He explained that this would

further exacerbate the cash deficit, thus requiring new financial loans, which, according to the Foreign Trade Bank, would no longer be available for 1976/77. In a joint letter to Honecker dated March 14, 1977, Mittag and Schürer urgently warned of the precipitous deterioration in the balance of payments vis-à-vis Western countries, which necessitated increasingly higher loans just to pay the interest.[37] Honecker viewed as a personal attack their portrayal of the growing import surplus as a significant cause of the cash deficit of 3.6 billion VM. He reacted with particular vehemence to the demand for the cessation of Western imports to supply the populace with goods,[38] stubbornly adhering to the old stance of increasing exports to the West. He was unwilling to discuss any other solution to the payment problem.

Following this rebuff Mittag began to unconditionally side with Honecker. By contrast Schürer continued to serve as a warning voice—even in the Politburo, where the increasing debt to the West had now been recognized as an existential problem.[39] Yet a majority in the Politburo nevertheless rejected Schürer's repeated calls to curtail the import of Western consumer goods, fearing that this would worsen the supply situation for the people. It was anticipated that similar effects would result from increasing exports to the West, since goods designated for export, including agricultural products, were being withdrawn from the domestic market with the corresponding impact on domestic supply. Success in foreign trade with capitalist countries could only transpire if the GDR were to produce competitive export goods as earners of foreign currency. But the country's technological backwardness and comparatively low labor productivity meant that these were not forthcoming.

A Confidential Conversation on Economic Policy Errors

The record of the conversation between Roigk and the chairman of the State Planning Commission on April 24, 1978, highlights three aspects of the SED's economic policy about which opinions within the Politburo differed: the expenditures on Western import goods; the relationship between social and economic policy; and the GDR's balance of payments. The document, moreover, provides insights into the decision-making processes on economic policy and the personal influence of Mittag on economic policy decisions. Schürer did not speak with a high-ranking state security officer without reason. He apparently intended to persuade Honecker, via the minister for state security, Mielke, to change the course of economic policy. At that time Schürer was still hoping for a fundamental reversal in the SED's strategy and thus an improvement in the economic situation.

This conversation took place between two functionaries at the top of the GDR's power hierarchy, both of whom had deep insights into the processes, planning mechanisms, and structural relationships, including the structural weaknesses and deficits, of the East German economy. Since the early 1950s Schürer had established himself as a recognized expert in economic planning and management, and served as deputy head of the Department of Economic Planning for the State Government of Saxony, as department head in the State Planning Commission, and as a sector and department head in the Planning and Finance Department of the SED Central Committee. In 1966 he was appointed chairman of the State Planning Commission, succeeding Erich Apel.[40] He subsequently also served as deputy chairman of the GDR Council of Ministers. In January 1963 the Sixth SED Party Congress elected him a member of the Central Committee; in October 1973 he became a candidate member of the Politburo. Schürer's extraordinary expertise in the field of economic planning significantly contributed to his ability to remain in his position as chairman of the State Planning Commission through December 1989, despite repeated attacks and accusations.

As someone with a degree in economics, Roigk knew what Schürer was talking about.[41] Roigk had been a member of the Ministry for State Security since 1955 and became the first acting head of Commercial Coordination as a special operations officer of HA XVIII within the Ministry for Foreign and Inner-German Trade in October 1966, before being succeeded by Alexander Schalck-Golodkowski in early 1967.[42] Owing to his long-standing service and his leading position in HA XVIII, Roigk had access to internal information on the state of the GDR economy, which he directly passed on to the head of the main department, as well as to Mielke.

Schürer spoke openly in their conversation and shared his impression that, until one or two years prior, it had still been possible to discuss impending economic problems with Honecker, and the latter had still responded to factual arguments. This was, however, no longer the case in 1978, at the time the conversation took place. Schürer explained that Honecker had not grasped the complexities of the economic situation and was clearly unwilling to engage seriously with the matters at hand. Schürer remarked that Honecker hardly met with him any longer and relied exclusively on the advice of Mittag, his economic secretary, whom Schürer believed to have become Honecker's closest confidant shortly after being reinstated as Central Committee secretary in October 1976. In light of this, earlier assumptions about the internal distribution of power in the Politburo during the Honecker era need to be corrected.[43]

Schürer further reported that he had repeatedly brought up the deteriorating

economic situation, and the payment difficulties in particular, in frank talks in close circles. These discussions included Honecker, Mittag, Stoph, and occasionally Krolikowski. Schürer's surviving records, as well as those of Heinz Klopfer, one of Schürer's deputies and state secretary in the State Planning Commission, confirm this claim. In fact regular internal meetings in which key data on prospective economic plans were discussed were held in both close and wider circles prior to crucial Politburo meetings. According to the notes, this close circle consisted solely of Honecker, Mittag, and Schürer.[44] Subsequently, the draft plans were discussed in an extended circle of selected members and candidate members of the Politburo and the heads of Central Committee departments. This included Honecker, Mittag, Schürer or his deputy Klopfer, Stoph, Gerhard Grüneberg, Kurt Hager, Krolikowski, Harry Tisch, Paul Verner, Werner Jarowinsky, and Günter Ehrensperger.[45] Only after that was the respective draft plan submitted to the Politburo as a whole, which typically approved the material presented without significant discussion.

As the minutes of the Politburo meetings demonstrate,[46] the majority were apparently guided by the idea that complicated economic problems could still be solved solely through ideological appeals and political directives, as had been the case in the 1950s. Honecker, in particular, was led by economic wishful thinking and political shrewdness rather than pragmatic expertise. Functionaries with economic competence and societal ambitions, who had not been socialized before 1933 and represented a new generation of "leadership cadres," generally did not find him willing to listen.[47]

As planning chief, Schürer advocated a different approach to Honecker to address the rising debt to the West in particular. He deemed illusory the formula that the Politburo adopted on January 16, 1973, which aimed to significantly reduce the payment deficit through high export surpluses.[48] In his conversation with Roigk, he thus proposed "fundamental economic measures" that needed to be adopted by the party and state leadership as soon as possible. Above all, he emphasized the need to curtail the private consumption of the population, to impose extensive import restrictions, especially with regard to consumer goods, and to halt further social policy measures.

The proposals favored by Schürer cast a spotlight on the two differing views of the party's economic course. Schürer was among those Politburo members who pushed for a rollback or correction of the expansive social policy and sought to reduce the private consumption of the population in favor of productive investments. In his letters to the Soviet leadership Krolikowski also vehemently attacked Honecker's course. In a letter to Leonid Brezhnev, general secretary of the Soviet Communist Party, dated October 24, 1980, he lamented the GDR's

adherence to "consumer socialism" as well as "living on credit for results yet to be achieved, which led to the debt burden increasing year on year from the beginning of the 1970s, a burden that has now reached an increasingly unmanageable level, providing capitalism with the opportunity at any time—as has indeed been seen on several occasions—to render the GDR insolvent or to blackmail it politically."[49]

In order to stabilize the economy, Krolikowski and Schürer deemed it necessary to lower the population's standard of living. In a June 1982 memorandum Krolikowski noted: "Of course, the standard of living in the GDR must be restricted. The majority of the party, the working class, and the people are also willing to accept this if it is explained honestly and justified with a convincing concept."[50] Krolikowski was mistaken in this regard. By the 1980s there was no longer any willingness to tolerate a significant deterioration in working and living conditions with a promise of better times to come. Unlike their parents before them, the generation that grew up in the GDR was no longer willing to be assuaged with a vision of a distant bright future. Krolikowski's proposals, which he also presented in letters to the Soviet leadership, did not therefore provide a genuine alternative to Honecker's "consumer socialism."

Schürer's conversation with the Stasi officer demonstrates how the SED leadership had been aware of the functional shortcomings of economic planning at least since the mid-1970s. It was, for example, abundantly clear that the economic performance of the GDR was insufficient to implement the sociopolitical program announced in 1971. The necessary financial conditions had to be established in order to secure both the planned increase in economic output through the import of raw materials and technical equipment and the promised rise in living standards through the import of Western consumer goods. The generation of convertible currencies with regard to the entire foreign trade sector was thus a key factor, making the country significantly more vulnerable to fluctuations on the global market.[51] In the early phases of development of long-term plans, the State Planning Commission regularly presented the general secretary and the economic policy departments of the Central Committee with information on the serious economic problems arising from the "unity of economic and social policy" approach, the opening of the GDR to foreign trade, and the associated need for foreign currency. It cannot therefore be said that the SED leadership plunged into economic disaster suddenly and unknowingly.

Honecker and the majority of the Politburo clung to their strategy of stabilizing SED rule through social policies with shaky economic foundations, despite the obvious weaknesses of the economy and flaws in planning. Honecker rejected

any correction to, let alone withdrawal of, social policy measures, fearing that this would lead to political instability, social unrest, and a strengthening of the domestic opposition. He also strictly refused to implement the price increases that were being demanded by some leading economists, insisting instead on a continuation of his costly subsidies policy, despite increasingly pressing external economic burdens. Maintaining stable prices for consumer goods, services, and rents was one of his consistent and unshakable principles. It was influenced by memories of the June 1953 uprising, which had led to great caution with regard to any social cutbacks. Honecker also interpreted the situation in Poland as a warning, as drastic price increases for food and other goods had led to strikes, mass protests, and demonstrations there in December 1970.

The majority of the Politburo continued until the end to share the views of Honecker and Mittag, still believing that the continually growing debt could be stopped by rapidly increasing exports to Western countries. The necessary economic conditions, however, were not in place for this, owing to a lack of technological progress and the structure of exports to the West. Demands and proposals to fundamentally change the export structure resulted only in vague concepts that remained in the planning stage for years. On the other hand, Schürer, Stoph, and Krolikowski urged the Politburo to heed fundamental economic principles, which would have required realistic economic plans to be developed and both social benefits and private consumption reduced. This would have meant a decrease in subsidies, a fundamental change in investment policy, and price increases in all areas, including for basic foodstuffs. Probably such a policy would have made it possible to stabilize the economy temporarily. However, the SED leadership could only afford to redirect its costly social policy toward industrial modernization and growth if it were willing to risk the passive loyalty of the majority of the people—but it was not. The Politburo therefore had no other viable alternatives.

In his "analysis of the economic situation of the GDR" presented on October 30, 1989, Schürer acknowledged his personal share of responsibility for the economic failure of the GDR.[52] He asserted that while the State Planning Commission had called attention to economic problems with "great consistency," the continual warnings from experts had not been sufficient to bring about a change in economic policy in opposition to Honecker's. These documents, now accessible to us, clearly depict how Schürer, in the ongoing struggle between economic expertise and party discipline, unfailingly yielded to political pressure from the general secretary and the majority of the Politburo. When asked why he nonetheless stayed on in his position as chairman of the SPK, Schürer

explained in retrospect: "I could have given up at times. But I would sit down with my closest colleagues, and they would say, 'Gerhard, if you leave, things will only get worse here—please stay.'"[53]

The Document

RECORD[54] OF A CONFIDENTIAL DISCUSSION WITH CHAIRMAN OF THE STATE PLANNING COMMISSION GERHARD SCHÜRER ON THE ECONOMIC POLICIES OF THE SED ON APRIL 24, 1978

Source: BStU, MfS, HA XVIII 16067, fols. 1–12.

Main Department XVIII
Berlin, April 27, 1978

Information about a conversation with Candidate Member of the Politburo of the SED, Chairman of the State Planning Commission [SPK], and Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers Comrade Gerhard Schürer, on April 24, 1978.

On April 24, 1978, a private internal discussion took place with Comrade Schürer regarding the problems of the SPK, the economy, cadre issues, and personal matters.

Comrade Schürer provided an assessment of the political and moral state of affairs within the SPK, which has evolved over the past six months in particular owing to continually increasing difficulties in implementing objective economic planning. A peak moment in the tense situation within the SPK occurred during the leadership meeting on April 21, 1978 (Comrade Klopfer, Comrade Lietz, Comrade Wenzel, Comrade Müller, Comrade Grünheid, Comrade Kopp, Comrade Schiefer).[55] The point of departure for [the comrades'] behavior involved the main decisions regarding the formulation of state tasks for the 1979 economic plan, which were imposed on the SPK from outside and lacked any objectivity, failing to correspond in any way with the economic conditions and situation. The output required for the 1979 plan would still be inordinate and excessive even if the 1978 plan had been fulfilled as envisaged and as approved by the Volkskammer.

The materials submitted by the SPK for 1979 were not accepted by the party leadership (Comrade Honecker, Comrade Mittag, and Comrade Stoph) because the problems concerning the balance of payments, which were to be solved in 1979, had not been taken into account.

Aside from the fact that such a demand to largely eliminate the payments deficit in 1979 is illusory and demonstrates a complete lack of understanding, instead of a reduction in the deficit the volume of debt will in fact increase unless fundamental economic measures are implemented by the party and state leadership.

These fundamental measures include:

Curbing consumption;

Measures to establish the profitability and production efficiency of investments made in previous years to manufacture products that can be sold on the global market;

Rigorously reducing the consumption of social funds (strict austerity);

Adhering to the specified growth rates in exports, which must be objectively assessed. The currently projected growth rates of 23–26 percent and in some industries of 20–50 percent are unrealistic and unattainable;

Extensive import restrictions, especially in areas intended for consumption;

No further sociopolitical measures that would impact the Warenfonds [stock of consumer goods], as preliminary calculations indicate a deficit of 1.7 billion [GDR Marks] in the Warenfonds for 1979, and currently all efforts by the SPK (arithmetically) to cover this gap are failing, as objectively speaking the prerequisites are currently lacking to close this gap through increased output, rationalization, or automation.

On the problem of raising productivity, Comrade Schürer stated that this must now be regarded as having only very limited potential for further development. Productivity increases on the intended scale would only be possible if the production sectors were able to utilize the necessary raw materials, modern equipment, and modern facilities in the interest of automation and rationalization. Since, in recent years, we have mainly used the loans we have taken out for sociopolitical measures and have not achieved, through our investments, the effects required to produce globally competitive products for the global market, these conditions do not exist.

The working class can work as diligently as it likes or be willing to do so—but if the raw materials are lacking, there will be periods of stand-

still, and if specific spare parts are not delivered, especially from the supply industry, which has been largely neglected, certain investment projects (large facilities in various fields) will not go into operation.

The same question arises regarding the demand for import restrictions. Imports can only be reduced to a certain extent, but limiting imports is necessary, especially in the consumer goods sector.

Such extravagances and uneconomical measures, such as a "Delikat and Exquisit" program,[56] imports of Golf automobiles,[57] and the construction of building complexes in which equipment from [capitalist countries] is installed, tie up large amounts of hard currency and ultimately yield no results in the sphere of production. These must be halted immediately or at least kept at their current level in order to prevent political damage and to avoid turning the population against the party and state leadership.

This might still be possible with great efforts and increased debt with [capitalist countries], but an acceleration of sociopolitical measures would no longer guarantee domestic supply, would further restrict exports, and would lead to an even greater burden on the production sector of the economy.

Comrade Schürer further stated that it was necessary to investigate where the billions in industrial investments were going. In his opinion they were not being used for the intended purpose and were not leading to an increase in production or an improvement in working and living conditions, but instead were being spent on building showcase facilities such as swimming pools, opera houses, Young Pioneer palaces, and other luxuries.

On this occasion Comrade Schürer also stated that the planned FDJ meeting in 1979 would, according to current estimates, cost approximately 250 million,[58] tie up a large amount of construction capacity, strain the transportation system, and lead to supply issues that would need to be addressed. While he supports a youth meeting, he opposes such an extravagant concept, which would contradict all principles of fiscal prudence.

Comrade Schürer went on to report that he had spoken openly about all these issues within a small circle, consisting of Comrade Honecker, Comrade Mittag, Comrade Stoph, and at times Comrade Krolikowski. All his comments were brushed aside without much discussion, especially in connection with the submission of the 1978 plan and in connection with the main problems concerning the 1979 plan.

He said that the first time he fell into "disfavor" was in 1975, during an internal discussion with Comrade Honecker in the presence of Comrade Mittag, because on that occasion, too, he had reported objectively on the situation. Comrade Honecker was incensed and asked him whether he was against the resolutions of the Ninth Party Congress and whether he wanted the resolutions of the Ninth Party Congress to be altered.[59] The factual arguments that he presented to Comrade Honecker in the presence of Comrade Mittag fell on deaf ears. Comrade Mittag kept a low profile throughout the discussion.

For approximately half a year, he had noticed that attacks on the work of the SPK by the party leadership, fueled by Comrade Mittag, had been intensifying. He had also repeatedly observed how General Secretary Honecker had presented arguments against the SPK in internal consultations, as well as in the Politburo, which he had previously heard in a similar form from Comrade Mittag.

Comrade Schürer stated that the SPK was in the firing line and that they were looking for someone to blame. He pointed out that in the history of the GDR this was not the first time the working methods of the SPK had been made a scapegoat for serious economic predicaments.[60]

Returning to the problems within the SPK apparatus, Comrade Schürer reported on the leadership meeting of April 21, 1978, during which all these problems were discussed. It had been noted at the meeting that investments in agriculture needed to be restricted further and the planned growth rates of nitrogen, potash, and phosphorus fertilizer for agriculture needed to be allocated to support the export of important machinery and equipment.

Comrade Lietz,[61] deputy chairman of SPK Agriculture, reacted to this with particular consternation, saying he could not fulfill his role as the planner responsible for agriculture under such conditions, and he offered to resign. He said it was impossible to demand that he develop a plan for 1979 corresponding with the situation in 1982 while at the same time seeking to maintain the necessary funds at the 1977 level, yet cutting everything required for increased production in favor of other priorities.

He further pointed out that he could not work miracles. He had been tasked with improving the situation with the non-socialist economic area by running down the meat reserve of 10 kilotons, but this was illusory! Because of the current situation, only 1.6 kilotons was available. He referred to such demands as charlatanism.

He subsequently asked for it to be noted that he could no longer go along with that sort of working method and that he had made his remarks on the issue as a candidate member of the Central Committee as well. Comrade Schürer stated that he had calmed Comrade Lietz down and highlighted the causes.

Last week Comrade Lietz had been called in to Comrade Grüneberg,[62] who had studied the new objectives from the available materials for 1979 during his retreat at the Baltic Sea. Subsequently, Comrade Grüneberg had asked Comrade Lietz to openly oppose and reject any cuts in funds for agriculture. If he failed to do so, Comrade Grüneberg would ensure that Comrade Lietz "be kicked out." In this connection, Comrade Grüneberg had leveled a few harsh insults at Comrades Lietz and Schürer, as was his way, referring to Comrade Schürer as a dyed-in-the-wool bureaucrat who simply doggedly calculated his plan, etc.

Regarding the issue of nitrogen exports, Comrade Schürer pointed out that this entailed significant problems. His demands to limit nitrogen consumption in the GDR and to keep the use of nitrogen to fertilize forests to a minimum would, for example, result in large forest areas in the Cottbus region being left vulnerable to destruction. The industrial agglomerations and the associated inadequate environmental protection would have an active impact on forest stocks, the consequences of which were currently incalculable (water management, etc.).

He added that the agricultural sector had been criticized in certain matters some time ago, in early 1978.[63] There were now a number of leading comrades who believed they could vent their frustration on the agricultural sector to distract attention from their own problems. It was not, however, possible to cut major investments for imports (modern facilities and machinery) in the interest of increasing agricultural production, which was indeed dependent on many different factors (weather, etc.).

It is unfortunately a recurring tendency that there is not the kind of firm, unified leadership that the economy needs. Instead, one person is played off against another, one person flatters another, particularly among the party leadership and when speaking to the general secretary. He said he had observed that the general secretary did not grasp the complexity of the economic situation and was apparently unwilling to address the problems. He increasingly relied on Comrade Mittag in all matters. A year or two ago, it was still possible [for Schürer] to discuss pressing issues with Comrade Honecker. Today, he is rarely received or listened to, and when he confronts Comrade Honecker with certain

questions, the latter does not initially answer. Yet hardly has he returned to his office before the general secretary calls him and issues instructions that contradict the proposals made and that are exclusively the doings of Comrade Mittag.

Comrade Schürer said Comrade Honecker immediately called Comrade Mittag after such meetings to seek his advice. Comrade Schürer finds it extremely regrettable that Comrade Honecker surrounds himself with misguided advisers who, in Schürer's view, adopt Honecker's ideas and, regardless of their feasibility, attempt to force them through.

The relationship between him and Comrade Mittag has deteriorated and reached a critical point over the past six months. Whereas Comrade Mittag previously had all economic issues under his purview, that is, within the Economic Commission, in the Working Group on the Balance of Payments, and in other commissions that still exist, from their initial manifestation through to implementation and enforcement, it has now become common for him to move everything out of his domain as secretary for the economy and to attempt to pass these issues on to the government. While many measures were previously implemented without informing the government and without obtaining the necessary resolutions, Comrade Mittag is now, especially in connection with the drafting and preparation of the 1979 plan, attempting to place all issues, difficulties, and related matters within the government's responsibility. This is borne out by the planning consultations with ministers now being conducted by Comrades Stoph and Krolikowski.

With regard to Comrade Mittag as a person, Comrade Schürer stated that he held great respect for his diligence and intelligence. In Schürer's opinion Mittag was able to assess very precisely all upcoming difficulties, consequences, and complications. He was personally extremely ambitious, intent on concentrating power in his own hands and exercising authority. This was particularly evident in the way he organized the work of his apparatus, his unfailing ability to enforce measures, both correct and incorrect, his intolerance of the objections of experts, and in his overall tactical behavior (additional remarks provided verbally).

Comrade Stoph[64] identifies solely with the tasks that he previously presented for discussion in the Politburo and that have been confirmed there, or those agreed in individual discussions between him and Comrade Honecker. He does not identify with economic actions, measures, and decisions introduced without being presented to him, nor does he show any interest in coming to terms with them.

This results in Comrade Schürer often finding himself entirely on his own, confronted after the fact with decisions originating from the party apparatus. He must then become reconciled to these decisions but often finds himself unable to, as they create new imbalances in the proportional development of the economy.

As an example, Comrade Schürer pointed out that Comrade Tisch,[65] apparently in consultation with the general secretary at the Party Congress,[66] had announced that we would build an additional 100,000 apartments beyond the plan. He had had no prior knowledge of this and was now being faced with the consequences. In particular, these 100,000 apartments entailed installing 100,000 bathtubs, 150,000 fixtures, gas stoves, electric stoves, pipes, window glass, radiators, etc. These items were not included in the five-year plan, but they would still have to be procured—imports were out of the question, and additional production was currently impossible, as in the best case, only the planned level of new housing construction could be met, and even then a blind eye would certainly have to be turned (since it was likely to include renovation of old buildings, etc.).

In this context Comrade Schürer stated that our price policy was not economically viable, flew in the face of reality, and evidently stemmed from a misguided idea. As raw materials, consumer goods, and other products were becoming more expensive worldwide, even in the vast Soviet Union, it was impossible for us to pursue and maintain a so-called stable price policy in the little GDR. There was no justification for this, he said, neither from a political nor from an economic point of view. The current price policy was causing state subsidies in these sectors to skyrocket. These subsidies were eating up a considerable share of the national income and thus reducing it. Furthermore, he said, expectations were being created among our people that we cannot fulfill owing to our price policy (as in the 1.7 billion shortfall in the Warenfonds for 1979).

Moreover, we are supplying the population of the People's Republic of Poland, the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, and, due to the open border with West Germany, West Berlin, the transit routes, and visitors to West Berlin with a large volume of cheap goods, food items in particular.

He said none of these measures or decisions had been properly thought through, and the experts and economic specialists as well as the ministers of the industrial sectors were usually confronted with such issues only after the fact, and then compelled to somehow integrate them

into a balanced economic development process. As for phenomena such as those involving the Golf,[67] these were hardly worth discussing, as there was essentially nothing that had not been mishandled in the Golf matter.

In response to a question on the practicality of carrying out planned compensation transactions[68] amounting to 10–12 billion VM, Comrade Schürer explained that he was fundamentally in favor of carrying out compensation transactions on a 100–100 basis, that is, covering or paying the sum of the expenses with goods delivered. He saw in this approach a way to resolve several balance of payments issues, to increase exports, to produce globally competitive products, and to go some way toward addressing the open question of the GDR's supply of goods, thus also tackling questions regarding the draining of purchasing power. He emphasized, however, that we had so far built only one such facility for this, namely, the newly constructed steel plant in Hennigsdorf. No other projects currently met these requirements.

Further issues were then discussed with Comrade Schürer concerning the construction sector and resulting complications (such as the manipulation of plans in construction, the tendency to avoid complex maintenance projects in favor of erecting new facilities and social centers, and even building FDGB resorts,[69] swimming pools, and other facilities); the close connection between the construction and industrial sectors; coordination problems; and the conduct observed among ministers, directors of industrial combines, and BMK[70] general directors of BMK-Ost (where there had been plan manipulations to the tune of 80 million).

In response to the question of how it was possible that, in the first half of 1978, the Presidium of the Council of Ministers had already decided on a reduction of approximately 845 million in the national economic plan, Comrade Schürer explained that the causes lay in the fact that the demands had been unrealistic from the outset and had been carried out solely under pressure from the party leadership, specifically from Comrades Honecker and Stoph.

Comrade Schürer said that he had fallen into "disfavor" for the second time in 1977, when he presented the concept for the 1978 national economic plan. The concept was decisively rejected, and unrealistic targets were incorporated into the plan, which was subsequently approved by the Volkskammer.

The 1978 concept developed by the SPK had already included very

substantial objectives. Targets had been set for investment policy, for exports, and for reducing the payments deficit and preventing further debt. It was his belief and that of his specialists that it would have been possible to go a long way toward achieving these objectives if large-scale sociopolitical burdens had not been shoehorned into the plan. As a result, adjustments to the plan were now necessary and would continue to be required throughout the year.

The issue of inventories exceeding planning[71] was revisited in the conversation as well. Comrade Schürer stated that he had observed a growth in these surplus inventories, which he expected to increase further over time. Such occurrences, he explained, would inevitably arise whenever the economic mechanism did not operate in line with the principle of proportional economic development.

He used an example to illustrate that a significant portion of our combines and enterprises were producing goods without contracts, meaning their products were not tied to any specific demand, making their distribution doubtful. This applied both to exports and to domestic consumption. For instance, he said we were manufacturing a number of machine tools without contractual sales agreements, resulting in finished products immediately being consigned to storage.

Another issue emerged in connection with the raw montan wax factory[72] that had burned down in 1972, a highly profitable export operation with a foreign currency profitability rate of 2.8.[73] The facility was rebuilt with imported equipment, but delays (in construction and deliveries) postponed its completion. Once the facility was completed, it became clear that we could no longer sell its output, as our former customers in [capitalist countries] had shifted to other raw materials or to suppliers in other countries, so that we were now producing raw montan wax only to be warehoused.

The topic of Commercial Coordination was raised in connection with the discussion of the "Exquisit and Delikat" programs.

Comrade Schürer stated that he had a generally positive opinion of the head of the department, Comrade Schalck,[74] as he had concluded a number of good deals for the GDR. He noted, however, that owing to spontaneous demands from Comrade Mittag at the behest of the party leadership, a number of imbalances had been created through the Commercial Coordination department, with economic consequences. In this context he questioned whether Comrade Mielke could not exert his influence to limit and eliminate such measures with their negative

impacts. He had the impression that Comrade Mielke was holding back on these issues, as the Ministry for State Security was earning rather well in the Commercial Coordination department.

A number of cadre issues were then discussed with Comrade Schürer. The conduct displayed by Comrade Krause[75] was used as a pretext to create certain conditions that would support the recall of the unofficial collaborator "Kosmos"[76] from the Soviet Union and to potentially assign him to the SPK in the future.

Notes

Translation by David Dichelle

1. See the protocols of conversations with Gerhard Schürer and Siegfried Wenzel on February 25 and May 21, 1993, in *Der Plan als Befehl und Fiktion: Wirtschaftsführung in der DDR; Gespräche und Analysen*, ed. Theo Pirker et al. (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1995), 67–120; Hans-Hermann Hertle, "Die Diskussion der ökonomischen Krisen in der Führungsspitze der SED," in ibid., 309–45, here 314ff.

2. Hans-Hermann Hertle, "Der Weg in den Bankrott der DDR-Wirtschaft: Das Scheitern der 'Einheit von Wirtschafts- und Sozialpolitik' am Beispiel der Schürer/Mittag-Kontroverse im Politbüro 1988," *Deutschland Archiv* 25 (1992): 127–31; Hans-Hermann Hertle, "Staatsbankrott: Der ökonomische Untergang des SED-Staates," *Deutschland Archiv* 25 (1992): 1019–30; Hans-Hermann Hertle, "Der Sturz Erich Honeckers: Zur Rekonstruktion eines innerparteilichen Machtkampfes," in *Widerstand und Opposition in der DDR*, ed. Klaus-Dietmar Henke, Peter Steinbach, and Johannes Tuchel (Cologne: Böhlau, 1999), 327–46.

3. Ralf Ahrens, *Gegenseitige Wirtschaftshilfe? Die DDR im RGW—Strukturen und handelspolitische Strategien 1963–1976* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2000); Jörg Roesler, "Die Wirtschafts- und Finanzbeziehungen der DDR zum Westen in den 70er und 80er Jahren," in *Die DDR in Europa—zwischen Isolation und Öffnung*, ed. Heiner Timmermann (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2005), 134–51; Christoph Buchheim, "Die Achillesferse der DDR—der Außenhandel," in *Überholen ohne einzuholen: Die DDR-Wirtschaft als Fußnote der deutschen Geschichte?*, ed. André Steiner (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2006), 91–103.

4. Hans-Hermann Hertle, "Die DDR an die Sowjetunion verkaufen? Stasi-Analysen zum ökonomischen Niedergang der DDR," *Deutschland Archiv* 42 (2009): 476–95; Hans-Hermann Hertle, "Wunderwirtschaft—Konsumsozialismus," in *Damals in der DDR: Alltag im Arbeiter- und Bauernstaat*, ed. Hans-Hermann Hertle and Stefan Wolle (Munich: Goldmann, 2006), 199–298, here 247ff.

5. Maria Haendcke-Hoppe-Arndt, *Die Hauptabteilung XVIII: Volkswirtschaft*, Anatomie der Staatssicherheit: Geschichte, Struktur und Methoden; MfS-Handbuch, part 3, vol. 10 (Berlin: Der Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, Abt. Bildung und Forschung, 1997).

6. The assumption that there were no unofficial Stasi collaborators within the Central

Committee apparatus cannot be maintained in light of new sources. See Stefan Wolle, *Die heile Welt der Diktatur: Alltag und Herrschaft in der DDR 1971–1989* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 1998), 106; the guidelines for work with unofficial Stasi collaborators contain no such indication. See Helmut Müller-Enbergs, ed., *Inoffizielle Mitarbeiter des Ministeriums für Staatssicherheit*, part 1: *Richtlinien und Durchführungsbestimmungen* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2010), 51ff.

7. Regarding Stasi reports on the economy, see Siegfried Suckut, "Seismographische Aufzeichnungen: Der Blick des MfS auf Staat und Gesellschaft in der DDR am Beispiel der Berichte an die SED-Führung 1976," in *Staatssicherheit und Gesellschaft: Studien zum Herrschaftsalltag in der DDR*, ed. Jens Gieseke (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2007), 99–128.

8. On the organization and operations of ZAIG, as well as the development of the reporting system, see Roger Engelmann and Frank Joestel, *Die Zentrale Auswertungs- und Informationsgruppe*, Anatomie der Staatssicherheit: Geschichte, Struktur und Methoden; MfS-Handbuch (Berlin: Der Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, Abt. Bildung und Forschung, 2009).

9. Siegfried Suckut, "Einleitung 1976," in *Die DDR im Blick der Stasi 1976: Die geheimen Berichte an die SED-Führung*, ed. Siegfried Suckut (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2009), 32–36.

10. See, for example, Eberhard Kuhrt in collaboration with Hannsjörg F. Buck and Gunter Holzweißig, eds., *Am Ende des realen Sozialismus: Beiträge zu einer Bestandsaufnahme der DDR-Wirklichkeit in den 80er Jahren*, vol. 2, *Die wirtschaftliche und ökologische Situation der DDR in den 80er Jahren* (Opladen: Leske + Budrich, 1996).

11. Henrik Eberle and Denise Wesenberg, eds., *Einverstanden, E. H.: Parteiinterne Hausmitteilungen, Briefe, Akten und Intrigen aus der Honecker-Zeit* (Berlin: Schwarzkopf & Schwarzkopf Verlag, 1999); Gerhard Schürer, *Gewagt und verloren: Eine deutsche Biographie*, 4th rev. ed. (Berlin: Frankfurter Oder Editionen, 1998); Günter Mittag, *Um jeden Preis: Im Spannungsfeld zweier Systeme* (Berlin: Aufbau-Verlag, 1991); Alexander Schalck-Golodkowski, *Deutsch-deutsche Erinnerungen* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 2000).

12. Archiv der Bundesbeauftragten für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (hereafter BStU), MfS, HA XVIII 16067, fols. 1–12, Hauptabteilung XVIII: Information on a conversation on April 24, 1978, with Chairman of the State Planning Commission and Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers Gerhard Schürer on economic problems, April 27, 1978.

13. Roland Wiedmann, *Die Organisationsstruktur des Ministeriums für Staatssicherheit 1989*, Anatomie der Staatssicherheit: Geschichte, Struktur und Methoden; MfS-Handbuch, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Der Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, Abt. Bildung und Forschung, 1996), 172–73.

14. Armin Volze, "Zur Devisenverschuldung der DDR—Entstehung, Bewältigung und Folgen," in *Am Ende des realen Sozialismus: Beiträge zu einer Bestandsaufnahme der DDR-Wirklichkeit in den 80er Jahren*, vol. 4, *Die Endzeit der DDR-Wirtschaft: Analysen zur*

Wirtschafts-, Sozial- und Umweltpolitik, ed. Eberhard Kuhrt in collaboration with Hannsjörg F. Buck and Gunter Holzweißig (Opladen: Leske + Budrich, 1999), 151–77.

15. For example, the decision of the SED Politburo on "Proposed solutions for the 1973 balance of payments with the capitalist economic area," November 28, 1972: Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv (hereafter SAPMO BA), DY 30 J IV 2/2A/1644.

16. At an exchange rate of $1 = 1.90 VM.

17. SAPMO BA, DY 30 J IV 2/2A/1644, Gerhard Schürer: Information on problems regarding the 1973 draft plan for the balance of payments with the capitalist economic area, November 24, 1972.

18. SAPMO BA, DY 30/5211, Information for the Politburo on the development of the balance of payments and foreign economic relations, September 18, 1980.

19. SAPMO BA, DY 30 J IV 2/2A/1644, Gerhard Schürer: Information on problems regarding the 1973 draft plan for the balance of payments with the capitalist economic area, November 24, 1972.

20. Ibid.

21. SAPMO BA, DY 30/5211, Information on the balance of payments and foreign economic relations through the end of August 1980, September 18, 1980.

22. BStU, MfS, HA XVIII 13329, fols. 19–21, Information of HA XVIII on the development of the balance of payments of the GDR with the non-socialist economic area, March 6, 1982.

23. SAPMO BA, DY 30 J IV 2/2/1899, Politburo resolution "on measures to fully secure the 1981 balance of payments with respect to the non-socialist economic area," June 30, 1981, which foresaw, for example, savings of Western imports of 1 billion VM.

24. SAPMO BA, DY 30 J IV 2/2A/1653, Directive on the political-ideological and economic tasks concerning trade with non-socialist countries for the implementation of the resolutions of the Eighth Party Congress, January 16, 1973.

25. André Steiner, *Von Plan zu Plan: Eine Wirtschaftsgeschichte der DDR* (Munich: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2004), 191–96.

26. Peter Skyba, "Politische Rahmenbedingungen 1971–1981," in *Geschichte der Sozialpolitik in Deutschland seit 1945*, vol. 10, *1971–1989: Deutsche Demokratische Republik; Bewegung in der Sozialpolitik, Erstarrung und Niedergang*, ed. Christoph Boyer, Klaus-Dietmar Henke, and Peter Skyba (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 2008), 5–34; Günter Manz, Ekkehard Sachse, and Gunnar Winkler, eds., *Sozialpolitik in der DDR: Ziele und Wirklichkeit* (Berlin: trafoverlag, 2001); Beatrix Bouvier, *Die DDR—ein Sozialstaat? Sozialpolitik in der Ära Honecker* (Bonn: Dietz, 2002); Peter Hübner and Christa Hübner, *Sozialismus als soziale Frage: Sozialpolitik in der DDR und Polen 1968–1976* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2008).

27. Peter Skyba, "Sozialpolitik als Herrschaftssicherung: Entscheidungsprozesse und Folgen in der DDR der siebziger Jahre," in *Der Schein der Normalität*: *Alltag und Herrschaft in der SED-Diktatur*, ed. Clemens Vollnhals and Jürgen Weber (Munich: Olzog, 2002), 39–80.

28. Peter Przybylski, *Tatort Politbüro: Die Akte Honecker* (Berlin: Rowohlt, 1991), 120–21.

29. Jörg Roesler, *Zwischen Plan und Markt: Die Wirtschaftsreform in der DDR zwischen 1963 und 1970* (Berlin: Haufe, 1990); André Steiner, *Die DDR-Wirtschaftsreform der sechziger Jahre: Konflikt zwischen Effizienz- und Machtkalkül* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1999).

30. Christoph Boyer and Peter Skyba, "Sozial- und Konsumpolitik als Stabilisierungsstrategie: Zur Genese der 'Einheit von Wirtschafts- und Sozialpolitik' in der DDR," *Deutschland Archiv* 32 (1999): 577–90.

31. Agnes Charlotte Tandler, *Geplante Zukunft: Wissenschaftler und Wissenschaftspolitik in der DDR 1955–1971* (Freiberg: Technische Universität Bergakademie, 2000).

32. Bundesarchiv [Federal Archives] Berlin (hereafter BArchB), DE 1/58746, Evaluation by Gerhard Schürer of the draft of the five-year plan for 1976 to 1980, October 6, 1976.

33. Peter Skyba, "Die Sozialpolitik der Ära Honecker aus institutionengeschichtlicher Perspektive," in *Repression und Wohlstandsversprechen: Zur Stabilisierung von Parteiherrschaft in der DDR und der ČSSR*, ed. Christoph Boyer and Peter Skyba (Dresden: Hannah-Arendt-Institut für Totalitarismusforschung, 1999), 49–62; André Steiner, "Zwischen Konsumversprechen und Innovationszwang: Zum wirtschaftlichen Niedergang der DDR," in *Weg in den Untergang: Der innere Zerfall der DDR*, ed. Konrad H. Jarausch and Martin Sabrow (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999), 153–92.

34. Peter Skyba and Christoph Boyer, "Gesellschaftliche Strukturen und sozialpolitische Denk- und Handlungsfelder," in Boyer, Henke, and Skyba, *Geschichte der Sozialpolitik*, vol. 10, 67–144.

35. Hertle, "Diskussion," 310.

36. BArchB, DE 1/58746, Note on a discussion with Erich Honecker, April 2, 1976.

37. BArchB, DE 1/58746, Message sent by Gerhard Schürer and Günter Mittag to Erich Honecker, March 14, 1977.

38. BArchB, DE 1/58746, Handwritten notes by Gerhard Schürer on a personal conversation with Erich Honecker dated April 28, 1977. See Hertle, "Diskussion," 315.

39. See for example the notes on the consultation regarding the draft of the five-year plan of November 5, 1976: BArchB, DE 1/58746.

40. SAPMO BA, DY 30 IV 2/11/v. 5472, Cadre file of Gerhard Schürer.

41. See the interview with "Dr. Horst R.," in Gisela Karau, *Stasiprotokolle: Gespräche mit ehemaligen Mitarbeitern des "Ministeriums für Staatssicherheit" der DDR* (Frankfurt a. M.: Dipa-Verlag, 1992), 20–34.

42. Reinhard Buthmann, *Die Arbeitsgruppe Bereich Kommerzielle Koordinierung*, Anatomie der Staatssicherheit: Geschichte, Struktur und Methoden; MfS-Handbuch, part 3, vol. 11 (Berlin: Der Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, Abt. Bildung und Forschung, 2003), 7.

43. Peter Przybylski, *Tatort Politbüro*, vol. 2, *Honecker, Mittag und Schalck-Golodkowski* (Berlin: Rowohlt, 1992), 141ff.

44. BArchB, DE 1/58746, Note on the discussion with Erich Honecker on April 2, 1976, regarding issues with the five-year plan of 1976 to 1980.

45. BArchB, DE 1/58746, Notes on the consultation on the draft of the five-year plan on November 5, 1976, with Honecker, as well as mention of the consultation with the general secretary on November 18, 1977.

46. BArchB, DE 1/58746, Notes by Heinz Klopfer on the Politburo discussion regarding the draft law on the 1978 economic plan dated November 22, 1977.

47. Gerhard Schürer, "Planung und Lenkung der Volkswirtschaft in der DDR—Ein Zeitzeugenbericht aus dem Zentrum der DDR-Wirtschaftslenkung," in Kuhrt, *Am Ende*

des realen Sozialismus, vol. 4, 61–98, here 84; André Steiner, "Möglichkeiten und Grenzen einer Planwirtschaft," in *Die DDR im Rückblick: Politik, Wirtschaft, Gesellschaft, Kultur*, ed. Helga Schultz and Hans-Jürgen Wagner (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2007), 135–53.

48. SAPMO BA, DY 30 J IV 2/2/1430, Resolution on the balance of payments and foreign economic relations at the Politburo meeting of January 16, 1973.

49. SAPMO BA, DY 30/25758, Information provided by Werner Krolikowski to Leonid Brezhnev, October 24, 1980.

50. SAPMO BA, DY 30/25758, Werner Krolikowski on the state of the GDR, June 16, 1982.

51. Buchheim, "Achillesferse," 97.

52. BArchB, DE 1/56320, Gerhard Schürer, Justification for the submission of an "analysis of the economic situation of the GDR with conclusions," October 30, 1989.

53. Cited in accordance with the minutes of conversations with Gerhard Schürer and Siegfried Wenzel, in Pirker et al., *Der Plan als Befehl und Fiktion*, 82.

54. The record was most likely provided by the head of HA XVIII/4, Central Planning and Financial Authorities, Lieutenant Colonel Horst Roigk, and forwarded to the head of HA XVIII, Alfred Kleine, as well as to Minister Erich Mielke. Alfred Kleine confirmed this in a verbal statement on October 25, 2010.

55. This concerns a consultation of SPK department heads and deputies to Gerhard Schürer: Heinz Klopfer, Bruno Lietz, Siegfried Wenzel, Richard Müller, Karl Grünheid, and Friedrich Schiefer.

56. The Exquisit shops that had been opening since 1962 primarily featured quality goods—mostly imported—from the textile, leather, and fur industries. They were offered at significantly inflated prices, but could be paid for in East German marks. In 1976 these facilities were supplemented by Delikat shops for food and luxury goods. In the 1980s there were some 300 Exquisit and 550 Delikat shops.

57. Beginning in January 1978, the West German Volkswagen company delivered 10,000 Golf cars to the GDR as part of a compensation deal.

58. This refers to the National Youth Festival, which the Freie Deutsche Jugend (FDJ—Free German Youth) held from June 1 to 3, 1979, in Berlin. Hundreds of thousands of young people gathered there for political rallies and numerous cultural events. The festival, like the traditional Pentecost meetings of the FDJ, served to politically legitimize the GDR as an autonomous state. The obligatory march of participating FDJ members past party and state leaders was intended to express the unreserved approval of the GDR youth for the political course of the SED.

59. This evidently refers to the Eighth Party Congress of the SED, held in June 1971, as the Ninth Party Congress took place in May 1976. Schürer's recollection of the discussion with Honecker refers to the year 1975.

60. Schürer is alluding here to the economic difficulties that arose in the fall of 1965 from the discrepancy between the targeted economic growth rates and what was possible in reality. In early December 1965 the Politburo held the SPK, and especially its chairman, Erich Apel, responsible for this. The day after the Politburo meeting, Apel committed suicide.

61. Lietz served as deputy chairman of the SPK and head of the Forestry and Food Industry Department from 1972 to 1981. In November 1982 he became minister for agriculture, forestry, and the food industry.

62. Gerhard Grüneberg served as agriculture secretary of the Central Committee of the SED from 1960 and became a member of the Politburo in 1966.

63. During its meeting on February 14, 1978, the Politburo passed a resolution titled "Lessons from the Harvest," which attributed losses in agricultural yield to deficiencies in leadership.

64. Willi Stoph served as chairman of the Council of Ministers of the GDR from 1964 to 1973, then as chairman of the State Council from 1973 to 1976. He again served as chairman of the Council of Ministers from 1976 to 1989. He was a member of the Politburo from July 1953 until November 1989.

65. Harry Tisch held the position of chairman of the Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund (FDGB—Free German Trade Union Federation) from 1975 to 1989. He became a candidate member of the Politburo in 1971 and a full member in 1975.

66. The reference here is to the Ninth SED Party Congress, which as noted took place in May 1976.

67. This refers to the import of Volkswagen Golf cars in 1978.

68. Compensation transactions were preferred practices in trade with Western industrial countries or Third World countries, where goods did not have to be paid for exclusively with convertible currencies but could be settled entirely or partially through exchanges of other goods and services. Compensation transactions were common in East-West trade, as the East German business partners had limited access to convertible currency.

69. This refers to the holiday and recreational homes of the FDGB unified trade union.

70. Bau- und Montagekombinat (construction and assembly combine).

71. This refers to the stockpiles of goods that were produced beyond the targets set in the national economic plan, but which could not find buyers owing to poor quality or insufficient usability.

72. This refers to the montan wax factory in Amsdorf, Saxony-Anhalt, which had been producing and exporting raw montan wax since 1922. This plant-based fossil wax is still extracted today from the lignite in the Amsdorf open pit. Raw montan wax serves as a raw material in the cleaning and care products industry, as precision-casting wax, and as an additive in the rubber, cable, plastics, bitumen, and asphalt industries. It is also used in the cosmetics industry.

73. This refers to the profitability of exports to Western countries.

74. Alexander Schalck-Golodkowski had been a "special operations officer" for the Ministry for State Security since 1966, and, as such, one of the deputy ministers in the Ministry for Foreign Trade since December 1966, as well as state secretary from 1975. He became head of the Commercial Coordination department in April 1966.

75. Wolfram Krause was the secretary of the SED district organization of the SPK and in this role one of Schürer's deputies. The specific reference made by Schürer could not be identified.

76. The identity of this unofficial collaborator of the Ministry for State Security could not be established.

The More Political, the Less Economic

A Comment on Andreas Malycha's "Unvarnished Truths"

JONATHAN R. ZATLIN

When is economics really a question of politics? According to Andreas Malycha, it is when politicians ignore economic reality with impunity. His short survey of the East German economy under Erich Honecker, who ruled the German Democratic Republic (GDR) from 1971 to its collapse in 1989, foregrounds the tensions between the country's economic needs and the party leadership's insistence on ignoring them. Alongside an engaging analysis of the GDR's economic development, Malycha's tale includes examples of palace intrigue, sycophantic yes-men, Cassandra-like truth tellers, and a security apparatus willing to spy on its masters. These players infuse what is otherwise a dismal portrait of foreseeable economic ruin and shocking political hybris with an element of Greek tragedy.

In remarkably clear terms, Malycha explains that Honecker's economic reforms, which initially drew support from a wide array of Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (SED—Socialist Unity Party of Germany) politicians, were quickly overtaken by material realities, including the rising costs of natural resources on international markets, the declining efficiency of the GDR's industrial base, and the pitfalls of central planning. The convergence of these factors led Honecker's economic advisers, most prominently State Planning Commissioner Gerhard Schürer, to advocate for measures to slow the country's accumulation of foreign debt. Honecker refused, preferring to regard any criticism of his economic policies as an attack on his person. Soon after, the GDR became effectively unable to pay its bills, and the ensuing shocks to the East German economy contributed mightily to the popular unrest that upended German communism in 1989. If they knew where things were headed, however, why did party leaders accede to Honecker's refusal to accept any belt-tightening? For Malycha the explanation for this central question lies not in Marxist-Leninist ideology, policy preferences, or institutional arrangements, but in a clash of personalities.

For those familiar with the latter half of the GDR's existence, it will come as no surprise that Honecker is the villain of Malycha's story. Within years of ousting his mentor and patron, Walter Ulbricht, in 1971, the self-styled general secretary of the SED had become as imperious toward his colleagues as he was impervious to economic reason. As many have pointed out, Honecker's signature program, entitled the "Principal Task of the Unity of Social and Economic Policy," was as poorly conceived as it was named. Despite the suggestion that social and economic policy were somehow "united" in the "Principal Task," both were in fact subordinated to Honecker's principal goal: raising living standards as a method of securing communist rule. Placing consumption ahead of production, however, marked a major departure from prior policy. Under Ulbricht the path to prosperity in a country that claimed to be morally and economically superior to capitalism was paved with increases in productivity, or how much is produced relative to what is used to produce it. According to Ulbricht's logic, captured in such slogans as "the way we work today is the way we will live tomorrow," investing in heavy industry here and now would enable future consumption.[1]

In contrast, Honecker, who came to power in part because Ulbricht's policies had thrown the planned economy into disarray, suggested that Ulbricht's relative neglect of consumption had demoralized East Germans, thereby depressing labor productivity, or how efficiently workers use their time and resources to produce goods and services. Reasoning that raising consumption levels would stimulate labor productivity, Honecker reversed the economic logic that had prevailed under Ulbricht. As with his diplomatic successes, moreover, he seems to have viewed increased living standards as meaningful only to the extent that they increased political stability and thus the party's power. The purpose of the Principal Task, mostly referred to as "the Unity" in SED parlance, was to deliver the improvements to consumption necessary to distance his leadership from the relative austerity of Ulbricht's rule while promoting greater compliance with the SED's control over East German institutions—and by extrapolation, Honecker's own power.[2]

Though it seems irresponsible in retrospect, Honecker's gamble that more creature comforts might lead people to accept less freedom was not unreasonable. Regimes as disparate as Suharto's Indonesia, Augusto Pinochet's Chile, Vladimir Putin's Russia, and Xi Jinping's China have embraced a mix of expansive political repression and partial market liberalizations aimed at muzzling dissent while generating wealth.[3] One might argue, moreover, that Honecker's overestimation of labor productivity as a component of overall productivity was ideologically rooted in Marxist-Leninist principles, deriving as it did from

communism's overemphasis on the working class as the subject of history. The principal problem with the Principal Task, however, was that Honecker's attempt to buy East Germans off cost too much. The GDR's moribund productive capacities, hobbled as they were by the structural inefficiencies of economic planning, were simply not up to the task of improving the country's dilapidated residential housing, much less manufacturing consumer goods in the quantity and quality East Germans desired.[4] Starving East Germany's aging industrial base of key investments, moreover, eventually lowered productivity further, making East German exports less competitive on international markets. As a result East Germans under Honecker consumed more than they produced, living today the way they were going to have to work tomorrow.

By the mid-1970s it had become abundantly clear to his economic advisers that Honecker's attempt to wag the political dog by its economic tail was bankrupting the country. He, however, refused to heed their warnings. Instead, he doubled down on the Principal Task, even importing Western consumer goods to supplement what the planned economy could supply. These Western items, from jeans and shoes to cigarettes and coffee, were popular with East Germans. The problem, however, was that the regime had to pay for them in hard currency. And the GDR could not pay. Over time, East German exports to capitalist countries faltered; even then, they mostly fetched less Western currency on international markets than they cost to make at home. As the terms of trade shifted against the GDR, the country's balance of payments rapidly turned negative. Unable to pay its bills, the socialist state was forced to turn to its capitalist neighbor for handouts—most notably in 1983/84, when the Federal Republic bailed the GDR out to the tune of 2 billion West German marks.[5]

Relying on West German financial largesse to mitigate the financial failures of the Principal Task had grave political ramifications. Borrowing money from the West German social market economy not only underscored the planned economy's shortcomings, but it also mortgaged the future of German communism to the class enemy—to a hostile neighbor that shared the same language, history, and customs, yet competed with the GDR for political legitimacy. In practical terms the failure to create a socialist alternative to capitalist models of consumerism invited unflattering comparisons with West German capitalism, a system that boasted higher living standards, superior creature comforts, and more political liberties. Over time this meant that SED leaders discredited the planned economy through their own policies in much the same way that their public preference for driving Swedish Volvos over East German Trabants demeaned the GDR's automotive industry. One might even argue that Honeck-

er's attempt to extract political acquiescence from the population in return for material concessions not only backfired, but also underscored for most East Germans that the GDR was running on empty.

Where there is a villain, there is always a hero. In Malycha's tale, that is Schürer, the man who became state planning commissioner when his predecessor, Erich Apel, committed suicide in 1965 after Ulbricht blamed him for the failure of his reforms. In 1973 Schürer became a candidate member of the Politburo as a reward for helping Honecker topple Ulbricht and consolidate his power. Alone among Honecker's advisers, it was Schürer who consistently offered objections to the general secretary's economic policies. Repeatedly rebuffed by Honecker, yet desperate to make himself heard, Schürer eventually turned to the Stasi. As Malycha observes, Schürer's conversation with Colonel Horst Roigk revealed nothing that the Stasi leadership did not already know. Instead, Malycha portrays Schürer as a victim of the "ongoing struggle" that raged inside him "between economic expertise and party discipline." Malycha is almost wistful regarding what might have been had Schürer not acquiesced to the "political pressure from the general secretary and the majority of the Politburo."[6]

Perhaps I have become cynical as I grow older and things unravel in the liberal-democratic West, but any story that assumes a top politician would speak truth to power gives me pause. Any tale that transforms the Stasi into the guardian of the truth, however, is a very tall tale indeed. Let us take each argument in turn, but end by separating the policy from the person, so that affective allegiances to social theory and sympathy for specific actors do not distort an otherwise sober evaluation of the way that the GDR's institutional arrangements allowed political interest to confuse economic reason.

That Schürer was courageous where Honecker was feckless is beyond doubt. In April 1977, for example, Schürer and Economic Secretary Günter Mittag banded together to impress upon Honecker that a change in economic course was necessary. In a joint letter they warned that the Principal Task had permitted "years of excessive imports of commodities which, after their use in the GDR, do not contribute directly to increasing productivity and thereby to the source of their repayment."[7] Honecker responded by rejecting their arguments out of hand and accusing them of insubordination. In a 1995 interview Schürer told me that Honecker was so upset that he became "furious and red in the face," insisting that "the cause [of the debt] is not, as you wrote, that more has been consumed since 1971 than produced."[8] The general secretary then accused his advisers of seeking to humiliate him before the party. "What has been suggested means deep cuts [in the standard of living]. We would have to go before the Central Committee and say: We did not foresee this or we lied to you."[9] In

other words, Honecker could not conceive that he had made what we might call a capital mistake, preferring instead to believe that the party (and therefore his leadership) could not be wrong because it had history on its side.

It is certainly possible to view this intervention by Schürer and Mittag as a turning point that failed to turn. Taken aback by Honecker's vehemence, both men beat a hasty retreat, apologizing for their audacity and declaring their unconditional fealty to Honecker. As Malycha observes, party discipline certainly played a role in their decision. To this we might add the political mystique of Honecker's biography, for he had impeccable antifascist credentials, incarcerated as he was from 1935 to 1945 in various Nazi prisons, while Schürer and Mittag had loyally served the "Third Reich."[10] The strength of Malycha's argument is not simply its psychologically satisfying condemnation of Honecker's irresponsibility or the way it plays up Schürer's moral integrity, but also its use of these two personalities to understand how politics could triumph over economics. To restate Malycha's argument in conceptual terms, Communist Party discipline coupled with the absence of democratic deliberation fueled the narcissistic proclivities of Honecker, the autocrat. At a structural level, Malycha's analysis acknowledges a central irony of communist rule, namely that the GDR, a regime whose claim to legitimacy rested on the argument that politics was merely an expression of economic conflict, was undone by communist politicians who turned a blind eye to economic reality, thus turning their own ideological order on its head.

An alternative explanation for Schürer's behavior is that he, too, loved power, but was nowhere as shrewd a politician as Honecker. Along these lines, Schürer and Mittag's intervention in 1977 can be read as a model of political miscalculation. By 1976 Honecker had outmaneuvered his former allies in the coup against Ulbricht, consolidated his power, and silenced any talk of collective leadership (a series of events that took place in parallel with and connected to the jockeying for power in Moscow, which only increased Soviet strongman Leonid Brezhnev's sympathy for Honecker). The two men waited to effect change at a most inopportune moment; with Honecker's rivals weakened, Schürer and Mittag were left politically exposed. No politician surrenders power voluntarily, and Honecker had no incentive to give up his policymaking powers to Schürer and Mittag. The same was true for Schürer and Mittag. Each man in his own way desired power far more than they did the GDR's welfare. The difference between the two men lay not in their loyalties to Honecker or economic reason, but in their talents and shamelessness.

By all accounts Mittag was the more talented but also the more shameless. Wary of losing his position as economic secretary, Mittag submitted to Honecker without reservation. He soon became Honecker's most effective attack dog,

ruthlessly shutting down any criticism whatsoever of his master's policies.[11] In fact Mittag's love of power was so complete that he willingly placed his considerable economic talents in the service of policies he knew were disastrous. He was supremely skilled at the kind of backroom politics that mattered in the dictatorship. His talent for undermining existing precedent and deliberative bodies is best illustrated by his creation of the Economic Commission, which effectively usurped the economic functions of the state during the 1980s. As Gerhard Beil, the minister for foreign trade from 1986 to 1990, put it, "if you were not a member, you had no say. But if you were a member, you had to deliver what Mittag wanted."[12]

Despite his economic expertise and political gifts, Mittag was a model sycophant of the kind that rigidly hierarchic regimes often produce, whether they are autocracies, capitalist enterprises, or private universities. At every turn Mittag managed upward and kicked downward, demonstrating his loyalty toward the general secretary in the most servile of ways, then humiliating ministers and maltreating managers in rearguard attempts to improve East German productivity. To the GDR's great detriment, Mittag inspired so much trust in the general secretary that he became the second most powerful man in the GDR, and so much loathing in his colleagues that he became the most hated figure in the SED. If ever there were a blackguard, it was surely Mittag.

By contrast Schürer cut a more sympathetic figure. But that hardly makes him a hero, much less the defender of the GDR's economic virtue. Yet historians (including me) have generally portrayed Schürer in a more positive light than his actions merit. It is tempting, given the narrative requirements of economic history, to make Schürer into the ventriloquist's dummy. After all, even the most technical accounts of the planned economy necessitate distinctions between "sound" and "unsound" economic logic. Where Honecker and Mittag were the progenitors of bad policy, Schürer's warnings usefully serve as a touchstone of economic reason amid the confusion of competing political imperatives.

Schürer was also willing to speak openly with researchers. That is best illustrated by his cooperation with Hans-Hermann Hertle, whose pathbreaking work helped map conflicts over policy among SED leaders.[13] My own experience with Schürer was that he was generally a more engaging discussion partner than almost any other East German politician I had the good fortune to interview, from Egon Krenz to Hans Modrow, and Christa Luft to Lothar de Mazière. Schürer also lent me his professional network, which enabled me not only to build my own, but also to speak with numerous second-tier figures, who had things to say that were often more valuable than their bosses. After rereading my own work, it is fair to say that I was too kind to Schürer. I think Malycha is as well.

Setting aside the demands of storytelling and the myopia of contemporary historians, however, the sources suggest that Schürer was more attracted to power than policy. Periodically, Schürer would satisfy his economic instincts by articulating his apprehensions about the GDR's growing debt. But he did so only on paper. After the GDR collapsed, Schürer portrayed himself as the chief defender of the country's economic health, claiming that he had warned Honecker as early as 1972 that his policies were bankrupting the GDR.[14] If he did speak out that early, the archives are mute witnesses, which suggests that Schürer's warnings were at best ineffective. In 2002 Beil contended that Schürer's protocols were self-serving, and warned against "retrospective attempts to find principled resistance where there are only objections to specific forms." To illustrate his point, Beil pointed out that Schürer was the main source of the 1977 altercation over runaway consumption. At the very least, Beil maintained, Schürer exaggerated his resistance to Honecker; at the worst, he was a coward.[15] Beil's harsh assessment of Schürer's person was every bit a function of his obvious distaste for him, his own frustrations at Honecker's obstinacy, and a continued allegiance to anticapitalism that viewed Schürer as treasonous, all of which he relayed in conversation years after the GDR had collapsed.

Whatever Beil's biases, there is little evidence that Schürer did more than register his views in Politburo meetings. After the 1977 meeting with Mittag and Honecker, there is no indication that Schürer worked against Honecker or with his critics—and there were quite a few—to effect real change in economic policy. It is true that Schürer's concerns became flashpoints for tensions over Honecker's leadership from time to time, but not because he intended it. In 1980, for example, Willi Stoph seized on one of Schürer's gloomy forecasts about the consequences of slowing economic growth to challenge Honecker during a Politburo meeting. Once one of Honecker's chief rivals, Stoph had joined together with him to push Ulbricht aside, and briefly served as head of state before Honecker removed him in 1976; during the revolution of 1989, it was the disgruntled Stoph who moved to dismiss Honecker from his leadership positions. In 1980, however, Honecker and Mittag successfully shut Stoph down by attacking the state planning commissioner's prognostications. Among other things Honecker dismissed concerns about the GDR's debt, rashly reassuring his colleagues that "some comrades were saying that we would go bankrupt now. There can be no talk of that." Schürer did not contradict the general secretary.[16] Nor did he remind Honecker that he had been right once his predictions that the GDR faced insolvency were vindicated a few years later, much less use this turn of events to force a policy correction. Clearly, Schürer was not worried enough about the economy to do something about it, much less risk his utility

to a boss who eagerly sidelined uncomfortable colleagues. He was not the man to play Honecker to Honecker's Ulbricht.

In 1988 Stoph launched a more carefully orchestrated assault on Honecker's leadership, once again using one of Schürer's reports as the pretext. Schürer's memorandum, which proposed drastic reductions in the subsidies for consumer goods that were at the core of Honecker's policies, was confidential. But Stoph obtained a copy and circulated it to members of the Politburo and the Council of Ministers in any case, effectively making Schürer's proposals public.[17] Mittag responded predictably, refuting Schürer's thirteen pages with a thirty-five-page screed of his own. This time, however, Stoph did not allow himself to be silenced. Declaring that the GDR's financial predicament was "no longer tolerable for any of us," Stoph suggested that Honecker had been disloyal to the party by driving the GDR into debt.[18] Rather than speak out on his own behalf or support Stoph, however, Schürer once again remained silent. Honecker successfully dismissed the report as too technical and unworthy of further discussion. The moment passed.

All of this is a way of saying that Schürer risked little to prevent the GDR from the fate he knew awaited it. Malycha explains Schürer's inaction by arguing that his loyalty to economic veracity was negated by his loyalty to the Communist Party. There are other possible explanations for Schürer's apparent paralysis, however. Alongside his affective attachments to Marxism-Leninism and his political clumsiness, Schürer was simply too attached to power to risk his positions at the top of the party and state. He was careful to avoid giving enough offense that Honecker might remove him. But neither did he choose to resign, much less follow the example of his predecessor, Apel, even though he certainly admitted to toying with both possibilities: every morning, he claimed, he eyed the bullet hole from Apel's pistol in the wall, which he had refused to spackle over as a way of reminding himself of the significance of his position.[19] Perhaps that bullet hole helped him reconcile himself to the loneliness of a battle for a cause he knew was lost. Whatever the case, he accepted the limitations of his position over time, retreating into understanding his role as Mittag and Honecker did—as implementing rather than making policy. More importantly, the considerable power he wielded made it easier for him to absorb his collisions with Honecker and Mittag.

The conflicts over economic policy in the Politburo form only part of the context that produced the document that Malycha discovered in the archives. From that conversation, it would be easy to conclude that Schürer sought to draw the security apparatus into action against Honecker and Mittag by passing sensitive information about the GDR's financial health to a high-ranking Stasi agent. In fact, however, the meeting was most likely routine, for Roigk

was Schürer's liaison at the Stasi. Roigk worked in Main Department XVIII of the Ministry for State Security (MfS), which was charged with protecting the integrity of the East German economy; as director of Section 4, he was responsible for the activities of the State Planning Commission. Because of their respective positions, moreover, the two men had known each other for quite some time. Early in his career Roigk had overseen the transfer of money from West German churches to their East German counterparts. In 1966 he briefly led KoKo (Bereich Kommerzielle Koordinierung), an organization founded to bolster the GDR's solvency by engaging in clandestine hard-currency activities. A few months later he was replaced by Alexander Schalck-Golodkowski, whose ingenuity soon made KoKo a large source of hard-currency revenue indispensable to the regime, after which Roigk joined Main Department XVIII.[20] Roigk's personal reasons for disliking Schalck converged with his ideological identification with the USSR. Like many Stasi agents, but particularly the members of Main Department XVIII, Mittag and Schalck's attempt to resolve the GDR's financial constraints by expanding trade relations with the West took on the contours of a security risk. In short, Schürer knew his criticism of the GDR's economic trajectory would fall on sympathetic ears.[21]

This tussle over the GDR's Cold War orientation had less to do with a clash of personalities, economic expertise, or party discipline than the very real impediments to modernizing the East German economy. As a small country the GDR possessed neither the domestic markets nor the natural resources to go it alone. As a closed society the GDR could hardly accept Western technology without fear of becoming dependent on its capitalist enemies. Relying on the Soviet Union to innovate its way out of this financial quagmire, however, seemed like a losing bet, for the Soviets were falling further and further behind the digital transformation of Western societies. Under Mikhail Gorbachev, moreover, the Soviets sought to live within their own means, slashing the subsidies for the natural resources, such as oil, on which the GDR relied. These threats to the GDR's survival, together with West Germany's concerted efforts to undermine East Germany's autonomy, however peacefully, made for unlikely coalitions inside the Politburo. Even Stasi chief Erich Mielke, one of Honecker's most loyal intimates, was taken aback by the row in 1980 between Honecker and Stoph over consumption. Anxious to understand the substance of the argument, Mielke tasked Roigk with putting together a report that December on the GDR's economic health. Roigk seized the opportunity to sound the alarm and offered a scathing critique of Mittag and Schalck's westward tilt. But the status-conscious Mielke, furious that Roigk had dared to criticize the economic secretary of the Central Committee of the SED, ordered Roigk to destroy the report, formally

reprimanded him, and forced two of Roigk's coworkers to exercise self-criticism for their arrogance. Mielke's outrage over Roigk's lapse in protocol, however, did nothing to assuage his concerns about the increasingly comfortable relationship with West Germany or clarify his confusion about the GDR's financial future. To learn more he turned to Roigk's boss, Main Department XVIII chief Lieutenant General Alfred Kleine, and requested a more considered report on the state of the economy. Kleine's report was more diplomatic but no less damning of the Principal Task.

At this juncture Mielke could have allied himself with Stoph, who also saw the GDR's economic salvation in Moscow rather than Bonn. But Mielke was completely loyal to Honecker. For his help in overthrowing Ulbricht, Honecker had rewarded Mielke personally and institutionally. Not only did the general secretary bring the minister for state security into the Politburo, making him a full member in 1976 (in contrast to Schürer, who remained a candidate member), but Honecker eagerly embraced the importance of the security apparatus as part of his approach to governance. At some point during the 1970s, the two men started meeting privately after every Politburo session to discuss what had transpired. Honecker also allowed Mielke to expand the Stasi's reach dramatically, more than doubling the number of police agents between 1971 and 1989.

This is all a roundabout way of saying that the analysis of Schürer's character is fascinating, for we all want to know more about the personalities of people in power, especially autocrats. But his actions do not explain why political fancy won out over economic reality. At a conceptual level, disputes over personalities and even policies are epiphenomenal; in the GDR, they were manifestations of the institutional arrangements and affective allegiances that shaped the East German dictatorship. Contrasting Schürer's relative moral integrity with Honecker's denial of economic reality makes for a good story, but it obscures the basic fact that, no matter who ran the State Planning Commission, it was fundamentally incapable of holding producers to planning targets or protecting the plan from politically motivated (mis)allocations of resources. In the last analysis, the Planning Commission was a politically disempowered organization charged with an economically impossible task. More importantly, the idea that Roigk might somehow have employed his conversation with Schürer to salvage the GDR's economy from the dustheap of history thoroughly misrepresents the Stasi's institutional purpose. In contrast to the State Planning Commission, the Stasi wielded real power. But it did so by producing knowledge through surveillance, blackmail, and violence, which it then used to obtain the willing and unwilling compliance of the population. Because it traded in lies and intimidation, the MfS was by definition incapable of acting as a whistleblower. As an essential

tool of the party's hegemony over East German society, moreover, "the shield and the sword of the party" was institutionally incapable of acknowledging that some truths were beyond even the SED's power to control. Besides, even if Mielke had been able to jump over his shadow, the Stasi's violent response to popular protests during 1989 suggests just how costly its attempt to rescue the dictatorship would have been.

In the end the GDR collapsed not because Honecker refused to listen to economic reason, Schürer was too torn between his economic expertise and his party loyalty to stand up for his views, Mittag was odious, Roigk spoke truth to power, or Mielke was secretive and violent. The GDR collapsed because its political leadership kicked the economic can down the road until it ran out of road. The SED's most compelling claim to political power lay in its argument that the planned economy was efficacious and just, and an important guardrail against that most extreme iteration of capitalism, fascism. The fact that the economy guaranteed the SED's political irrelevance and facilitated the dissolution of the GDR is either tragic or farcical, depending on your point of view.

Notes

1. On Ulbricht's policies, see Hartmut Berghoff and Ute Andrea Balbier, eds., *The East German Economy, 1945–2010: Falling Behind or Catching Up?* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013); Peter C. Caldwell, *Dictatorship, State Planning, and Social Theory in the German Democratic Republic* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003); Dierk Hoffmann, *Die DDR unter Ulbricht: Gewaltsame Neuordnung und gescheiterte Modernisierung* (Zürich: Pendo, 2003); Jeffrey Kopstein, *The Politics of Economic Decline in East Germany, 1945–1989* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1997); André Steiner, *Die DDR-Wirtschaftsreform der sechziger Jahre: Konflikt zwischen Effizienz- und Machtkalkül* (Berlin: Akademie, 1999).

2. Mark Allinson, "More from Less: Ideological Gambling with the Unity of Economic and Social Policy in Honecker's GDR," *Central European History* 45, no. 1 (March 2012): 102–27; Peter Grieder, "The Overthrow of Ulbricht in East Germany: A New Interpretation," *Journal of Contemporary Central and Eastern Europe* 6, no. 1 (1998): 8–45; Peter Grieder, *The East German Leadership, 1946–1973: Conflict and Crisis* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1999); Dierk Hoffmann, *Von Ulbricht zu Honecker: Die Geschichte der DDR 1949–1989* (Berlin: be.bra, 2013); Nathan Morley, *The Man Who Built the Berlin Wall: The Rise and Fall of Erich Honecker* (Yorkshire: Pen and Sword History, 2023); Rüdiger Bergien, *Inside Party Headquarters: Organizational Culture and Practice of Rule in the Socialist Unity Party of Germany*, trans. David Burnett (New York: Berghahn, 2023).

3. The liberal expectation, informed by the history of modern autocracies, is that markets ultimately destabilize police states, even when constrained by crony capitalism or economic planning. So far, however, Putin and Xi have successfully harnessed a combination of pop-

ulist nationalism and technological control to stabilize their regimes. Although Honecker had begun to emphasize the peculiarities of East German identity, celebrating such figures as Martin Luther, East German patriotism was not robust enough to fend off the lure of a pan-German solution to the GDR's economic problems. Nor is it clear how the regime might have dealt with the decentralized dissemination of information that has accompanied the digital age.

4. In addition to the destruction of fixed capital and residential housing during World War II and the reparations paid to the Soviet Union in terms of plant and equipment, the most significant investments in the region's infrastructure and factories dated to the mid-1930s. See Kopstein, *Politics of Decline*; Dierk Hoffmann, ed., *Die Zentrale Wirtschaftsverwaltung in der SBZ/DDR: Akteure, Strukturen, Verwaltungspraxis* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2016); Rainer Karlsch, *Allein bezahlt? Die Reparationsleistungen der SBZ/DDR 1945–53* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 1993); André Steiner, *The Plans That Failed: An Economic History of the GDR*, trans. Ewald Osers (New York: Berghahn, 2010); Jonathan R. Zatlin, *The Currency of Socialism: Money and Political Culture in East Germany* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007). The literature on consumption in the GDR is sprawling. See, for example, Katherine Pence and Paul Betts, eds., *Socialist Modern: East German Everyday Culture and Politics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008); Philipp Heldmann, *Herrschaft, Wirtschaft, Anoraks: Konsumpolitik in der DDR der Sechzigerjahre* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004); Dierk Hoffmann, "Mangelwirtschaft—Konsum als Herausforderung in der Planwirtschaft der DDR," in *Konsum im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Christian Kleinschmidt and Jan Logemann (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2021), 563–88; Ina Merkel, *Utopie und Bedürfnis: Die Geschichte der Konsumkultur in der DDR* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1999); Eli Rubin, *Synthetic Socialism: Plastics and Dictatorship in the German Democratic Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008); Judd Stitziel, *Fashioning Socialism: Clothing, Politics, and Consumer Culture in East Germany* (New York: Berg, 2005); Zatlin, *Currency of Socialism*.

5. For the context, see Zatlin, *Currency of Socialism*, 105–99.

6. Andreas Malycha, "Ungeschminkte Wahrheiten: Ein vertrauliches Gespräch von Gerhard Schürer, Chefplaner der DDR, mit der Stasi über die Wirtschaftspolitik der SED im April 1978," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 59, no. 2 (April 2011): 283–305, here 296. An English translation of Malycha's article appears in this volume as "Unvarnished Truths: A Confidential Conversation between Gerhard Schürer, Chief Economic Planner of the GDR, and the Stasi in April 1978 about the SED's Economic Policies."

7. Bundesarchiv [Federal Archives] Berlin (hereafter BArchB), DE 1/56323, fol. 410, Günter Mittag and Gerhard Schürer to Erich Honecker, March 14, 1977.

8. Gerhard Schürer, interview by Jonathan R. Zatlin, Berlin, April 19, 1995; BArchB, DE 1/56323, fol. 372, "Zum Material vom 14.3.1977."

9. BArchB, DE 1/56323, fol. 372, "Zum Material vom 14.3.1977." Well aware of his place in history, Honecker added that "in [your] proposal it ends up looking as if the policy after Ulbricht was wrong, as if Ulbricht incurred no debts and Honecker creates debts" (Hans-Hermann Hertle, "Die Diskussion der ökonomischen Krisen in der Führungsspitze der

SED," in *Der Plan als Befehl und Fiktion: Wirtschaftsführung in der DDR; Gespräche und Analysen*, ed. Theo Pirker et al. [Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1995], 309–45, here 315).

10. Schürer, interview.

11. Mittag was economic secretary from 1962 to 1973, when Honecker used a particularly embarrassing instance of his alcoholism as a pretext to demote him. The real reasons for removing Mittag likely involved his lack of political dependency on Honecker. In 1976 Honecker reinstated Mittag as economic secretary for a variety of reasons, including the complete incompetence of Mittag's brief replacement, Werner Krolikowski, who was also a drunkard; Mittag's decision to forswear alcohol, which he never again touched; Mittag's economic expertise and political skills; and his ability to impress Honecker with his devotion.

12. Gerhard Beil, interview by Jonathan R. Zatlin, Berlin, July 7, 2002.

13. See, for example, Hans-Hermann Hertle, *Vor dem Bankrott der DDR: Dokumente des Politbüros des ZK der SED aus dem Jahre 1988 zum Scheitern der "Einheit von Wirtschafts- und Sozialpolitik" (Die Schürer-Mittag Kontroverse); mit einem Gespräch mit Gerhard Schürer, ehem. Mitglied des Politbüros und Vorsitzender der Staatlichen Plankommission der DDR* (Berlin: Zentralinstitut für Sozialwissenschaftliche Forschung, 1991); Hans-Hermann Hertle, "Staatsbankrott: Der ökonomische Untergang des SED-Staates," *Deutschland Archiv* 25 (1992): 1019–30; Hertle, "Diskussion"; Hans-Hermann Hertle, *Der Fall der Mauer: Die unbeabsichtigte Selbstauflösung des SED-Staates* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1996); Hans-Hermann Hertle and Gerd-Rüdiger Stephan, eds., *Das Ende der SED: Die letzten Tage des Zentralkomitees* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 1997).

14. Schürer, interview; Gerhard Schürer, "Die Wirtschafts- und Sozialpolitik der DDR," in *Ansichten zur Geschichte der DDR*, vol. 3, ed. Dietmar Keller, Hans Modrow, and Herbert Wolf (Eggersdorf: Kirchner, 1994), 131–72, here 151; Günter Schabowski, *Der Absturz* (Berlin: Rowohlt, 1991), 121–22.

15. Beil, interview.

16. BArchB, DC 20/5272, fols. 174–83, cited in Wilfriede Otto, *Erich Mielke—Biographie: Aufstieg und Fall eines Tschekisten* (Berlin: Dietz, 2000), 421–22; State Secretary Gerhard Klopfer, interview by Jonathan R. Zatlin, Berlin, October 4, 1995.

17. BArchB, DE 1/VA 56319. According to the State Planning Commission's calculations, price subsidies had risen from 7.9 million marks during Ulbricht's last year in power to 17.2 billion in 1980 and 58.4 billion in 1988, with foodstuffs and consumer goods accounting for most of the expenditure (BArchB, DE 1/VA 56323, fol. 540, "Preisstützungen Bevölkerung (Subventionen)").

18. The following is based on BArchB, DE 1/56285, Politburo meeting on May 10, 1988; DE 1/56320, fols. 152–55, Gerhard Schürer, "Rede bei der Parteiaktivtagung der Parteiorganisation der SPK," November 14, 1989; Gerhard Schürer, interview by Jonathan R. Zatlin, Berlin, April 19 and May 20, 1995.

19. Schürer, interview, May 20, 1995.

20. The following is based on Maria Haendcke-Hoppe-Arndt, *Die Hauptabteilung XVIII: Volkswirtschaft*, Anatomie der Staatssicherheit: Geschichte, Struktur und Methoden; MfS-Handbuch, part 3, vol. 10 (Berlin: Der Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des

Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, Abt. Bildung und Forschung, 1997), 44.

21. Schürer clearly wanted his concerns to go on the record, which is why he did not communicate them to Roigk informally. After all, a great deal of business in the GDR was conducted by word of mouth, not least because putting ideas to paper could backfire and ruin careers—or worse—if the party later adopted a different position. In this case, Schürer felt certain that the GDR was headed for financial turmoil and that he would be vindicated.

The Leipzig Educational Program for Journalists during the Ulbricht Era

CHRISTIAN SCHEMMERT AND DANIEL SIEMENS

Soon after its creation, the University of Leipzig's School of Journalism developed into the main academic training center for journalists in the German Democratic Republic (GDR). For the most part, scholars have described the School as a propaganda arm of the Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (SED—Socialist Unity Party of Germany), run by Stalinist hardliners who drummed the communist classics into their students' heads. In contrast, this article emphasizes the institutional constraints on officials, lecturers, and students in Journalism as well as their cooperation with party and state watchdogs, including the Agitation and Propaganda Department of the Central Committee of the SED and the Stasi. It analyzes the curricular history and political aims of academic journalism in Leipzig through the 1960s. It argues that the primary goal of journalistic education in Leipzig consisted of bringing all forms of media in the GDR under the party's control by disciplining the consciousness of future journalists. To that end, the School of Journalism designed a system of cognitive control that would contribute to the formation of thought patterns and behavioral routines that facilitated the editorial work of its graduates on a daily basis.

In the final years of rule by the Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (SED—Socialist Unity Party of Germany) it became virtually impossible for the party leadership to find out what ordinary East Germans thought about politics—at any rate, not from the state-run mass media. Ultimately it was not until 1989, the year of the revolution, when the basic model of media reporting determined exclusively by the state began to change, giving way to a process of political decision-making based on comparative observation that took the population into account as a relevant factor.[1] As a consequence of this new media policy, all citizens were now able to read and hear about issues such as freedom of the press and opinion, freedom to travel, and freedom of assembly, which in previous decades the SED had addressed only occasionally in order to initiate very narrowly circumscribed public "discussions."[2] For both the rul-

ers and the ruled, November 1989 took on a special significance as the time when the East German mass media gradually began to reflect a world that lay beyond the explicit guidelines issued by the SED and internalized by media professionals.

By its very nature, the East German political system had a problem with self-reflection, given that those in power equated consensus with efficiency and stability, while regarding inefficiency and instability as side effects of a liberalist order, which they strictly rejected.[3] The ambition to create social unity according to a plan per se overestimated the capacity of political organizations to bring this about—a miscalculation that largely corresponded with the self-image of their members.[4]

The SED leadership's aspiration for control extended to all aspects of social life, including the minds of the country's citizens. Consequently it attempted to establish a political public sphere that—as a deliberately chosen counter-model to capitalist societies—was from the very beginning to have no truck with pluralism of opinion. This entailed a radical project of social planning designed to remodel society. In keeping with this, and in common with both the Nazi regime and Soviet-style state socialism, journalistic practice in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) sought not to eliminate but to unify public opinion,[5] a phenomenon that has yet to be studied in detail.[6] The present essay seeks to address this gap, asking what contribution an analysis of journalistic training can make to a media history of the GDR in the broader context of comparative research on dictatorships. It takes as an example the Institute of Communications (starting in 1954 the School of Journalism) at Karl Marx University in Leipzig.

After World War II the University of Leipzig became a center for the academic training of journalists in the GDR.[7] The purpose of this training was to give would-be journalists a thorough schooling in the theory and practice of their trade in order subsequently to employ them in the mass media, which remained loyal to the state. Despite the central significance of the journalistic training in Leipzig, many aspects of its history remain unstudied. The existing research consists primarily of older studies on the so-called Red Monastery, which though accurate in their details are mainly descriptive or strongly autobiographical.[8] In addition there are self-portraits, academic theses, and other university publications from the GDR,[9] as well as students' and lecturers' recollections; these, however, make little attempt at a critical analysis.[10] Even the more recent historiography on the history of the GDR has, with a few exceptions, accorded journalism only cursory treatment.[11] Very little is known about journalism in the Ulbricht era,[12] even though an analysis of these years shows especially well how the SED dictatorship was not only established but also supported by the mass

media. In this period we find elements both of political transformation and of continuity of the authoritarian state, as well as reminiscences of particular forms of a left-wing alternative public sphere in the Weimar Republic.

Appeal for a Double Contextualization

Among higher education institutions in the GDR, the School of Journalism was a special academic establishment, as the labels often applied to it illustrate: it was described as a barracks-like training academy and propaganda institution headed by a squad of Stalinist "hardliners" who indoctrinated their "cadre pupils" with communist classics in the middle of "Stasiland." But reducing the journalist to a kind of "homo economicus" of the East German media whose actions were stable, predictable, and animated by automatic reflexes is unconvincing.[13] Rather, the journalism training in Leipzig needs to be systematically contextualized and examined with a view to the programming and internalization of pre-conscious routines of action.[14]

It was not only censorship that played a key role in everyday working life in the East German media, but also the self-selection of future journalists and their adaptation to the demands of the system, a skill they honed throughout their studies.[15] As a now leading journalist in public radio who graduated from the Leipzig School in the 1980s remarked, the young journalists selected for training were without exception people who were prepared to relinquish their personal ideas about the profession in favor of complete subordination to party goals. Criticism was frowned on and radically suppressed: "Anyone who did not submit, anyone who expressed fundamental doubts about the system, had to go."[16]

This spotlight on the logic followed by journalism in the GDR brings the aim of the present essay into view: to integrate the socialization experiences of young journalists more closely than before into an overall interpretation of the history of the mass media. An analysis of the journalistic training in Leipzig, for instance, promises to provide some answers to the much-discussed question of how journalists knew—in the absence of a pre-censorship authority—what they were allowed to inform the public about and whether they always had to be told what to write. At the Leipzig School journalists were not only taught the nuts and bolts of communicating information but also a specifically socialist ideology of their profession. Partisanship, rather than the "mere journalism" stigmatized by the SED,[17] was the principle to be followed even during the training: "The journalist is a political functionary. He or she uses the tools of journalism to change how people think and feel, how they behave, and thus actively fights for the realization of the party's resolutions. A thorough mastery of the party's

resolutions is therefore absolutely fundamental to the work of a journalist. [. . .] The responsibilities of a journalist require a person who is active, militant, and persevering; they require an ability to win people's trust, to work together with them, to teach them, and to learn from them."[18]

In the following we will examine how the political leadership succeeded in institutionalizing the behavioral expectations of this "new type" of journalist, in other words, in training a new generation of young journalists suitable to occupy key positions in the mass media. Since the subject of journalistic training in East German society can by no means be fully understood through analyzing individual actors based on their personal relationships, one needs to go beyond Karl Marx University if one wants to understand the School of Journalism. It was not exclusively on the micro-level of social interaction that the school established itself as a "field of social activity," but also on the meso-level of institutional entanglements. Seen from this perspective, the school does not appear as a "pure object" of actors with enormous resources, such as the party leadership and Ministry for State Security (MfS), "but rather as a complex social system that is more than the sum of its formal organizational structure."[19]

In other words, our aim is to arrive at a fruitful contrast between the social relationships within the profession, on the one hand, and those with the outside world, on the other—two realms that were mutually and inextricably connected. This essay is therefore constructed to reflect this analytical premise. After a brief introduction to the history of the institution, the initial focus will be on the school administration. Here the question of how the respective deans and their party representatives within the school dealt with conflicts is of particular interest. More specifically we look at how two of the most important actors, the SED and the Staatssicherheit (Stasi—State Security), both influenced and were influenced by the interactions taking place in the school. The final section is devoted to the students' individual goals and the objective constraints under which they trained as journalists. A special focus is placed on identity conflicts and specific forms of individuality.

From Reporting to Journalism

The historian of Eastern Europe Hugh Seton-Watson wrote in an influential book in the early 1950s that the reconstruction and transformation of East Central European societies, what he called an "East European revolution," was being implemented in all socialist countries from outside and from above. In this process of Sovietization the elimination of local knowledge and traditional practices was just as inevitable as the failure to take into account the experienc-

es of previous generations. It would not be long, Seton-Watson predicted at the time, before the residual differences between the Eastern Bloc states and the Soviet Union were eliminated.[20]

Recent research concerned specifically with the history of universities in socialist societies post-1945 draws a mixed picture, particularly with respect to the preservation of academic traditions, which, owing to differing political and cultural starting points, in some cases varied considerably.[21] In the meantime it has become clear that the establishment of the Soviet higher education model in the GDR was not solely the product of political intervention from outside and above. Rather, it might better be described as a consequence of the interplay between university and non-university authorities.[22] Even if the University of Leipzig—the most important university in the GDR alongside the Humboldt University in Berlin—is now one of the best-researched universities in Germany,[23] its School of Journalism has so far not been subjected to a critical historical examination. Yet it serves as a good illustration of how revolutionary interventions (in Seton-Watson's sense) on the part of the Soviet occupying power and the SED leading functionaries in Berlin interacted with local traditions and internal university processes.

The early years after World War II were a time of reorientation for the University of Leipzig. This also applied to the discipline of journalism, which had a tradition there: the Institute for Newspaper Science, founded by Karl Büchers in 1916, was Germany's first research facility for the history and working methods of the press. The discipline of journalism, which until 1945 had been part of the College of Arts (and returned there from 1951 to 1954, after several intermediate periods at the Faculties of Economics and Social Sciences, as well as Sociology), was able only gradually to return to a normal teaching routine under the new political regime. One of the main reasons for this were the "*Altlasten*" (questionable political roles under the Nazi regime) among the staff.[24] After the war the department had only one full professor in the person of Gerhard Menz.[25] Moreover, it was only possible to keep regular teaching going in those years with the help of temporary lecturers, and even that was difficult. The wording in the revised journalistic curriculum for the fall semester of 1951 was telling: "The comprehensive program of lectures [. . .] will be prepared in stages with specific focuses."[26]

The City of Leipzig had already approached the university administration in March 1946, asking it to examine the possibility of establishing a "school of journalism for Saxony."[27] Initially, however, the university administration was evasive. It was worried about losing its academic autonomy and evidently feared a growth in political influence. It informed the city that the existing journalism

program offered a "fully fledged academic training." It did express, however, that it would be pleased to engage in a fruitful collaboration if the city wished to increase personnel at the existing institute.[28] When the pilot project for party-loyal training for journalists led by Anton Ackermann and Franz Dahlem at the Karl Marx Party Academy looked set to fail in late spring 1947,[29] Walter Ulbricht spoke up for Leipzig in a letter to Wilhelm Pieck and Otto Grotewohl: "Would it not be expedient to reopen the Institute for Newspaper Culture in Leipzig? This institute used to train journalists. In this way we would achieve a stronger influence on the training of journalists, and allow students training to be party editors to obtain state recognition after graduating from the university, which could be part of the Department of Sociology."[30] It took until 1950, however, before the SED party executive decided to expand the training of journalists in Leipzig.

In 1949/50 it was initially the returned émigré Hermann Budzislawski who tried to reform the Leipzig journalism program. Budzislawski, who had come back to Germany in 1948 and was immediately appointed a professor while at the same time joining the SED, replaced Menz, who had held the chair until then and was a member of the East German Christian Democratic Union. Initially the SED leadership deemed Budzislawski a highly suitable candidate to expand and reform the study program, given that he had been writing for the left-liberal newspaper *Weltbühne* since the late 1920s and had continued to run it from exile in Prague in the 1930s, albeit by then with a clearly pro-Soviet slant. During World War II Budzislawski had lived in exile in the United States, where among other things he had worked as a ghostwriter for the American journalist and writer Dorothy Thompson and as a columnist under the pseudonym Donald Bell. He was also a co-founder of the so-called Council for a Democratic Germany and was one of the left-wing intellectuals that the Communist Party of Germany and the SED courted soon after the war.[31] His original wish to return to editing *Weltbühne* was, however, not to the liking of the party leadership. "Better to use him in a teaching position," Walter Ulbricht ordered at the end of 1946.[32] Budzislawski later recalled that the party had told him directly after his return from the United States to regard himself as a "political professor," who should "divide his energy between the university and immediate political assignments."[33]

Since, however, as a returned émigré from the West Budzislawski was for a time considered unreliable,[34] the Central Committee's Agitation Department summoned him on November 22, 1950, and relieved him of his function. A year later Budzislawski wrote that his "elimination" had not caught him entirely unprepared, since his plan to expand and transform journalism into a "Marxist discipline" had fallen on deaf ears, at least among the Party's local branches.[35]

On November 27, 1950, the minister of education, Paul Wandel, had ordered the immediate dissolution of the Institute of Communications at the College of Social Sciences. Instead, with effect from December 1, a new chair for communications and newspaper science was to be established at the University of Leipzig.[36] The chair was filled by Eduard Schulz, who had only just become a professor in early December 1950 (and who soon thereafter was appointed director of the institute). Schulz, however, fled with his family to West Berlin on June 29, 1951, after being accused of committing rape.[37]

From January 5, 1951, the Leipzig journalism training program operated under the name Institute of Communications and Newspaper Science with a rapidly growing number of students. Whereas during 1951 some 70 students, mainly from "petit bourgeois" (to use the party's internal language) backgrounds, commenced their studies, three years later the number of registered students had risen to 370. In accordance with instructions from the minister of education issued on January 8, 1951, they were accommodated in "boarding-school-like conditions" in order to be able to keep them under closer surveillance.[38] Professor Wilhelm Eildermann, for many years a Communist Party functionary and who became director of the Institute of Communications on August 1, 1951,[39] sought in 1954 to justify this type of accommodation because it would improve the necessary "intensive political and moral education" of the students.[40] The number of students was further swelled in fall 1953 by distance learners, who numbered 230 in the first year, as well as by "qualification programs for editors of the socialist press," attended by as many as 100 persons per year. In 1954 the institute was proud to announce a significant increase in the number of "workers' and peasants' children" enrolling (in 1953 it was said to be 76 percent of all freshmen); in addition, a large percentage of female students (46 percent) was recorded for that same year.[41] The rapidly growing number of both students and staff led in 1954 to the institute's status being elevated; borrowing the terminology used in the Soviet Union, in the fall it officially became the School of Journalism. This reorganization was intended to prepare graduates better than had previously been the case for the "requirements of [journalistic] practice, but not to the detriment of their academic training."[42]

The School and Its Actors

September 1, 1954, is officially regarded as the day the School of Journalism was founded. In the meantime, Hermann Budzislawski had been rehabilitated and was now appointed dean with the approval of the SED Central Committee. After an initial period of personal difficulties when his path to high political of-

fice was blocked—partly by his later boss Albert Norden, whom he had known since his emigration[43]—he began from 1951/52 onward to develop into the central figure in journalistic training in Leipzig, where he proved to be tactically adept at balancing party and school interests. Early accusations by the SED District Committee[44] directed at the university that his "class consciousness" was underdeveloped, and his allegiance to the party wanting, did not obstruct Budzislawski's career in Leipzig in the long term, especially as he proved highly capable of adapting to the political environment.[45]

With a doctorate in economics Budzislawski was also the driving intellectual force behind the textbook *Sozialistische Journalistik*, published in 1966. This work, which taught the foundations of journalism and was based on a series of lectures that Budzislawski had given, was one of the few school publications to be printed by a regular East German publisher rather than just being handed out as lecture notes to students. However, this textbook occupies a special place for another reason too: this was the first time an attempt had been made to go beyond a purely abstract theory of socialist journalism and to underpin it empirically in social science terms. Naturally it was based on the premise of a new social order, but within these limits it was innovative, even in international comparison. Especially the sections on the impact of the media were politically explosive, since in Budzislawski's view the forms taken by socialist journalism were not least dependent on the expectations of media users.[46]

Nevertheless this academic portrayal of the discipline remained singular in its theoretical claims. Budzislawski's influence on practical journalism in the GDR likewise remained limited, a fact of which he was all too aware. Soon he became dissatisfied with his role as a teacher of socialist journalists as well. Even many years after leaving the school he complained that his withdrawal from active journalism had been tantamount to the "loss" of his "journalistic personality."[47] Beginning in 1959, he made multiple appeals to the Central Committee, occasionally to Norden personally, to release him from his post as dean,[48] yet he was forced to stay in office until a successor deemed suitable by the party was elected in 1962.

Budzislawski was replaced by Wolfgang Rödel, previously a member of the State Committee for Radio. He was confirmed as dean of the school by a resolution of the SED Central Committee Secretariat on March 7, 1962.[49] Rödel did not have much of an academic reputation; it would be more accurate to call him a practitioner with experience as a functionary.[50] What distinguished him in the eyes of the SED was his clear political stance: "Never did he vacillate on political or cultural issues. He executed party policy to the letter."[51] In February 1962 a detailed statement setting out the reasons for his election as dean, au-

thored by the Central Committee Department for Agitation, also emphasized as positive his "particularly distinctive stand against the false opinions of [Georg] Lucazs [*sic*] and Prof. Hans Mayer."[52] After a "very promising start," however, as the SED party leadership told the school in retrospect in 1965,[53] Rödel's state of health deteriorated soon after assuming office. For this reason he was replaced in September 1964 by Franz Knipping, who had previously earned his spurs as a member of the party leadership. Despite his brief period in office, Rödel managed, in the eyes of his superiors, to "activate the teaching staff and to boost the political education of the students."[54] Indeed, in the years that followed, until the Prague Spring, things remained astonishingly quiet in the school. This was no doubt because many research assistants and some professors had themselves studied there.[55] They had already internalized the stringent party loyalty with which they were supposed to continually indoctrinate their students.

Here we have devoted comparatively detailed attention to the deans of the school because they played a key role in determining vertical social relationships, that is, school policy in the narrower sense, in coordination with the party leadership. It was therefore taken for granted that only party comrades could be considered for this job. De facto the dean functioned primarily as the extended arm of the SED. On the ground it was ambitious young SED members like Werner Clauß and Klaus Höpcke, appointed minister of culture in 1973,[56] who played a key role from the mid-1950s in ensuring that the school toed the party line. Anyone who did not conform with the "collective" experienced difficulties or ultimately was even thrown out. This applied not only to students but also to some school teaching staff, as illustrated by the case of the returned émigré Wieland Herzfelde.[57] The latter had assumed the chair for the "sociology of contemporary literature" in 1949 without ever getting on a friendly footing with the School of Journalism. Like Budzislawski, Herzfelde, who had become a key figure among the German left while in exile in New York, had to account to the party for his year in the capitalist West from summer 1950. Since in New York the Herzfelde family had privately been friends with Noel H. Field, who briefly became famous as an alleged US agent,[58] Herzfelde and his wife were excluded from the party in March 1951 (and only readmitted in June 1956).[59] In these five years Herzfelde, whom the Central Committee's Science Department considered "neither academically nor politically" suitable as a professor, had to submit the scripts of his lectures in advance for inspection by the respective director of the institute. He was also barred from holding seminars. In the party's view Herzfelde was scarcely acceptable because—as an internationally known figure—he retained a degree of intellectual freedom. And he regarded the everyday discussions in the party bodies at Karl Marx University as largely irrelevant.[60]

In view of this it is understandable that the school council, urged by Budzislawski, decided on November 1, 1957,[61] to apply to have Herzfelde's professorial chair abolished.[62] The reasons given included not only his limited teaching program but also the claim that the chair "does not meet the specific needs of our school at present." Furthermore, despite repeated prompting, Herzfelde neglected to get involved "socially within the framework of our school." Whereas the school was a "collective," he worked "exclusively individually."[63] With effect from October 1, 1958, Herzfelde was released from his post "at his own wish" by the state secretary of higher education.[64]

The School of Journalism consisted of various institutes, initially the Institute for Press History and the Institute for the Theory and Practice of Press Work. These were supplemented in 1956 by the Institute for Radio Journalism, renamed the Institute for Radio and Television Journalism in 1967. A fourth institute was added in 1959: the Institute for Literary Journalism and Stylistics.[65] The curriculum of 1954/55 reveals that the students attended between twenty-four and thirty hours of classes per week, although only some of these were devoted to genuinely journalistic subjects, such as the "History of the German Press" or the "Theory and Practice of Press Work." Many lectures and seminars were concerned with civics or questions of party policy. The curriculum for the first year, for instance, included "Fundamentals of Marxism-Leninism" and "Political Economy," while in the second year students learned about the "History of German Literature" and the "History of the German People," and in the third, "Dialectical Materialism," "Structure of East German Agriculture," (!) and—surprisingly late in the program—"Structure of the State and Legislature of the GDR"; finally, in the fourth year, the curriculum included courses on "Problems of Marxist Aesthetics" and "Questions of Party Life in Newspapers."[66]

Even just a brief look at this curriculum reveals that its primary purpose was not so much to teach students journalistic practice or to encourage them to reflect on the profession in a scholarly way, but rather to train cadres who could be used in many ways and who were thoroughly schooled in matters of state ideology. The graduates' lack of training in journalistic practice was also not changed by the fact that from fall 1954 the study program in journalism was extended to four years and a one-year practical training in the mass media of the GDR added, primarily newspapers and radio, and later television as well. Even in the early 1960s the verdict of the Verband Deutscher Journalisten (VDJ—Union of German Journalists) on young journalists trained in the GDR was as follows: "Most editors have a wealth of experience as political functionaries but insufficient knowledge of journalism or journalistic skills."[67]

It would nevertheless be wrong to regard the school as a monolithic bloc, as

many have done ever since the publication of the book by Brigitte Klump.[68] If her assessment ignores the reality of the teaching staff, who were in many cases at loggerheads with one another, then this applies all the more so to the students. From the mid-1950s we see cases both of active resistance and a more general feeling of unease regarding the political conditions both within the school and in the GDR as a whole. The prorector for undergraduates of the university reported to Berlin on December 14, 1955, that the School of Journalism was showing "tendencies toward pessimism with respect to whether the mass populace has sufficient strength to resolve current issues."[69] This euphemistic formulation can be interpreted as a cautious allusion to the fact that the party line was no longer meeting with unreserved approval, and alternative solutions were being considered. Intense discussions took place throughout the university about the events in Hungary in 1956. The Stasi noted that at an election meeting of the Freie Deutsche Jugend (FDJ—Free German Youth) on December 19, 1956, some students from the School of Journalism had responded to the remark that it "was taking a united stand against the White terror in Hungary," with interjections such as "whitewashing!" or "opinion machine!"[70] Such criticism remained the exception, however. The school was dominated by what the Stasi regarded as "positive discussions."[71]

Responses to the building of the Berlin Wall on August 13, 1961, were entirely different. A report to the State Secretariat for Higher Education dated September 30, 1961, states that this question in particular was interpreted as "a test of the attitude of every citizen to the workers' and peasants' state."[72] From an official point of view, then, it was all the more critical that some journalists did not meet expectations in this respect. Unlike the lecturers, not a few of them "wavered and sat on the fence," since they had clearly not understood that "the imperialists in Bonn had been prevented from unleashing a civil war by the energetic intervention of our People's Army and brigade groups."[73] Particularly the more advanced students in their fourth year at the School of Journalism had exhibited "a considerable lack of clarity about fundamental questions of our policies." No fewer than nine students in the class of 1960/61 had regularly visited West Berlin in their capacity as editorial interns, yet disciplinary proceedings within the school had been delayed for months, the prorector for studies complained.[74] What is more, in early 1962 there had been three cases in quick succession of "§§ 174/175," in other words, cases of "unnatural" man-to-man "fornication" involving the university's "charges" had evidently come to light.[75] The prorector apparently regarded both phenomena equally as signs of increasing decadence at the school.

Closely connected with statements of this kind was the unusually tough line taken in fall 1961 toward the student cabaret Rat der Spötter, to which at least six

students at the School of Journalism—Manfred Albani, Heinz-Martin Benecke, Peter Seidel, Hans Ronneburger, Hans-Gert Schubert, and Heiko Rämisch—belonged.[76] A further member was the former director of the cabaret, Ernst Röhl, who had just graduated in journalism and started a job as an editor in Magdeburg.[77] The cabaret, which had existed since 1954 and was initially officially an FDJ establishment, had in previous years won several awards, including one for a successful guest tour of West Germany. A key figure in this amateur cabaret since 1958 had been Peter Sodann, a one-time student of the School of Theater in Leipzig and—like most of his fellow cabaret artists—a member of the SED.[78]

For fall 1961 the students had prepared a program with the title "Wo der Hund begraben liegt" (The crux of the matter), which in the view of the party leadership at the university exhibited an "openly counterrevolutionary character." They even claimed that "counterrevolutionary elements" of the cabaret had joined forces with "other revisionist circles (so-called artists and rowdies)" and were planning a conspiracy that should be regarded as a new incarnation of the Petőfi circle.[79] It had been proven, it claimed, that "this cabaret program must be evaluated as part of the imperialist program of civil war against our republic and the entire socialist camp."[80] In fact these accusations were entirely made up.[81] The case was also awkward because the program had been submitted for inspection in advance to the deputy secretary of the SED District Committee, the former journalism student Klaus Höpcke, who told the students on the morning of September 5, one day before the premiere, that they would get it through with a few changes.[82] In the heated climate of fall 1961, however, the SED was attempting to put paid to any kind of resistance by taking an uncompromising line. The school's reassurances, and even those from the Agitation Department of the Central Committee, that the whole affair was just "a minor vestige" from the situation six or seven years ago were condemned by the SED District Committee as an attempt "to trivialize the matter and to draw a veil over the ideological causes, as well as the connections with problems in research, teaching, and training at the school."[83] The local party organization saw "serious shortcomings and weaknesses in the educational work of the teaching staff"; some even went so far as to discern a "platform of the enemy" in the school.[84]

After the performance on September 5, 1961, the party leadership of Karl Marx University banned the program. The leading members of the cabaret were arrested on September 9 and were held in custody until they were sentenced on July 16, 1962. Three of them were given sentences of between a year and ten months (Sodann) and one year (Röhl, Albani) by the Leipzig District Court on charges of "continuing agitation endangering the state." The sentences were

suspended on probation. However, since the three had already spent almost a year in custody, they had de facto already served most of their terms.[85]

This affair also had consequences for the school. The Central Committee Department for Agitation held Dean Budzislawski in particular responsible for the fact that students from the School of Journalism, of all people, had made themselves available "to support counterrevolutionary elements"—as the disciplinary committee of the university put it. The events in Leipzig had shown that he no longer had "the necessary strength" to lead the school in a responsible manner.[86] Budzislawski, who could no longer count on Norden's protective hand, was replaced. From this point on at the latest, the School of Journalism was dominated by ideological hardliners. It remains open whether and to what extent the student party-groups, who enjoyed a remarkable degree of autonomy and latitude vis-à-vis the school, were involved in these processes, which ultimately had the party's blessing.[87] The bottom line was that Budzislawski's efforts to establish a kind of academic order at the school that did not conform entirely in all points with the basic Marxist-Leninist orientation met with little approval. And in this respect alone the formal school hierarchy already diverged considerably from the real power structure.

Did the Agitation Department of the SED Central Committee Control School Policy?

When the internal party campaigns against Jews and those who had returned from the West ended in the mid-1950s, the party leadership in Berlin introduced an important regulation which had an impact on East German journalism. Fred Oelßner from the Agitation Department of the Central Committee—who until then had been responsible for the entire East German press, including the training of journalists in Leipzig, and who had been a major actor in the party purges of 1952/53, some of which had been anti-Jewish—was forced in March 1955 to make way for a functionary of Jewish origin who had been a protégé of Walter Ulbricht for many years: the journalist Albert Norden.[88] As far as Ulbricht was concerned, there was not a shadow of doubt either about Norden's journalistic skills or about his loyalty to the party, since Norden had already been chief editor of a number of communist newspapers at the time of the Weimar Republic.[89]

The high expectations Ulbricht had of Norden's alleged expertise are illustrated above all by the fact that in 1955 he appointed him chairman of the Agitation Commission of the Central Committee.[90] One of the main tasks this Agitation

Commission was expected to fulfill in light of the SED's policies toward West Germany[91] was to come up with arguments that would contribute to scoring a "victory" in the "competition with capitalist countries" in the arena of mass-media production. For this to happen, in Norden's early assessment of the situation, comprehensive changes were required in the training and working practices of journalists,[92] who should strive with more determination than before for a decisive confrontation with the "West German system of government."[93]

From 1955 on, Norden's "power of decision-making and definition"[94] embraced the central working sectors of the print and audiovisual mass media in the GDR, including the journalistic training program in Leipzig.[95] Norden had a say in all important technical and personnel issues at the School of Journalism, which were decided exclusively by the Politburo and Central Committee Secretariat of the SED. As a permanent member of these two bodies, which met on a weekly basis, he was no doubt the best informed about the training situation in Leipzig. The SED leadership in turn learned about developments there primarily from the networks, which followed Norden's decision-making competence.

But did these two party bodies really play as central a role in the training of journalists in Leipzig as the ruling and administrative structures suggest? Or were institutions such as Karl Marx University, likewise located in the regional capital, Leipzig, not also of key significance as state organizations that were, on the one hand, subordinate to the Central Committee Department for Science and, on the other, at the regional level, part of the sphere of influence of the powerful SED regional secretariats?[96] These questions are not easily answered, given that we have virtually no studies of the relationship between the center and the periphery in the East German regime that critically question the alleged dominance and absolute power of central leadership vis-à-vis the country's cities and districts.[97] This would require further research, since "even in a centralistic state like the GDR the party leadership was not in a position, either in terms of personnel or conceptually, to recognize, tackle, and solve all problems for every district and region."[98]

An analysis of the school's relationship with the party leadership in Berlin does not indicate that it was exclusively controlled from the capital. We therefore cannot claim unlimited power for the Agitation Department of the Central Committee. It is true that this party organization—which had well over fifty staff in 1955, making it one of the largest of its kind—did have a prominent role in the training of journalists in the GDR:[99] decisions about such things as the curriculum, research programs, the selection of students and allocation of graduates, the promotion of young academics, and the regulation of exchanges with neighboring "fraternal states" were all made outside the walls of the school and

were occasionally even the direct concern of the Agitation Commission of the Politburo.[100] However, even if the Central Committee Department for Agitation claimed to wield influence directly over the party organization of the school over and above the school and party leadership,[101] this field of responsibility clearly overlapped with the area of competence of the SED organization at the university.[102] Overlaps in competence of this kind did not exist even at the Moscow School of Journalism,[103] which in the Soviet sphere of influence was regarded as the Mecca of journalistic training and from which the Leipzig School likewise initially expected to receive a positive impetus.[104]

Norden's efforts to separate the school entirely from the party leadership at Leipzig University in favor of the Agitation Commission that he headed did not succeed either in the mid-1950s or later. "Whatever the school's importance in training party functionaries, it remains a school of Karl Marx University,"[105] was the verdict of the Science Department under Central Committee Secretary Kurt Hager, which thus repeatedly made clear where the boundaries of Norden's decision-making competence ended. Unlike Norden, Hager, who even for years after the fall of the Berlin Wall attributed the "impoverishment" of the "ideological and political culture" of the GDR to an insufficient study of Marxism-Leninism,[106] made strenuous efforts to promote educational and party work at the university. In formal terms from 1959/60 onward he had an additional instrument at his disposal in the form of the Ideology Commission, which answered to the Politburo. But Hager was also able to exert considerable control over Karl Marx University Leipzig via Berlin administrative bodies like the Cadres Department and leading party organs, which endowed him with representative authority. With this accumulation of competences he was able to circumvent the regulatory norms of the ruling party bureaucracy, which as a rule led to overlaps between the various work sectors and hence to conflicts.[107] On the other hand, the party dogmas championed by Hager could be spread more quickly via various routes. This meant that in cases of noncompliance he could act both quickly and rigorously.[108]

This also applied to the School of Journalism, where, right from the start, Norden and Budzislawski's prioritizing of more advanced knowledge and skills in teaching and research had been a thorn in the side of both the head of the Science Department, Kurt Hager, and the district chief in Leipzig, Paul Fröhlich.[109] Like the "SED chief ideologist" Hager, who assiduously sought to fight and uncover "subversive phenomena" in Marxism-Leninism, so too did Fröhlich draw attention to himself in the 1950s with his "sectarian intelligentsia-hostile policies toward democratically minded professors at Leipzig University."[110] On November 15, 1956, for example, he issued proposals to his functionaries on how to treat

"free thinkers": "I am in favor of using methods that are analogous to those that we used in the past to deal with the SA and the SS." Hans-Joachim Böhme, who until 1966 was one of the "movers and shakers" in the Leipzig University party leadership before he was promoted to ministerial rank in the Ministry of Higher Education, where he spent almost two decades, was unable to understand why a journalist should become qualified "to master the argumentation, language, and style of various genres,"[111] especially if at the same time less than half of all the staff employed by the school showed up either to the party's ideological training course or to the Marxist colloquium, and the students likewise showed disinterest in a series of lectures on the history of the labor movement.[112] Regardless of whether the teaching program at the School of Journalism appealed to the students, it was judged by "active party workers" primarily in terms of its contribution to molding them ideologically. Questioning any components of the Marxist-Leninist ideological edifice in favor of maintaining academic standards was, in the view of orthodox champions of the party line, tantamount to a violation of SED statutes and hence of party discipline, which was to be regarded "as the inviolable basis for party life and party building."[113] "Individual intellectual efforts to comprehend historical truth were misguided from the start. [. . .] The path of a party member into the party went hand in hand with a deadening of their own subjectivity. A person became a comrade by freeing themselves from their imperfect bourgeois origins and, through permanent self-criticism, transforming from a subject into a communist."[114]

Together with the Lower University party leadership and the student party-groups a veritable action group had been formed by the late 1950s, which was to weaken Budzislawski's faction and ultimately usher in a reversal of the power relationships prevailing in the school and party leadership. Hans-Joachim Böhme in the party office of the university administration claimed to identify the root of all evil, so to speak, in the implementation or even intensification of academic research in the school, which Budzislawski had officially called for in 1959 before hundreds of Party members[115] and which, despite Norden's protection, increasingly sidelined him. When Norden attempted once again in the mid-1960s to explain to the media representatives of the SED that a journalist could only fulfill the demands of his everyday working life in a manner in keeping with the times if the reins of party norms were loosened, since not everything that journalists were required to report on fitted with theory, his audience did not applaud.[116] It took only another year before the responsibility that Norden carried for the mass media in the GDR was transferred to other hands.[117]

In Leipzig the pressure on the "academic" wing aligned with Budzislawski increased steadily from the late 1950s on. It was not only the dean who suffered but

also the staff at his Institute for the Theory and Practice of Press Work. Provocative remarks such as "You'll have an easy death, since you have no guts" were among the "more trivial insults" that Budzislawski, stigmatized as a scapegoat, had to endure at his place of work.[118] Relations at the school could no longer be described as constructive. From April 1962, in other words in the weeks leading up to Budzislawski's departure from his post as dean, something that had been brewing for a long time in the composition of the party organization at the school finally became official: for the first time it was laid down in writing that all academic school staff were to subordinate themselves to SED party groups. The formulation "The party groups are the most important instrument for the political education of scientists" implicitly included an obligation to submit reports on how and above all what seminar groups were to be taught from then on.[119] The agreements required for this were to be concluded with the so-called party group organizers, such as senior assistant J., the leader of the party group at the Institute for Language and Stylistics, who had far more experience and some of whom had themselves worked as journalists.[120] Before commencing his studies, J. had worked for a district newspaper for two and a half years, which was more the exception than the rule. As a statistic recorded at the turn of the year 1957/58 shows, of the fifty-seven staff with teaching responsibilities at this time, 95 percent were young research assistants, of whom the overwhelming majority had had no experience in journalistic practice.[121]

This lack of any "connection to practice," for which J. and other representatives of the SED party groups primarily blamed Budzislawski and his supporters, had a disastrous effect on student acceptance of teaching staff. Orthodox SED representatives of the Soviet brand of Marxism used a kind of "stigma theory"[122] to explain the inferiority of "members of the petit bourgeois intelligentsia" and "people qualified only in their subject," who primarily indulged in their "complacent, self-satisfied subjectivity" and thereby posed a threat to the school. Even the Central Committee Agitation Department now assumed that Budzislawski construed the work in the school "rather too *one-sidedly in favor of the 'science of journalism*'," a rather telling formulation.[123] In 1966 Emil Dusiska, since 1965 professor of the theory and practice of the socialist press, criticized the lack of teaching qualifications among school staff and their "wholly inadequate" attempts in previous years to "impart a complete Marxist picture of history."[124] Only under his leadership, Dusiska told the Central Committee in a statement of accounts in 1968 (having been promoted to dean in 1967), had the trend begun to be reversed. After no less than a quarter of the staff had been replaced, the subject of Marxism-Leninism now made up 24 percent of the teaching program. And Dusiska added proudly: "There is no sociological

department at which the students receive such a comprehensive education in M/L [as here]."[125]

This development exemplified the success of party dogmatists, who during the 1960s increasingly gained the upper hand at various levels of the GDR bureaucracy. Related to this was the concurrent institutional failure of a political journalism oriented toward media consumers. This is remarkable, given that in the same decade an Institute for Empirical Opinion Research was founded in Moscow.[126] Whereas following Stalin's death the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU) propagated a popular Soviet culture of the masses, which took heed of citizens' wishes regarding media consumption,[127] in East Germany the representatives of a doctrinaire Leninist proclamatory journalism held sway, which contributed to the sustained alienation between the party and citizens.

The Role of the State Security Service

At the latest following the publication of Klump's book in 1978, the School of Journalism came to be considered in West Germany as an institution that was not only closely monitored by the GDR's internal security service but was also used intensively to recruit its own staff. According to Klump, the institute was a veritable "training ground for the State Security Service."[128] Students learned during their studies that without "voluntary" collaboration with the MfS they would not graduate successfully. Once students understood and accepted this fact, many career opportunities were open to them.[129] Following German reunification, former staff members of the Stasi put it in similar terms: they claimed that the Main Directorate for Reconnaissance, the foreign secret service of the GDR under the aegis of the MfS, basically kept files on all students at the school, and that the seminar groups always included students who had allowed themselves to be recruited as Inoffizielle Mitarbeiter (IMs—unofficial collaborators).[130]

A closer look at the activities of the Stasi at the University of Leipzig during the period in question, however, makes such close monitoring seem doubtful. Although the Stasi had played an active role at the school since the 1950s, its actual influence was less extensive than has previously been assumed. Indeed, as the following paragraphs will show, it was not at all necessary to approach all the students "actively." For the purpose of preparing future cadres for potential smooth collaboration with the Stasi in their professional lives, it was sufficient to create the impression that the school was completely permeated by the Stasi. If one looks just at the unit attached to Department V,[131] whose job was to "secure" the whole of Leipzig University, it quickly becomes apparent that this

was a long way from its own aspiration of blanket surveillance. To judge from the "assessment reports"[132] for the months of December 1953 and January 1955, a maximum of three Stasi staff were allocated to monitor the School of Journalism. Their responsibilities also extended to more than a hundred other institutes, which at the university were spread over no fewer than ten faculties. Even if one leaves out the university staff in the administration and health departments, one can assume that in spring 1955 these three state security officials were required to monitor some 10,500 people. The size of the network of informers was likewise documented. According to this source, one secret informer (Geheimer Informator, GI) was allocated to the still young School of Journalism and twenty-one further "informal collaborator types" (Müller-Enbergs) were allocated to other institutes; however, the number increased rapidly in the years that followed.[133] A further problem from the point of view of the Stasi was the "lack of general and specialist qualifications"[134] of its staff. Both the "lack of focus in operative work" and the inability to allocate the recruited candidates efficiently to the tasks at hand[135] remained, even years later, classic problems confronting the state security authorities, which they sought to solve by further qualifying their staff.

Nevertheless, the local conditions for monitoring the School of Journalism were favorable: the Leipzig office of the MfS was only a few minutes' drive from the school, and when it moved into the university's new high-rise in the city center in the 1970s it became even closer. Even if the MfS staff responsible for the school did not appear in the school building in person for discussions,[136] which usually required a prior call to the Cadres Department, there were other ways of being in contact. If one of the few staff members overseeing informal collaborators managed to recruit a student as a spy, the conversations to this end usually took place in "conspiratorial apartments" rented specially for this purpose, in other university premises ("meeting rooms"), or in public places. On the other hand, state security officials were expressly instructed to avoid visiting the school's student dorms,[137] which did not, however, mean that private accommodations were not used for such conversations when it came to more advanced students.[138] At some meetings MfS staff paid the student in question a premium in recognition of good collaboration; the standard rate for this in the late 1950s was ten marks.[139]

Generally it is remarkable that, despite the fact that references to the state security service were taboo in meetings of party members or of the University President's office and other formal interactions at the school, no one seemed to be surprised when on-campus operatives of the MfS revealed their identity. The files held by the federal commissioner for the Stasi Archives expressly document the fact that by the last third of the 1950s students regarded the presence of the

Stasi as normal, which at the same time always implied a certain absolution of personal responsibility.[140] The assumption that the individual was always required to comply with the expectations of the Stasi is, however, incorrect. Even in view of the various repressive measures of the MfS, which in some cases had serious repercussions,[141] and of the widespread fear of repressions, which on the whole may have had an even greater effect, we cannot automatically conclude that those affected did not have other options.

Three examples may be cited to illustrate this. The first is the case of journalism student G., which illustrates that students could combine cooperation and obstruction without themselves being subjected to MfS repressions. G., who even before he commenced his studies in the fall of 1954 had entered into an obligation to collaborate with the Stasi, and who was instructed by the ministry to provide detailed evaluations of the members of his seminar group,[142] found clever ways of getting out of this. In meetings with his handler he repeatedly complained about how difficult he found it to come face-to-face with his seminar groups and his friends after he had had to submit written evaluations of each of them in turn.[143] Anxious inquiries about whether his reports were important and whether they would mean disadvantages for individuals soon caused the young MfS officer, who was up to his ears in work, to lose patience. He wrote angrily in one of his reports on a meeting: "Getting him to tell me anything [. . .] was like pulling teeth."[144] A few weeks later the Stasi broke off the collaboration with this student. "He was inhibited in carrying out tasks and sometimes lacking in initiative" was the reason given in the final report.[145]

The Stasi came to a similar conclusion with respect to the student N., who had been characterized by the aforementioned G. as an "intellectual type." N. was recruited on September 17, 1957, under the code name "Renate" and served—with interruptions—as an informal collaborator until the end of 1960. The "very intelligent" and "pretty" young woman was told to spy specifically on men at the School of Journalism, as well as to regularly report on the members of her seminar group at meetings with her handler.[146] Her MfS personnel file contains some reports on such meetings [*Treffberichte*], which at the insistence of the handler's boss were to be held on a more or less regular basis. However, N. always remained noncommittal and at most talked about matters of personal taste. As far as can be seen, she had virtually nothing to say about central political issues. On repeated occasions N. failed to show up to the agreed meetings without having to fear consequences from the MfS. The Stasi's final report, dated December 29, 1960, reached a clear verdict: "The entire collaboration with the GI did not yield the slightest operational use."[147]

The third case, by contrast, documents a collaboration that was favorable for

both sides. The student M., who was evidently in contact with the MfS prior to his studies, met on April 27, 1956, with a member of staff of the Leipzig security office to talk about his "future deployment with the press." M. had previously done an internship with the Foreign Affairs Department of the Allgemeine Deutsche Nachrichtenagentur (ADN), the East German press agency, and wanted to return there after finishing his studies. A member of staff of the Central Committee's Agitation Department had, however, proposed in a conversation with M. that he work as an editor for the army, a prospect that he was not thrilled about. He was afraid that he would not be able to "make full use" of his professional interests, and a career as a journalist abroad would then also be unlikely. In this situation M. apparently turned to the MfS on his own initiative in the hope of improving his career chances. And he was successful. His interlocutor at the Leipzig office noted: "Gen. M. is willing to work for the organs of the state security service, and it is recommended that he be given a position in the ADN with the prospect of working as a foreign correspondent in a capitalist country."[148] A handwritten declaration of commitment by M. is attached to his file.[149] While the details are fragmentary, this case illustrates that not all students were necessarily victims of the MfS. They could also deliberately decide to "play along" if a collaboration with the MfS promised career advancement.[150]

The report of the Leipzig security authorities on the meeting with M. also contains another piece of revealing information. The conversation took place not outside the School of Journalism, as one might expect, but directly in the University President's building, revealing that the Stasi did not behave in a particularly "conspiratorial" way. At least the leading figures, the dean and the SED party leaderships of the university and the school, were aware of regular meetings of this kind.[151] Just two years after the School of Journalism had been established, the Stasi had already become an important actor there and enjoyed, as it were, domiciliary rights.

If one considers all three cases together, it becomes clear that fruitful collaboration with the MfS was not necessarily a precondition for successfully graduating in Leipzig. Even someone like G., who had initially agreed to collaborate with Department V of the Leipzig office but then cleverly managed to avoid doing what was expected of him, was able to work as a journalist in the GDR after graduating. From the Stasi's point of view it was not crucial whether students at the school agreed to collaborate for a given period of time. Rather there were two key criteria, if you will, for academic success in their eyes: first of all, students graduating from the school should become acquainted, directly or indirectly, with the Stasi's mission and be aware of the power it wielded; second, the students needed to demonstrate convincingly through their behavior

that although they would not talk publicly about the role of the Stasi, they had internalized and accepted it as an ingrained, tacitly acknowledged routine fact.[152] Even graduates who only occasionally collaborated with the Stasi in their everyday lives as students and otherwise kept their distance were not barred from making a successful career as journalists in the GDR.

Conflicts of Interest among the Students: Career versus Criticism

Anyone wishing to study journalism in the 1950s had to submit a handwritten resumé giving reasons for their choice. In the files one also finds so-called evaluations of individual students written by fellow students, lecturers, and sometimes their former teachers. These documents provide information about the origins and previous experience of the applicants, but also about the would-be journalists' perception of the school and their future profession.

The random samples used in this essay from the early years of the school illustrate that many students, despite their youth, brought a considerable amount of life experience to their studies, owing partly to the war and the turmoil of the immediate postwar period, and partly to their family circumstances. There were children of refugees who had grown up amid great hardship, while others had been born outside wedlock or had been orphaned at an early age.[153] Many students ended up at the school more or less by chance and had only a vague idea of what awaited them.[154] One applicant wrote with naive honesty that she had in fact wanted to study German language and literature, but that this program was currently oversubscribed. Her greatest wish at any rate was "to become a writer and to educate and delight people with my works"[155]—a formulation that likely echoed what she had learned as a schoolgirl ([Horace's] *prodesse et delectare*). Another applicant stated that he wanted to become a journalist so that the "horrors of the Hitler era" would not be repeated. He cited reasons for this from his biography. As a teenager he had been "shaken and seriously wounded" by an Allied bombing raid, and the Nazis had shot his then sixteen-year-old brother in the final days of the war.[156] Now he wanted to help "build democracy" and "enjoy peace himself"—a wish that many of the applicants expressed in one form or other. They were members of a postwar generation that had already seen and suffered a lot, and who acted out of practical motives and tended to be put off by political slogans. Many had been molded by social hardship and fears about the future, which perhaps explains why they sought stabilization in the new conditions. Helping to build socialism was not just a formula they had been taught, but also an obvious response to the existentially threatening experiences they had had as children and youngsters.

The journalism program as it existed in reality, with its emphasis on party doctrine, is unlikely to have been what these young people initially had in mind. There was no academic freedom, in the traditional sense of the word, at the School of Journalism. The curriculum for each year of study laid down the exact number and type of classes to be attended; the students' freedom of choice was limited to a few additional classes known as "special seminars." For classes taught by external lecturers, whether high-ranking Central Committee comrades or—more rarely—lecturers from other universities, the school administration and its party leadership decided in advance which students were to attend.[157] The information contained in the students' files shows that many students found it difficult to accept the ideological premises of their study program unquestioningly. Since open opposition was not tolerated, many students simply kept silent on political matters.[158] We read the following, for example, in the evaluation of a student who is otherwise described as "on the ball and lively": "After such meetings, many comrades tried to get her to voice her political views, but they never succeeded."[159]

On the other hand, many students had a hard time maintaining a distance from the official ideology that they were taught, not least because they did not want to seem ungrateful to the university. In the GDR anyone who was allowed to study, especially at the School of Journalism, was expected to regard it as a privilege—as indeed it was, since the number of places in this popular study program were limited and journalism graduates were certain to find a secure and in some respects very attractive professional position.[160] In addition, the majority of students had an adequate basic income that allowed regular visits to the cinema and theater, as well as minor excursions on the weekends, without having to earn extra money. In the late 1960s more than 70 percent of all students received a basic stipend, which, provided they got good results or were politically active, could be increased to a so-called performance stipend. Less than 20 percent of the students managed to attain this, however.[161]

In return for this all-encompassing provision, the school claimed the right to rule over its students. Right from the start, the journalism program in Leipzig was organized in such a way that it also embraced the students' private lives and was used to indoctrinate them. This applied, on the one hand, to the seminar groups, where the students learned and took part in discussions, but were also evaluated and reprimanded. Officially the school spoke of "students educating students,"[162] a practice that even extended to friendships and love relationships. Even back then it was sufficiently well known that the peer group was the most important reference point for young people.[163] Since the students of the School of Journalism were accommodated in dorms that were very close to the university,

their circle of friends was almost inevitably made up of fellow students; it was deliberately made difficult for the students to keep their studies and private lives separate.[164] This sometimes went so far that the Stasi via its "contact persons" and informers systematically acted as a matchmaker and set up relationships between students or undermined existing ones as the opportunity presented itself.

Through a system of veritable psychological harassment, in which it was difficult for those affected to discern who was responsible, not a few students had mental breakdowns. In the face of extreme pressure, some of them saw suicide as the only way out. This was a particularly sensitive subject in the GDR, since the act of killing oneself constituted the most radical form of rejection imaginable of the socialist society's promise to cure all woes.[165] Of course, one cannot assume that the reasons for every suicide at the university were political in nature, but it is striking that the party and the SED leadership at the university reacted particularly sensitively to reports of suicides in times of general unrest, which at least implied a connection between the students' political and individual situation.[166] So far it has not been possible to find any more detailed information about the number of suicides at the School of Journalism. However, Klump reports several cases of attempted suicide—two of which she claims to have made herself—as well as one actual suicide.[167]

This shows once again how intensely the routine pressure exerted by the school and by various other bodies was felt by many students. Anyone who appeared not to fit the ideal of a socialist journalist initially had to reckon with being given a talking-to in their seminar group. Students who continued to attract negative attention were likely to be expelled or—in severe cases—even prohibited from studying altogether. One first-year student, for example, had his permission to study withdrawn, because "in his overall behavior" he allegedly "allowed himself to be guided by careerist intentions." In addition, while still at high school, he had left the "Junge Gemeinde" [church youth group][168] only for tactical reasons and had sought to become a member of the SED for the same motives. The vague accusation that his behavior "in no way [. . .] complied with the requirements that we expect of socialist students and future journalists" was sufficient to remove him from the university.[169] As well as political reasons, students were also forced to leave the university for "laziness," lack of discipline, or poor performance.[170] Being condemned to years of forced labor, a fate that befell some journalism students at the Social Sciences Institute between 1947 and 1951, was, however, not something that students at the School of Journalism had to fear in the late 1950s and 1960s.[171]

Concluding Remarks

Probably almost 2,000 students—either direct attendees or distance learners—successfully graduated from the School of Journalism between 1954 and 1968. They subsequently worked mainly as journalists, diplomats, or SED cadres in high-ranking positions.[172] Albert Norden wrote in 1964, only ten years after the school was founded, that 50 percent of chief editors and deputy chief editors of daily or weekly newspapers were graduates of the Leipzig school. For journalists who worked in other positions in the editorial offices of the East German mass media, the figure was 30 percent.[173] To what extent these journalists really worked with conviction "together with the workers" in advancing "the building of a socialist social order in the first German workers' and peasants' state" must remain the subject of further studies.[174] This essay, at any rate, confirms the widespread assumption that, in establishing and expanding the School of Journalism at Karl Marx University Leipzig, the SED right from the start was pursuing the goal of grooming loyal socialist journalists as "agitators" and "propagandists" for the party, and pushing them systematically into the most important positions in the mass media.

Placing responsibility for training journalists in Budzislawski's hands was thus by no means optimal under these premises. And indeed the conditions in general were certainly far from optimal, given that politicians wanted to train suitable personnel for the struggle for public opinion as quickly as possible. Moreover, this became an increasingly urgent task, as many people were frequently expressing doubt about the official portrayal of reality in the GDR, for which consensus was declared obligatory. Deviant behavior was soon pathologized, and in this process—of subjecting social communication to a kind of psychiatric treatment—the party leadership regarded the School of Journalism as of supreme importance. It was supposed to continually supply the system with "fresh blood," so to speak, which, given the heightened political expectations, it fell well short of doing. This became particularly evident in crisis situations—triggered by events like the violent suppression of the Prague Spring in 1968—which frequently resulted in the concept for journalistic training being subjected to intense scrutiny.[175]

Ideas differed, of course, about what was the right course to pursue. Although the main ideological goal was systematically followed, the training program was by no means free of tensions. There were differences not only among the leadership of the school—between comparatively liberal, undogmatic comrades and orthodox champions of the party line—but also repeated cases of students who, despite the stringent selection procedures, displayed a nonconformist or

even openly resistant attitude. This appears, on the one hand, to have been a direct consequence of world political events like the Hungarian uprising or the building of the Berlin Wall; on the other hand, it was also a consequence of the dilemma of attempting to stimulate talented and in many cases idealistic young people intellectually and at the same time to make them "toe the line" politically. In 1994 the writer Reiner Kunze, a journalism student between 1951 and 1953 and subsequently a research assistant at the School of Journalism until 1959, formulated this ambivalence as follows:

> I remember these years as years of unbearable indoctrination, which I to some extent passed on, initially [. . .] when I was teaching. [. . .] But that is only one side, only one aspect. If there had only been this one aspect, then one would have to say that it was a dark time. But there is also the other aspect. The indoctrination was so crazy that anyone who had even a spark of creativity and who had not completely renounced logic, human logic, had to see the contradictions, had to start thinking about them. And that's how during this time I began to think freely.[176]

To identify recurring patterns in both structural and staff relationships, it was necessary to go well beyond what was happening within the School of Journalism. This applies not only to attitudes toward the party and the Stasi, but strictly speaking to the world of work in editorial offices, which from roughly the mid-1960s onward was increasingly responsible for the practical qualification of young journalists. At least on paper the dual system of professional training entailed students initially spending half of their studies working in the editorial offices of the press, radio, and television before they returned to the seminar rooms of Karl Marx University to perfect their mastery of journalistic theory. But to expand on this subject would go beyond the confines of this essay.

The specific situation of this school gave students the opportunity to work as journalists and lecturers after successfully graduating or else to make a career as party functionaries. Not a few of them used this opportunity to advance professionally, in some cases rising—as with Klaus Höpcke—all the way to the state and party leadership. There were, however, others who during their studies—or like Reiner Kunze, soon thereafter—came into conflict with the authorities and subsequently tried consistently to avoid pressure from the party. While there is no doubt what the general party-state line was at the School of Journalism, life at the school in the 1950s and 1960s was more diverse than has previously been assumed.

Notes

Translation by Melanie Newton

1. Hans Hermann Hertle and Gerd-Rüdiger Stephan, eds., *Das Ende der SED: Die letzten Tage des Zentralkomitees*, 5th ed. (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2012).

2. Mary Fulbrook, *Ein ganz normales Leben: Alltag und Gesellschaft in der DDR* (Darmstadt: Primus Verlag, 2008), 273–80.

3. Martin Sabrow, "Der künstliche Konsens: Überlegungen zum Legitimationscharakter sozialistischer Herrschaftssysteme," *Jahrbuch für Historische Kommunismusforschung* (1999): 191–224; Dirk Baecker, "Oszillierende Öffentlichkeit," in *Medien und Öffentlichkeit: Positionierungen, Symptome, Simulationsbrüche*, ed. Rudolf Maresch (Munich: Klaus Boer Verlag, 1996), 89–107.

4. Research on the GDR to date has focused mainly on the example of the State Security Service (Stasi), whose role, among other things, was to keep the party leadership informed about the mood among the public. However, from the early 1970s, East German policymakers were increasingly operating in the dark, since the reports of the Ministry for State Security "did not even regularly reach the Politburo anymore." Jens Gieseke, *Die Stasi 1945–1990*, 4th ed. (Munich: Pantheon Verlag, 2011), 162. See Thomas Lindenberger, "Tacit Minimal Consensus: The Always Precarious East German Dictatorship," in *Popular Opinion in Totalitarian Regimes: Fascism, Nazism, Communism*, ed. Paul Corner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 208–22.

5. "Öffentliche Meinung," in *Wörterbuch der marxistisch leninistischen Soziologie*, ed. Wolfgang Eichhorn (Cologne: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1969), 424–25. On the concept of public opinion from a social science perspective under the Nazi regime, see Hans Amandus Münster, "Zeitung und Zeitungswissenschaft im neuen Staat," *Zeitungswissenschaft: Zweimonatsschrift für internationale Zeitungsforschung* 8, no. 5 (March 1933): 273–88, esp. 273–75. On the Soviet Union from the same perspective: Aleksandr K. Uledow, *Die öffentliche Meinung: Eine Studie zum geistigen Leben der sozialistischen Gesellschaft* (Berlin: Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, 1964).

6. For other approaches in the study of persuasive forms of communication, see Christoph Classen, "Thoughts on the Significance of Mass Media Communications in the Third Reich and the GDR," *Totalitarian Movements and Political Religions* 8, no. 3–4 (October 2007): 547–62. On party-state-controlled mass communication within societies under state socialism and National Socialism, see also Gábor T. Rittersporn, Malte Rolf, and Jan C. Behrends, eds., *Sphären von Öffentlichkeit in Gesellschaften sowjetischen Typs: Zwischen partei-staatlicher Selbstinszenierung und kirchlichen Gegenwelten* (Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 2003); Corey Ross, *Media and the Making of Modern Germany: Mass Communications, Society, and Politics from the Empire to the Third Reich* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2010), 263–301.

7. The only alternative was either the journalism program at the Karl Marx Party Academy of the SED Central Committee, which had existed since 1947, or the German School of Journalists, whose editorial courses were undertaken at the Leipzig School of Journalism. On the Karl Marx Party Academy, see Thekla Kluttig, *Parteischulung und Kaderauslese in der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands 1946–1961* (Berlin: Berlin-Verlag Spitz, 1997),

191–403. See also Julia Martin, "Der Berufsverband der Journalisten in der DDR (VDJ)," in *Journalisten und Journalismus in der DDR: Berufsorganisation—Westkorrespondenten—"Der schwarze Kanal,"* ed. Jürgen Wilke (Cologne: Böhlau, 2007), 7–77.

8. With the exception of Arnulf Kutsch, "Kommunikations- und Medienwissenschaft," in *Geschichte der Universität Leipzig 1409–2009: Fakultäten, Institute, Zentrale Einrichtungen*, vol. 4/1, ed. Ulrich von Hehl, Uwe John, and Manfred Rudersdorf (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2009), 741–59, the vast majority of the publications are from the 1970s and 1980s. See here especially Gudrun Traumann, *Journalistik in der DDR: Sozialistische Journalistik und Journalistenausbildung an der Karl Marx University Leipzig* (Munich: Verlag Dokumentation, 1971); Verena Blaum, *Ideologie und Fachkompetenz: Das journalistische Berufsbild in der DDR* (Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1985); Verena Blaum, *Marxismus-Leninismus, Massenkommunikation und Journalismus: Zum Gegenstand der Journalistikwissenschaft in der DDR* (Munich: Minerva-Publikation, 1980); Brigitte Klump, *Das rote Kloster: Als Zögling in der Kaderschmiede des Stasi* (Hamburg: F.A. Herbig Verlagsbuchhandlung, 1978; Munich: Herbig, 1991); Xing Hu Kuo, *Wodka in Sektgläsern: Cocktail meiner liebenswürdigen Stasi-Damen* (Böblingen: Tykve, 1993).

9. See, especially, Hermann Budzislawski, *Sozialistische Journalistik: Eine wissenschaftliche Einführung* (Leipzig: Bibliographisches Institut, 1966); Hermann Budzislawski, "Die erste deutsche Fakultät für Journalistik," in *Journalistisches Handbuch der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik*, ed. Verband der Deutschen Journalisten (Leipzig: Verlag für Buch- und Bibliothekswesen, 1960), 78–89. See also the remarks regarding particularly the early years of study policy at the School of Journalism in Hermann Budzislawski, "Zur Verbesserung des Studienganges und des Studienplanes an der Fakultät für Journalistik," *Neue Deutsche Presse* 11, no. 3 (1957): 3–16.

10. See, for example, Klaus Höpcke, "Lehrer-Persönlichkeiten an der Fakultät für Journalistik," in *Universität im Aufbruch—Leipzig 1945–1956*, ed. Manfred Neuhaus and Helmut Seidel (Leipzig: Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung Sachsen, 2002), 140–44; Hans Poerschke, "Anfänge marxistischer Journalistik—zwischen wissenschaftlichem Anspruch und Parteikonzept," in ibid., 134–39; Siegfried Schmidt, "Fakultät für Journalistik: Zum 50. Jahrestag der Gründung am 20. September 2004," in *Jubiläen 2004: Personen/Ereignisse*, ed. Universität Leipzig (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2004), 53–58.

11. Michael Meyen and Anke Fiedler, *Die Grenze im Kopf: Journalisten in der DDR* (Berlin: Panama-Verlag, 2011). This book contains a detailed survey of the status of research on the history of journalism in the GDR, which includes many of the autobiographical personal testimonies published to date. See also Stefan Zahlmann, ed., *Wie im Westen, nur anders: Medien in der DDR* (Berlin: Panama-Verlag, 2010); Wilke, *Journalisten und Journalismus*; Gunther Holzweißig, *Die schärfste Waffe der Partei: Eine Mediengeschichte der DDR* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2002). It is noteworthy that in many of the more recent collections of writings on the role of the media in Germany and elsewhere, there is scarcely any mention of the GDR. See Clemens Zimmermann, ed., *Politischer Journalismus, Öffentlichkeit und Medien im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert* (Ostfildern: Jan Thorbecke Verlag, 2006); Jürgen Wilke, *Massenmedien und Journalismus in Geschichte und Gegenwart: Gesammelte Studien* (Bremen: edition lumière, 2009); Klaus Arnold et al., eds., *Von der Politisierung der Medien zur Medialisierung des Politischen? Zum Verhältnis von Medien, Öffentlichkeit und Politik*

im 20. Jahrhundert (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2010). Exceptions are Karl Christian Führer and Corey Ross, eds., *Mass Media, Culture and Society in Twentieth-Century Germany* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006); Thomas Lindenberger, ed., *Massenmedien im Kalten Krieg: Akteure, Bilder, Resonanzen* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2006); Ute Daniel and Axel Schildt, eds., *Massenmedien im Europa des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2010).

12. In this connection see Daniela Münkel, "Zwischen 'Kaderschmiede' und Professionalisierung: Rundfunkjournalistenausbildung in der DDR der fünfziger Jahre am Beispiel der Rundfunkschule," in *Massenmedien und Zeitgeschichte*, ed. Jürgen Wilke (Constance: UVK-Medien, 1999), 188–99; Peter Strunk, *Zensur und Zensoren: Medienkontrolle und Propagandapolitik unter sowjetischer Besatzungsherrschaft in Deutschland* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1996); David Pike, *The Politics of Culture in Soviet-Occupied Germany, 1945–1949* (Stanford: Stanford University Press, 1992), 91–123.

13. Meyen and Fiedler, *Die Grenze*; Anke Fiedler and Michael Meyen, eds., *Fiktionen für das Volk: DDR-Zeitungen als PR-Instrument; Fallstudien zu den Zentralorganen Neues Deutschland, Junge Welt, Neue Zeit und Der Morgen* (Berlin: Lit-Verlag, 2011).

14. Fundamental to the methodological approach followed here: Anthony Giddens, *Die Konstitution der Gesellschaft: Grundzüge einer Theorie der Strukturierung* (Frankfurt a. M.: Campus Verlag, 1988), 91–159; Thomas Welskopp, "Die Dualität von Struktur und Handeln: Anthony Giddens' Strukturierungstheorie als 'praxeologischer' Ansatz in der Geschichtswissenschaft," in "Struktur und Ereignis," special issue, *Geschichte und Gesellschaft*, no. 19 (January 2011): 99–119.

15. Frank Bösch, *Mediengeschichte: Vom asiatischen Buchdruck zum Fernsehen* (Frankfurt a. M.: Campus Verlag, 2011), 194; Matthew Lenoe, "Censorship," in *A Dictionary of 20th-Century Communism*, ed. Silvio Pons and Robert Service (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2010), 92–94.

16. Meyen and Fiedler, *Die Grenze*, 328.

17. Sächsisches Staatsarchiv, Staatsarchiv Leipzig (hereafter StA-L), 21132 SED District Committee Karl Marx University Leipzig, no. IV/4/14/52, fols. 275–83, Resolution of the SED party leadership Karl Marx University, December 5, 1961; 21442 SED Ground Organization Journalism, no. IV/7/122/12, Resolution of Departmental Organization VIII, The struggle against social democracy, December 1950.

18. Quoted from the Bundesarchiv [Federal Archives] Berlin-Lichterfelde (hereafter BArchB), Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR (hereafter SAPMO), DY 30/IV A 2/9.02/107, "Die neuen Anforderungen des Journalisten und der Weg zu ihrer Qualifikation," May 15, 1963. Traditional ways of understanding the journalistic profession, such as those espoused by the Soviet communists in the 1920s, are discernible here. See Matthew Lenoe, *Closer to the Masses: Stalinist Culture, Social Revolution, and Soviet Newspapers* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 103–44.

19. The formation of institutions and institutional behavior cannot be examined solely on the basis of party directives and their practical guidelines; such an approach would too quickly confuse the management of institutions with the official fantasy of reality on the ground. Thomas Welskopp has formulated empirical and theoretical approaches to resolve this conundrum, albeit relating to the economic rather than the political sphere.

See Thomas Welskopp, "Ein modernes Klassenkonzept für die vergleichende Geschichte industrialisierender und industrieller Gesellschaften: Kritische Skizzen und theoretische Überlegungen," in *Mikropolitik in Unternehmen: Arbeitsbeziehungen und Machtstrukturen in industriellen Großbetrieben des 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. Karl Lauschke and Thomas Welskopp (Essen: Klartext-Verlag, 1994), 48–106, and Thomas Welskopp, "Der Betrieb als soziales Handlungsfeld: Neuere Forschungsansätze in der Industrie- und Arbeitergeschichte," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 22, no. 1 (1996): 118–42. The above quotations are from the last-mentioned publication, here 131.

20. Hugh Seton-Watson, *The East European Revolution* (New York: Frederick A. Praeger, 1951). In subsequent decades this idea was treated by both historians and political scientists as established structural knowledge. See Joseph Rothschild, *Return to Diversity: A Political History of East Central Europe Since World War II* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1989); György Schöpflin, *Politics in Eastern Europe, 1945–1992* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1993).

21. John Connelly and Michael Grüttner, eds., *Zwischen Autonomie und Anpassung: Universitäten in den Diktaturen des 20. Jahrhunderts* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2003); Oskar Anweiler, "Hochschulpolitik in Ostmitteleuropa und in der SBZ/DDR—alte Themen, neue Fragen," *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 24, no. 1 (1998): 81–87; John Connelly, *Captive University*: *The Sovietization of East German, Czech, and Polish Higher Education, 1945–1956* (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2000); Ralph Jessen, *Akademische Elite und kommunistische Diktatur: Die ostdeutsche Hochschullehrerschaft in der Ulbricht-Ära* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999).

22. On the current status of research on universities in the GDR, see Michael Grüttner et al., eds., *Gebrochene Wissenschaftskulturen: Universität und Politik im 20. Jahrhundert* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2010).

23. According to Ilko Sascha Kowalczuk, "Lehre und Forschung im SED-Staat: Universitäten und Hochschulen in der DDR," in *Deutschland Archiv*, March 10, 2012, https://www.bpb.de/themen/deutschlandarchiv/126682/lehre-und-forschung-im-sed-staat/. On the University of Leipzig, see especially Günther Heydemann, "Sozialistische Transformation: Die Universität Leipzig vom Ende des Zweiten Weltkrieges bis zum Mauerbau 1945–1961," in *Geschichte der Universität Leipzig 1409–2009*, vol. 3, *Das zwanzigste Jahrhundert 1909–2009*, ed. Ulrich von Hehl, Klaus Fitschen, and Günther Heydemann (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2010), 335–567; Günther Heydemann and Francesca Weil, eds., *"Zuerst wurde der Parteisekretär begrüßt, dann der Rektor . . . ": Zeitzeugenberichte von Angehörigen der Universität Leipzig (1945–1990)* (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2009); Markus Wustmann, "Die Gesellschaftswissenschaftliche Fakultät in Leipzig 1947–1951," in *Sachsens Landesuniversität in Monarchie, Republik und Diktatur: Beiträge zur Geschichte der Universität Leipzig vom Kaiserreich bis zur Auflösung des Landes Sachsens 1952*, ed. Ulrich von Hehl (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2005), 289–306.

24. The best-known example of a Leipzig journalist with a Nazi past is the former director of the Institute, Hans Amandus Münster. See Hans Bohrmann, "Das Jahr 1945 als personeller und institutioneller Wendepunkt von der Zeitungs- zur Publizistikwissenschaft," in *Journalismus und Öffentlichkeit: Eine Profession und ihr gesellschaftlicher Auftrag*, ed. Tobias Eberwein and Daniel Müller (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften,

2010), 483–505, here 490; Thymian Bussemer, *Propaganda: Konzepte und Theorien*, 2nd ed. (Wiesbaden: VS Verlag für Sozialwissenschaften, 2008), 195–205.

25. On account of his Nazi past, Menz was likewise a controversial figure at the Leipzig Institute for Newspaper Science; however, his remarkable interest in various aspects of journalism and above all his extensive teaching experience were key to his continued employment. See the accusations against Menz in Universitätsarchiv Leipzig (hereafter UAL), R 81h, fol. 8, M. K., "Hochschul-Reaktion?," *Volksstimme: Landeszeitung der Sozialdemokratischen Partei Deutschland, Landesverband Sachsen*, no. 44, November 2, 1945.

26. As shown in the curriculum for the journalism program at the Institute of Communications and Newspaper Science at the Philosophical Faculty of the University of Leipzig dated August 15, 1951 (privately owned by the author).

27. UAL, R 65, vol. 1, fol. 1, City Director Ott to the rector of the University of Leipzig, March 29, 1946.

28. UAL, R 65, vol. 1, fol. 4, Reply from the Leipzig University administration to the Press Office of the City of Leipzig, April 11, 1946.

29. BArchB, SAPMO, DY 30/IV 2/9.03/49, fols. 210, 298, 300–303, 344–46, 350; Kluttig, *Parteischulung*, 257–58, 263–64.

30. BArchB, SAPMO, DY 30/IV 2/903/49, fol. 1, Walter Ulbricht to Wilhelm Pieck and Otto Grotewohl, May 7, 1947.

31. On Hermann Budzislawski (1901–78), see the information in his "Victims of Fascism" (Opfer des Faschismus, OdF) file in Landesarchiv Berlin (hereafter LAB), C Rep. 118–01, no. 26041, as well as in his SED cadre file, in BArchB, SAPMO, DY 30/IV 2/11/v. 2509. See also Marita Krauss et al., "'Drei Zonen, drei Städte, drei Schicksale,'" in *Zwischen den Stühlen? Remigranten und Remigration in der deutschen Medienöffentlichkeit der Nachkriegszeit*, ed. Claus Dieter Krohn and Axel Schildt (Hamburg: Christians, 2002), 245–66; Toralf Teuber, *Ein Stratege im Exil: Hermann Budzislawski und "Die neue Weltbühne"* (Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, 2004); Karin Hartewig, *Zurückgekehrt: Die Geschichte der jüdischen Kommunisten in der DDR* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2000); Axel Fair-Schulz, *Loyal Subversion: East Germany and Its Bildungsbürgerlich Marxist Intellectuals* (Berlin: Trafo Verlag, 2009), 275–334.

32. BArchB, SAPMO, DY 30/IV 2/11/v. 2509, fol. 232, Ulbricht's handwritten note in the margin of a letter to Franz Dahlem, December 6, 1946.

33. Akademie der Künste, Berlin (hereafter AdK), Literature Archive, Hermann Budzislawski holding, Sig. 127/28, Hermann Budzislawski, Memorandum on my exclusion from regular work.

34. Ulrich Mählert, "'Die Partei hat immer recht!' Parteisäuberungen als Kaderpolitik in der SED (1948–1953)," in *Terror: Stalinistische Parteisäuberungen 1936–1953*, ed. Hermann Weber and Ulrich Mählert (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh, 1998), 351–457. On this subject, see the overview of the research in Johannes Baur, "'Großer Terror' und 'Säuberungen' im Stalinismus: Eine Forschungsübersicht," *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 45 (1997): 331–48.

35. AdK, Literature Archive, Hermann Budzislawski holding, Sig. 127/28, Hermann Budzislawski, Memorandum on my exclusion from regular work; Archiv des Bundes-

beauftragten für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (hereafter BStU), MfS, BV Lpz., AIM 263/53 "Garanti," fol. 40, Memorandum of the 82nd Police District, Leipzig, April 3, 1951. On Budzislawski's experience of returning from emigration, see Daniel Siemens, "Elusive Security in the GDR: Remigrants from the West at the Faculty of Journalism in Leipzig, 1945–61," *Central Europe* 11, no. 1 (2013): 24–45.

36. UAL, R 65, vol. 2, fol. 2, GDR minister of education to the government of Saxony and the rector of the University of Leipzig, November 27, 1950; BArchB, SAPMO, DY 30/J IV 2/3/163, fols. 1–3, 12–23, minutes no. 36 of the Central Committee Secretariat, December 27, 1950.

37. BStU, MfS, BV Lpz., AIM 263/53 "Garanti," fol. 98, Police memorandum, July 5, 1951. To this day the circumstances surrounding the appointment of Eduard Schulz, a highly dubious figure, remain shrouded in mystery.

38. UAL, R 65, vol. 2, fol. 4, Minister of education, instruction no. 81, January 8, 1951.

39. Wilhelm Eildermann (1897–1988), a member of the German Communist Party from 1919, worked for the party as a journalist in the Weimar Republic. Under the Third Reich he was imprisoned from 1933 to 1937 and subsequently went into exile in Prague and Paris, where he was interned in 1939 and deported to Algeria. Liberated by the Allies in 1942, he initially fought with the British Army against the Wehrmacht. In 1944 he served as editor of the newspaper of the National Committee *Freies Deutschland* in Moscow; from May 1945 to May 1947 he was a lector at the "Antifa School" of the Soviet Army in Austria. After that he returned to the Soviet zone of occupation/GDR. On Eildermann's biography, see his extensive estate in BArchB, NY 4251.

40. UAL, R 65, vol. 2, fols. 8–13, here fol. 10, Professor Wilhelm Eildermann to State Secretary for Higher Education Gerhard Harig, May 14, 1954.

41. StA-L, 21442 SED Ground Organization Journalism Studies, no. IV/7/122/19, Suggestion for improving party work at the Institute of Communications and Newspaper Science, April 26, 1954.

42. StA-L, 21442 SED Ground Organization Journalism Studies, no. IV/7/122/12, Party educational work at the School of Journalism, Leipzig, July 18, 1955.

43. BArchB, SAPMO, DY 30/IV/11/v/2509, Albert Schreiner to the Personnel Policy Department of the Central Secretariat of the SED, November 9, 1949; DY 30/IV 2/11/v5427, fols. 157–65, here fol. 161, Copy of Albert Norden's resumé, February 27, 1951; NY 4217/1, fols. 1–11, here fol. 6, Albert Norden's resumé, November 29, 1949. Albert Norden (1904–82) had been a member of the German Communist Party since 1920 and, like Budzislawski, was arrested while in French exile in fall 1939. He likewise spent the early 1940s in the United States, where he worked as a journalist for the *German American* among other papers. After the war Norden moved to the Soviet zone of occupation, where he succeeded in making an impressive career as a functionary. Information in LAB, C Rep. 118–01, no. 7684. See also the contemporary witness biography of Norbert Podewin, *Der Rabbinersohn im Politbüro: Albert Norden—Stationen eines ungewöhnlichen Lebens*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Edition Ost, 2003).

44. The proposal to turn the SED party organization at Karl Marx University Leipzig into the SED District Committee Karl Marx University Leipzig can be traced to a motion brought by the SED District Committee Leipzig in 1966. Because the Saxon State Archive failed to take account of this difference—adopted by the former SED District Party Archive Leipzig—in labeling the files, in the following the pre-1966 correspondence is listed under SED District Committee Karl Marx University Leipzig for the sake of uniformity. BArchB, SAPMO, DY 30/J IV 2/3/1227, fol. 7, Minutes no. 90/60 of the Central Committee Secretariat, October 18, 1966.

45. The main criticism in the early 1950s came from Eildermann, Budzislawski's immediate rival (following the flight of Eduard Schulz) when it came to who should steer the development of Leipzig's journalism program. According to him, "it should on no account be recommended that B[udzislawski] broaden his scope at the Institute of Communications." "The reasons are known to you [the Central Committee of the SED]: both his past connections, his influential work in the United States (for Dorothy Thompson), which was only possible on account of his more than dubious attitude toward the Soviet Union, as well as more generally his view of the press, which still today is colored by his time in America." BArchB, NY 4251, vol. 63, fol. 204, Wilhelm Eildermann to the Central Committee of the SED, September 19, 1951. It was only a personal letter from Budzislawski to Wilhelm Pieck, who interceded on his behalf with Hermann Axen, that seems to have remedied the situation. See the documents in Budzislawski's SED cadre file in BArchB, SAPMO, DY 30/IV 2/11/v. 2509, fols. 28–35; LAB, C Rep. 118–01, no. 26041, fol. 6, "Judgment" on Hermann Budzislawski by the SED District Committee Karl Marx University Leipzig, April 26, 1951.

46. Budzislawski, *Sozialistische Journalistik*, 37, 46, 63, 69, 109, 137, 144–45, 149, 153–56, 181–82, and 188.

47. AdK, Budzislawski Papers, Publizistische Texte, Mappe 1, Typescript of Budzislawski's speech of thanks on being awarded an honorary doctorate at Karl Marx University Leipzig (1966).

48. BArchB, SAPMO, DY 30/IV 2/2.028/89, fol. 19, Letter of reply from Hermann Budzislawski to Albert Norden, January 8, 1962.

49. StA-L, Cadre files holding, no. 455, Excerpt from the Central Committee resolution, March 7, 1962.

50. Following studies in German language and literature, which lasted only two years on account of postwar conditions, Wolfgang Rödel (1924–2007) had worked since 1948 at the College of Education and at the University of Jena as a radio journalist for the Weimar broadcasting station, where he became head of the cultural policy desk in 1950 and later rose to become a member of the State Committee for Radio in Berlin. In 1954 he earned a doctorate in Jena with a thesis on Georg Forster. Information in Wolfgang Rödel's SED cadre file, in StA-L, Cadre files holding, no. 455.

51. StA-L, Cadre files holding, no. 455, Submission of the Central Committee Department of Agitation to the SED Central Committee, February 5, 1962.

52. Ibid. The Marxist philosopher and literary scholar Georg Lukács (1885–1971) had become persona non grata in the GDR after the Hungarian uprising of 1956 was put down.

In 1963, following continual attacks from within the party, Hans Mayer (1907–2001), then professor of literature in Leipzig, finally found himself forced to leave the GDR. On Mayer's time in Leipzig, see Heydemann, "Sozialistische Transformation," 546–65.

53. StA-L, Cadre files holding, no. 455, "Judgment" on Wolfgang Rödel by the SED party leadership of the School of Journalism, June 25, 1965.

54. This was how it was formulated in the SED cadre file on Wolfgang Rödel, an only partially preserved document, in ibid.

55. In the broadest sense they belonged to the "1929 generation," as Fulbrook called the cohort who had grown up under Nazism and later identified particularly closely with the GDR in an attempt to distance themselves from the Nazi regime. See Mary Fulbrook, *Dissonant Lives: Generations and Violence through the German Dictatorships* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011), 330–44.

56. Klaus Höpcke, born on November 21, 1933, in Cuxhaven, studied at the Institute of Communications/School of Journalism from 1951 to 1955. From 1955 to 1960 he worked as a scientific assistant and then senior scientific assistant, first at the Institute of Theory and Practice of Press Work, later at the Institute for Language and Stylistics. He joined the party in 1953 and from 1956 was a member of the university's party leadership, holding the post of full-time deputy secretary from 1960 to 1962. In 1962 he moved to the SED District Committee, and in 1964 he became head of the cultural desk at the *Neues Deutschland* newspaper in Berlin. Information in Klaus Höpcke's SED cadre file in BArchB, SAPMO, DC 20/8119, esp. fols. 6–7, 28–29.

57. Wieland Herzfelde (1896–1988) joined the German Communist Party at the end of 1918. He was the founder of the Malik publishing house. His brother was John Heartfield (real name Helmut Herzfeld), whose photomontages for the *Arbeiter Illustrierten-Zeitung* earned him lasting acclaim. From 1933 Wieland Herzfelde and his wife lived in exile, finally settling in New York, where he headed the Aurora publishing house, a cooperative publisher of German writers in the United States, in a voluntary capacity. He moved to the Soviet zone of occupation/GDR in 1949. On May 18, 1949, the Saxon government appointed him to the professorial chair of the sociology of contemporary literature at the University of Leipzig. Information in Wieland Herzfelde's SED cadre file in BArchB, SAPMO, DY 30/IV 2/11/v. 4504.

58. AdK, Literature Archive, Wieland Herzfelde holding, Sig. 3028, "Declaration of the Central Committee and the Central Party Control Commission (Zentrale Partei-Kontrollkommission, ZPKK) of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany on the connections between former German political emigrants and the head of the Unitarian Service Committee Noel H. Field." See Georg Hermann Hodos, *Schauprozesse: Stalinistische Säuberungen in Osteuropa 1948–54* (Berlin: LinksDruck, 1990), 57–65.

59. On the question whether antisemitic sentiments toward Herzfelde played a role in this context, see Siemens, "Elusive Security."

60. BArchB, SAPMO, DY 30/IV 2/11/v. 4504, fol. 79, "Judgment" on Wieland Herzfelde by the ZPKK.

61. BStU, MfS, BV Lpz., AP 3041/64, fols. 3–5, here fol. 3, Report of the deputy head of the Bezirksverwaltung für Staatssicherheit (BVfS) Leipzig, February 11, 1957.

62. Details of the conflict that began in 1951 directly after Herzfelde switched to the In-

stitute of Communications can be gleaned from the correspondence between the party and the university, in BArchB, SAPMO, DY 30/IV 2/11/v. 4504, fols. 210–14.

63. UAL, R 65, vol. 3, fols. 13–16, Dean Hermann Budzislawski to State Secretary for Higher Education Wilhelm Girnus (via the rector of Karl Marx University, Prof. Georg Mayer), November 2, 1957.

64. Correspondence in UAL, R 206, vol. 10.

65. Information from UAL, School of Journalism holding (Journ. Fak.), 1954–69, inventory, fol. 16, Short chronicle of the history of the School of Journalism, and Schmidt, "Fakultät für Journalistik," 56.

66. UAL, R 65, vol. 2, fols. 48–51, Curriculum for 1954/55.

67. BArchB, SAPMO, DY 10/797, fols. 88–94, here fol. 89, Union of German Journalists (VDJ) of the GDR: A brief evaluation of three programs for seminar leaders at the German Journalists School in December 1962 and January 1963. Stephan et al. provide an overview of this organization: Gerd-Rüdiger Stephan et al., eds., *Die Parteien und Organisationen der DDR: Ein Handbuch* (Berlin: Dietz, 2002), 827–31.

68. See, for example, Karl Corino, "Geprüft von der Stasi: Journalisten-Ausbildung in der DDR," *Stuttgarter Zeitung*, April 28, 1979, citing BStU, MfS, BV Lpz., Abt. XX 655, fols. 7–8; Ingolf Kern, "Die Sekte," *Cicero* 9 (2009), https://www.cicero.de/berliner-republik/die-sekte/39800.

69. UAL, R 123, fols. 5–6, Prorector Robert Schulz to the State Secretariat for Higher Education, December 14, 1955.

70. BStU, MfS, BV Lpz., administration 824, vol. 5, fols. 41–44, here fol. 42, Information report of BVfS Leipzig, December 27, 1956.

71. BStU, MfS, BV Lpz., administration 02108, fols. 130–36, here fol. 131, Information report of BVfS Leipzig, November 5, 1956.

72. UAL, R 123, fols. 51–54, Prorector for undergraduates to the State Secretariat for Higher Education, November 30, 1961.

73. Ibid.

74. On this see also Kuo, *Wodka*, 25–26.

75. UAL, R 123, fol. 57, Prorector for studies, Dr. Möhle, to the State Secretariat for Higher Education, March 30, 1962.

76. BStU, MfS, BV Lpz., AOP 40/64, vol. 1, fols. 36–38, Minutes of the Disciplinary Committee of Karl Marx University, September 16, 1961.

77. Sylvia Klötzer, *Satire und Macht: Film, Zeitung, Kabarett in der DDR* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2006), 121–51, here 131; see also Ernst Röhl, *Der Rat der Spötter: Das Kabarett des Peter Sodann* (Cologne: Kiepenheuer, 2002).

78. Klötzer, *Satire und Macht*, 122–30.

79. This circle of young intellectuals, named after the Hungarian folk hero Sándor Petőfi (1823–49), was regarded as the driving force behind the Hungarian popular uprising of 1956. On the history of its impact, see Matthias Braun, "Petőfi-Kreise grenzüberschreitend? Die internationalen Kontakte der intellektuellen Dissidenz," in *Kommunismus in der Krise: Die Entstalinisierung 1956 und die Folgen*, ed. Roger Engelmann (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 371–89.

80. StA-L, 21145 SED Municipal Committee, no. 70, "Summary of the discussion at the

members' meeting of the SED Ground Organization at the School of Journalism on the anti-party group in 'Rat der Spötter,' on September 11, 1961."

81. The fact that, in a letter to the SED Regional Committee, a secretary of the SED District Committee at Karl Marx University Leipzig made the "mistake" of referring to the "peaceful" rather than "hostile" political line of the controversial cabaret program is a telling example. StA-L, 21132 SED District Committee Karl Marx University Leipzig, no. IV/4/14/046, fol. 163, Secretary of the university party leadership to the SED Regional Committee, September 7, 1961.

82. For details see Klötzer, *Satire und Macht*, 131–32.

83. StA-L, 21132 SED District Committee Karl Marx University Leipzig, no. IV/4/14/046, fol. 171, Secretary of the SED District Committee Karl Marx University, Böhme, to Paul Fröhlich, SED Regional Committee, March 17, 1962.

84. UAL, R 117, vol. 2, fols. 4–57, here fol. 37, Karl Marx University, "The situation among the teaching staff," 1961.

85. Silvia Klötzer, "'Wo der Hund begraben liegt': Vom Ende des Studentenkabaretts 'Rat der Spötter' 1961/62," *Potsdamer Bulletin für Zeithistorische Studien* 20–21 (December 2000): 6–18, here 15.

86. StA-L, Cadre files holding, no. 455, submitted by the Central Committee's Agitation Department to the Secretariat of the SED Central Committee, February 5, 1962.

87. "Statut der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands," in *Protokoll der Verhandlungen des IV. Parteitages der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands (30.3.–6.4.1954)* (Berlin: Dietz, 1954), 1115–41, esp. 1118–20.

88. Andreas Malycha, *Die SED: Geschichte ihrer Stalinisierung 1946–1953* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2000); Podewin, *Rabbinersohn*, 190–294.

89. See the multivolume estate of Albert Norden (NY 4217) in the Bundesarchiv Berlin-Lichterfelde, as well as, for a brief biography, the information in n. 43.

90. On the development of personnel and work routines in the central party apparatus, see Heike Amos, *Politik und Organisation der SED-Zentrale 1949–1963: Struktur und Arbeitsweise von Politbüro, Zentralkomitee und ZK-Apparat* (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2003).

91. Michael Lemke, *Einheit oder Sozialismus? Die Deutschlandpolitik der SED 1949–1961* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2001).

92. BArchB, SAPMO, NY 4217/38, fols. 172–87, Speech by Albert Norden at the meeting of the Central Executive of the German Press Union, November 26, 1955.

93. BArchB, SAPMO, DY 30/IV A 2/9.02/62, Draft of a lecture by Albert Norden with the title "The Ideological Weapon of the Party: Press, Radio, and Television in the Comprehensive Building of Socialism," December 1964.

94. Welskopp, "Ein modernes Klassenkonzept," 87.

95. BArchB, SAPMO, DY 30/4686, fol. 33, Tasks and working methods of the Agitation Commission and the Agitation Department (minutes of the Politburo no. 6/65, February 9, 1965); DY 30/J IV 2/3/704, fol. 118, Main nomenclature of the Central Committee (minutes of the Central Committee Secretariat, no. 36/60, September 26, 1960).

96. Mario Niemann, *Die Sekretäre der SED-Bezirksleitungen 1952–1989* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 2007).

97. Jan Palmowski, "Regional Identities and the Limits of Democratic Centralism in

the GDR," *Journal of Contemporary History* 41, no. 3 (July 2016): 503–26; Heinz Mestrup, "Die unterschiedlichen Realitäten im regionalen Herrschaftsalltag der DDR: Das Beispiel der thüringischen ersten Bezirks- und Kreissekretäre der SED," in *Die Geschichte der SED: Eine Bestandsaufnahme*, ed. Jens Gieseke and Hermann Wentker (Berlin: Metropol, 2011), 187–209.

98. Niemann, *Die Sekretäre*, 196.

99. As Central Committee secretary for agitation and propaganda from 1955 to 1967, Norden was the boss of three department heads in succession: Horst Sindermann (1953–63), Rudolf Singer (1963–66), and Werner Lamberz (1966–71). The endless organizational restructuring of the department during the 1950s thus took place almost exclusively during Sindermann's period in office. It was under him in January 1954 that the Department of Press and Radio was changed back into the Department of Agitation (having previously been renamed from the Department of Press and Mass Agitation into the Department of Agitation) before it became the Department of Agitation, Press, and Radio in spring 1955, and between 1957 and 1961 was merged with the Department of Agitation and Propaganda. "From 1961 until its dissolution in 1989 there was once again a Department of Agitation, but its sectors and leadership structures were continually changing. The fundamental allocation of tasks was, however, preserved until the end." Holzweißig, *Die schärfste Waffe*, 12.

100. BArchB, SAPMO, DY 30/IV 2/9.04/230, fol. 38, Department of Agitation and Propaganda of the SED Central Committee to the Department of Sciences, December 31, 1957; DY 30/IV A 2/9.02/107, Rudi Singer to the members of the Agitation Commission, December 11, 1963; DY 30/IV 2/9.04/230, fols. 22–38, Guidelines for the work of the School of Journalism, December 6, 1957.

101. BArchB, SAPMO, DY 30/IV 2/9.04/230, fol. 31, Guidelines for the work of the School of Journalism, December 6, 1957.

102. BArchB, SAPMO, DY 30/IV 2/9.04/558, fols. 363–64, Decision of the SED Regional Committee Karl Marx University Leipzig, October 21, 1955.

103. BArchB, SAPMO, DY 30/IV 2/9.04/230, fols. 1–21, here fol. 13, Report on a study trip to the Soviet Union, May 21–June 4, 1957.

104. BArchB, SAPMO, DY 30/IV 2/9.04/18, fols. 213–17, Moscow School of Journalism to Professor Wilhelm Eildermann, February 10, 1954; DY 30/IV 2/9.02/14, fols. 111–12, Submission to the Central Committee Secretariat regarding sending a delegation to study the training of journalists in the Soviet Union, April 2, 1957; DY 30/IV 2/2/169, fol. 6, Request of the Politburo to the CPSU Central Committee (B) to send a professor to the Institute of Communications in Leipzig, October 2, 1951.

105. BArchB, SAPMO, DY 30/IV 2/9.04/21, fol. 74, Statement of the Central Committee Department of Science to be presented to the Secretariat of the Department for Agitation and Propaganda, October 17, 1958.

106. Kurt Hager, *Erinnerungen* (Leipzig: Faber & Faber, 1996), 151.

107. BArchB, SAPMO, DY 30/IV A 2/2.028/60, fols. 115–16, Letter from Albert Norden to Kurt Hager regarding the "inadequate training at the German Film Academy" and the "serious cadre situation in German television and radio in the field of cultural policy."

108. A good example of this is the "review" of "behavior hostile to the party," of which many institute directors and students working at the Institute for the History of European

People's Democracies at Karl Marx University Leipzig were accused. It was carried out in December 1966 at the urging of the Central Committee Department of Sciences led by Hager, and concluded in February of the following year by the Department of Leading Party Organs of the SED Central Committee. BArchB, SAPMO, DY 30/ J IV 2/3J/557, fols. 1–6, Central Committee Department of Leading Party Organs to the Central Committee Secretariat, March 10, 1967. On Hager, see also the remarks in Andreas Malycha and Peter Jochen Winters, *Geschichte der SED: Von der Gründung bis zur Linkspartei* (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2009), 146–47.

109. BArchB, SAPMO, DY 30/IV 2/9.04/56, fol. 158, An assessment of the current status of the work of party organizations at the universities, May 25, 1957; BStU, MfS, BV Lpz., AOP 40/64, vol. 2, fols. 68–75, esp. fol. 71, Conclusions of the SED Party leadership at Karl Marx University, December 5, 1961.

110. Karl Schirdewan, *Aufstand gegen Ulbricht: Kampf um politische Kurskorrektur, gegen stalinistische, dogmatische Politik* (Berlin: Aufbau-Taschenbuch-Verlag, 1996), 36.

111. BArchB, SAPMO, DY 30/IV 2/9.02/53b, fol. 60, Theses on the third press conference of the SED, March 21, 1959; see also the contribution by Karl-Heinz Röhr and Willy Walther, both former research assistants to Hermann Budzislawski, on his scientific premises: Karl-Heinz Röhr and Willy Walther, "Hermann Budzislawski," in *Journalismus und Gesellschaft: Festschrift der Fakultät für Journalistik Karl Marx University Leipzig (Hermann Budzislawski zum 65. Geburtstag)* (Leipzig: Karl Marx University Leipzig, 1966), 9–22, and Budzislawski's public statement of accounts to the School of Journalism, October 15, 1958: Hermann Budzislawski, *Die Ausbildung der Journalisten und die Erforschung der Presse: Öffentlicher Rechenschaftsbericht vor der Fakultät für Journalistik am Tage der Universität*, October 15, 1958 (Leipzig: Verlag Enzyklopädie, 1959), 13–14.

112. BStU, MfS, BV Lpz., AP 3041/64, fol. 8, IM report, January 23, 1957; BArchB, SAPMO, DY 30/IV A 2/9.04/408, Brief information about the status of party schooling at Karl Marx University Leipzig, April 1963; StA-L, 21442 SED Ground Organization Journalism, no. IV/A/7/122/010, Information report of the SED Party leadership at the School of Journalism, June 9, 1965.

113. See the speech by Karl Schirdewan, "Abänderungen am Statut der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands," in *Protokoll der Verhandlungen des IV. Parteitages*, 904–70, here 905–6.

114. Bernd Florath, "Die Partei," in *Erinnerungsorte der DDR*, ed. Martin Sabrow (Munich: C.H.Beck, 2009), 79–89, here 85, 87; Berthold Unfried, *"Ich bekenne": Katholische Beichte und sowjetische Selbstkritik* (Frankfurt a. M.: Campus Verlag, 2006).

115. BArchB, SAPMO, DY 30/IV 2/9.04/555, fols. 280–88, esp. fol. 287, Speech by Hermann Budzislawski at the third press conference of the SED Central Committee in Leipzig, April 17/18, 1959.

116. See the speech by Albert Norden to the Union of German Journalists, January 27, 1966, in Albert Norden, *In Aktion für das sozialistische Vaterland: Ausgewählte Aufsätze und Reden 1964–1969* (Berlin: Dietz, 1969), 202–13, here 207, 211–12.

117. Norden's dismissal was also the expression of a changed, often cynical treatment of older communists in the GDR from the 1960s onward. See Catherine Epstein, *The Last*

Revolutionaries: German Communists and Their Century (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 2003), 187–243.

118. BArchB, SAPMO, DY 30/IV 2/9.04/558, fol. 233, File note, September 12, 1961.

119. StA-L, 21442 SED Ground Organization Journalism, no. IV/7/122/03, Resolution of the SED Party Organization at the School of Journalism, April 16/17, 1962.

120. BStU, MfS, BV Lpz., AP 3043/64, fols. 47–48, Copy of J.'s "evaluation," February 3, 1955.

121. BArchB, SAPMO, DY 30/IV 2/9.04/230, fols. 25–27, 29–30, Guidelines for the work of the School of Journalism, December 6, 1957.

122. Erving Goffman, *Stigma: Über Techniken der Bewältigung beschädigter Identität* (Frankfurt a. M.: Suhrkamp, 1967), 14.

123. BArchB, SAPMO, DY 30/IV A 2/2.028/61, fol. 9, Central Committee Agitation Department to Norden's office, April 19, 1966 (emphasis in the original).

124. BArchB, SAPMO, DY 30/IV A 2/2.028/61, fols. 11–30, Report by Emil Dusiska on the work of the Institute for Theory and Practice of Press Work, April 19, 1966.

125. BArchB, SAPMO, DY 30/IV 2/2.106/5, fols. 233, 235–36, Statement of accounts by Dean Emil Dusiska on the School of Journalism, December 7, 1968.

126. Paul Roth, *Sow-inform: Nachrichtenwesen und Informationspolitik der Sowjetunion* (Düsseldorf: Droste Verlag, 1980), 200; René Ahlberg, "Theorie der öffentlichen Meinung und empirische Meinungsforschung in der UdSSR," *Osteuropa* 19, no. 3 (March 1969): 161–72, here 168–72.

127. Kristin Roth-Ey, *Moscow Prime Time: How the Soviet Union Built the Media Empire that Lost the Cultural Cold Wa*r (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 2011).

128. Klump, *Das rote Kloster*, 223.

129. Ibid., 252, 256, 273–74.

130. This subject has not been sufficiently researched. Studies to date include Steffen Reichert, *Transformationsprozesse: Der Umbau der LVZ* (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2002), 50, and Frank Nordhausen, "Seminargruppe 606," *Berliner Zeitung*, February 13, 2002, https://www.berlinonline.de/berliner-zeitung/archiv/.bin/dump.fegi/2002/0213/seite3/0001/index.html.

131. The staff of Line V formed the "nucleus of a system of political repression and surveillance by the Ministry of State Security. In terms of structure and activities the department adapted itself several times to the changing conditions for securing the ruling regime." In 1964 it was renamed one final time to become Main Department XX (called "Department" or "Section XX" in the district administrations), whose secret service mission continued to be the surveillance of the state apparatus, the cultural sphere, the opposition, and the churches. See Thomas Auerbach et al., *Hauptabteilung XX: Staatsapparat, Blockparteien, Kirchen, Kultur, "politischer Untergrund"* (Berlin: Bundesarchiv/Stasi-Unterlagen-Archiv, 2008); the quotation can be found on p. 3.

132. The information given in the following relates to the reports on the activities of Department V/4 of BVfS Leipzig dated December 11, 1953, in BStU, MfS, BV Lpz., administration 180, fols. 82–83, 98–99, and the report of the activities of Department V/1 of the BVfS Leipzig dated January 18, 1955, in BStU, MfS, BV Lpz., administration 183/03, fols. 1–9.

133. BStU, MfS, BV Lpz., administration 924, fol. 3, Report on the monitoring of Departments II, III, V, and VII, as well as the regional offices for Torgau and Altenburg of BVfS Leipzig, January 4–14, 1955.

134. Gieseke, *Die Stasi*, 57.

135. BStU, MfS, BV Lpz., administration 924, fol. 69, Report on the monitoring of Departments II, III, V, and VII, as well as the regional offices for Torgau and Altenburg of BVfS Leipzig, January 4–14, 1955; BStU, MfS, ZA 11569, fol. 5, Assessment by MfS staff member Klaus W.

136. BStU, MfS, BV Lpz., AP 3799, fol. 85, Report of Department V/1 on the meeting with IM "Renate," October 25, 1957.

137. BStU, MfS, BV Lpz., AGI 321/56, fol. 79, File note of Department V/1 concerning IM "Taucher."

138. BStU, MfS, BV Lpz., AP 3799, fol. 57, Report of Department V/1 concerning the self-criticism session (*Aussprache*) with the scientific assistant at the School of Journalism A., March 21, 1957.

139. BStU, MfS, BV Leipzig, AP 3799, fol. 83, Report on the meeting on Oct. 21, 1957, with IM "Karlus."

140. On the exonerating effect of this process, see Lynne G. Zucker, "The Role of Institutionalization in Cultural Persistence," *American Sociological Review* 42, no. 5 (October 1977): 726–43.

141. BStU, MfS, BV Lpz., AP 3799, fol. 73, Main points of Department V/1 on the interrogation of a student of the School of Journalism, May 27, 1957; fol. 64, Report of Department V/1 concerning the self-criticism session (*Aussprache*) with a student at the School of Journalism, June 6, 1957; fol. 93, Report of BVfS Leipzig.

142. BStU, MfS, BV Lpz., AGI 321/56, fols. 12–13, Recruitment report of the office Bautzen II, May 5, 1954; fol. 90, Meeting report of Department V/1 of the BVfS Leipzig, November 2, 1955; fol. 104, Meeting report of Department V/1 of the BVfS Leipzig, December 22, 1955; fol. 21, Evaluation of IM "Taucher" by Department V/1 of the BVfS Leipzig, January 27, 1956.

143. BStU, MfS, BV Lpz., AGI 321/56, fols. 86–89, 93, 99, Meeting reports of Department V/1 of the BVfS Leipzig, October 24, November 7, and December 14, 1955.

144. BStU, MfS, BV Lpz., AGI 321/56, fol. 100, Meeting report of Department V/1 of BVfS Leipzig concerning IM "Taucher," December 14, 1955.

145. BStU, MfS, BV Lpz., AGI 321/56, fol. 23, Final report of Department V/1 of BVfS Leipzig concerning IM "Taucher," April 3, 1956.

146. BStU, MfS, BV Lpz., AIM 916/61, AA, fol. 5, Recruitment proposal by Department V/1 of BVfS Leipzig, September 19, 1957.

147. BStU, MfS, BV Lpz., AIM 916/61, PA, fol. 55, Final report of the MfS Köpenick office, December 29, 1960.

148. BStU, MfS, BV Lpz., AIM 1/56, fol. 5, Memorandum of Captain Müller on the self-criticism session (*Aussprache*), April 27, 1956.

149. BStU, MfS, BV Lpz., AIM 1/56, fol. 6, M.'s declaration of commitment, April 27, 1956.

150. It is unclear from the records to which the authors were given access by the Federal Commissioner whether M. really was able to join the ADN after graduating.

151. For example, the journalism student who went under the IM cover name "Renate" was invited by the party secretary of the party organization at the school to a meeting with the MfS. BStU, MfS, BV Lpz., AP 3799, fol. 8, Meeting report of Department V/1 of BVfS Leipzig concerning IM "Renate," September 19, 1957.

152. Welskopp, "Dualität," 106–7.

153. Information in UAL, PA-A 8642, 7382, and 7177.

154. These findings thus coincide with the characteristics ascribed by Meyen and Fiedler, *Die Grenze*, 345–51, to what they portray as a strong "reconstruction generation." "In contrast to the reconstruction generation," the authors emphasize that "anyone who decided from the mid-1950s on (and especially later) to become a journalist in the GDR" knew exactly what they were letting themselves in for (351).

155. UAL, PA-A 5925, fol. 7.

156. UAL, PA-A 2299, fols. 13–16.

157. UAL, Journ. Fak. holding 80, fol. 7, Dr. Halbach to Prof. Dusiska, May 29, 1965.

158. BArchB, SAPMO, DY 30/IV A 2/9.02/63, Press Section to Rudolf Singer regarding an election meeting at the School of Journalism.

159. UAL, PA-A 8642, fol. 25.

160. BArchB, SAPMO, DY 30/IV 2/5/933, fols. 86–91, here fol. 86, "Concept for including a qualifying assignment for direct study in programs with a difficult applicant situation," May 9, 1961.

161. UAL, R 117, vol. 5, Zentralinstitut für Jugendforschung, ed., *Student 69* (Leipzig: Zentralinstitut für Jugendforschung, 1969), 200–201, 217–18. In the mid-1950s a basic stipend was 180 marks, while a performance stipend was 40 marks more.

162. BArchB, SAPMO, DY 30/IV A 2/2.028/61, fols. 11–30, here fol. 29, Emil Dusiska, Report on the work of the Institute for Theory and Practice of Press Work, April 19, 1966.

163. See the extensive statistical survey at Karl Marx University conducted in 1969 and published under the title *Student 69* by the Zentralinstitut für Jugendforschung. Also in UAL, R 117, vol. 5, 206.

164. A survey of the overall statistics for Karl Marx University Leipzig reveals that it was not customary to accommodate students in dorms. According to this survey, just under 60 percent of students lived in sublets and another 20 percent with their parents, while only 10 percent were accommodated in dorms. See *Student 69*. The rental contract with the school stipulated that no outside persons—no acquaintances, friends, or family members—were allowed into the rooms in which the journalism students lived. Detail in the rental contract between the director of administration at the University of Leipzig and the journalism student Klaus Höpcke, January 14, 1952 (privately owned by the author).

165. On suicide in the GDR more generally, see Udo Grashoff, *"In einem Anfall von Depression. . .": Selbsttötungen in der DDR* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2006); Udo Grashoff, *Selbsttötungen in der DDR und das Wirken des Ministeriums für Staatssicherheit* (Magdeburg: Landesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen DDR in Sachsen-Anhalt, 2004).

166. UAL, R 123, fols. 61–62, Notes on the attempted suicides of two female students in February 1962.

167. Klump, *Das rote Kloster*, 253, 268–69, 287. Herzfelde likewise noted in 1956 that in view of the pressure exerted on him in recent years he had also considered suicide. AdK, Literature Archive, Wieland Herzfelde holding, Sig. 2928, Wieland Herzfelde, occasional diary, entry for June 26, 1956.

168. On the "Junge Gemeinde" in the early years of the GDR, see Ellen Ueberschär, *Junge Gemeinde im Konflikt: Evangelische Jugendarbeit in SVZ und DDR 1945–1961* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 2003).

169. UAL, holding J 21, vol. 11, fols. 41–42, Prorector Gertler to the rector of Karl Marx University, Hans Mayer, May 14, 1958, and the response from Hans Mayer, May 19, 1958.

170. UAL, holding J 21, vol. 12, fol. 32, Prorector Gertler to the rector of Karl Marx University, Hans Mayer, April 29, 1958.

171. See the efforts made mainly by the Leipzig University archive to uncover the fates of persecuted students and academics in Jens Blecher, "'ab… nach Sibirien': Einschüchterungspolitik und Meinungsbildung durch Terror an der Universität Leipzig zwischen 1945 und 1955," in *Studentischer Widerstand an den mitteldeutschen Universitäten 1945 bis 1955: Von der Universität in den GULAG; Studentenschicksale in sowjetischen Straflagern 1945 bis 1955*, ed. Jens Blecher and Gerald Wiemers (Leipzig: Universitätsverlag Leipzig, 2005), 42–57.

172. There are no precise figures for the number of graduates during the period in question; however, in 1963 the Union of German Journalists named a figure of 1,200 graduates up to that point; if we extrapolate this further to 1968, 2000 would seem plausible. Union of German Journalists in the German Democratic Republic, Information about journalistic training in the GDR (as of July 1, 1963), in BArchB, SAPMO, DR 3, 1. Schicht/1876.

173. BArchB, NY 4217, vol. 59, fols. 178–222, Albert Norden, Draft of a lecture entitled "The ideological weapon of the party, press, radio, and television in the comprehensive building of socialism," on the occasion of the Fourth Conference of Journalists, December 11/12, 1964.

174. The quoted formulations are taken from the brochure "Grundsätze für die journalistische Ausbildung durch den Verband der deutschen Presse in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik," which was published as a supplement to no. 9/1958 of the *Neue Deutsche Presse*; BArchB, SAPMO, DR 3, 1. Schicht/1876.

175. BArchB, SAPMO, DY 30/IV 2/2.106/5, fols. 104–22, Meeting of the Agitation Commission at the Central Committee Politburo, September 30, 1968; fols. 269–76, Meeting of the Agitation Commission at the Politburo, December 12, 1968; fols. 230–59, Report on teaching and research at the school, December 7, 1968.

176. Reiner Kunze in the film *Der Schriftsteller Reiner Kunze: Ein Porträt von Sigrid Esslinger*, BR 1994. We would like to thank Christoph Studt, Bonn, for making it possible for us to see this film.

The Contours of East German Exceptionalism

The Schooling of Journalists under Ulbricht

JOHN CONNELLY

In the 1990s I spent years reading internal reports of the Communist apparatus—in Berlin and Leipzig, but also Prague and Warsaw—and became inured to its language and learned to take certain expressions for granted, like *versöhnlerisch* (conciliatory) or *Feinde entlarven* (unmasking enemies), but now, after a pause of several decades, the first thing that strikes me is the bizarre phraseology that state socialist functionaries took for granted.

The language is not the conventional one of bureaucracies that alienate people across the globe, but instead reflects the unusually stringent aspirations and concerns of a different and now bygone world.[1] SED (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands—Socialist Unity Party of Germany) jargon seems particularly odd as a way of communicating at a university, which after all is about education. The functionaries acted to limit rather than expand knowledge, or more precisely to guide a limited set of understandings and commonsense meanings through narrow channels, to produce minds like their own, geared to a particular story of human salvation.[2] Polish students under Stalinism compared certain university faculties to seminaries, but that is not quite accurate. Even in the pre-Vatican II period, Catholic seminaries never attempted to totally standardize knowledge, seeking out and punishing nonconformists. Leipzig's journalism faculty appears remarkable against the background of European history, where before the age of dictators newspapers and universities reflected the desire of people to know more about themselves. The story of the Leipzig journalism faculty was about hiding a society from itself.[3]

So one wonders whether the old European concept of the "university" is adequate to capturing that past reality in Leipzig, or whether the word itself misleads, like calling the Supreme Soviet a parliament. Perhaps readers should

be alerted that they are encountering a peculiar new chapter in European history, where age-old institutions received not just new tasks but a fresh matrix of vocabularies for professional communication.

Social historians remind us that "party jargon" gives limited access to the realities of a time and place. Much more was happening than reflected in reports about the Karl Marx University in Leipzig.[4] It was somewhere that a later dissident like Reiner Kunze found promising as a place of education; he found much to challenge and expand his thinking. Yet it is also true that Kunze left the university because he found it unbearable, a fact due to the tightening of orthodoxy during the vital time of transition our piece explores.

The arrests of cabaret performers in the fall of 1961 represented a caesura, a cruel warning. Evidently the suppression of "revisionism" in 1956/57 (which also hit Leipzig hard) had not sufficed: now even thinking of disrespecting the "workers' and peasants' state" and its leaders would land students in prison. Cabaret artists had the duty "of studying the decisions of the party and government with particular care and of observing and helping implement them in their agitational activities, which include satire."[5] If a university was not a university, now cabaret was not cabaret; could students still be students?[6]

And what of journalism with its assumed task, going back to the liberal breakthroughs of the 1840s, of publicly communicating society's disputes about itself? Was a newspaper that one bought at a newsstand in Potsdam the same kind of thing that one might purchase three (closed) S-Bahn stops away in Wannsee? Formally, perhaps yes, but the purpose of *Neues Deutschland* or *Neue Zeit* was not unshackled communication of anything, but rather informing citizens what it was safe to say about current events in public. (More on the press below).

A word to describe these two differing realities on either side of the wall between Potsdam and Wannsee might be a *Lebenswelt* (life world), which social scientists have used to capture subjectively received experience common to a particular group of human beings: for example the Central European *Bürgertum* (middle classes) of the nineteenth century, with its shared sense of identity, sacred rituals, and values, as well as taboos.[7] Students in socialist Leipzig shared a different kind of lived experience than counterparts in Heidelberg, or Western universities in general; the larger life world involved their participation in constructing socialism, the more specific one that they satisfy political expectations that were ever more strictly enforced.[8]

Alf Lüdtke, seminal in GDR (German Democratic Republic) social history, rejected the *Lebenswelt* idea because it implies boundaries between those inside and outside; indeed, even "inside" people's behaviors and self-perceptions are characterized by unending variety. On the basis of earlier work that valorized

industrial laborers, he recommends seeking *Eigen-Sinn*, ways in which people created their own worlds.[9] In my view that approach denies the obvious, which, as noted, smacks outsiders the moment they encounter correspondence of the SED: this was a place of radically illiberal imposed and absorbed values, with constraints and rewards very different from those current in the West.[10] A woman I overheard on the weekend after the Wall opened returning to East Berlin on the S-Bahn told her child as the train reached the final stop at Friedrichstrasse, the walls between the platforms still firmly in place: "You can tell people in school that you visited another country on the weekend." Now it seems absurd to say that visiting western areas of the same city constituted a visit to a different "country," but what the woman said was an understatement.

A perhaps more sensitive way of articulating different worlds of East and West is Thomas Lindenberger's "tacit consensus," which he offers as a corrective to the notion of the GDR as dictatorship of consent (which might be specific to certain parts of the elite). The word "tacit" is key: people within *Lebenswelten* understand things in similar ways without verbalizing or even becoming aware of the fact that they take basic things in life for granted, even if they do not agree about them.[11]

The point, whatever metaphor one chooses, is not to totalize. We should acknowledge that East Germans were not completely dominated by structures of expectation; but more than that, we should explore their powers to shape those structures. Still, such exploration is a fine art, and the challenge remains of over- or underrating East Germans' freedom, the *Freiräume* (open spaces for action) within which they realized agency. *Freiräume* seems to me superior to *Eigen-Sinn* as it does not anticipate resistance, and sensitizes us to Marx's old caveat that we make history, but not just as we please. In the Leipzig of the early 1960s we see a gradual closing off of *Freiräume*, for students in general, but also for those who wanted to shape socialism. As Schemmert and Siemens write, "Ideas differed, of course, about what was the right course to pursue."[12] That is perhaps the most important thing to remember about the student cabaret: several were SED members who wanted to "build" socialism in ways that were less "dictatorial," and therefore were disciplined by forces within their party—it's not clear whether those forces were more to the right or left.

Yet, right or left, unity socialists belonged to the same *Lebenswelt*, the same milieu: the persecuted, the persecuting, and those standing by shared socialist convictions that were remarkably durable. Take Ralf Schröder, a gifted Slavicist who worked at the University of Leipzig and was sentenced in 1958 to ten years' imprisonment for treason.[13] He was "guilty" of taking part in discussions about reforming socialism, with the Yugoslav and Polish ways in mind. Schröder was

refused work at Karl Marx University after his release in 1964, and acted as editor at the Volk und Welt publishing house till 1988, becoming a leading interpreter of Russian literature in the GDR (especially the work of Mikhail Bulgakov).[14]

In the year before the wall came down, I heard Schröder in conversation with fellow philologists at the University of Greifswald, all of us fascinated by the opportunities opened by Gorbachev. In Schröder's view Stalinism was not about a dictator's monstrous abuse of power, but instead signaled an unfortunate temporary setback in revolution, shaped by Russia's backwardness and the imperative to stage "primitive accumulation." Historical necessity drove Stalinism, in other words. Despite years in state socialist prisons, Schröder possessed an unbroken Marxist worldview, ultimately supported by a certain faith in "history."[15] None of the indignities he suffered could justify a return to "capitalism."

Trotskyists and free-thinking socialists like Schröder often found themselves in the same party with neo-Stalinists after 1989. The Partei des Demokratischen Sozialismus (PDS—Party of Democratic Socialism) was a home where revolutionary Marxists with their beliefs in "realizable utopias" had more in common with each other than with those on the outside.[16] The ultimate indicator of belonging to the same world is a common vocabulary: like being in the company an old acquaintance, where important things do not need to be explained. Like any world, it had no clear boundaries, but one knew when one was in it: from the tactile to odors in the air, commonly understood jargon, an unending array of colors, sounds, institutions, uniforms, one "felt" the GDR. Still: these all echoed, paralleled, or exotically mirrored counterparts elsewhere, more so within the old bloc, but to some extent in any modern society, variations on a theme.[17]

Despite the persistence of basic utopian hopes and Marxist worldviews in certain milieus of the socialists of the GDR, from "old communists" to the Hitler Youth generation, the reality of the GDR was anything but unchanging. If I had a critique of the piece it would be its practice of reading material from the mid-1950s next to documents from a decade later, as if this were from the precise same place. When one reads transcripts of party meetings from early and later years, one sees that the GDR evolved, from a place of open and contentious discussion in the 1950s to the stultifying ritualism in the Honecker years, though the former years featured unbridled terror.

One indication in the piece is the slogan "Aufbau des Sozialismus" (building of socialism). The meaning of that phrase changed radically over time, and by the 1980s certain ideas and stances (if one likes "habitus") could not be part of the project. Those insisting on open discussions—called *Aussprachen* in GDR German—had become enemies; the problem in *Fehlerdiskussionen* (discussions of mistakes) was not the fact of a mistake, but the fact of a discussion. Rather

than methods of building consensus or discovering truth, a still common idea in 1954, by 1966/67, *Aussprachen* had the primary function of identifying enemies. The truth of this statement is seen in the curtailing of the searching, critical films of the early 1960s, or at the Leipzig faculty, in the edging out of figures like Budzislawski.

One can also give examples from everyday life and the *real existierende* (really existing) socialist press. By the 1970s it had the function of impressing not so much what to know as what not to think, setting limits on what people even tended to discuss. Without saying that the GDR replicated the Nazi period, we can draw a lesson from Nicholas Stargardt's depiction of wartime media in German that controlled Europe: by saying nothing about the dark side of German state practice, the media had set certain limits to what people discussed even in private.[18] Stargardt cites Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, a social scientist famous for postwar opinion polling who had worked for Joseph Goebbels's *Das Reich*, and her term "spiral of silence": "fear of isolation and social sanction tended to silence individuals who feel they are in the minority, reducing their potential number; meanwhile press reporting of the 'majority' viewpoint augments and stabilizes its moral position."[19]

One wonders if Kunze was optimistic when he wrote: "The indoctrination was so crazy that anyone who had even a spark of creativity and who had not completely renounced logic, human logic, had to see the contradictions."[20] Perhaps his own case reveals that this reality was receding as the journalism school became a *Kaderschmiede* (place for forging cadres) from the late 1950s onward: increasingly those who possessed creativity were not accepted to begin with.

Schemmert and Siemens might have made it more evident that a journalism school was not just any institution that the party-state wished to instrumentalize: its goal was to forge new humans who would build the new society, and in this function it had a status above all other institutions in higher education, excepting perhaps the Karl Marx Party Academy and the training institutions of the MfS.

The pressure to efface gaps between what was written at the official level and what was said in cafeterias and other public places became drastic. The lives that GDR citizens might lead "behind walls" were incomparably rich,[21] but what was communicated officially, in newspapers or public speeches, with time became ever emptier and more routine, virtually unreadable. Ralph Jessen describes the experience of reading reports and correspondence from the waning years of state socialism: "The older the GDR became, it seems, the more meaningless were the records it collected of itself. The reports swelled, but their content became increasingly meagre." He speaks of "the world of SED socialism" as "linguistically constituted," and presumably also linguistically distinct from other societies.[22]

Journalism of the "developed socialist society," that is, of the Honecker period that succeeded the turbulent time described by our authors, had the function not so much of disseminating news, but also of restricting people's ability not just to pose questions, but to imagine them. (We) liberals profess faith in a quantity that runs parallel to what theologians call conscience, namely curiosity; people's ability to ask questions may be blunted, but can it be eradicated? Those who lived under the Nazi dictatorship substituted a world of innuendo and often wild rumors for the facts the regime withheld: was the situation similar in the GDR?[23]

Superficial observation suggests that the offerings of newsstands failed to satisfy curiosities. Did people on public transit in the GDR sit engrossed in newspapers, the way counterparts did in the French metro?[24] In socialist Moscow I recall metro riders reading books and not newspapers. The *Leseland DDR* (East German society of readers) of course massively consumed *Belletristik* (fiction), provided by a functionary mentioned in the piece under discussion, Klaus Höpcke, who proudly called himself the *Bücherminister* (Minister of Books), and denied employing censorship when I asked him about it in the summer of 1989 ("we have a process of approving books for printing!"). Beloved authors, like Sarah Kirsch, Stefan Heym, Christoph Hein, quickly sold out, partly because they attempted to make sense of the "DDR-Lebenswelt."[25] But there was also overproduction of ideologically correct material, and the enduring visual impression from 1990 is of stacks of unread, unsellable books and journals, written material that lay in bins across the republic before unification, waiting to be pulped.

How far could the state push people into living a reality where questions were undesired, and *Querdenker* (unconventional thinkers) went nowhere;[26] within the party: why did forces of limiting horizons seem to advance, while those in favor of questions were edged out, like the heroes we encounter in this piece?

I wondered about this conundrum while studying the purported crime of fleeing East Germany for the West (*Republikflucht*) at universities before the wall went up.[27] An odd dynamic obtained after the "revisionists" were safely arrested. On the one hand the party wanted to hold on to desperately needed scholars, but on the other it kept alienating them and their families by tightening screws: for example persecuting professors' children who attended meetings of Protestant Youth Groups. Though warnings were issued against *Sektierertum* (ideological extremism)—another staple in party jargon—the intensity of ideological vigor differed little between party base and elite: at all levels the SED pushed for radical conformity. And, predictably, professors left in droves. Well before August 13, 1961, the SED radicalized university life in a way that necessitated that students and their teachers maintain *Mauern in den Köpfen* (walls in their minds), between what was and was not permissible to think.

Was the pressure to wall off unwanted ideas and truths perhaps dictated by the past? Or perhaps more accurately: did an embarrassing past make the suppression of future speech necessary? I am speaking above all of 1953 and 1961, but there were countless other episodes that could not be openly addressed. Anyone who stated the undeniable, for example, that Western agitators did not unleash workers' demonstrations, or that the United States was not poised to attack from West Berlin, became an instant enemy. Arguably the evident failures of socialism, the system's ingrained inability even to verbalize them, required an escalating scale to suppress questions and curiosity.

It's a different world but the same galaxy. People belonging to faith communities established in the hoary past find themselves unthinkingly defending that community's history in times long before they were born. Faith communities are coherent worlds that fear probing questions that might unravel a coil of cherished truths. Americans also know worlds red and white where unwelcome questions attract efforts at suppression, where people of differing persuasions draw on completely different news sources. We also know of rumors, half-truths, and falsehoods substituting for news. The point here is not to relativize, but to accomplish something the piece of Siemens and Schemmert gestures toward: a comparative study of dictatorships. What socialism in the colors of the GDR really meant in world history does not become shocking, banal, or even relevant until it is placed next to other cases, starting with the most proximate: other societies of the socialist world system. East Germany was, as functionaries liked to joke in the strictures of utopia, "Die größte DDR der Welt" ("the greatest GDR in the world.")

Notes

1. The word officially used in the GDR to capture that intended otherness was *Gesellschaftssystem*.

2. Our authors write of a "deliberately chosen counter-model to capitalist societies—[which did not allow for] pluralism of opinion"; Christian Schemmert and Daniel Siemens, "Die Leipziger Journalistenausbildung in der Ära Ulbricht," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 61, no. 2 (April 2013): 201–37, here 202. An English translation of Schemmert and Siemens's article appears in this volume as "The Leipzig Educational Program for Journalists during the Ulbricht Era."

3. With the ultimate ironic outcome that the regime itself became unable to judge what its own population thought about its rule. Schemmert and Siemens, "Journalistenausbildung," 201.

4. As our authors write, "life at the school in the 1950s and 1960s was more diverse than has previously been assumed"; ibid., 237.

5. Sylvia Klötzer, "'Wo der Hund begraben liegt': Vom Ende des Studentenkabaretts 'Rat der Spötter' 1961/62," *Potsdamer Bulletin für Zeithistorische Studien*, no. 20/21 (2000): 6–18, here 16, 18.

6. Klötzer finds that the SED created further "cabarets" in the 1970s, with the goal of using humor to "unmask class enemies" and "deepen friendship with the Soviet Union and other socialist brother lands." Sylvia Klötzer, "'Volldampf woraus?'—Satire in der DDR: 'Eulenspiegel' und 'Kabarett am Obelisk' in den siebziger und achtziger Jahren," in *Herrschaft und Eigen-Sinn in der Diktatur: Studien zur Gesellschaftsgeschichte der DDR*, ed. Thomas Lindenberger (Cologne: Böhlau, 1999), 267–313, here 274–75.

7. For orientation, see Andreas Schulz, *Lebenswelt und Kultur des Bürgertums im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2014), 17–18 and passim.

8. The use of *Lebenswelt* is also compatible with the basic structure of German historicism, characterized above all by the "the idea of the irreducible individuality of all historical formations." Thus Friedrich Meinecke's view of historicism cited in Wolfgang J. Mommsen, *Bürgerliche Kultur und politische Ordnung: Künstler, Schriftsteller und Intellektuelle in der deutschen Geschichte 1830–1933* (Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer-Taschenbuch-Verlag, 2000), 103. The GDR was indeed a very particular "historische Gestaltung."

9. Alf Lüdtke, "Lebenswelt: verriegelte Welt? Überlegungen zu einem Konzept und seinen Verwendungen," *Werkstatt Geschichte*, no. 75 (2017): 115–24. Synonyms for *Lebenswelt* include milieu and "political culture." For a critical reflection on the latter, replicating the spirit of Lüdtke's dissatisfaction with "Lebenswelt," see Frank Bösch, "'Sonderfall Ostdeutschland?' Zum Demokratieverständnis in Ost und West," *Zeitgeschichte-online*, March 18, 2019, https://zeitgeschichte-online.de/themen/sonderfall-ostdeutschland. He notes that East and West Germans shared many understandings about politics, and that the contrasting of East and West tends to normalize the old Federal Republic of Germany. Here, too, the criticism deprives us of conceptual tools to analyze the obvious: that East and West Europeans lived in, and were shaped by, very different political and social systems. "Lebenswelt" has roots in Edmund Husserl's phenomenology; important proponents have included Aldred Schütz as well as Jürgen Habermas. In Habermas's case we can speculate that "Lebenswelt" gave him a way of embracing national or national-like identity without seeming to reify that very difficult entity in the German context, especially before unification. See his contribution to the *Historikerstreit*: "Eine Art Schadensabwicklung: Die apologetischen Tendenzen in der deutschen Zeitgeschichtsschreibung," *Die Zeit*, July 11, 1986. *Eigensinn* normally translates "obstinacy," but in the understanding of Lüdtke and his followers, as "Eigen-Sinn" it has come to mean a kind of individual and group human agency, the subtle determination to live according to one's own lights, in behavior that cannot be termed resistance or support. For an insider's perspective, see Thomas Lindenberger, "Eigen-Sinn, Domination, and No Resistance," Docupedia-Zeitgeschichte, August 3, 2015, https://docupedia.de/zg/Lindenberger_eigensinn_v1_en_2015.

10. Péter Apor adds a critical note: by confusing microhistory and the history of everyday life, studies of the GDR have tended to focus on the supposed resistance of lower strata living separate from and against the regime, rather than "providing contexts of the rich complexity of social and cultural relationships [. . .] situating particular historical events in their actual historical-anthropological contexts." They also do not fully grasp the potential

of social history to account for the stability of state socialist regimes. Péter Apor, "The Joy of Everyday Life: Microhistory and the History of Everyday Life in the Socialist Dictatorships," *East Central Europe* 34/35, no. 1/2 (2008): 185–218, here 186.

11. Thomas Lindenberger, "Tacit Minimal Consensus: The Always Precarious East German Dictatorship," in *Popular Opinion in Totalitarian Regimes: Fascism, Nazism, Communism*, ed. Paul Corner (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 208–22.

12. Schemmert and Siemens, "Journalistenausbildung," 236.

13. The supposed conspiracy also included writer Erich Loest and linguists Harro Lucht and Ronald Lötzsch.

14. A leading member of the Rat der Spötter, Heinz-Martin Benecke, went on to a successful career in the cultural world of Leipzig after his release from prison; the same was true of Peter Sodann, who worked in East Berlin and Halle.

15. Fritz Mierau, "Sechs Widmungen oder Vom Verstummen," in *Ralf Schröder (1927–2001): Das schwierige Leben eines bedeutenden Slawisten*, vol. 1: *Erinnerungen, Beiträge zu seinem Werk, Bibliographie*, ed. Willi Beitz (Leipzig: Rosa-Luxemburg-Stiftung Sachsen, 2003), 25–30, here 27 and passim.

16. And so dissident and critical figures like Stefan Heym, Gerhard Zwerenz, Peter Sodann, and the Brie brothers found their way into the PDS. Ronald Lötzsch's wife, Sabine, was a chairperson of Die Linke. Péter Apor writes that an unanswered question for students of state socialism is the origin of a need to believe in utopia. Apor, "Joy of Everyday Life," 186.

17. A major one being consumption.

18. Nicholas Stargardt, *The German War: A Nation under Arms, 1939–45* (London: Bodley Head, 2015), 250: "For a time [. . .] the spiral of silence worked."

19. Stargardt continues: "Her argument also highlights an important intersection between the public and private spheres of society, with much of the pressure toward conformity exercised privately, within like-minded peer groups. Through embarrassment, even humiliation, the opinion-forming relationships of family and workplace effect silent shifts in moral positions." Ibid., 246.

20. Kunze, cited in Schemmert and Siemens, "Journalistenausbildung," 237.

21. See Paul Betts, *Within Walls: Private Life in the German Democratic Republic* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013).

22. Ralph Jessen, "Diktatorische Herrschaft als kommunikative Praxis: Überlegungen zum Zusammenhang von 'Bürokratie' und Sprachnormierung in der DDR-Geschichte," *Presse in der DDR*, June 6, 2011, https://pressegeschichte.docupedia.de/wiki/Diktatorische_Herrschaft_als_kommunikative_Praxis_Version_1.html.

23. The regime itself attempted to steer and run the "rumor mill" for its own purposes. See Lars-Broder Keil and Sven Felix Kellerhoff, *Gerüchte machen Geschichte: Folgenreiche Falschmeldungen im 20. Jahrhundert* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2006), 23–24.

24. People of course subscribed to newspapers, for weather and sport news, also for information about local events that affected them personally; but this did not involve much "reading." The newspaper was valuable for many other purposes, like cleaning glass. Students were supposed to be familiar with the content of *Neues Deutschland* and could be asked about it in school; certain entertaining magazines, like *Eulenspiegel* or *Guter Rat*, were in-

deed read and survived the transition to a market economy (three titles in all). Citizens also read the press for disguised news: for example "eating eggs is healthy" meant the refrigerating facilities were full. But getting that kind of information required a practice akin to reading: skimming.

25. Sabine Peschel, "Die wichtigsten Autoren der DDR-Literatur," *DW-Kultur*, November 9, 2019, https://www.dw.com/de/angepasst-umstritten-aufm%C3%BCpfig-die-wichtigsten-autoren-der-ddr-literatur/a-51173688.

26. This was an insight Dietrich Staritz shared with me in the summer of 1989 in his office at Mannheim. Mannheim. *Querdenker* also translates as "lateral thinker."

27. John Connelly, "Zur 'Republikflucht' von Wissenschaftlern in den fünfziger Jahren," *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 42, no. 4 (April 1994): 331–52.

Divided but Not Disconnected

Transboundary Waters as a German-German Environmental Problem

ASTRID M. ECKERT

Although humans have been busily creating territorial boundaries for millenia, rivers pass through these imagined frontiers. This article analyzes the way in which the waterways connecting East and West Germany forced both states to work with each other to address river pollution. It explores the political circumstances, conflicting interpretations, and economic interests that influenced and even prevented agreements to clean up rivers during the 1970s and 1980s. For the Federal Republic, the consequences of the German Democratic Republic's environmental laxity soon became a pressing concern because 95 percent of these rivers ran from East to West. In contrast, East German negotiation strategies were driven by the country's need for Western currency. By the 1980s, an acute shortage of foreign currency led East German officials to view the environment as a commodity that it could use to convince West German authorities to share its wealth. The Werra River, gravely damaged by potash salts, serves as an example for the strategic dynamic that evolved between both German states. The article concludes that environmental policy and river ecology functioned as independent causal factors in post-1945 German history.

In the wake of the East German revolution in 1989/90, when the official taboo on environmental issues was lifted, a survey of the natural environment in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR) revealed a state of affairs that was almost as shocking as the state of the East German economy.[1] In January 1990 the news magazine *Der Spiegel* carried a cover story entitled "the poison kitchen of the GDR" and illustrated its ecological horror story with an image of a bubbling round-bottom flask.[2] Following reunification, the Federal Republic of Germany invested billions in environmental protection and in cleaning up contaminated sites in the former GDR; Joachim Radkau called this "the world's most expensive environmental protection operation."[3] The ecological costs of the socialist planned economy did not, however, come as news

Map 1. Map highlighting the transborder waterways, wetlands, and mountain ranges straddling West Germany and its socialist neighbors.

to West German experts on the GDR. East German environmental contamination had been a constant concern for West Germany since the early 1970s. For years, the wind had blown sulfur dioxide, fly ashes, and herbicides across the border into western territory; and the rivers had carried heavy metals, fertilizers, and sewage into the Federal Republic. Environmental diplomacy thus became another field of activity for political experts in inter-German relations.

Until shortly before the fall of the Berlin Wall, they continued to work out the implementation of the hard-won Environmental Accords of 1987; the last environmental agreement between the two German states was concluded in July 1989.[4] By then the division of Germany, while continuing to be the subject of rhetoric, had long been treated as an established fact in the old Federal Republic.

Physical and biological environmental conditions—climate, water, air, soil—know no political boundaries. In many instances, environmental history has taken this into account and defined its analytical framework irrespective of national entities.[5] Especially studies on the history of transboundary rivers can be considered as models in this respect.[6] Major waterways connect political and cultural communities in ways that transcend the rivers themselves; they create hinterlands and determine the development of infrastructure. Competing claims to rivers as transport and trade routes, as a source of water for people and animals, and, with increasing industrialization, as a conduit for effluent engendered models of shared regulation. Interventions upstream had consequences downstream; where the straightening of a river brought benefits for some, it threatened others with flooding. Who was allowed to intervene how was always a question of political power.[7]

In the German context, environmental history illustrates well how until 1990 the country was "divided, but not disconnected."[8] Water management in particular (the supply of drinking water to West Berlin or the border city of Duderstadt, the management of the Oker dam in the Harz Mountains, the maintenance of agricultural drainage channels near the border), along with the use of natural resources in mining (lignite near Helmstedt/Harbke, potash along the Werra), disaster prevention (building dikes along the Elbe River, protection against radioactivity in Gorleben/Morsleben), forestry issues (bark beetle infestation, air pollution from sulfur dioxide), and wastewater problems (sewage treatment plants, industrial wastewater), shows just how difficult it was to divide a highly industrialized state by a paper partition.[9] However perfect the deadly border installations became, the inter-German border and the Berlin Wall inadvertently became "contact zones" between the two German states.[10]

Waste and environmental toxins crossed the border in both directions. Especially during the 1980s, West German politics and business sought to dispose of waste as inexpensively as possible, which entailed sending some of the country's household and toxic waste to the GDR. After the fall of the Wall, West German environmental organizations were at pains to remind the public that West Germany had been "so clean" not least at the expense of the GDR.[11] Sulfur dioxide from the West blew into East Germany when the wind was blowing in

that direction, although air pollution in the other direction was much greater. The GDR's dependence on lignite meant that in the 1980s it emitted the largest volume of sulfur dioxide in the whole of Europe.[12]

With respect to rivers that flowed across borders, however, the burden was almost exclusively West Germany's. Most rivers along the former inter-German border flow from east to west, turning the Federal Republic into the downstream recipient of the GDR's waste until 1990. While West Germany did indeed suffer environmental contamination, it also exploited this state of affairs to exert political pressure on the GDR. The Stasi warned the leadership of the Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (SED—Socialist Unity Party of Germany) that this strategy was designed to squeeze the GDR economically since "environmental protection would require enormous expenditure, which would put the GDR [. . .] in a difficult position."[13] At the same time, the SED leadership feared negative western news coverage about its environmental sins.[14] When the East German Ministry of the Environment instructed subordinate agencies in 1981 to avert environmental damage, it was motivated not by a genuine concern for the environment but by a fear of losing face. Spills as such were not the issue; only those that would provide Bonn with further leverage constituted a problem.[15] Conversely, the GDR used the means at its disposal to record West German cross-border environmental transgressions. When the coal-fired power station in Buschhaus, near Helmstedt, was set to go into operation without desulfurization filters in 1984, East German authorities quickly installed two measuring devices for sulfur dioxide in Harbke/Marienborn in order to collect evidence that West Germany was freeloading on the GDR.[16]

Using the example of borderland waters, this essay examines the dynamics that arose between the two German states from transboundary environmental problems. It asks which political circumstances and interpretations of the situation at hand prevented or obstructed cooperation between East and West Germany. It reveals in particular how crucial the shortage of hard currency was for the GDR in the 1980s. However, this essay is not concerned only with environmental policy. It also acknowledges the independent role played by the ecology of rivers. The Werra River, heavily contaminated by saline wastewater from the GDR's potash industry, will be used as an illustration of the connection between environmental policy and material environmental history,[17] allowing us to approach an environmental history topic with the familiar categories of politically oriented contemporary history.[18]

All Rivers Flow West

East Germany was by nature a relatively dry country and was therefore forced to recycle water, especially in industrial production. Years with low precipitation could easily lead to acute water shortages, so that "fear of a lack of water" determined all water policy decisions ever since the GDR came into existence.[19] Despite official efforts, however, by 1990, 45 percent of East German rivers could no longer be used to supply drinking water.[20] Rehabilitation measures for these waterways were only considered if the water quality became so poor that it impaired industrial production. But especially with respect to transboundary rivers, the GDR regarded such efforts as superfluous, "since the[se] rivers usually leave GDR territory after short stretches, and therefore the contamination of these waters does not result in any restrictions on water use within GDR territory."[21]

Farther downstream, this very attitude defined West Germany's woes, since in 95 percent of cases the transboundary rivers drained from the GDR into West German territory. Thus West Germany received twenty-five times the influx that the GDR did. Whereas by the 1970s the rivers flowing from east to west carried a steadily increasing pollution load, the GDR, solely on account of the direction of flow, did not suffer anything comparable in the other direction. The only rivers that offered potential points of discussion for the GDR in this respect were the Franconian Saale, possibly the Warme Bode in the Harz region, and the Teltow Canal in Berlin.[22] However, West Germany preempted such potential complaints by investing DM 166 million in the Saale, while modern sewage treatment plants were installed in West Berlin.[23] The only targets of occasional criticism, therefore, were a few water management maintenance measures on the West German side.[24] West Germany, on the other hand, was the recipient of a multitude of pollutants in transboundary waters, which reflected the fundamental environmental problems in the GDR in the 1970s and 1980s. The impact of these problems on transboundary rivers alone was as follows.

Waste from unregulated or inadequately secured garbage dumps washed into transboundary waters. In principle, East German consumers produced less packaging waste than their western counterparts due to lower consumption levels and greater efforts to recycle raw materials.[25] Yet both industrial waste and household trash were regularly deposited in unsecured landfills, even though this was illegal in the GDR as well.[26] The Steinach River in Franconia, for example, regularly carried trash from the Köppelsdorf landfill in Sonneberg County across the border into Kronach County. After mild flooding in April 1975, the Weiss electricity company in Mitwitz had to shut down its power station in order to

fish tin cans, plastic bottles, car tires, crates, chairs, and various wooden objects out of the river. Whole pig carcasses had become trapped in the power station's grate.[27] The Weiss company repeatedly alerted county officials in Kronach to the problem and filed a complaint with the Border Commission, but these efforts brought no improvement. After four years of entreating the local government without success, the company eventually turned to the Federal Ministry of Justice in Bonn to complain about the lack of progress, but to no avail.[28]

The removal of solid objects from streams could be solved by mechanical means, but smaller transboundary rivers also suffered from inflows of pesticides as well as wastewater from slaughterhouses, dairies, breweries, and agrochemical works. The SED's agricultural policy caused a further fundamental environmental problem, since its ambition to achieve maximum yields per hectare left little scope for extensive agriculture.[29] As in West Germany, so in the GDR cultural landscapes were systematically cleared for agricultural use. The courses of rivers and creeks were straightened, hedges and small wooded areas removed, and wetlands drained by land melioration combines to enlarge fields and accommodate heavy agricultural machinery.[30] The decision in the early 1960s to separate livestock farming from crop production proved to be especially problematic. Factory farming produced large amounts of liquid manure, which was generally spread in the immediate vicinity of the animal factories.[31] At the same time, plant production went chemical and increased the use of mineral fertilizers, pesticides, and herbicides. By the early 1970s East German agriculture found itself in a vicious circle whereby the erosion and contamination of the soil, the decline in the groundwater table levels, the eutrophication of surface waters, and the expansion of open lignite mining to agricultural areas resulted in a reduction in the amount of land available for farming. To compensate for this, farms tried to improve soil quality through increased use of fertilizers, further land melioration, and ever greater intensification of land use. The policy adjustment made in the late 1970s regarding the size of fields and land melioration in many cases failed to be implemented owing to the economic constraints faced by individual farms.[32] In view of the resulting devastation, Michael Succow, deputy minister of the environment in the de Maizière government, even spoke in 1990 of these agricultural landscapes as "brownfield sites."[33]

On the West German side of the border, this form of industrialized agriculture manifested itself in transboundary waters. Particularly in the smaller streams, such as the Föritz, Kreck, Itz, and Milz in Franconia, fish regularly died, for which damages were sought by way of the Border Commission. The GDR, however, rarely admitted that the cause of the pollution lay on its side of the border.[34] As a rule, its representatives in the Border Commission reported that the respon-

sible water authority had found no cause for the contamination.[35] It then fell to the West German authorities to compensate those who had suffered damage. Whereas in 1970 the Bavarian State Chancellery mainly expected damage along the inter-German border to be caused by exploding landmines, by 1976 its focus had shifted to fish die-offs in transboundary streams.[36]

A further source of water pollution in the GDR was untreated or inadequately treated municipal sewage and industrial wastewater. In 1983, 90 percent of East German households were connected to the central drinking water supply, but only 70 percent of them to the public sewage system and only 53 percent to a sewage treatment plant.[37] Municipal wastewater and fecal matter were either dumped in an unregulated fashion in landfills, released untreated into rivers, or irrigated on wastewater farms. Sewage sludge was even deposited on cultivated fields.[38] Owing to insufficient maintenance and to wear and tear, municipal sewage treatment plants were generally ineffective and limited to the mechanical stages of water purification.[39] In 1987, the problem caught up with a major sewage plant in Dresden-Kaditz. The facility suffered an outage when the Elbe River flooded the plant. Overwhelmed by the floodwaters, the electricity supply broke down, the pumps from the 1920s stopped working, and the entire pumping station suffered irreparable damage. With the Kaditz plant completely incapacitated, for the next five years all the sewage from Dresden and the adjacent municipalities poured untreated into the Elbe.[40]

The first two environmental agreements between the two German states concerned municipal wastewater being discharged into transboundary rivers, which indicates just how seriously West Germany took this environmental problem. In 1982 the two states concluded an agreement to refurbish the three sewage treatment facilities in East Berlin: Münchehofe, Falkenberg, and Nord. The Federal Republic contributed DM 68 million to the installation of a tertiary purification stage designed to eliminate phosphates, anticipating that this would improve the water quality in West Berlin; this indeed proved to be the case once the facility went into operation.[41] In 1983 a second agreement was concluded to clean up the Röden River flowing between Thuringia and Bavaria. Since Sonneberg, a town of 28,000 inhabitants, did not have a sewage treatment plant, municipal sewage flowed directly into the river. Between Sonneberg and Neustadt, near Coburg, the Röden resembled a cesspool.[42] The East German Ministry of Environmental Protection and Water did not attempt to disguise the state of affairs in the transboundary river: "As a result of the discharge of wastewater, the Röden is a particularly contaminated river that resembles a sewage canal when the water level is low. Downstream from Sonneberg and well beyond the state border to West Germany, it is impossible to use water from the Röden. The high levels

of contamination lead to putrefaction and a permanent stench. The hygienic conditions are alarming. There is a danger of epidemics."[43]

Even such alarming findings did not lead the GDR to try to avert the danger to its own population. Instead, in 1982 environmental data in the GDR became classified information.[44] On the Bavarian side of the border, by contrast, the state of the river was public knowledge. The Bavarian authorities first tried to deal with the stinking water on their own by building a purification facility at Neustadt-Wildenheid, yet the plant was soon overwhelmed.[45] Following lengthy negotiations the two sides agreed to build a mechanical-biological sewage treatment plant using the latest environmental technology. West Germany supplied the technology as well as a share of the financing. Together, the federal government and the State of Bavaria spent DM 18 million to improve the water quality in the Röden.[46] The sewage treatment plant went into operation in 1987.

If the inadequate purification of municipal wastewater was already critical, the pollution of rivers caused by industrial wastewater moved many streams toward a toxic tipping point. The GDR did not invest in the purification of industrial wastewater until a point was reached when river water was not even usable for cooling purposes, which resulted in production stoppages in factories downstream.[47] This was the case with the Saale River, for example. As a rule, industrial wastewater was only subjected to mechanical purification that removed sediments and solids and skimmed off oils and greases before the water was discharged into a river. The rest was left to the "natural self-purification properties" of the stream.[48] However, by the 1980s rivers like the Elbe and its tributaries were no longer capable of self-purification. The contamination of the river began in Czechoslovakia and continued in the GDR. East German water experts regularly cited a "considerable self-cleaning stretch" of the Elbe between Magdeburg and Boizenburg, and explained that therefore the river was "not unduly polluted" when it left the territory of the GDR.[49] The West Germans saw the situation differently, though, asserting that when the water arrived in Schnackenburg in Lower Saxony it already carried 80 percent of its pollution load. This load comprised 25 metric tons of mercury, 13 metric tons of cadmium, 120 metric tons of lead, and 100 metric tons of nickel, copper, and chromium annually.[50] When the first water-quality map for the whole of Germany was compiled in 1990, a new category had to be introduced for the state of the Elbe: level 8—ecologically destroyed.[51] The Elbe drama was repeated in practically every creek and river along the inter-German border. However, it was not the Elbe that prompted the West German government to engage in negotiations with the GDR about transboundary water pollution but the Werra,

which had already been contaminated with salts from the potash industry since the nineteenth century.

On the Banks of the Werra: The Background to the Environmental Dispute between the Two Germanys

The Werra rises in the southern Thuringian Highlands, known as the Slate Mountains, near the Rennsteig Ridge. In its middle reaches between the states of Hesse and Thuringia, it meanders across the border several times. One of its most important tributaries, the Ulster, originates in the Rhön region of Hesse, flows through the town Unterbreizbach in Thuringia and joins the Werra at Philippstal in Hesse. It merges with the Fulda 298 km further downstream at Hannoversch Münden to form the Weser. The potash seams along the banks of the Werra formed the basis for the German potash industry in the mid-nineteenth century. By 1900, this became the most important industry in the region's economy and drew on its natural resources as a matter of course. The Werra thus not only provided potable water and irrigation water for agriculture but also absorbed the wastewater generated by the mining industry. However, potash mining soon polluted the Werra to such an extent that conflicts over wastewater arose between the different states of the German Reich. In 1911 those who opposed the potash industry—fishermen, farmers, manufacturers, and representatives of municipalities—staged the first organized protest in Naumburg an der Saale. It quickly became apparent that the existence of this entire industrial sector depended on the disposal of saline wastewater.[52]

In 1913 a joint Prussian-Thuringian Potash Wastewater Commission met for the first time in Kassel. Its task from then on was to regulate the discharge of brines into the river. But even the newly drawn up salt plan and the monitoring of the river water were not sufficient to bring the chloride concentration in the Werra under control. Concentrations of between 500 and 1,500 milligrams per liter (mg/L) remained common. Well before World War I, water experts analyzed the consequences of such concentrations for the flora and fauna, and predicted that azonal seashore vegetation would develop along the river if such high salinity persisted. In 1925 the river experienced its first "water bloom", a large-scale proliferation of saline-tolerant freshwater diatoms, followed by the mass death of fish.[53] Bremen had been protesting against increasing chloride concentration in its drinking water since 1912 and demanded that the Reich Health Office enforce a maximum concentration of 250 mg/L. But Bremen never succeeded in imposing this limit.

In the 1930s the city gave up protesting. The potash industry had bought Bremen's compliance with a promise to ship a large share of exports via the city's port. At the same time, Bremen was connected to a 200-km-long pipeline from the Harz Mountains to provide it with drinking water.[54] During World War II, the permissible chloride level was raised by decree from 1,780 to 2,500 mg/L, which then became the new normal after the war ended.[55] Thus the salinity of the Werra remained way above the biological damage threshold: a chloride concentration higher than 250 mg/L makes water "hard" and hence no longer potable. A concentration above 650 mg/L rules out agricultural use of water for irrigation or as drinking water for livestock. Freshwater organisms exhibit different levels of salinity tolerance: 500 mg/L kills native crayfish, 2,000 mg/L is fatal for freshwater mussels and water lice, and 2,500 mg/L destroys most native freshwater fish; even the hardy eel perishes in a 4,000 mg/L concentration.[56]

The potash industry responded to the regulation by seeking alternatives to discharging saline wastewater into the river. The idea of "brine channels" was already considered in 1912. This would have entailed running pipelines over hundreds of kilometers to transport the brines from the potash mining areas to the Weser near Bremen or to the lower reaches of the Elbe. But the project proved too expensive.[57] Instead, the geological conditions in the Werra region were regarded as favorable for injecting brines into the ground. From the mid-1920s onward, some of the saline wastewater was discharged either into decommissioned mine shafts or into wells that were sunk for this purpose (*Schluckbrunnen*). In the 1950s, when readily available cavities were becoming rare, the industry sought to maximize the underground cavities through pressurized deep-well injections. Until the early 1990s the potash works along the Werra pumped some 900 million m^3 of wastewater underground. Compared with discharging the saline wastewater directly into the river, this proved to be the lesser evil, but it came with its own problems. Shortly after the pressurized deep-well injections began, reports emerged of pressurized brines seeping out of the earth again and contaminating agricultural land. Moreover, the wastewater pushed up the water table or increased the salinity of the groundwater. Back on the surface, the flora adapted to the new salinity. In the Rohrlache near Heringen, for example, a section of the Werra floodplains encompassing 75 hectares, rare salt marshes evolved, offering a habitat to many species of vegetation normally found on the seashore, just as had been predicted before 1914. In 1979, the Rohrlache was placed under nature protection.[58]

Although the pollution of the Werra has a deep history, it reached its culmination only after 1945. In 1947 the Potash Wastewater Commission issued

maximum thresholds and saline discharge quotas for both East and West for one last time: just under two-thirds were allocated to the potash mines in Thuringia, while a good third remained for the Hessian mines. After 1951 the GDR representatives no longer attended meetings of the commission and did not provide any information about the volume of brine discharged. Yet a major fish kill in 1953/54 based on a chloride concentration of more than 6,000 mg/L indicated just how active the eastern mines were. By the early 1960s the salt concentration in the Werra was so high that it prevented the water from freezing.[59] In 1968 the Thuringian potash mines stopped using deep-well injection of brines, because they had run out of underground cavities. Moreover, the injections threatened Eisenach's water supply and damaged agricultural land.[60] From then on, the salt load was discharged directly into the Werra. As a consequence, fish now also died downstream in the Weser River; in the Werra itself, freshwater organisms were already long gone.[61]

Henceforth, the contamination of the Werra and the Weser reached ever new heights, as *Der Spiegel* reported in graphic terms in 1976: "If you wanted to transport the salts in the Weser's riverbed by federal rail, you would need a freight train with 40 cars each carrying 15 tons, to run every 55 minutes to the North Sea."[62] In fall 1976, the river reached its highest chloride concentration with 40,000 mg/L, which still manifested itself downstream in Bremen a a level of 2,400 mg/L. The Weser had thus long since become "saltier than the North Sea."[63] The supply of drinking water to 476 cities and municipalities with around five million inhabitants—including Bremen, whose drinking water was mixed with 40 percent Weser water until the mid-1970s—was considered to be seriously threatened, since the groundwater was also affected by the salination. In 1982 the City of Bremen had to stop extracting potable water from the Weser, since the addition of chlorine to the already highly saline Weser water meant that the bromoform content became too high.[64] Even industrial water could only be extracted from the Weser at considerable expense. In addition, technical equipment and building works along the rivers exhibited premature corrosion and material fatigue. The salt ate away at turbines, pipes, bridge piers, and ships' hulls, causing damage to steel and concrete amounting to an estimated DM 65 million a year.[65] Salination, a leading official in the Lower Saxony Ministry of the Environment concluded in 1980, "is currently the most pressing environmental problem between the GDR and the Federal Republic of Germany."[66]

As in the case of the Röden, the East German authorities had all the necessary information about the situation in the Werra and the Weser. A 1971 expert report listed all the damage that could be expected from potash wastewater:

Damage to a large number of groundwater works in the Weser region

Bank filtrate can no longer be used for drinking water

Bremen can only take 50 percent of its drinking water from the Weser

Impact on the salination of the Mittelland Canal (into which Weser water is discharged near Minden) extending as far as the Münster area

Impairment of the use of river water for industrial purposes

Damage to Werra fisheries

Impairment of agricultural use of water from the Werra, the Weser, and the Mittelland Canal.[67]

However, East and West Germany drew fundamentally different conclusions from the available environmental data, and right up to the demise of the GDR were unable to reach any agreement that might have relieved the situation in the Werra. What, then, were the factors that made inter-German environmental diplomacy such a futile exercise?

No Help for the Werra

In the early 1970s both German states took a new approach to ecology, which coincided with Erich Honecker's coming to office in the GDR. For a short time, environmental policy and nature conservation seemed to offer a new field for the GDR to boost its international standing. By 1975, the country had created a Ministry of the Environment and passed exemplary environmental legislation, at least in theory. However, the optimistic mood soon waned, either because the GDR leadership realized that they did not have the economic wherewithal to put their own environmental laws into practice, or because their political priorities shifted to housing and consumer goods production.[68] The economic inability to invest in environmental protection also had ideological underpinnings. The GDR regarded environmental pollution as "a legacy of capitalism." Its argument was that capitalist production was designed to maximize profits, which inevitably led to a subordination of ecology and ruthless exploitation of natural resources. Under socialism, on the other hand, there was a unity between economy and ecology, and the relationship between human beings and their environment was a harmonious one. In the long term, since socialist production was not oriented toward maximizing profits, it would overcome the environmental damage it had inherited.[69] In practice, however, it was by no means "pure doctrine" that repeatedly brought negotiations between the two states to a standstill but rather the question of who was responsible: West Ger-

many argued with the "polluter pays" principle, whereas the GDR espoused a "beneficiary pays" principle. The GDR had caused the damage, so it should repair it, Bonn asserted. West Germany would benefit from improvements, so it should pay, East Berlin countered.

But these irreconcilable positions were not the only factor blocking the environmental negotiations. Between 1974 and 1980 the GDR refused to participate in any discussions about environmental policy, citing the "illegally" established Umweltbundesamt (UBA—Environmental Federal Agency) in West Berlin. Interior Minister Hans-Dietrich Genscher had decided in 1973 to locate a new agency for environmental issues in West Berlin in order to increase the West German presence in the divided city, and to create high-profile, highly skilled jobs there. The plan was based on an admittedly idiosyncratic interpretation of the Four Power Agreement of 1971, which revoked West Berlin's status as an "integral part" of the Federal Republic of Germany but made the concession that "ties" between West Berlin and the Federal Republic could be "maintained and developed." The West German government regarded the new federal agency in this sense, whereas the GDR saw it as a gross violation of the "quadripartite agreement" and was able to rely on full support from Moscow on this point.[70] The Interior Ministry's juggling with words, whereby instead of a Federal Environmental Agency only an Environmental Federal Agency was to be opened in West Berlin, did nothing to change this interpretation. In the short term, the GDR responded with harassment on the transit routes to West Berlin;[71] in the longer term, it blocked all environmental negotiations. As a consequence, the environmental agreement originally slated to follow on the coattails of the Basic Treaty did not materialize as planned in 1973 but only in 1987.[72]

The row about the Environmental Federal Agency illustrated how entangled environmental talks were with the complexities of inter-German politics, and how they always overlapped with other issues in terms of content and timing. This meant that environmental questions could suddenly be made contingent on other areas of policy. The GDR responded to the initial West German inquiries about cleaning up the Elbe River in 1983 by raising the vexatious question of the border. While West Germany insisted that the demarcation line should run along the east bank of the Elbe, East Germany claimed that it ran through the middle of the river. Of course the GDR leadership knew perfectly well that the West German position about the location of the demarcation line on the eastern bank of the river was one of the few remaining political principles concerning the division of Germany on which neither Bonn nor Hanover (the capital of Lower Saxony) would budge. The border question was therefore a reliable obstacle for

delaying environmental negotiations. It was not until 1988 that Chancellery Minister Wolfgang Schäuble cleared the way for negotiations by simply linking the question of cleaning up the Elbe with the renegotiation of the transit regulations for West Berlin, which were due to expire in 1989. Schäuble thus made the level of the transit fee that the GDR received dependent on beginning constructive talks about the Elbe.[73] Given that in 1981 the federal government had had to be pressured into negotiations with the GDR by the federal states that lay along the Elbe, this was a surprisingly decisive move.[74]

Inter-German Negotiations

In the case of the contamination of the Werra and the Weser, attempts to bring about inter-German cooperation repeatedly ran into obstacles. Ever since the potash mines in Thuringia had stopped the deep-well injection of brines in 1968 and instead discharged them directly into the Werra, the salt contamination of the river had become an urgent problem for West Germany. Early attempts to discuss the issue on an administrative level failed on account of another perennial issue in relations between East and West Germany: the question of recognizing the GDR's sovereignty. According to a statement issued by the GDR in 1971, the Federal Republic could only press compensation claims on the basis of international law, which in turn would require that it recognize the GDR as a subject of international law. "But as long as West Germany maintains its presumptuous principle of being the sole representative [of the German people], it can accordingly not assert such claims."[75] Thwarted in their efforts at the lower administrative level, the Bonn representatives brought the subject back onto the agenda during the negotiations about the Basic Treaty (on relations between the two states).[76] The treaty of 1972 envisioned future topical agreements, "in order to contribute to the prevention of damage and danger to the respective other side."[77] In the preparations for an environmental agreement between the two Germanys, potash wastewater soon became the most urgent problem, yet the quarrel about the Environmental Federal Agency rapidly put an end to such talks. The GDR broke off negotiations in 1974, and the brines continued to pour into the river.[78]

Officially there was silence on the issue until 1980. While the GDR leadership refused to address its own waste disposal methods, it was very keen to talk about the deep-well brine injections performed by West German potash firms. In February 1975 miners at the Marx-Engels pit in Thuringia discovered that brine was seeping into a shaft. In addition, increased salinity was measured in the drinking water in Unterbreizbach, and brines were resurfacing in the vicinity. On June 23

the shaft in question collapsed. The GDR leadership held the deep-well injections carried out by the Western Hattorf and Wintershall mines responsible for this "seismic event," and demanded damages of 80 million Valutamarks (VM), the agreement currency between the two German states.[79] The Bonn government flatly rejected the GDR's claims and presented an expert evaluation attributing the shaft collapse to flaws in the Thuringian mining technology. The evaluation asserted that the pillars supporting the overlying rock had been clipped too much in order to raise the volume of raw salt mined.[80] The Chancellor's Office used the opportunity to challenge the claim that brines had reemerged from Hessian deep-well injections.[81] However, brines began to resurface on the western side of the border as well, and still pose a problem to this day; on this point the GDR's complaint may well have been justified.[82]

Although Günter Mittag, the secretary for the economy of the SED Central Committee, held no expectations that Bonn would recognize the GDR's compensation claim, he nonetheless urged Honecker to authorize negotiations about cross-border mine safety.[83] It was not least a question of the inviolability of East German territory, since the West German potash brine had quite literally infiltrated the border.[84] The SED leadership thought it could see a pattern here: the West German potash works were injecting their brines into GDR territory on a large scale in order to "fulfill the requirements of the West German environmental authorities at the GDR's expense." In a similar way, in choosing Gorleben as its site for storing nuclear waste, it shifted "the safety risks largely to East German territory."[85]

In East Berlin, however, it was clear that any approach of western officials on the issue of potash mining would inevitably prompt the Bonn government to address the condition of the Werra. Indeed, an expert evaluation from Hans Reichelt's Ministry of the Environment came to the conclusion that, given mounting levels of pollution, the international trend was for problems between neighboring states to be settled contractually. The advancement of international law in this area was a development the GDR would not be able to ignore indefinitely. Reichelt predicted that the cheap method of discharging all brines into the river could not be "maintained for much longer," since it would "seriously" compromise relations with West Germany. On the other hand, he reasoned, the potash deposits along the Werra were finite, expected to come to an end at some point. Until then, however, Reichelt recommended holding onto the "economically most convenient disposal method for the GDR of draining [wastewater] into the Werra"—in other words, potash mining should continue for as long as possible and as cheaply as possible. The GDR's negotiating strategy was thus clear: the tactic was "to delay the start of [any] negotiations about the

salinization of the Werra or other environmental questions."[86] And indeed, the GDR succeeded in achieving this goal. Seven meetings of experts on potash mining safety, fourteen rounds of negotiations on reducing deep-well brine injection and Werra salinization, and four sessions of exploratory talks had not succeeded in reducing the contamination of the Werra by the time the GDR collapsed.[87]

In the world of inter-German relations, where often only small steps were possible, the Bonn delegations sometimes felt that they had achieved minor successes. At the request of the GDR, it was agreed that the talks about mining safety in 1976/77, in which the GDR demanded that a causal relationship between brine injections and the mining accident be recognized, would be kept secret.[88] The West Germans therefore regarded it as a success that they managed to divert the talks from the issue of mining safety to that of the salinization of the Werra and to make the consultations public. Six years after the tug-of-war about the Environmental Federal Agency, the two sides announced the start of expert talks in April 1980.[89] West Germany had cleverly used the GDR's demands for compensation as a conduit for getting the issue of the contamination of the Werra onto the agenda. For its part, the GDR had managed to ensure that this aspect would only be discussed in tandem with the problems of deep-well brine injections and other issues relating to the potash industry. Insofar as the GDR leadership was willing to discuss the salinization of the Werra at all—and it remained a declared goal to avoid the subject[90]—they hoped that contact of this kind would give them access to West German environmental technology. In addition, the GDR delegation made its willingness to hold talks contingent on one condition: "The GDR shall not incur any costs."[91] Besides insisting on their all too familiar "beneficiary pays" attitude, the East German negotiators also made the ecologically outrageous claim that the salinization of rivers was merely a "transit problem." The water, they claimed, "only flows through the Federal Republic of Germany, eventually reaching the North Sea."[92] The negotiations soon reached an impasse, not least because the GDR repeatedly made the transition from preliminary talks to real negotiations dependent on "a concrete cost-sharing commitment."[93] And indeed the GDR was unable to budge here. For years the discharge of brines into the Werra had been for the Thuringian mines "the only economically viable way of ensuring that the plan target for potash production was met."[94]

At the same time the West German aim of the negotiations—to reduce the salinization of the Werra—offered the GDR a welcome opportunity to pursue a selective modernization of its potash industry. The environmental technology required for this was to come from the West, and the East German experts had

clear ideas about which technology they wanted. In the years of noncommunication the old idea of constructing a saltwater pipeline had been entertained by state politicians in Lower Saxony and Hesse. The idea was for a 400-km-long pipeline to pump potash wastewater from the mines in Hesse and Thuringia directly into the North Sea. Budgeted at DM 1.3 billion, the pipeline would have been the most expensive environmental project ever in West Germany.[95] Following a feasibility study, however, it was shelved in June 1981.[96] Instead, the Federal Republic offered to build flotations[97] in the GDR to separate halite and kieserite from crude salt. This technology could have been installed within two to three years. Bonn likewise advocated the construction of retention ponds that withheld the brines when the water level in the river was low and released them once the flow increased. This would allow the brines to be diluted and ensure a more even flow, since flora and fauna in the Werra and the Weser suffered chiefly from sudden discharges of environmental toxins to which no organism could adapt in the long term. The GDR representatives, however, preferred to use an electrostatic separation process called ESTA, which Kali & Salz AG (K&S) in Kassel had developed itself at a cost of DM 300 million. This had enabled K&S to reduce the amount of brines discharged into the river; instead, salt tailings were piled up into widely visible potash mountains, earning them the nickname "Monte Kali." This elaborate procedure meant that potash production in Hesse cost far more than it did in Thuringia.[98]

The ESTA technology was of course not a bargaining chip that the Bonn team could simply play, since K&S owned the patents. The company board could only imagine surrendering the technical know-how to the GDR if the latter pledged in turn not to sell the by-products of this process, especially kieserite, which was important for fertilizer production, on the world market. This would have put K&S at a competitive disadvantage, since East Germany was able to produce potash more cheaply, not least because of its disregard for the environment. What is more, a pilot ESTA facility would only be ready for use in six to eight years and, in addition to being more expensive than flotation, would also have entailed paying patent fees to K&S. As usual, the GDR was "not willing to pay either for the patent or for the [ESTA] pilot facility and demanded that West Germany foot the bill."[99]

By the late 1980s the West German side showed signs of attrition. Clearly the GDR wanted to sit out the situation and was gradually moving toward its own negotiation goals. The ESTA process introduced in 1980 had in any case reduced the volume of West German wastewater and with it the injection of brines, even without reaching any agreement with the GDR.[100] In 1984 the two sides signed a provision realigning the boundaries of the potash mines along the

border, followed a year later by an agreement regulating the times when rock blasting could take place.[101] It did not escape the notice of the West German representatives that whenever the GDR was pursuing its own interests, negotiations had quick results, but not the other way around. If Bonn did not want "to lose [. . .] its bargaining chips," it needed to slow down the pace of negotiations.[102]

K&S inadvertently strengthened the position of the GDR. Since 1985 the company had been seeking a permit to pile up salt tailings along the security strip in the border zone near Dankmarshausen. The GDR was not opposed to the idea, given the hard currency that the deal promised to yield; the so-called Dankmarshäuser Sack lay fallow in any case. It cleverly managed to exploit K&S's urgent need to find new dump sites for salt tailings to press its own familiar demand to stop deep-well brine injections on the Hessian side of the border.[103] Even a spectacular publicity stunt staged by Greenpeace failed to move the negotiations. In 1986, under the slogan "Return to sender," activists dumped a hundredweight of Werra salt in front of the Ministry of the Environment in East Berlin.[104] All the western negotiators had to show for their efforts was an agreement that the eastern mines would give retention ponds a try. The permanent installation and use of such ponds, however, the GDR tied to the well-known demand that the Federal Republic not only to pay a share of the investment costs but also to participate in the operating expenses.[105]

For West Germany, then, it was clear that any progress on the issue of the salinization of the Werra would have to be bought. A senior official in the Ministry for Inter-German Relations was of the opinion that "in the interests of Germany [as a whole] and of the Germans living in the GDR, the 'wealthy' Federal Republic of Germany [. . .] [should be] willing and in a position to pay a share of the cost of environmental protection measures in the GDR."[106] In accordance with this weary realization, West German representatives of the federal and state governments in 1987 developed a new "desk-drawer plan" that foresaw the building of an ESTA pilot facility in the Thuringian municipality of Merkers in the likely case that the GDR once again rejected the flotation option.[107] Finally, in September 1988, the federal government offered the GDR the ESTA technology together with funding assistance to the tune of DM 200 million.[108] At this point, the GDR could no longer afford to see the talks fail, since at the same time the "polluter pays" principle and state liability for environmental damage were being enshrined in international law at the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe negotiations in Vienna. Even Günter Mittag now considered it "inevitable that the GDR also makes material [i.e. financial] efforts

to reduce the salinization" of the Werra. Nonetheless, he considered the West German offer of DM 200 million too low.[109]

Transboundary Environmental Protection as a Source of Hard Currency

The positions and strategies that the GDR adopted in negotiations about potash wastewater stand pars pro toto for other environmental discussions. The tough nature of the negotiations cannot be explained solely in terms of an attitude of indifference to environmental pollution on the part of the GDR leadership.[110] The timing of the environmental negotiations between the two German states likewise had a decisive role to play. After communications came to a standstill in 1973, it was not until the early 1980s that the GDR showed a renewed interest in inter-German environmental policy. The resumption of environmental talks thus coincided with a phase when the GDR found itself in a liquidity crisis, becoming increasingly dependent on loans and transfer payments from West Germany.[111] The environmental talks of the 1980s were thus dominated by the East German goal of obtaining as much hard currency as possible. Transboundary environmental protection was thus regarded as a potential cash cow, and each project was considered primarily in terms of its potential hard currency yield. In institutional terms this objective was reflected in the fact that it was not the Ministry of the Environment and Water Management that determined the line of approach in environmental talks between the two Germanys, but the Economic Secretariat of the SED Central Committee headed by Günter Mittag, with growing influence from the commercial coordination division led by Alexander Schalck-Golodkowski.

The GDR had already gained experience in providing transboundary environmental services to West Berlin. Ever since the Berlin Blockade of 1948, the city's utilities infrastructure (electricity, water, sewage) had become a political bargaining chip between the two systems. While West Berlin made much progress over the decades, any question of it having an independent infrastructure remained a pipe dream.[112] Since 1973 the GDR disposed of household waste and building rubble from West Berlin at the request of the Senate and thus mitigated an acute crisis in garbage disposal. The GDR established the Schöneiche, Vorketzin, and Deetz landfill sites exclusively for garbage from West Berlin, and by 1989 had earned DM 870 million for this service. After this lucrative experience the GDR extended the business model to garbage from the rest of West Germany, and in 1979 opened the Schönberg hazardous waste depot in the county of Grevesmühlen.[113]

The city's water needs inevitably kept West Berlin connected to its East German hinterland as well. In December 1974 a new sewage agreement replaced earlier contracts. At the same time the SED leadership took note of West Berlin's growing need for drinking water, which by 1985 at the latest would have resulted in serious shortfalls. Since the West Berlin Senate had already sounded out the GDR in the mid-1970s regarding its willingness to supply potable water, this clearly opened up new possibilities. The department of the GDR Foreign Ministry responsible for West Berlin proposed that the GDR should use the Senate's impasse to "realize a hard currency yield and to occasion the Senate to share in *necessary investments* in the East German capital's drinking water supply, which could be repaid in kind later through deliveries of drinking water."[114] Since the SED leadership was not even able to supply their own population reliably with high-quality drinking water, they thus earmarked a prized commodity for export, prioritizing the anticipated income over their own people's needs. Furthermore, the idea of getting West Germany to pay for the modernization of the GDR's environmental technology was already laid out here.

This goal was realized for the first time in 1982, when West Germany provided DM 68 million for the technical modernization of the three East Berlin sewage treatment plants, Münchehofe, Falkenberg, and Nord.[115] Even before Münchehofe (1975) and Falkenberg (1981) went into operation, the East Germans were aware that wastewater from these plants, which was purified only by mechanical-biological means, would pollute West Berlin water to a greater extent than the effluent from West Berlin treatment plants would pollute the Teltow Canal. The original West German negotiating position on improving the quality of Berlin's water envisaged both sides simultaneously introducing a tertiary chemical purification stage to eliminate phosphates. What the West Germans failed to appreciate was that their own growing woes were an integral component of the East German negotiating strategy to get the Western side to shoulder as high a share of the costs as possible.[116]

The GDR then relied on these experiences and strategies in negotiations about transboundary waters. The most successful project was the construction of a sewage treatment plant in Sonneberg. Once again the West German "interest in achieving an improvement of the state of the Röden was used" to get the Western side to share the costs.[117] Although at DM 18 million the Western financial commitment was relatively modest, the GDR succeeded in receiving this sum in freely convertible currency rather than in the Verrechnungseinheiten (VE—calculation units) that were more customary in trade between the two states. For the future, the Economics Ministry in Bonn opposed such a means

of payment because it played into the hands of the GDR in its goal of using the environment to earn hard currency, since the GDR achieved a net gain by covering all costs of the sewage treatment plant in East German marks.[118] Besides, money in hand, the GDR simply scaled back the project in order to achieve "a substantial minimalization of the investment costs."[119] From then on the GDR regarded the "Röden model" as the gold standard in environmental deals with West Germany.

The sewage treatment plants in Berlin and Sonneberg fit a pattern: starting in the early 1980s, the GDR sought with increasing frequency to do business with West Germany on environmental issues. In 1980 Alexander Schalck-Golodkowski suggested to Günter Mittag that he use the reprocessing of nuclear waste as a business opportunity. While the project for a permanent storage facility for nuclear waste in Gorleben in Lower Saxony was still pending, Minister President Ernst Albrecht had abandoned the plans for a reprocessing facility in 1979 in the face of protest.[120] Here Schalck saw an opportunity for the GDR: since the West German nuclear industry's contracts with the French reprocessing plant in La Hague were due to expire in 1985, the country was slowly heading toward a reprocessing bottleneck. The catch was that the GDR did not have the resources to build or operate such a reprocessing plant. Instead, it would have to be built and financed by the West Germans, offsetting the costs against the reprocessing service. Given the antinuclear movement and the pressing nature of the disposal problem in West Germany, this idea was not unrealistic. However, such an offer to the West Germans was never made.[121] Instead, in 1981 Günter Mittag put forward to Erich Honecker the less elaborate idea of increasing the export of radioactive isotopes to medical facilities, while at the same time offering to take back the low-level radioactive waste. This would have allowed the GDR not only to raise its earnings from exporting isotopes but also to make money out of the related radioactive waste.[122]

In 1984 Mittag instructed Environment Minister Reichelt to prepare the directives for further negotiations with West Germany. The top priority was "earning hard currency," followed by access to Western environmental technology that the GDR in turn would not have to develop itself. West Berlin waste, of whatever kind, remained an important field of business. From 1984 it was expected "to bring in hard currency to the tune of 60–70 million VE together with 14 million VE in earnings for sewage."[123] Reichelt also suggested to Mittag that the GDR should not only treat West Berlin's sewage but also take the resulting sewage sludge.[124]

As the environmental balance sheet of East Germany made clear after 1900,

the GDR had never been in a position to offer any of these environmental services. The SED leadership sold services to the "nonsocialist economic zone" that it withheld from its own population. The authorities in West Germany, in turn, yielded to the temptation to rid the country of its own environmental problems by exporting them to the other side of the border.[125] The environment had become a commodity.

The Werra Today

And the Werra? The river certainly benefited from the collapse of the GDR. Following reunification, the contamination of the Werra decreased rapidly. Between 1990 and 1995 the chloride concentration in the Werra fell by 72 percent. In the following two years, however, it shot up again because of lower water levels.[126] The reduction in the discharge of brines into the Werra was due to the closure of potash plants in Thuringia as well as to technical innovations. Two potash mines in Thuringia—Merkers and Bischofferode—were closed, while the other three were sold to their main competitor, the Kassel-based company K&S.[127] Yet even today chloride levels in the Werra are still high. K&S, now a global player in the fertilizer industry and the fourth-largest producer of potash in the world, is solely responsible for this. Regional environmental organizations, Greenpeace, and the German Friends of the Earth (BUND) have been demanding for years that K&S put an end to its customary method of brine disposal. The deep-well injections of brines and the piling up of salt tailings, the waste product of the ESTA method, were never unproblematic, merely the lesser evil.[128] The Werra remains in a poor ecological state to this day. This contamination is not the legacy of the GDR mines, but the result of the continued discharge of brines: at its peak in 2008 the concentration was 3,000 mg/L.[129] Although this is not comparable with the record level of 40,000 mg/L in 1976, it is still a long way from the benchmark of 200 mg/L.[130] What certainly is a legacy of the GDR is that some participants in the debate regard today's chloride levels in the Werra as the new normal.[131]

The struggle to protect the water resources of the Werra and the Weser also illustrates the problem of perspective in the history of inter-German environmental policy. The GDR's sad environmental record can easily distort one's view of the environmental situation in West Germany. Even before 1989, environmental activists suspected that West German industries along transboundary rivers were quietly disposing of their own pollutants but conveniently ducked under the widely shared assumption that pollution swept in from the East.[132] Industries with time-honored water rights such as the Bremer Woll-Kämmerei (BWK) did this

quite openly, discharging their wastewater untreated into the Weser until well into the 1970s. This river was adversely affected not only by chloride from the Werra but also, by the end of the 1970s, by the operations of eight conventional power stations and one nuclear reactor that drew their cooling water from the river, thus warming it and fueling oxygen consumption.[133] Of course, at no point was the environmental situation in West Germany the subject of negotiations with the GDR, which would gladly have accused its West German negotiating partners of environmental misdemeanors more often, and indeed used every opportunity to do this providing it did not immediately result in tu quoque arguments being turned against it. Conversely, in Bonn and in the capitals of the federal states bordering on the GDR, the neighbor's environmental situation was only of official interest if it directly affected West Germany. This interest could well stretch as far as Dresden, as evidenced by the declarations of intent of July 1989 that foresaw a West German financial contribution to environmental projects to clean up the Elbe and the Saale.[134] With the disappearance of the GDR, the old Federal Republic of Germany not only lost waste disposal opportunities on the other side of the Iron Curtain; environmental offenders were likewise no longer able to point a finger at a neighbor whose environmental problems made their own look relatively harmless.[135]

The adversaries in the debate about the salinization of the Werra have been struggling since 2008 at the Werra/Weser Water Protection and Potash Production Round Table to find a solution that both complied with European Union water regulations, which stipulated that European waters needed to reach "a good ecological state" by 2015, and protected the approximately 4,200 jobs in the Hessian potash industry. For a few years, an old idea gained traction again: a salt pipeline that would transport the brine either into the North Sea or at least as far as the Weser.[136] Irrespective of the outcome of recent debates, it is clear that the pollution of the Werra and the Weser will never again be able to gain the political attention that it had when the West's aim was to discredit the GDR as a polluter or the East's goal was to extract more hard currency from West Germany. In terms of environmental policy as well, the division of Germany was a historically exceptional situation.

Notes

Translation by Melanie Newton

This article was originally published in 2014 and became the basis for the chapter "Salt, Sewage, and Sulfurous Air: Transboundary Pollution in the Borderlands," in my book *West Germany and the Iron Curtain. Environment, Economy and Culture in the Borderland* (New

York: Oxford University Press, 2019). New scholarship has since been published that advances knowledge on some of the issues the article covers, including Thomas Fleischman, *Communist Pigs: An Animal History of East Germany's Rise and Fall* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2020); Sophie Lange, *Deutsch-deutsche Umweltpolitik 1970–1990: Eine Verflechtungsgeschichte im internationalen und gesellschaftlichen Kontext des Kalten Krieges* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2023); Christian Rau, *Hungern für Bischofferode: Protest und Politik in der ostdeutschen Transformation* (Frankfurt/M.: Campus, 2023); Philipp Kröger, "Über die Herstellung der Natur: Konturen einer deutsch-deutschen Geschichte der Umweltgestaltung," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 73, no. 2 (April 2025): 181–219.

1. Bundesarchiv (Federal Archives) (hereafter BArch), B 295/20492, GDR Ministry for Nature Conservation, Environmental Protection, and Water Management (Ministerium für Naturschutz, Umweltschutz und Wasserwirtschaft, MNUW), Information about environmental conditions in the GDR and further measures—base year 1988. On the ecological situation (January 1990): B 295/20493, MNUW, Concept for the development of environmental policy, Berlin, February 2, 1990, and Institute for Environmental Protection, Information on the analysis of environmental conditions in the GDR and on further measures, Berlin, February 1990; B 295/20494, Society for Applied Social Science and Statistics, The environmental situation in the GDR as judged by its citizens. Results of a survey at the Leipzig Spring Fair 1990 commissioned by the Federal Ministry of the Environment (Bundesministerium für Umwelt, BMU) and the Federal Environment Agency, 1990; Bundesministerium für Umwelt, *Eckwerte der ökologischen Sanierung und Entwicklung in den neuen Ländern* (Bonn: Bundesministerium für Umwelt, 1990). In addition to these official evaluations, see also Ulrich Petschow, Jürgen Meyerhoff, and Claus Thomasberger, eds., *Umwelt-Report DDR: Bilanz der Zerstörung, Kosten der Sanierung, Strategien für den ökologischen Umbau* (Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer, 1990). For the research required for this article, the author received a Franklin Research Grant from the American Philosophical Society in summer 2012.

2. "Das Land der 1000 Vulkane," *Der Spiegel*, January 8, 1990. On the environmental reporting of *Der Spiegel*, see Joachim Radkau, "Scharfe Konturen für das Ozonloch: Zur Öko-Ikonographie der Spiegel-Titel," in *Das Jahrhundert der Bilder: 1949 bis heute*, ed. Gerhard Paul (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2008), 532–41. A necessary differentiation has taken place in environmental historiography whereby the GDR's ecological balance sheet is viewed both in comparison with that of West Germany and in the context of other socialist states, and in some cases is divided according to media and sectors. Here the specific point when the evaluation took place—that is, the political context of the early 1990s—continues to present an obstacle to doing justice to the subject. See Christoph Bernhardt, "Zwischen Industrialismus und sanitärer Wohlfahrt: Umweltprobleme im Sozialismus am Beispiel der Wasserfrage in der DDR," in *Technik, Arbeit und Umwelt in der Geschichte: Günter Bayerl zum 60. Geburtstag*, ed. Torsten L. Meyer and Marcus Popplow (Münster: Waxmann, 2006), 367–80; Roger Manser, *Failed Transitions: The Eastern European Economy and the Environment since the Fall of Communism* (New York: New Press, 1994); Hermann Behrens and Jens Hoffmann, eds., *Umweltschutz in der DDR*, 3 vols. (Munich: Oekom, 2007).

3. Joachim Radkau, *Die Ära der Ökologie: Eine Weltgeschichte* (Munich: Beck, 2011), 535. Radkau estimates the costs of these investments up to 1994 at DM 80 billion; however, the Federal Ministry of the Environment does not have any reliable figures, since environmental

protection and the economic modernization of the former East Germany cannot be separated. To date there have been no historical studies on the ecological cleanup of the GDR after 1990. See Günter Bayerl, "Umweltsanierung auf dem Gebiet der ehemaligen DDR: Ein Weg in die ökoindustrielle Gesellschaft?," *Studienarchiv Umweltgeschichte* 14 (2009): 3–14; Michael Zschiesche, "Umweltschutz in Ostdeutschland—Versuch über ein schnell verschwundenes Thema," *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* B27 (June 2003): 33–38.

4. See the joint declaration of the deputy chairman of the Council of Ministers and the GDR minister for environmental protection and the water management (Reichelt) and the West German minister of the environment, nature conservation and reactor safety (Töpfer) on carrying out environmental protection pilot projects in the GDR, dated July 6, 1989, in Deutscher Industrie- und Handelstag, *DDR Umweltschutz: Ökologie statt Autarkie; Bestandsaufnahme und Lösungsansätze* (Bonn: DIHT, 1990).

5. This does not mean, however, that it was immune to an imprecise use of spatial concepts and terms. According to Joseph E. Taylor III, "Boundary Terminology," *Environmental History* 13, no. 3 (July 2008): 454–81, here 456, "transnational" was too often "a chic way to say international."

6. Marc Cioc, *The Rhine: An Eco-Biography, 1815–2000* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2002). The study by Christoph Bernhardt, *Im Spiegel des Wassers: Eine transnationale Umweltgeschichte des Oberrheins (1800–2000)* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2016), could not be taken into account for this essay.

7. For reflections on water as a leitmotif in environmental history, see Radkau, *Ära der Ökologie*, 195–209; for an economist's perspective on problems between neighboring states, see Rainer Durth, *Grenzüberschreitende Umweltprobleme und regionale Integration: Zur Politischen Ökonomie von Oberlauf-Unterlauf-Problemen an internationalen Flüssen* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1996).

8. The formulation is based on the title of the book by Tobias Hochscherf, Christoph Laucht, and Andrew Plowman, eds., *Divided, but Not Disconnected: German Experiences of the Cold War* (New York: Berghahn Books, 2010).

9. The term "paper partition" was coined in the context of colonial border-drawing. See Karl Schlögel, "Grenze und Grenzerfahrungen im alten und neuen Europa: Eine Meditation," in *Grenze und Grenzüberschreitung im Mittelalter*, ed. Ulrich Knefelkamp and Kristian Bosselmann-Cyran (Berlin: Akademie, 2007), 3–18, here 10.

10. Mary Louise Pratt, *Imperial Eyes: Travel Writing and Transculturation* (New York: Routledge, 1992), 4, defines contact zones as "social spaces where disparate cultures meet, clash, and grapple with each other, often in highly asymmetrical relations of domination and subordination—like colonialism, slavery, or their aftermaths as they are lived out across the globe today." The term has been widely used in cultural borderland studies, for example, to analyze hybrid cultures and plural identities. In the context of the GDR border regime, which was designed precisely to prevent and control cross-border contacts, the expression is not without irony. It was the existence of the border in the first place that created the problems that then required transboundary regulation. It is in this sense that it was a contact zone, albeit not one desired by the GDR.

11. "West Germany is so 'clean' because the GDR is so dirty." Quotation in Archiv Bund Naturschutz in Bayern (Nürnberg), DDR PM PROe, Joint declaration by environmental

associations from East and West on the occasion of the round-table talks with Federal Minister of the Environment Töpfer on December 13, 1989. Literature on the export of waste is listed in n. 113.

12. Figures in Michael von Berg, "Zum Umweltschutz in Deutschland," *Deutschland Archiv* 17, no. 4 (April 1984): 374–83, here 380.

13. The federal commissioner for the files of the State Security Service of the Former German Democratic Republic (hereafter BStU), MfS/HVA/no. 29, part 1 of 2, fol. 042, Ministry for State Security (Ministerium für Staatssicherheit, MfS), Information no. 112/84 on negotiations with the GDR on environmental protection (1984).

14. The GDR's environment minister, Hans Reichelt assembled materials for the planned visit of Erich Honecker to Bonn in 1984 that were intended to showcase the GDR's environmental "achievements" in order to refute the "slander by the West German media energetically and conclusively." Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv (hereafter BArch-SAPMO), Büro Mittag DY 3023/1435, Reichelt to Mittag, October 10, 1984. For a reaction to Western reporting, see the information on the program "Mit Wind und Wasser über die Grenzen" aired by the ZDF public television station on January 8, 1987, in BArch-SAPMO, Büro Mittag DY 3023/1444.

15. The subordinate authorities are instructed in directive no. 36/81 dated November 24, 1981, to make it clear to all staff concerned with environmental protection that (1) "a reduction in environmental damage extending onto the territory of the FRG or West Berlin will strengthen the GDR's political reputation," (2) "the FRG will be deprived of any opportunities to press compensation claims," and (3) "therefore all potential for preventing damage should be comprehensively and continuously made use of." BArch, DK 5/1498, Directive no. 36/81 (VS B161–71/81); BArch-SAPMO, Büro Mittag DY 3023/1442, Information about the state of progress in eliminating the dangerous situations in the area bordering the FRG and West Berlin and proposals for how to proceed, n.d. [March 22, 1984].

16. BArch, DK 5/1498, Information 19/83 about the start of operations of a coal-fired power station being constructed by the FRG near the state border of the GDR, incidents of increased deposits of pollutants in the GDR and proposals for how to proceed, June 30, 1983. On Buschhaus, see Andreas Wirsching, *Abschied vom Provisorium 1982–1990: Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Munich: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2006), 367–71.

17. J. R. McNeill, "Observations on the Nature and Culture of Environmental History," *History and Theory* 42 (December 2003): 5–43, here 6–9, defines the three most important branches of environmental history as material, political, and cultural. Material environmental history borrows most heavily from the natural sciences because it is concerned with "changes in biological and physical environments, and how those changes affect human societies."

18. Jens Ivo Engels, "Umweltgeschichte als Zeitgeschichte," *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 13 (2006): 32–38; also Sverker Sörlin, "The Contemporaneity of Environmental History: Negotiating Scholarship, Useful History, and the New Human Condition," *Journal of Contemporary History* 46, no. 3 (July 2011): 610–30; Melanie Arndt, "Debatte: Zeitgeschichten der Umwelt," *Zeithistorische Forschungen* 9, no. 1 (2012): 98–137.

19. Bernhardt, "Umweltprobleme im Sozialismus," 370–71. See Gerhard Würth, *Umweltschutz und Umweltzerstörung in der DDR* (Frankfurt a. M.: Lang, 1985), 228–31.

20. Figure in Helmut Klapper, "Gewässerschutz und Gewässernutzung im Spannungsfeld zwischen Ökologie und Ökonomie," in *Umweltschutz in der DDR: Analysen und Zeitzeugenberichte*, vol. 2: *Mediale und sektorale Aspekte*, ed. Hermann Behrens and Jens Hoffmann (Munich: Oekom, 2007), 233–43, here 234. See also Manfred Melzer, "Wasserwirtschaft und Umweltschutz in der DDR," in *Umweltschutz in beiden Teilen Deutschlands*, ed. Maria Haendcke-Hoppe and Konrad Merkel (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 1986), 69–87.

21. BArch-SAPMO, Politbüro DY 30/J IV 2/2, Assessment of the GDR's interest in entering into negotiations with the FRG in the area of environmental protection, n.d. [November 6, 1973]. This was one of the documents used to prepare negotiations on cooperation in environmental policy, as originally envisaged by the Basic Treaty.

22. Ibid.

23. Timothy Moss, "Divided City, Divided Infrastructures: Securing Energy and Water Services in Postwar Berlin," *Journal of Urban History* 35, no. 7 (November 2009): 923–42, here 932. On the Franconian Saale, see "'Wir haben Angst um unsere Kinder': Spiegel-Report über die Umweltverschmutzung in der DDR (III)," *Der Spiegel*, July 22, 1985.

24. "Wo Ost-Berlin Schaden fürchtet: Deutsch-deutscher Deichbau interessanter als deutsch-deutscher Umweltschutz," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, June 20, 1980.

25. Hannsjörg F. Buck, "Umweltbelastung durch Müllentsorgung und Industrieabfälle in der DDR," in *Am Ende des realen Sozialismus: Beiträge zu einer Bestandsaufnahme der DDR-Wirklichkeit in den 80er Jahren*, vol. 4: *Die Endzeit der DDR-Wirtschaft: Analysen zur Wirtschafts- Sozial- und Umweltpolitik*, ed. Eberhard Kuhrt in collaboration with Hannsjörg F. Buck and Gunter Holzweißig (Opladen: Leske + Budrich, 1999), 455–97, here 461–71; Susanne Hartard and Michael Huhn, "Das SERO-System," in Behrens and Hoffmann, *Umweltschutz in der DDR*, vol. 2, 309–34.

26. According to Buck, "Umweltbelastung," in 1989 there were around 13,000 illegal waste dumps; 11,000 were filled with municipal garbage, 2,000 with industrial waste.

27. Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv (hereafter BayHStA), StK 19538, Elektrizitätswerk Weiss, Mitwitz, to Landratsamt Kronach, February 13 and April 15, 1975.

28. BayHStA, StK 19538, Electricity company Weiss, Mitwitz, to Dr. Hans De With, parliamentary state secretary at the Federal Ministry of Justice (Bundesministerium der Justiz, BMJ), August 21, 1979: "What use is it to us, for example, if you spend years engaged in negotiations with the GDR about environmental contamination and it brings no improvement." The establishment of a Border Commission was agreed in the Basic Treaty of December 1972. This inter-German commission was tasked with surveying the boundary and regulating compensation claims and water and energy supply issues at the operational level. On the work of the commission, see Klaus Otto Nass, ed., *Die Vermessung des Eisernen Vorhangs: Deutsch-deutsche Grenzkommission und DDR-Staatssicherheit* (Freiburg: Centaurus, 2010).

29. See, however, the objection by Klaus George, "Neue Bedingungen für die Vogelwelt der Agrarlandschaft in Ostdeutschland nach der Wiedervereinigung," *Ornithologischer Jahresbericht Museum Heineanum* 13 (1995): 1–25.

30. On the damage caused by land improvement schemes in West Germany, see the contemporary historical interventions by Hubert Weiger at that time, "Flurbereinigung

und Naturschutz: Bilanz 1982; Nach wie vor negativ," *Natur und Umwelt* 62, no. 2 (April 1982): 3–6; "Was spricht gegen Plastikbäume?," *Der Spiegel*, May 9, 1983; Jochen Bölsche, *Die deutsche Landschaft stirbt: Zerschnitten, zersiedelt, zerstört* (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1983). On land clearance in the GDR, see Michael Heinz, "Klassenkampf gegen Hecken und Teiche—Flurbereinigung in der DDR," *Horch und Guck* 76, no. 2 (2012): 32–35; Hermann Könker, "Komplexe Standortmeliorationen," in Behrens and Hoffmann, *Umweltschutz in der DDR*, vol. 2, 45–58; Hans-Joachim Mohr, "Die Entwässerung landwirtschaftlicher Nutzflächen: Schwerpunkt der Meliorationstätigkeit 1960–1990—ein kritischer Rückblick," in Behrens and Hoffmann, *Umweltschutz in der DDR*, vol. 2, 59–80.

31. Michael Heinz, *Von Mähdreschern und Musterdörfern: Industrialisierung der DDR-Landwirtschaft und die Wandlung des ländlichen Lebens am Beispiel der Nordbezirke* (Berlin: Metropol, 2011), 314–32; P. A. Schmidt, "Landwirtschaft und Naturschutz in der DDR," *Forstwirtschaftliches Centralblatt* 109 (1990): 378–402; BArch, B 295/13831, The baseline situation in agriculture, attachment to a letter from the GDR Council of Ministers, Ref. N[aturschutz] II.2, Dr. Haiko Pieplow to the BMU, Ref. N5, Dr. Rustemeyer, August 29, 1990; Hannsjörg F. Buck, "Umwelt- und Bodenbelastung durch eine ökologisch nicht abgesicherte industriemäßig organisierte Tier- und Pflanzenproduktion," in Kuhrt, *Am Ende des realen Sozialismus*, vol. 4, *Die Endzeit der DDR-Wirtschaft*, 426–46, here 432.

32. Heinz, "Klassenkampf," 34–35.

33. BArch, B 295/20493, BMU, Ref. N 1, Minutes [of] the meetings of the department heads responsible for nature conservation in the federal and state governments on April 24 and 25, 1990, in Bad Reichenhall.

34. BayHStA, StK 19497, Police officer Dürrbeck, Rödental border police station, concluding note [on the contamination of the Effelder with detergents], January 14, 1987.

35. "Fischsterben in der Kreck," *Coburger Neue Presse*, July 2, 1976; "Fischsterben in der Kreck: DDR-Behörden lehnen Verantwortung ab," *Coburger Tageblatt*, July 2, 1976. Regarding the contamination of the Milz in 1981, an inquiry reported that "investigations of the Milz carried out by the responsible organs of the GDR 'revealed no extraordinary changes.'" BayHStA, StK 19539, Minister-President Franz Josef Strauß to Johann Böhm (MdL, CSU), October 30, 1981.

36. BayHStA, StK 19536, Announcement of the Bavarian State Chancellery dated January 15, 1970, no. 105-3-20, Guidelines for material damage compensation in the areas of the DL [demarcation line] caused by restrictions imposed by the central German authorities; StK 19535, Bavarian State Chancellery to district administrations, July 7, 1976, re. damage incidents on the border not caused by barrier constructions. "Cases of damage that are currently occurring particularly often include [. . .] fish dying in transboundary waters, as well as damage caused by the spraying of herbicides by the GDR on our territory." The "spraying of chemicals" was already recognized as a case of damage in 1970.

37. The figures are based on the GDR statistical yearbook for 1983, cited in von Berg, "Zum Umweltschutz," 381. See also Würth, *Umweltschutz*, 233. For comparison: in 1983, 99.9 percent of the West German population were connected to the water supply and 90.7 percent to mains sewage canalization, of whom 95.3 percent had a connection to a sewage treatment plant (information from the Federal Office of Statistics—Bonn branch—, July 12, 2012).

38. Buck, "Umwelt- und Bodenbelastung," 435.

39. Würth, *Umweltschutz*, 231–48; Bernhardt, "Umweltprobleme im Sozialismus," 376–78; Hannsjörg F. Buck, "Umweltpolitik und Umweltbelastung: Das Ausmaß der Umweltbelastung und Umweltzerstörung beim Untergang der DDR 1989/90," in *Am Ende des realen Sozialismus: Beiträge zu einer Bestandsaufnahme der DDR-Wirklichkeit in den 80er Jahren*, vol. 2: *Die wirtschaftliche und ökologische Situation der DDR in den 80er Jahren*, ed. Eberhard Kuhrt in collaboration with Hannsjörg F. Buck and Gunter Holzweißig (Opladen: Leske + Budrich, 1996), 223–57, here 243; Klapper, "Gewässerschutz," 235.

40. Rudolf Böhm et al., *Zur Geschichte der Stadtentwässerung Dresdens*, 3rd ed. (Dresden: self-pub., 2007), 110.

41. Reinhard Müller and Birgit Süß, "Die Entwicklung des Umweltvertragsrechts zwischen Deutschland, der früheren Tschechoslowakei und Polen, unter rückschauender Einbeziehung der Vertragspraxis der DDR," *Zeitschrift für ausländisches öffentliches Recht und Völkerrecht* 53 (1993): 293–321, here 300–301; Michael von Berg, "Umweltschutzabkommen Bundesrepublik Deutschland/DDR," in Haendcke-Hoppe and Merkel, *Umweltschutz*, 123–30, here 124. On the success of the facility, see Dietrich Jahn, "Die Sanierung der Berliner Gewässer," *Stadt + Umwelt* (August 1989): 28.

42. Edith Sheffer, *Burned Bridge: How East and West Germans Made the Iron Curtain* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 210–11.

43. BArch, DK 5/5752, Statement on a "Draft report on the effects of pollution of inner-German transboundary waters through waste discharges from the GDR," no author [compiled at the request of GDR Environment Minister Reichelt], n.d. [September 1983].

44. Regulated by the "Decree on Ensuring Confidentiality in the Field of Environmental Data," dated November 16, 1982. On the confidentiality of environmental data, see Carlo Jordan, "Umweltzerstörung und Umweltpolitik in der DDR," in *Materialien der Enquete-Kommission "Aufarbeitung von Geschichte und Folgen der SED-Diktatur in Deutschland"*, vol. 2, part 3: *Machtstrukturen und Entscheidungsmechanismen im SED-Staat und die Frage der Verantwortung* (Baden-Baden: Nomos, 1995), 1770–90, here 1786. The decree became known in West Germany by 1985 at the latest; see "Wir haben Angst um unsere Kinder," *Der Spiegel*, July 8, 1985. In the GDR it was published in 1988 by the Arche green-ecological network in the underground newspaper "Arche Nova."

45. BayHStA, StK 19673, Problem catalog of the Border Commission for the territory of the Free State of Bavaria. Effective: January 1, 1977; "Grenzen: Teuflische Dinger," *Der Spiegel*, July 1, 1974.

46. "Innerdeutsche Regelung im Bereich der Gewässerreinhaltung: Vereinbarung mit der DDR in der Grenzkommission über Maßnahmen zum Schutz der Röden im bayerisch-thüringischen Grenzgebiet," *Bulletin der Bundesregierung*, October 13, 1983; "Modellfall für innerdeutschen Umweltschutz," *Wiesbadener Tagblatt*, October 13, 1983.

47. Peter Wensierski, "Umweltprobleme in der DDR: Eine Einführung," *Geographische Rundschau* 39, no. 11 (November 1987): 604–5.

48. Peter Wensierski, *Von oben nach unten wächst gar nichts: Umweltzerstörung und Protest in der DDR* (Frankfurt a. M.: Fischer, 1986), 141–47, quotation on 143; Buck, "Umweltpolitik," 244; Würth, *Umweltschutz*, 236–40.

49. BArch, B 288/113, Federal Ministry for Inner-German Relations (Bundesministeri-

um für innerdeutsche Beziehungen, BMB) II 7, Note re. expert talks with the GDR on the pollution of the Elbe, February 2, 1983. The argument about the self-cleaning stretch of the Elbe beyond Magdeburg was already contained in BArch-SAPMO, Politbüro DY 30/J IV 2/2, Evaluation of the GDR's interest in entering into negotiations with the FRG in the field of environmental protection, n.d. [November 6, 1973], 4. On the long tradition of the argument about the self-cleaning properties of rivers, see Thomas Rommelspacher, "Das natürliche Recht auf Wasserverschmutzung: Geschichte des Wassers im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert," in *Besiegte Natur: Geschichte der Umwelt im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert*, ed. Franz-Josef Brüggemeier and Thomas Rommelspacher (Munich: Beck, 1989), 42–63, here 50–51.

50. Figures in Joachim Kahlert, *Die Sanierung der Elbe als Aufgabe deutscher und europäischer Umweltpolitik: Programme, Instrumente und Kooperationen im Gewässerschutz; Eine Tagung der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung und des Vereins für Politische Bildung und Soziale Demokratie am 12. und 13. September 1990 in Dresden* (Bonn: Forschungsinstitut der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Abteilung Wirtschaftspolitik, 1990), http://library.fes.de/fulltext/fo-wirtschaft/00275toc.htm.

51. *Die Gewässergütekarte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1990*, ed. Länderarbeitsgemeinschaft Wasser (Berlin: Umweltbundesamt, 1991), 14, https://www.lawa.de/documents/gewaesserguetekarte_der_brd_1991_text_b36_copy_1552305807.pdf.

52. The history of the Werra is the subject of several studies on environmental history. See Ulrich Eisenbach, "Kaliindustrie und Umwelt," in *Die Kaliindustrie an Werra und Fulda: Geschichte eines landschaftsprägenden Industriezweigs*, ed. Ulrich Eisenbach and Akos Paulinyi (Darmstadt: Hessisches Wirtschaftsarchiv, 1998), 194–222; Jürgen Büschenfeld, "Der harte Kampf um weiches Wasser: Zur Umweltgeschichte der Kaliindustrie im 19. und 20. Jahrhundert," in *Mensch—Natur—Technik: Aspekte der Umweltgeschichte in Niedersachsen und angrenzenden Gebieten*, ed. Carl-Hans Hauptmeyer (Bielefeld: Verlag für Regionalgeschichte, 2000), 79–109. See also Jürgen Büschenfeld, *Flüsse und Kloaken: Umweltfragen im Zeitalter der Industrialisierung (1870–1918)* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1997), chapter 5.

53. Gerd Hübner, "Ökologisch-faunistische Fließgewässerbewertung am Beispiel der salzbelasteten unteren Werra und ausgewählter Zuflüsse" (PhD diss., University of Kassel, 2007), 27–28. On seashore flora, see Büschenfeld, "Kampf," 87–89.

54. Büschenfeld, "Kampf," 100.

55. Eisenbach, "Kaliindustrie," 205, 216.

56. Niedersächsisches Landesarchiv-Hauptstaatsarchiv Hannover (hereafter NLA-HH), Nds. 600 acc. 143/92 no. 11, G. Buhse, Salinization of the Werra and Upper Weser and wastewater from the potash industry. See also Eisenbach, "Kaliindustrie," 219.

57. Büschenfeld, "Kampf," 101.

58. Eisenbach, "Kaliindustrie," 207–10; Büschenfeld, "Kampf," 101–3. On the Rohrlache, see Bernd Koch, "Naturschutzgebiet 'Rohrlache,'" *Chronik Widdershausen*, accessed November 26, 2024, https://www.widdershausen.de/rohrlache.html.

59. Hübner, "Fließgewässerbewertung," 24–34; Jürgen Hulsch and Gerhard M. Veh, "Zur Salzbelastung von Werra und Weser," *Neues Archiv für Niedersachsen* 27, no. 4 (December 1978): 367–77; Klaus-Martin Liersch, "Salz in Werra und Weser," *Geographische*

Rundschau 39, no. 11 (November 1987): 642–47. Liersch was head of the Göttingen Water Management Office; Hulsch and Veh were ministerial officials in Hannover.

60. BArch-SAPMO, Büro Mittag DY 3023/1434, Ministry for Environmental Protection and Water Management, June 9, 1977. See also Eisenbach, "Kaliindustrie," 218.

61. Eisenbach, "Kaliindustrie," 216–20; Hulsch and Veh, "Salzbelastung"; NLA-HH, Nds. 800 acc. 2001/090 no. 171, Association of Waterworks in the Weser Basin, Drinking water supply for five million inhabitants of the Weser Basin impaired by salination of the Weser [press release, n.d., probably 1980].

62. "Dass der Fluss so krank ist . . .," *Der Spiegel*, September 27, 1976.

63. "Umwelt: Lenkt die DDR ein?," *Der Spiegel*, September 25, 1978. The salt concentration of the Baltic is 11,000 mg/L, that of the North Sea 19,000 mg/L; see Hulsch and Veh, "Salzbelastung," 371.

64. Liersch, "Salz." On the Bromoform content: NLA-HH, Nds. 800 acc. 2001/090 no. 173, Free Hanseatic City of Bremen, Senator for Health and Environmental Protection, to Gerhard W., doctoral student, May 25, 1981.

65. See the estimate of damage from 1988 in Herbert Schäfer, "'Hier beginnt die Nordsee': Bonn und DDR streiten um verschmutzte Flüsse," *Die Zeit*, May 20, 1988.

66. NLA-HH, Nds. 800 acc. 2001/090 no. 171, Memorandum, Ministerial Adviser Jürgen Hulsch, January 25, 1980.

67. BArch, DK 5/1498, AG II, Demands and obligations of the GDR arising from maintenance and upgrading as well as problems arising from the wastewater contamination of transboundary waters, March 10, 1971. The document was compiled in 1971 by legal advisers to the Working Group for Investigating the Demands and Obligations of the GDR vis-à-vis the FRG in the Field of Water Management (Arbeitsgruppe zur Untersuchung der Forderungen und Verbindlichkeiten der DDR gegenüber der BRD auf dem Gebiet der Wasserwirtschaft, AG II) in the Office for the Legal Protection of GDR Assets (Amt für den Rechtsschutz des Vermögens der DDR, AfR). Its purpose was to anticipate possible compensation claims that West Germany might make against the GDR with respect to transboundary waters. It was communicated to the head of the Office for Water Management, Johann Rochlitzer, on April 15, 1971, by the head of the AfR, Hermann Kleyer.

68. Jörg Roesler, "System- oder konjunkturbedingte Unterschiede? Zur Umweltpolitik in der DDR und der Bundesrepublik in den 70er und 80er Jahren," *Deutschland Archiv* 39, no. 3 (2006), 480–88; Radkau, *Ära der Ökologie*, 521; Andreas Dix and Rita Gudermann, "Naturschutz in der DDR: Idealisiert, ideologisiert, instrumentalisiert?," in *Natur und Staat: Staatlicher Naturschutz in Deutschland 1906–2006*, ed. Hans-Werner Frohn and Friedemann Schmoll (Münster: Landwirtschaftsverlag, 2006), 578–90; "Überblick Umweltgesetzgebung," in von Berg, "Zum Umweltschutz," 376–77.

69. von Berg, "Zum Umweltschutz," 375–76; Jörg Roesler, *Umweltpolitik und Umweltprobleme in der DDR* (Erfurt: Landeszentrale für Politische Bildung Thüringen, 2006), 8; Karl-Hermann Hübler, "Umweltpolitik zwischen Theorie und Umweltrealität in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und der DDR—Ein Vergleich," in Haendcke-Hoppe and Merkel, *Umweltschutz*, 13–39.

70. On the conflict about the UBA, see Hermann Wentker, "Bundespräsenz in West-

Berlin: Perzeption, Propaganda und Politik der SED-Führung," in *Hauptstadtanspruch und symbolische Politik: Die Bundespräsenz im geteilten Berlin 1949–1990*, ed. Michael C. Bienert, Uwe Schaper, and Hermann Wentker (Berlin: be.bra-Wissenschaft-Verlag, 2012), 241–62, here on 255 a reference to the disparities between the official translations of the treaty: whereas the Western texts spoke of "ties [Bindungen] between the Western sectors of Berlin and the Federal Republic of Germany [. . .] being maintained and developed," the Russian version spoke only of "ties [Verbindungen]." There was no official German version of the treaty, which led to disagreements about the translations.

71. "Kneift gewaltig," *Der Spiegel*, June 24, 1974; "Berlin 'Schikanen auf niedriger Ebene,'" *Der Spiegel*, August 5, 1974.

72. Monika Kaiser, Daniel Hofmann, and Hans-Heinrich Jansen, eds., *Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik*, 6th ser., vol. 3: *1. Januar 1973 bis 31. Dezember 1974* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2005), doc. no. 87H, 344–45, doc. no. 240, 788, with respective annotations. See also von Berg, "Umweltschutzabkommen." The environmental agreement was signed during Erich Honecker's visit to Bonn in 1987.

73. On the Elbe border, cleaning up the Elbe, and the flat-rate transit fee, see Karl-Rudolf Korte, *Deutschlandpolitik in Helmut Kohls Kanzlerschaft: Regierungsstil und Entscheidungen 1982–1989* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1998), 417–31.

74. In 1981 the Permanent Representation (Ständige Vertretung, StäV) regarded talks with the GDR as unpromising in view of the border issue. It also assumed that the federal states were demanding negotiations with the GDR about the Elbe "just for show" in order to deflect the pressure being exerted by environmental activists onto Bonn. In addition StäV asserted that very few fishermen were affected by the pollution of the Elbe, but they received a disproportionate amount of media attention: "In the meantime a group of 'radical' environmentalists with a lot of clout in the media has positioned itself primarily behind the Elbe eel fishermen who are affected by the river's high concentration of heavy metals. The Elbe fishermen number only twelve and—without publicity—their number would bear no relation to the political implications of attempts to eliminate the heavy metals in the waters of the Elbe." Quotation StäV, Memorandum, Pollution of the Elbe, here 2. BArch, B 288/112, Departmental talk in the Federal Ministry of the Interior (Bundesministerium des Innern, BMI) on March 25, 1981. On the protest of the Elbe fishermen, see "Elbe: 'Wir hängen jetzt total auf Null,'" *Der Spiegel*, May 25, 1981.

75. BArch, DK 5/1498, AG II, Demands and obligations of the GDR arising from maintenance and upgrading as well as problems arising from the wastewater contamination of transboundary waters, March 10, 1971. On the effects of West Germany's claim to be the sole representative with respect to the cross-border administrative problems at municipal and county level, see Sagi Schaefer, *States of Division: Border and Boundary Formation in Cold War Rural Germany* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014), 89–117.

76. "Ostpolitik: Salz in der Werra," *Der Spiegel*, December 1, 1969.

77. "Vertrag über die Grundlagen der Beziehungen zwischen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik," *Bulletin der Bundesregierung*, December 8, 1972.

78. The developments were summarized in NLA-HH, Nds. 800 acc. 2001/090 no. 171,

Lower Saxony parliament, 9th electoral term. Transcript of the 15th session of the Committee for Environmental Questions, December 21, 1979.

79. BArch-SAPMO, Büro Mittag DY 3023/1434, Council of Ministers of the GDR. Working Group for Organization and Inspection reporting to the chairman, May 30, 1975; Mittag to Honecker, January 14, 1976. This source puts the damage at 72.7 million VM. Later demands vis-à-vis the Federal Republic amounted to 80–94 million VM. See also BStU, MfS/Z2421, fols. 01–04, Ministry for State Security, Information no. 588/75 on the depositing and storage of hazardous substances [. . .] in the vicinity of the state border of the GDR, August 21, 1975.

80. Since this negligent practice was maintained in the Thuringian mines, a veritable earthquake occurred in March 1989. The mine of the potash works Ernst Thälmann collapsed over an area of 6.8 square kilometers and triggered seismic shocks that could be felt as far away as Frankfurt am Main. Eisenbach, "Kaliindustrie," 210–12; Karl-Heinz Baum, "Wie die DDR einst Hessen erschütterte," *Frankfurter Rundschau*, November 2, 1996.

81. BArch-SAPMO, Büro Mittag DY 3023/1434, Bonn's response to the GDR's demands, communicated by ministerial section head Stern, Federal Chancellor's Office (Bundeskanzleramt, BkA), June 21, 1976; Telegram of the Foreign Representation (Auslandsvertretung, AV) Bonn, signed Baumgärtel, n.d.; Declaration of the Government of the Federal Republic (about the handing over of the expert appraisal of June 22, 1977), June 30, 1977; the West German explanation for the collapse of the ceiling in BayHStA, StK 19611, BMB II 7, Record of the progress of negotiations on measures to reduce the salinization of the Werra and deep-well injections, November 15, 1986.

82. On the resurfacing of brines after deep-well injections, see "Alarm am Monte Kali," *Der Spiegel*, August 24, 2009.

83. BArch-SAPMO, Büro Mittag DY 3023/1434, Mittag to Honecker, January 14, 1976.

84. "Some of the brines injected into deep-wells underground [. . .] are being pressed toward the territory of the GDR and thus sharing in the use of the GDR's deep-well cavities." BArch-SAPMO, Büro Mittag DY 3023/1434, Ministry for Environmental Protection and Water Management, Proposals for how to proceed in relation to the elimination of wastewater from the potash industry, June 9, 1977.

85. Potash quotation in Council of Ministers of the GDR, Working Group for Organization and Inspection reporting to the chairman, May 30, 1975; Gorleben quotation in Directive for conducting preliminary talks with the FRG and for how to proceed further on the issue of potash mining in the Werra mining region, August 5, 1978, both in BArch-SAPMO, Büro Mittag DY 3023/1434.

86. BArch-SAPMO, Büro Mittag DY 3023/1434, Ministry for Environmental Protection and Water Management, Proposals for how to proceed in relation to the elimination of wastewater from the potash industry, June 9, 1977.

87. BArch-SAPMO, Büro Mittag DY 3023/1436, Documentation on negotiations with the FRG in relation to potash mining in the Werra region, n.d. [March 21, 1989]. The talks were in progress from 1976 to 1989.

88. BArch-SAPMO, Büro Mittag DY 3023/1434, Report on the 1st round of talks between the GDR expert delegation and representatives of the FRG (December 21, 1976) on

the problems arising for the GDR through deep-well injections of potash wastewater by FRG potash mines in the vicinity of the state border of the GDR.

89. *Bulletin der Bundesregierung*, April 30, 1980.

90. "With reference to the urgency of the aforementioned issues [on deep-well injections of brines], talks should not be conducted about the salinization of the Werra." BArch-SAPMO, Büro Mittag DY 3023/1434, Mittag to Honecker, April 18, 1979.

91. NLA-HH, Nds. 800 acc. 2001/090 no. 171, Memorandum by Ministerial Adviser Hulsch, Salinization of the Werra and the Weser, here: Progress of negotiations with the GDR, February 4, 1980.

92. NLA-HH, Nds. 800 acc. 2001/090 no. 173, Lower Saxony parliament, 9th electoral term, Transcript of the 23rd session of the Committee for Expellees, Refugees, and Ethnic German Migrants as well as issues concerning the area adjacent to the Soviet zone, January 16, 1981, TOP 2, Water issues in the area adjacent to the Soviet zone, here: Briefing on the progress of inner-German talks on reducing the saline contamination of the Weser and the Werra.

93. BayHStA, StK 19611, BMB II 7, Record of the progress of negotiations on measures to reduce the salinization of the Werra and deep-well injections, November 15, 1986.

94. Summary of issues pending with the FRG and West Berlin that directly affect the economic interests of the GDR, May 27, 1977, in *Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik*, 6th ser., vol. 5, ed. Daniel Hofmann, Hans-Heinrich Jansen, and Anke Löbnitz (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2011), doc. no. 49, 175–183, here 180.

95. "Gesalzene Rechnung," *Der Spiegel*, February 4, 1980. In addition there would have been annual maintenance costs of roughly DM 15 million.

96. NLA-HH, Nds. 800 acc. 2001/090 no. 173, Lower Saxony Ministry for Food, Agriculture, and Forests to the prime minister of Lower Saxony, June 24, 1981.

97. On the potash production processes, see Hans-Jörg Wittich, "Kurze Darstellung der Produktionsprozesse eines Kaliwerkes mit Beispielen der technischen Entwicklung in der Kaliverarbeitung," in Eisenbach and Paulinyi, *Kaliindustrie*, 137–66, here 153–56.

98. Ibid., 156–58.

99. BayHStA, StK 19611, BMB II 7, Record of the progress of negotiations on measures to reduce the salinization of the Werra and deep-well injections, November 15, 1986. See also "Im Koma," *Der Spiegel*, May 31, 1982.

100. The West German delegation informed the GDR about the first successes of the ESTA process in October 1980. BArch-SAPMO, Büro Mittag DY 3023/1435, Report on the 3rd round of talks on issues connected with potash mining in border areas between the GDR and the FRG on October 17 and 18, 1980, in Berlin, capital of the GDR, December 18, 1980.

101. von Berg, "Umweltschutzabkommen," 125–26.

102. NLA-HH, Nds. 800 acc. 2001/090 no. 173, Lower Saxony parliament, 9th electoral term, Transcript of the 23rd session of the Committee for Expellees, Refugees, and Ethnic German Migrants as well as issues concerning the area adjacent to the Soviet zone, January 16, 1981.

103. BArch, DK 5/1498, Kurt Singhuber, minister of ore mining, metallurgy, and potash, to Hans Reichelt, minister for environmental protection and water management, August 29, 1988 (with attachment), Bill submitted to the Politburo re. information about projects connected with the negotiations with the FRG on the piling up of salt tailings by the West Ger-

man potash industry on GDR territory in the border zone as well as the disposal of potash wastewater by the publicly owned Werra potash enterprise.

104. Uwe Bastian, *Greenpeace in der DDR: Erinnerungsberichte, Interviews und Dokumente* (Berlin: Edition Ost, 1996), 18–20.

105. BArch, DK 5/1498, Kurt Singhuber, minister of ore mining, metallurgy, and potash, to Hans Reichelt, minister for environmental protection and water management, August 29, 1988 (with attachment), Bill submitted to the Politburo re. information about projects connected with the negotiations with the FRG on the piling up of salt tailings by the West German potash industry on GDR territory in the border zone as well as the disposal of potash wastewater by the publicly owned Werra potash enterprise.

106. Michael von Berg, "Umweltschutz in Deutschland: Zusammenarbeit zwischen den beiden deutschen Staaten," *Geographische Rundschau* 39, no. 11 (1987): 606–9, here 609.

107. BayHStA, StK 19611, BMB II B 3, Memorandum, February 6, 1987.

108. BArch-SAPMO, Büro Mittag DY 3023/1436, Non-paper, September 14, 1988.

109. BArch-SAPMO, Büro Mittag DY 3023/1436, Mittag to Honecker, November 29, 1988 (with attachment), marked "approved" by Honecker on November 30, 1988.

110. Radkau, *Ära der Ökologie*, 523, speaks in this connection of "pure fatalism" on the part of the GDR leadership.

111. On the GDR's debt crisis, see André Steiner, *Von Plan zu Plan: Eine Wirtschaftsgeschichte der DDR* (Munich: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2004), 191–226; Armin Volze, "Zur Devisenverschuldung der DDR—Entstehung, Bewältigung und Folgen," in Kuhrt, *Am Ende des realen Sozialismus*, vol. 4, *Die Endzeit der DDR-Wirtschaft*, 151–77; Jörg Roesler, "Der Einfluß der Außenwirtschaftspolitik auf die Beziehungen DDR–Bundesrepublik: Die achtziger Jahre," *Deutschland Archiv* 26 (May 1993): 558–72; Matthias Judt, *Der Bereich Kommerzielle Koordinierung: Das DDR-Wirtschaftsimperium des Alexander Schalck-Golodkowski—Mythos und Realität* (Berlin: Ch. Links, 2013), 132–41, 158–66, and 172–74.

112. Thus, in 1989, instead of the original 90 percent of all wastewater, only 28.3 percent needed to be treated in the surrounding area; see Moss, "Divided City, Divided Infrastructures," 927, 932.

113. Jinhee Park, "Von der Müllkippe zur Abfallwirtschaft: Die Entwicklung der Hausmüllentsorgung in Berlin (West) von 1945 bis 1990" (PhD diss., Technische Universität Berlin, 2003), 84–90, 192–96, figures on 196; Judt, *Der Bereich Kommerzielle Koordinierung*, 67–76, 192–203. See also the contributions in Susanne Köstering and Renate Rüb, eds., *Müll von gestern? Eine umweltgeschichtliche Erkundung in Berlin und Brandenburg* (Münster: Waxmann, 2003). On the Schönberg landfill, see also Matthias Baerens and Ulrich von Arnswald, *Die Müll-Connection: Entsorger und ihre Geschäfte; Ein Greenpeace Buch* (Munich: Beck, 1993).

114. BArch, DK 5/971, vol. I, Information on water management problems between the GDR and West Berlin and proposals for how the GDR should precede, n.d. (attachment to Joachim Mitdank, head of the West Berlin Dept. of the GDR Ministry for Foreign Affairs, to Johann Rochlitzer, head of the Water Management Office in the GDR Council of Ministers, June 13, 1975). Author's emphasis.

115. See n. 41.

116. NLA-HH, Nds. 800 acc. 200/090 no. 173, Senator for Construction and Housing, Dept. III bC4, Minutes of the 5th round of expert talks with the (GDR) Ministry for Environmental Protection and Water Management re. solving urgent Berlin water protection problems, December 11, 1980. A note in the margin of the minutes by a West German official reads: "GDR is demanding five-fold inflated costs!!"

117. BArch, DK 5/1995, GDR Council of Ministers, VVS B2-B161, Resolution concerning sewage treatment measures by the City of Sonneberg, December 12, 1983.

118. BArch, B 288/108, Federal Ministry for Economic Affairs to BMI, BkA, BMB, BMJ, Federal Ministry of Finance, Representation for the State of Berlin, West German participation in GDR projects, December 11, 1985.

119. The East German side had named a figure of DM 80 million as the required volume of investment. "By working out the terms of reference and further disseminating the plan, a significant minimization of the investment costs can be achieved." BArch, DK 5/1995, GDR Council of Ministers, VVS B2-B161, Resolution concerning sewage treatment measures by the City of Sonneberg, December 12, 1983.

120. Anselm Tiggemann, *Die "Achillesferse" der Kernenergie in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: Zur Kernenergiekontroverse und Geschichte der nuklearen Entsorgung von den Anfängen bis Gorleben 1955–1985*, 2nd ed. (Lauf an der Pegnitz: Europaforum-Verlag, 2010), 662–76.

121. Mike Reichert, *Kernenergiewirtschaft in der DDR: Entwicklungsbedingungen, konzeptioneller Anspruch und Realisierungsgrad (1955–1990)* (St. Katharinen: Scripta Mercaturae, 1999), 289–93. Rumors about Schalck's plans to reprocess West German nuclear waste were circulating among East German nuclear engineers in the early 1980s; BStU, MfS/HA XVIII/No. 18910, fols. 221–22, Information, March 21, 1980.

122. Proposal to increase NSW-exports of isotopes as well as taking back the resulting low-level radioactive waste, September 29, 1981, approved ("einverstanden") by Honecker on September 30, 1981, in BArch-SAPMO, Büro Mittag DY 3023/1441. The waste was to be stored at the facility in Morsleben, a fact that was to be kept secret in the contracts for taking back the waste. This compensation deal is described in more detail in BStU, MfS/HA XVIII/No. 8722, fols. 017–023. The GDR expected to receive income to the tune of 2.5 to 4 million VM for this.

123. BArch, DK 5/5756, Günter Mittag to Minister for the Environment and Water Management Dr. Hans Reichelt, March 20, 1984, re. drawing up directives concerning further negotiations with the FRG on environmental issues. When in early 1989 talks about cleaning up the Elbe got past the preliminary stage, the West German delegation "occasionally [. . .] gained the impression that the GDR ultimately intends to use this method to completely remediate the wastewater problems of its Elbe industries in hard currency terms." BArch, B 288/384, StäV an BkA, BMU, BMB, Foreign Office, March 31, 1989.

124. BArch, DK 5/5756, Concept for the further conduct of negotiations with the West Berlin Senate in the fields of water management and environmental protection, n.d. [October 10, 1984].

125. These environmental problems certainly had "borderless" qualities. The West German export of hazardous waste to the Schönberg depot endangered the groundwater and

drinking water for Lübeck and of course the nearby municipalities in Mecklenburg. See "Seliges Gottvertrauen," *Der Spiegel*, July 20, 1987.

126. ARGE Weser, *Folgen der Reduktion der Salzbelastung in Werra und Weser für das Fließgewässer als Ökosystem* (Hildesheim: Wassergütestelle Weser, 2000), 11. See also Hübner, "Fließgewässerbewertung."

127. The difficult process of unifying and consolidating the potash industry briefly made national headlines when miners in Bischofferode went on hunger strike in 1993. It otherwise remained a regional political issue. See Claus Peter Müller von der Grün, "Unter einem Dach: Die wiedervereinigte Kaliindustrie im geeinten Deutschland," in Eisenbach and Paulinyi, *Kaliindustrie*, 223–37. Hübner, "Fließgewässerbewertung," 37, attributes the reduction in salt contamination mainly to the closure of potash mines, but overlooks the investment of well over DM 250 million in East German mines in the years 1993–97. On this, see Müller von der Grün, "Dach," 237. The closure of the Bischofferode mine became the subject of Volker Braun's novel *Die hellen Haufen* (Berlin: Suhrkamp, 2011).

128. Marlies Uken, "Stress am Monte Kali: Der Düngerproduzent K&S macht Milliardengewinne—auf Kosten der Umwelt," *Greenpeace Magazin*, no. 5 (2009); "Werraversalzung," BUND, accessed June 16, 2025, https://www.bund-hessen.de/wasser-und-gewaesser/werraversalzung/.

129. Falko Wagner, *Der ökologische Zustand des Makrozoobenthos der Mittleren und Unteren Werra und seine Haupteinflussfaktoren* (Jena: Institut für Gewässerökologie und Fischereibiologie, 2009), 63–64, https://www.living-rivers.de/werra/downloads/2009_04_gutachten_igf-jena_mzb-werra.pdf [URL discontinued]. The study compares different stretches of the Werra that were or were not influenced by salinity. The data were recorded in 2008; figures for the peak contamination in ARGE Weser, *Salzbelastung*, 11.

130. Wagner, *Zustand*.

131. This is portrayed particularly clearly in "Der ewige Streit um das weiße Gold," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, May 24, 2011.

132. Schäfer, "'Hier beginnt die Nordsee'"; "Der Topf ist voll," *Der Spiegel*, November 4, 1992.

133. "Dass der Fluss so krank ist . . .," *Der Spiegel*, September 27, 1976. There is also a reference to the BWK.

134. The declaration of intent foresaw pilot projects for the VEB Arzneimittelwerk Dresden pharmaceuticals factory and the chemical works in Buna for the 1990s. West Germany would have covered 50 percent of the costs. The declaration is interesting because it provides insight into the potential future development of inter-German environmental protection projects; a future, however, that did not come to pass. See the joint declaration of the deputy chairman of the Council of Ministers and GDR minister for environmental protection and the water economy (Reichelt) and the West German minister of the environment, nature conservation and reactor safety (Töpfer) on carrying out environmental protection pilot projects in the GDR, dated July 6, 1989, in Deutscher Industrie- und Handelstag, *DDR Umweltschutz*. On toxic waste from the pharma industry, see Andreas Förster, "'Akute Umweltgefährdung' im Arzneimittelwerk," *Horch und Guck* 76, no. 2 (2012): 26–27.

135. In this context it is worth reading the article by Raymond Dominick, "Capitalism, Communism, and Environmental Protection: Lessons from the German Experience," *Environmental History* 3, no. 3 (July 1998): 311–32.

136. https://www.runder-tisch-werra.de, accessed April 2013 [URL discontinued]. See "Alarm am Monte Kali," *Der Spiegel*, August 24, 2009; "Kaliproduktion ohne Salzlauge möglich," *Frankfurter Rundschau*, May 22, 2009; "Eine Leitung bis in die Nordsee," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, October 30, 2011.

The Greenest Nation and Its Borders

Astrid M. Eckert's "Divided but Not Disconnected" in the Context of Cold War History

ELI RUBIN

By the time of the *Wende* (the fall of the Berlin Wall) the ecological situation in East Germany had become catastrophic. Over 9,000 lakes were biologically dead.[1] In some places, for example near the notorious Bitterfeld chemical combine, the groundwater had a pH somewhere between vinegar and battery acid.[2] East Germans seemingly all had stories of black snow, acid rain, or needing to keep windows shut even in the summer because the very air stank, causing watering eyes and scratchy throats.

The pollution was so bad that it led to the creation of a number of environmental activist groups, who pioneered ways of trying to pressure the regime despite the absence of any freedom of speech. These included the clever 1987 "Eine Mark für Espenhain" campaign, which was a petition in disguise,[3] and the surreptitious production of the 1988 documentary *Bitteres aus Bitterfeld*, smuggled into the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), where it was shown and thus seen on East German TV sets.[4] A samizdat library of documenting the environmental destruction was created by activists in the basement of the Zionskirche in Prenzlauer Berg, Berlin, in 1987, which was raided late that year by the Ministry for State Security (MfS), an event that environmental historian Tobias Huff has claimed to be the "true beginning of the end" of the German Democratic Republic (GDR).[5] All of these initiatives formed the core of the *Bürgerbewegung* (citizens' movement), which eventually culminated in the massive protests that ended the government of the GDR, and set in motion a chain of events that ended the Cold War.

Environmental pollution, environmental policy, and its connection to citizen protest movements ought therefore to be seen as something very much at the center of the history of the Cold War, and especially its end. In particular, environmental pollution was at the center of a triangular relationship between the

GDR state, the GDR populace, and the FRG. This last one is often overlooked, because of what I have termed the creation of a "green legend" as part of the Cold War competition between the two Germanys during the 1980s.[6] Activists and dissidents behind the Iron Curtain frequently relied on the FRG and the West more broadly as a means of broadcasting their message to their *own* population, because books or pamphlets could be freely printed in the West, and then re-smuggled back across the border; the *Bitteres aus Bitterfeld* documentary was just one of many examples of this phenomenon.[7]

As a result, in the minds of people in both East and West, East Germany's polluted environment came to be seen not as a bug, but rather as a feature, of socialism, writ large. It was not something that could be fixed—socialism automatically and inevitably would lead to environmental devastation. The association of socialism's grandiose and Promethean claims to remake society with its despoiling of the air, earth, and water came from within socialist countries, as well as from without—for example, Václav Havel himself helped to propagate the notion that environmental pollution was inextricably linked to ideological and moral failure in his first inauguration speech in January 1990, referencing the Slovnaft chemical factory, saying that communist Czechoslovakia had "polluted the soil, rivers and forests bequeathed to us by our ancestors [. . .] the worst thing is that we live in a contaminated moral environment."[8] Scholars, too, contributed to the conflation of environmental pollution with ideological bankruptcy. One historian claimed in a 2005 book that the "constant pollution" was due to the GDR's "hypermaterialism," and its ecological ruin was created by its "economic ruin," both of which led to the GDR's deserved "dissolution into oblivion."[9] No less a historian than David Blackbourn saw the GDR as the heir of a destructive Prometheanism, emanating from the Enlightenment, which taught that human needs, including economic and technological progress, reigned supreme over the natural environment, an ideology that transformed directly into communism, and especially Soviet communism. The GDR, according to Blackbourn, was "in thrall to Soviet gigantomania," seeking to replicate megalomaniacal plans to transform nature, similar to those Stalin had destructively pursued.[10] In the GDR, Blackbourn writes, "nature was [. . .] there to be beaten into submission."[11] From the socialist side, since Marx himself, if not even earlier, the thinking was that it was *capitalism* that ruined the environment, since its never-sated drive for profits led inevitably to overextraction of the environment. But some historians turned that completely around, claiming that capitalism is better for the environment, because markets and their prices protect the environment, for example, by making certain materials more expensive as they become scarcer, putting a natural

brake on extraction—and without market mechanisms to slow it down, state socialism had no brakes on its single-minded drive to extract every last resource.[12]

As often is the case with one-sided interpretations, these views were based on real facts—the GDR was a major polluter. But the story of the GDR's pollution and the Cold War is in fact much more complicated than the neat little equivalency socialism = pollution that created the "green legend." Among the first scholars to look carefully and with much more nuance at how the environment, and pollution, played into the tense Cold War relationship between the GDR and the FRG was Astrid Eckert, with her publication in the *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* of what has become a landmark article in the field of East German environmental history, "Geteilt, aber nicht unverbunden: Grenzgewässer als deutsch-deutsches Umweltproblem."[13] Eckert's work appeared at a time when there was still a huge deficit of work on the environmental history of the GDR, especially within the context of the Cold War.[14] It challenged the notion of the FRG's "umweltmoralische Lufthoheit gegenüber der DDR," ("environmental moral high horse vis-à-vis the GDR") to borrow Huff's phrasing, while also in no way minimizing the very real devastation that GDR enterprises wreaked on the natural environment, in both the GDR *and* in the FRG.

The importance and effectiveness of Eckert's work here lies in her use of the *border* as a framework for understanding pollution in the context of the Cold War. She starts with the simple but often overlooked fact that pollution knows no political boundaries, because it is usually borne by the wind and the water. And in a particularly ironic turn of fate, most of the water flowing through the territory of the GDR ends up passing through FRG territory as well. Even more awkwardly, much of this water formed the boundaries between the two states, including the Elbe, or waters that begin in what was the FRG, flow through the GDR, and rejoin the FRG, such as the Saale, which empties into the Elbe after flowing through the "chemical triangle" area of Saxony-Anhalt. Eckert cites multiple examples of this: a garbage dump near Köppelsdorf, Thuringia, spilled its contents into the Steinach River during a flood in 1975, and immense amounts of garbage floated down the river, across the border into Bavaria, where it piled up inside the grating of a hydroelectric station. "Tin cans, plastic bottles, car tires, crates, chairs, and various wooden objects" and even "whole pig carcasses" had to be cleaned out from the inside of the West German station, all courtesy of East Germany and its seeming inability to safeguard its garbage dumps from high water.[15] The Elbe itself entered into West German territory after flowing through the GDR from its beginnings in Czechoslovakia, yearly carrying 25 metric tons of mercury, 13 metric tons of cadmium, 120 metric tons of lead, and

100 metric tons each of nickel, copper, and chromium—it was so polluted that the German government, once it was newly unified, could not apply any of its seven existing categories of contamination because it exceeded them all. Out of necessity a new eighth category was invented, "biologically destroyed."[16]

The most problematic instance that Eckert looks at involves the Werra River. The Werra forms the border between the East German Thuringia and the West German Hesse for a stretch, before joining with the Fulda River to form the Weser River, a major river that flows through West Germany, specifically, Bremen and Bremerhaven, and then into the North Sea. The potash industry, essential to the industrialization of agriculture in the nineteenth century, sprang up along stretches of the Werra, and for decades the potash industry dumped alkali salts into the Werra, contaminating the water that so many others along the Werra and ultimately the Weser depended upon.[17] Internal battles had happened between, for example, the fishing industry, and other industries in Bremen, and the potash producers further upstream, since before World War I. But it was after World War II, in the 1950s and 1960s, that the logic of the Cold War took hold of the long simmering dispute about the contamination of the river. In part this was simply because, as the GDR invested in its heavy industries, pollution increased, so that by the 1970s, Bremen could no longer draw its drinking water from the Weser, and there was so much alkali salt in the water that it was corroding any steel or concrete structures in contact with the river, causing damage to the tune of DM 65 million a year.[18]

The GDR in principle held to the line that pollution was a capitalist problem—either because it was actually coming from the FRG, or because it was coming from sources in the GDR that had been created during the capitalist era before 1945. It was socialism, according to the dogma, that strove to create harmony between economy, ecology, and humans.[19] Furthermore, the GDR based its conceptualization of who should pay to clean up spills or pollution in terms of those impacted, not those causing the pollution—convenient for them, since most of the waterborne pollution in the GDR flowed into the FRG (whereas for the FRG it was completely opposite). The GDR had a vested interest therefore in not entering into any talks with the FRG about helping to clean up rivers like the Werra and the Weser. However, it was also acutely aware that *Umweltpolitik* (environmental policy) had become a major part of public opinion, in both the East but especially in the West, where the Green Party had been born out of the massive antinuclear and anti-growth protests in places like Wyhl and Brokdorf in the 1970s. So, it had to walk a fine line—it did not want to commit to the kinds of capital outlays that would be required to remediate

the situation, because essentially it did not have the money, but it also did not want to be *seen* to not be helping.

The environmental movement had had a huge impact on West German politics, with the newly formed Green Party immediately having some success in winning seats in the Bundestag, and the Helmut Kohl–led Christian Democratic Union (CDU) government co-opting and adopting a chunk of the environmental movement's demands, with a flurry of environmental legislation. The GDR leadership saw in this an opportunity for leverage: people and firms impacted by the pollution were appealing to the Bonn government to do something about the pollution—the pressure was all on the FRG. And it was the FRG government that was more desperate to fix the contaminated waters flowing from the GDR into its towns and cities.

Here, Eckert's careful work parsing through the highly complex diplomacy between the two Germanys really brings clarity to the subject, allowing it to surpass the previous and typical "socialism = pollution" triumphal obituaries of East Germany. In the case of the Werra, and elsewhere, the GDR saw a chance to essentially blackmail the FRG into paying for technological upgrades to its existing industrial infrastructure. These were improvements that would lead to much cleaner emissions, but would also upgrade the technology in general. This is significant, because two of the primary factors that are so often overlooked in scholarship and debates about the pollution of the GDR, as opposed to the FRG, are that of the importance of surplus capital in pollution remediation, and also that of the outsourcing of pollution. The GDR was in some ways like a young person who inherits a car or a house. While it is nice to inherit something expensive, and so central to life's necessities, like that, for free, people often misjudge or naively overlook the fact that there will still be many costs associated with that ownership: maintenance and repairs, let alone other costs like insurance, taxes, and other fees. So too did the GDR inherit a great deal of industrial plant from the Third Reich and prior eras, even if some of it was dismantled in the postwar Soviet "demontage" program. But the GDR did not inherit much of the *surplus capital* that had been connected to the firms that ran those plants and facilities. In general, much of the industrial plant in the GDR was dangerously outdated by the 1970s if not even earlier; while corporations in the West made enough money to be able to afford things like filters and scrubbers for their smokestacks, for example, Volkseigene Betriebe (VEBs—publicly owned enterprises) in the East did not have access either to the newest antipollution technology, or to the hard currency to import much of it from the West. Socialism was supposed to "subsume" or "transcend" capitalism, for example, by turning over the techno-

logical marvels achieved by greedy capitalists through the money they accrued via the exploitation of their workers. But no one ever really thought through the concept of upkeep and renewal, that machines don't last for ever, and that as things in society change, there must still be capital available for reinvesting and renovating. *This* was perhaps the most important problem that the GDR, or any other socialist country, never really solved.

But there is another angle to the problem of exporting pollution across borders: the West learned to "clean up" its environment after the increasing popularity of environmentalism during the 1970s. But much of this consisted simply of deindustrialization—moving factories to Third World countries where regulations were lax, saving corporations money not just in terms of lower labor costs, but also in terms of lower environmental remediation costs. If a Western-owned plant caused an environmental catastrophe, such as the Bhopal disaster in India, it was out of sight and out of mind for Western voters and consumers. If it is not *your* drinking water that is contaminated, not *your* eyes that are burning and tearing every time the wind blows from a certain direction, not *your* village that seemed to have a very high number of miscarriages and stillbirths, then what do you really care whose air or water was contaminated in the making of the many consumer products you use each day?

This fact has real implications. It means that, for example, while the FRG took great credit for the very expensive cleanup of the *Neue Bundesländer* (the new federal states, of the former East Germany) after 1990, to a large degree the cleaning of the environment of the former East Germany was due simply to the shuttering of factories and the deindustrialization forced upon the economy by the new Western investors and *Treuhänder* (trusts which oversaw and privatized former state-owned East German companies), a point made recently by Thomas Fleischmann. It also reframes the German-German relationship in its last decade almost more in terms of a First World–Third World relationship. Like developing countries, the GDR realized that it could leverage its laxity about environmental standards vis-à-vis the FRG to bring in the Western currency it craved; the example Eckert cites is the agreement that the FRG and the GDR reached to export West German garbage to East Germany, by which the FRG would pay the GDR to accept its trash, something that is now a common practice between industrialized and industrializing countries everywhere. The anger that citizens and political and business leaders in the FRG felt at having the GDR's industrial pollutants dumped on them was not just related to the real harms that such contaminants caused. It was also a certain measure of wounded pride: as a First World country, it was the *FRG* that was supposed to be exporting its pollution to poorer, lower-status countries, *not the other way around*. The feeling

of powerlessness to make the GDR stop polluting its environment would be a familiar feeling in many places in the world.

The GDR knew that environmentalism had become mobilized as yet another weapon in the Cold War. From its perspective, the FRG was "greenwashing" its own environmental record; not only that, but it seemed likely that the very anticommunist CDU suddenly embraced environmentalism in the early 1980s, when it had not really done so before, once it became clear that it provided a powerful propaganda tool to give the FRG the "umweltmoralische Lufthoheit" (environmental moral high ground). So, the FRG's sudden concern for the pollution in its rivers, flowing, it was true, out of the GDR, was less than genuine or authentic. It was partially, if not entirely, for this reason that in 1982 the MfS put an embargo on the public release of any environmental data—no officials, reporters, scientists, activists, and so forth were allowed to publish or openly speak about levels of pollution or acid rain or anything like that. Again, from the GDR's perspective, it was not only disingenuous for the FRG to suddenly raise a hue and cry about East German chemicals in West German groundwater or waterways. It was also plain unfair because, being capitalists, the FRG's corporations had enough capital to spend large sums on remediation and environmental cleanup, and this included the large sums of R & D investment available to firms like Kali & Salz AG, based in Kassel, to develop new high-tech solutions to remediation. This is what K&S did in the 1980s, with a new process which used electrolysis to remove a large percentage of alkali salt from water, which cost DM 300 million to create.[20] In the many negotiations over just the issue of the alkali in the Werra and Weser Rivers, which dragged on throughout the 1980s (Eckert describes ten meetings, four commissions, and three rounds of negotiations just over the Werra alone),[21] the GDR made it clear: If you want us to clean up the alkali salt in the Werra, you need to give us the K&S technology, for free. After all—you are the rich capitalists, right? And where did that DM 300 million that you used to develop the electrolysis come from originally, if not the typical exploitation that capitalist companies practice? Not to mention that companies like K&S are still living off the legacy of the potash industry that established itself in part through serious degradation of the same river—so it would only seem fitting for the West to pay for both its and the GDR's environmental pollution.

The GDR managed to play its cards shrewdly in these diplomatic-environmental battles, but for all that winning it lost the war, so to speak. If there is any sense in which the GDR "deserved" collapse due to its environmental record, it might be found in the fact that by trying to win the propaganda battle by shutting down any talk of the environment, when its own citizens could literally feel the pollution in their eyes and throats and on their skin—and by its

too-clever-by-half strategy of leveraging the FRG's ideological winds to pressure it to pay for the GDR's environmental cleanup—it unwittingly wrote a rationale for why it no longer needed to exist. If it couldn't clean up its own mess, but the FRG could, then why have a GDR?

It was presumably not lost on officials, and especially citizens, on either side of the border that it was actually *the Cold War itself* that was ultimately most responsible for the pollution. The fact that it took endless rounds of talks that dragged on for years and sometimes decades between the two states just to set up an electrolysis facility, or other similar cases, was due in part to the enmity between the two states. Neither side was necessarily approaching the situation with the well-being of the environment (or the humans dependent on the environment) as its sole or even primary focus—each negotiation about pollutants became linked to broader conflicts or disagreements or diplomatic goals. So, the environment suffered most from this enmity, since as the years went by the contamination just continued to accumulate and accumulate in the *Grenzgewässer* (border waters) shared by both states. Rather than blaming solely the GDR, it was the division and the antagonism between the two states that created the absurd situation with the environmental pollution. The division of Germany was *unnatural*, both in the sense that it was imposed by outsiders, and in the sense that it was harming nature itself—human and nonhuman nature.

Indeed, since the reunification, many of the shibboleths of environmental condemnation that have existed as pillars of the "green legend" have faded away to the attention of almost no one: it was the massive lignite deposits, for example, found throughout Saxony and Saxony-Anhalt, and elsewhere in the former East Germany, which were the main source of both consumer and industrial energy, as well as petrochemical feedstocks. This was especially true after 1980, when the USSR dramatically cut back on its deliveries of petroleum through the "Friendship Pipeline," which brought oil from the Caspian oil fields to the Schwarze Pumpe combine in Schwedt, on the Poland-GDR border. This in turn caused the GDR to ramp up mining and consumption of lignite, also known as brown coal, which is a much dirtier burning form of coal, and a major source of airborne sulfur dioxide, which can cause the phenomenon known colloquially as acid rain. By 1989 the GDR was so dependent on lignite that it burned 40 percent of all the brown coal on the planet.[22] Perhaps the one episode most definitive of the rising tide of environmental consciousness in West Germany was the so-called *Waldsterbendebatte* (forest death debate) crystalized by a now iconic *Der Spiegel* cover.[23] Politicians in the FRG were spurred to action by the idea of the beloved German forest withering from sulfur-poisoned rain. But

they could turn to petroleum imports, which the GDR could not, unless the USSR delivered them, which it continued to do only in dramatically reduced quantities after 1980.[24]

And yet, after the scaling back and near ending of nuclear power in reunified Germany, which was a major pillar of the country's *Energiewende* (energy revolution), itself a pillar of the mythos of Germany as the "greenest nation," new sources of energy needed to be found. The open pit lignite mines, lying fallow since 1990, were an obvious solution, as historian Thomas Fleischman has shown. Since the 1990s, multinational energy corporations have reopened the mines, minus two-thirds of their previous workforce, of course. The mines were practically free, after all the stigma attached to lignite, so they are more profitable than they ever were for companies like NRG and Vattenfall.[25] The massive industrial-scale animal farming, especially pig farming, which the GDR had built up, and which Eckert explains was itself a cause of much toxic runoff into waterways,[26] is back and bigger than ever before in the former GDR, still secreting toxic slurries into the water.[27] And the Werra? How is it now, decades on since the end of East Germany? It is still polluted with alkali salts, perhaps less so than before, but still in "bad ecological condition," according to Eckert, while K&S has profited mightily from the cleanup and the reunification, becoming the fourth-biggest producer of potash in the world, so powerful now that it can mostly ignore entreaties and protests from Greenpeace and other environmental groups over its continued lack of concern for the quality of the Werra and Weser Rivers.[28] Since the *Wende*, Eckert writes, the Federal Republic has lost the convenience of being able to point a finger at its poorer, dirtier cousin to the east, to deflect and distract from its own pollution problems.[29]

Notes

1. David Blackbourn, *The Conquest of Nature: Water, Landscape, and the Making of Modern Germany* (New York: Norton, 2006), 335.

2. Ibid., 339. See also Sandra Chaney, "A Chemical Landscape Transformed: Bitterfeld, Germany, since 1980," *Global Environment* 10, no. 1 (2017): 137–67.

3. "Eine Mark für Espenhain" was a clever ruse created by environmental activists in the GDR to raise awareness and create a protest petition against the environmental pollution being emitted by the Espenhain coal-burning power plant. Citizen petitions, for example for the purpose of protesting, were outlawed in East Germany. However, citizen initiatives collecting donations were allowed. So activists collected signatures as receipts for one-mark donations towards the cause of ending the pollution from Espenhain, and the initiative was known as "Eine Mark für Espenhain" ("one mark for Espenhain"). The copies of the signatures on the receipts became a *de facto* petition as the numbers of contributors rose above

100,000. That so many people contributed became a major political statement against pollution in East Germany in its own right.

4. Frank Uekötter, *The Greenest Nation? A New History of German Environmentalism* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014), 136.

5. Tobias Huff, *Natur und Industrie im Sozialismus: Eine Umweltgeschichte der DDR* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), 399.

6. A reference to the "Black Legend" created by the British Empire during the 1500s and 1600s, which cast the Spanish Empire as the progenitor of barbaric treatment of Indigenous groups, as part of a conscious propaganda campaign linked to the overall rivalry of the two empires; it was built on elements of truth, but also served a clear geopolitical motive, while simultaneously distracting from the equally brutal crimes against humanity perpetrated by the British Empire. See Eli Rubin, "The Greens, the Left, and the GDR: A Critical Reassessment," in *Ecologies of Socialisms: Germany, Nature, and the Left in History, Politics, and Culture*, ed. Sabine Mödersheim, Scott Moranda, and Eli Rubin (New York: Peter Lang, 2019), 167–200, here 171.

7. Konrad Jarausch, *The Rush to German Unity* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1994), 37.

8. Václav Havel, *The Art of the Impossible: Politics as Morality in Practice; Speeches and Writings, 1990–1996* (New York: Knopf, 1997), 3–4.

9. Arvid Nelson, *Cold War Ecology: Forests, Farms, and People in the East German Landscape, 1945–1989* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 2005), xii–xiv. See also Doubravka Olšáková and Arnošt Štanzel, "Kafkaesque Paradigms: The Stalinist Plan for the Transformation of Nature in Czechoslovakia," in *In the Name of the Great Work: Stalin's Plan for the Transformation of Nature and its Impact in Eastern Europe*, ed. Doubravka Olšáková (New York: Berghahn, 2016), 43–125.

10. Blackbourn, *Conquest*, 336.

11. Ibid., 336–37.

12. Raymond Dominick, "Capitalism, Communism, and Environmental Protection: Lessons from the German Experience," *Environmental History* 3, no. 3 (July 1988): 311–32, here 312.

13. Astrid M. Eckert, "Geteilt, aber nicht unverbunden: Grenzgewässer als deutsch-deutsches Umweltproblem," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 62, no. 1 (January 2014): 69–100. An English translation of Eckerts' article appears in this volume as "Divided but Not Disconnected. Transboundary Waters as a German-German Environmental Problem."

14. Huff, *Natur und Industrie im Sozialismus*, 12.

15. Eckert, "Geteilt, aber nicht unverbunden," 75.

16. Ibid., 80.

17. Ibid., 80–82.

18. Ibid., 83.

19. Ibid., 84.

20. Ibid., 91–92.

21. Ibid., 89.

22. Thomas Fleischman, "The Half-Life of State Socialism: What Radioactive Wild Boars Tell Us about the Environmental History of Reunified Germany," in Mödersheim, Moranda, and Rubin, *Ecologies of Socialisms*, 227–50, here 234.

23. Ibid., 235.

24. Rainer Karlsch and Raymond Stokes, *The Chemistry Must Be Right: The Privatization of Buna Sow Leuna Olefinverbund GmbH, 1990–2000* (Berlin: Buna Sow Leuna Olefinverbund GmbH, 2001), 38–40.

25. Fleischman, "Half-Life of State Socialism," 242.

26. Eckert, "Geteilt, aber nicht unverbunden," 76.

27. Thomas Fleischman, *Communist Pigs: An Animal History of East Germany's Rise and Fall* (Seattle, WA: University of Washington Press, 2020), 204–5.

28. Eckert, "Geteilt, aber nicht unverbunden," 97–98.

29. Ibid., 98–99.

The Cat-Pee-Smell Affair

Cross-border Odor Conflicts between the Federal Republic of Germany, the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, and the German Democratic Republic, 1976–89

BODO MROZEK AND DOUBRAVKA OLŠÁKOVÁ

While the recent sensory turn in contemporary history has increasingly dealt with images and sounds, smells have played a minor role thus far. However, foul odors connected with industrial and agricultural pollution have repeatedly led to political conflicts. Referring to the so-called *Katzendreck* (cat pee) smell, first recorded in the 1970s, the article shows that conflicts regarding smell could result in cross-border complications. For more than ten years unresolved air pollution strained relations between the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, the Federal Republic of Germany, and the German Democratic Republic. The authors analyze how smells were measured, how they were politicized against the background of the Cold War, and how they were tackled through the international cooperation fostered by the emergence of détente.

In fall 1976 a malodorous mixture of unknown composition wafted through northeastern Bavaria. It settled over urban and rural areas, crept through cracks and hatches, infiltrated barns and houses, and filled nostrils with its smell. The first reports about the adverse effects of this mixture came from the districts of Upper Franconia, the Upper Palatinate, the Sechsämterland, and the Fichtel Mountains. They told of severe physical reactions: headaches, nausea, and vomiting. Windows had to remain shut; some people even covered their faces. A term was soon agreed upon to describe the smell, which featured prominently in a June 1977 broadcast by the Bavarian television show *Jetzt red i* (Now I'm talking). Moderated by the journalist Franz Schönhuber, who would later become a prominent figure of the far right, it interviewed citizens of Wunsiedel, giving them an opportunity to voice their concerns and problems to members of the state government, who appeared as guests in the studio. When the head of the local environmental initiative vented his

anger, he received a round of applause: "A very relevant topic, Herr Schönhuber, it stinks around here, and it's put our noses out of joint! [. . .] Smells like plain old *Katzendreck* [cat pee]."[1] A hotelier from Fuchsmühl also used the word "Katzendreck," and the local newspaper *Sechsämterbote* featured it in its headline.[2]

Given that in German "Katzendreck" is normally used colloquially to refer to something to be ignored, a trifle, the affair was initially taken to be of marginal interest. Yet what was soon to enter official usage as the "cat-pee-smell affair" would later balloon into a conflict of statewide, national, interregional, and even trans- and international dimensions. For over ten years it occupied officials, local politicians, the media, scientists, parliament, diplomats, and ultimately heads of state. The title "cat-pee" is emblazoned on a great many folders that today fill archival boxes. Records of the affair can be found in administrative district offices, state archives, Stasi files, national archives, and the annals of several ministries of foreign affairs. To date, the memorably named affair has not received much attention from historians;[3] a more recent cursory article by Christoph Lorke, on the other hand, is laden with gross inaccuracies.[4] In the relevant editions, too, the scattered records—assembled and analyzed here for the first time—are mentioned only in a footnote.[5]

What applies to this affair in particular also applies to conflicts around odors more generally, at least in contemporary history.[6] They are an integral component of the urban, medical, and cultural history of older epochs,[7] in which the struggle against foul odors was waged by the most diverse means. The ancient Egyptians and the French nobility in the era of absolutism used perfumes, medieval plagues were combated through fumigation, and Prussian reformers introduced regulations on sanitation and ventilations, while the nineteenth century also saw the introduction of sewage systems and urban waste collection.[8]

A major thesis holds that, with these comprehensive *désodorisation* measures, strong odors largely disappeared from the world.[9] For Alain Corbin, for example, the deodorization attempts of earlier times reached their zenith at the turn of the twentieth century, although he acknowledges in his pioneering study of Paris that industrialization brought new olfactory problems.[10] Smells are also mentioned in the industrial history of the nineteenth century, but they play just as minor a role there as they do in environmental history.[11] The twentieth century is characterized as largely odor-neutral, or even as the century of a fragrant "reodorization."[12]

The cat-pee-smell affair casts doubt on this historical verdict on sensory matters, since it provides exemplary proof that foul smells could still play a substantial role in the late twentieth century. The example allows us to broad-

en well-known questions of environmental history, transnational history, and international relations to include those of more recent sensory history.[13] How were odors perceived sensorially, described linguistically, measured technically and medically, and ultimately combated in practice? And how were they contextualized in contemporary history—under the conditions of division, the Cold War, international cooperation, and a growing sensitivity to the regulation of anthropogenic emissions?[14] The combination of personal testimonies, media reports, and repositories of local records with those of national and international politics, as required in transnational history to tap sources in all relevant languages, also makes it possible[15] to reveal detailed connections between micro and macro history. At the heart of the affair is the formation of what cultural studies scholar J. Douglas Porteous has defined as a "smellscape": a volatile, yet sometimes persistent olfactory landscape formed by temporally and spatially occurring "smell events."[16]

Local Beginnings: "Mysterious 'Waves of Smell'" in the Borderland

Early complaints about the cat-pee-smell were recorded in the official files of the Bavarian border police stations in Selb and Rehau in the fall of 1976.[17] According to these records, the phenomenon occurred there around October 10, 1976, in the morning and evening on three consecutive days, and likewise in the vicinity of Schönwald, Schirnding, and Arzberg, as well as in Marktredwitz and Hohenberg an der Eger. Further complaints came from the municipalities of Kirchenlamitz, Töpen, Tirschenreuth, Waldsassen, and Schwarzenbach an der Saale. In February 1977 there was already talk in the local press of a "flood of complaints from eastern Bavaria" due to "mysterious waves of smell."[18] And reports also came from outside Bavaria, for example about the farmer Rudolf Brenner, who was so overwhelmed that he considered abandoning his little farm in the Fichtel Mountains: "And this despite the fact that, in view of his profession, Farmer Brenner's nose has not been pampered."[19] In this casual remark one can sense a certain disregard for the problem—an attitude soon to vanish from the media coverage. Yet it also reflects an everyday understanding of an issue that the *histoire sensible* takes very seriously: the distribution of collective sensitivities, the differing manifestations of which may coincide with topographical, cultural, and gender- or class-specific boundaries.[20]

In the case of the cat-pee-smell, complaints were raised from all sections of the population, whether urban or rural, which indicates how intense it was. It emerged under certain weather conditions, when beneath dull, foggy skies winds would carry it from an east-southeasterly direction. From early on the

Fig. 1. Map of the tri-state transborder region affected by the "cat-pee smell." Note the official border crossing points between West Germany and its socialist neighbors as well as the Bavarian State Environmental Agency station tasked with measuring air pollution.

sources of the stench were therefore suspected to lie near the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) in the neighboring German Democratic Republic (GDR) and the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (CSSR).

Despite the linguistic association with domestic pets, they certainly were not the cause of the bad smell, so the authorities tried to gain clues about the extent and origin of the problem by interviewing travelers at border crossings.[21] As it turned out, Bavarians were not the only ones wrinkling their noses. Two Czechs who fled to the FRG, a teacher from Nová Role and a forest engineer, reported that residents had been complaining about headaches and nausea to

the authorities in the CSSR as well.[22] People in the GDR were likewise suffering from the transnational stench, as noted by a retiree who regularly visited the city of Plauen in Saxony. The East Berlin Ministry of Health also received complaints about the "incredible stench from the CSSR," which had caused anxiety, sleep loss, and a "strange tautness of the skin."[23] In short, this was a cross-border "smellscape" of considerable proportions.

But humans were not the only ones at risk. According to one complaint, horses had suffered burns to their nostrils and mouths "after ingesting pollutant-impacted grass."[24] Local Bavarian politicians also complained that the problem threatened the "promising future development" of tourism and could have a detrimental effect on the timber industry owing to forest damage, as stated in a letter of complaint from Kulmbach to various federal ministries, which urgently requested "corrective action on odor emissions."[25]

Cross-border odor conflicts were not without precedent. In the winter of 1974, for example, the West Berlin authorities had already mapped a large-scale "odor wedge" several kilometers long, which had spread from the GDR to the south of the American sector and triggered symptoms similar to those caused by the cat-pee-smell a few years later—although Berliners used other attributes to describe the odor nuisance: the associations varied from "boiling glue" to "burned cabbage." At the end of the 1970s these nuisances reappeared and clouded inner-German relations for some time.[26]

Odor problems were also familiar in the German-Czech border region—that "historical region of East Central Europe outlined by environmental history."[27] Northern Bohemia had rapidly industrialized since the nineteenth century owing to its lignite deposits and was considered "the most severely devastated cultural landscape in central Europe" in the 1970s.[28] In the first half of that decade, the area affected by foul-smelling emissions was estimated at 20,800 hectares. And the saying in the Ore Mountains that "They're brewing coffee in Bohemia" came into usage no later than 1922.[29] In the mid- to late 1970s, however, the problem worsened drastically: between 1976 and 1978 alone, the Environmental Protection Department of the GDR Ministry for Environmental Protection and Water Management counted around 1,460 odor complaints.

Olfactory Soil-Air Reconnaissance: Measuring the Stench

The political sphere in the FRG was also being sensitized to odors during this time. In March 1978 the Ministry of the Interior—which had been responsible for environmental protection since 1969—received the results of a large-scale study commissioned by the federal minister for research and technology on

the "Detection and Reduction of Odor Emissions." The study was carried out in collaboration with the universities of Bochum and Düsseldorf under the direction of the Hanau-based nuclear energy company NUKEM, and aimed to "record the problems associated with the occurrence of bothersome odor emissions on a broad basis in order to prepare for the [. . .] prevention and reduction of the nuisance caused to the population."[30] The study was motivated by recent environmental protection legislation in the FRG, which paid "increased attention" to "bothersome odor emissions."[31] In this context the purpose was to determine basic facts about the function of the sense of smell and specific facts about the effects of malodors—and to argue for "odorless" nuclear power. But the authors of the study had to acknowledge the difficulty posed by an "almost total" lack of systematization, as "humans' perception and sensation of smell" and by extension their assessment of smell are complex and subjective.[32] Particular importance was therefore attached to the so-called odor detection threshold—the lowest concentration of airborne odor molecules perceived by all test subjects.[33]

From a technical standpoint, recording olfactory phenomena was extremely difficult. Although it was possible to measure the concentration of certain substances in the air using various methods such as odorimetry and gas chromatography, this quantitative analysis lacked a qualitative dimension. The authors of the study conceded that "ultimately, odor assessment is dependent on the very subjective operation of the human olfactory system as a detector."[34] Their aim was a prognostic model for odors: "to gauge the odor complaints to be expected from the population in the future" and "to obtain indications of the magnitude of the population affected and the extent of the nuisance."[35] Here, olfactory research was political preparation for the future.

Thus, the cat-pee-smell, which took on considerable proportions in terms of its spread, its intensity, and its persistence, did not come as a total surprise to politicians, even if the authors of the NUKEM study had focused only on the FRG. At first it was mainly local politicians who had to grapple with this problem. But authorities at the state level of Bavaria also became alarmed when petition after petition—from those affected, from mayors, and from district administrators—reached members of the state parliament in Munich and the Bavarian State Ministry for Regional Development and Environmental Affairs. In this regard, the ministry faced a fair amount of criticism for waiting until "the stench appeared in the newspaper" before reacting.[36]

Under pressure from these protests, the State Office for Environmental Protection took action. In order to determine the quantity and quality of the pungent odor, it performed several aerological emission measurements and initiated

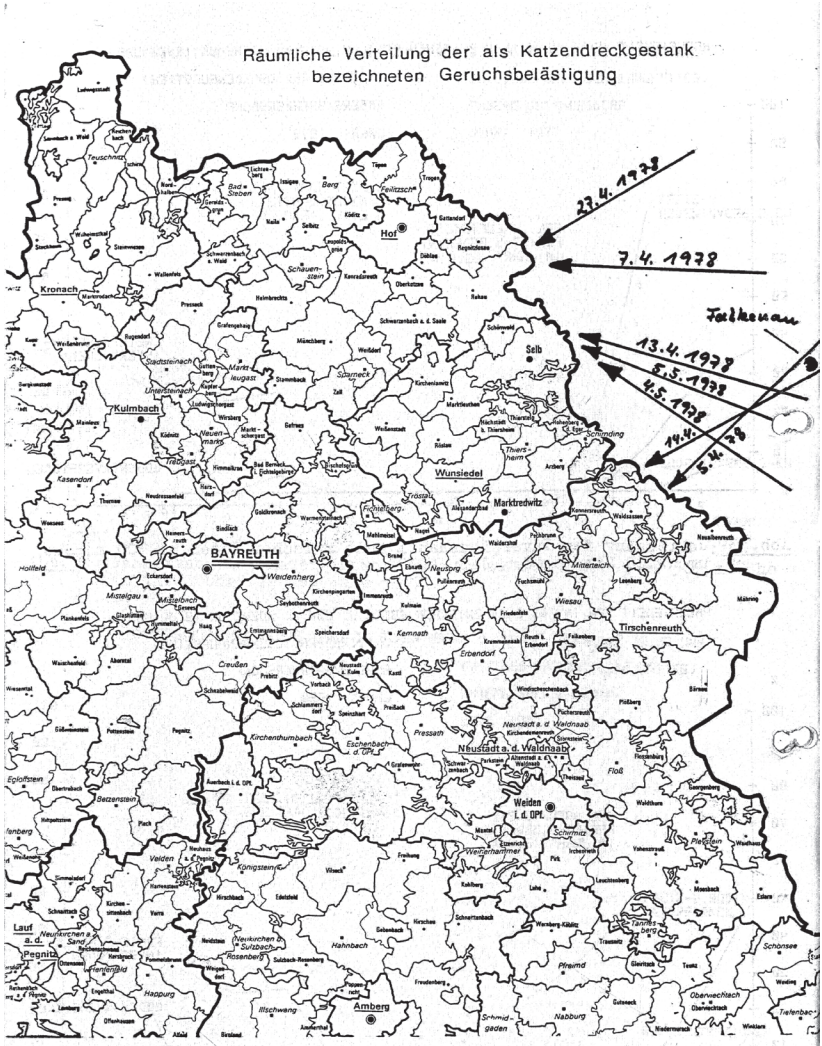

Abb. 141: Zusammenfassung aller Vorzugswindrichtungen an Tagen mit ausgeprägten großflächigen Geruchsbelästigungen

Kopie aus dem Bundesarchiv

Fig. 2. The map can be found in BArchK, B 295/7435, with the title "Spatial Distribution of the Odor Nuisance Referred to as Cat-Pee-Smell" and the explanation "Summary of all Prevailing Wind Directions on Days with Distinct Large-Scale Odor Nuisances."

olfactory aerial reconnaissance: when the cat-pee-smell appeared, an airplane flew along the Bavarian-Czechoslovak border to "determine the geographical extent of the pollution by measuring the sulfur dioxide and nitrogen concentration."[37] Mobile laboratories and measuring stations also came into operation on the sparsely built Tröstau valley floor. As these technical procedures could only determine substance concentrations, but not how humans perceived them, subjective or collective odor impressions were collected through questionnaires in affected communities and districts and evaluated centrally at the state office.

Officials charted the results of the measured data by specifying the spatial "distribution of the odor nuisance referred to as the cat-pee-smell" in the form of topographical markers and by noting this distribution by hand over the course of the day as two-dimensional diagrams on millimeter paper, with times of day on the X-axis and the sulfur dioxide values (SO_2 in mg/m^3) in Tröstau on the Y-axis. In this way, temporally defined odor events were mapped and thus visualized as "smellscapes." This was a common procedure, as imaging methods had been established as a scientific resource for centuries—in contrast to olfactory impressions, which first had to be transformed into the visual register of human perception for the purpose of objectification.[38]

The measurements showed a drastic increase in air pollution from SO_2 emissions. Furthermore, spruce tree populations suffered from significantly increased sulfur deposits: in areas affected by the cat-pee-smell, the area affected by the cat-pee-smell was more than double the size of forested areas that had been polluted by domestic sources.[39] In addition, carbon disulfide and carbon dioxide sulfide were detected in the atmosphere—"typical accompanying substances joined by even more odor-active volatile sulfur compounds," much like those produced through lignite coking.[40] Though more detailed investigations were still pending, the origins were thus suspected to be the Tisová lignite-fired power plant in the industrial area of Sokolov, in chemical plants in Vřesová[41]—both around thirty kilometers east of the Bavarian-Czechoslovak border—and a factory near the border in the GDR. In order to confront the alleged emitters, the extent and effect of the odor had to be determined more closely.

According to the measurements, in Bavaria alone the complaints covered an area of roughly 100 by 30 km, in which around 100,000 people lived.[42] Responding to a public call by the Christian Social Union (CSU) in Arzberg, 175 people reported symptoms such as insomnia, shortness of breath, heart palpitations, and inflammation of the respiratory tract.[43] In January 1980 the Council of Ministers ordered a medical investigation in order to analyze the effects of the cat-pee-smell more precisely: toxicologists from Munich University's teaching hospital—Klinikum rechts der Isar—considered the question whether not only

subjective but also "objectifiable health impairments" could be ascertained. The expert report submitted in February 1983 answered this question in the affirmative, as affected persons had experienced physiological symptoms ranging from irritation of the respiratory tract to "colonization by pathogenic germs."[44] The toxicologists identified—in addition to the "easily measurable main substance," SO_2—a mixture of various toxins in different concentrations.[45] Even if there was no acute danger, "long-term chronic toxic effects" could not be ruled out.

The study was supplemented by a "neurological report" from a psychiatric clinic, in which forty-four olfactorily impaired people were examined. In addition to vegetative disorders, their symptoms included "fatigue, sullen-depressive moods," and a "feeling of despair," which was exacerbated by the fact that their complaints were not taken seriously. The cat-pee-smell had made at least one patient "genuinely depressed, with no desire to live and suicidal tendencies."[46] The final psychiatric and toxicological diagnoses were similarly vague; however, the former did consider a link between the complaints and the odor nuisance to be "at least possible." Both reports went further than the general NUKEM study in that they examined the effects of malodors in a specific case.

Through this expert survey of the human sensorium, governments sought to outline rules for their scope of action—or rather, inaction—which was also to play a role in interstate conflict. With their repeated reference to the subjectivity of perceptions, however, the expert reports recognized the limits to normalizing smell. Pointing out that the smell remained beneath recommended levels did nothing to help those with sensitive noses.[47] At the same time, in tracing the effects of foul odors, the expert reports went beyond the purely sensory phenomena of smell to include the long-term effects on the entire human organism—and thus contributed to the establishment of an expanded understanding of smell.

"More Threatening than Nuclear War": The Cat-Pee-Smell in the Bundestag

In March 1982 the problem was also prominently discussed at the federal level. With a "minor interpellation" or written inquiry, a group of thirty-two Bundestag members from the Union (the alliance formed by the Bavarian CSU and the Christian Democratic Union, CDU) brought the cat-pee-smell to parliament.[48] Four points of the inquiry concerned the GDR: Since when and what had the federal government undertaken—its odor policy, so to speak—against the stench? Had the polluter-pays principle (*Verursacherprinzip*) been brought to bear? And could pressure be exerted through the issue of extending interest-free overdraft facilities, or was the GDR only being offered large cash

payments? The signatories rejected the latter in no uncertain terms: it would be "unacceptable for the Federal Republic of Germany to merely act once again as a generous financier who, by way of large monetary contributions, fulfills the financial obligations of the notoriously inefficient socialist centrally planned economies." The Union parties also called for decisive action against the CSSR's "transgressions of international law." It urgently recommended negotiations with the governments of both socialist neighbors—negotiations "that go beyond the scope of expert discussions, are fundamentally guided by the polluter-pays principle, and are conducted firmly and at a high political level." In other words, the Union argued the case for bringing the cat-pee-smell affair onto the diplomatic stage. The cross-border odor nuisance was thus instrumentalized in two ways in the context of the Cold War: in terms of foreign policy, Christian Democrats and Christian Socialists underlined their demand for a tougher approach toward the Eastern Bloc states; in terms of domestic policy, they criticized the social-liberal policy of détente. The press similarly took up the odor problem and even dramatized it, as illustrated by the headline "More threatening than nuclear war—doctor warns of pneumonic plague."[49]

In its response the German government stated that it was sufficiently informed about the situation in Bavaria. According to its information, the "perpetrators of the odor nuisance referred to as the 'cat-pee-smell'" were to be found in the CSSR, while the damage from SO_2 emissions was "primarily caused by the CSSR and the GDR."[50] One culprit was identified as the Volkseigener Betrieb (VEB—publicly owned enterprise) the Rosenthal Pulp and Paper Mill in Blankenstein an der Saale, where filters had already been installed in the chimneys at the insistence of the West German government in late 1980. The government said it did want to continue its efforts to enforce the polluter-pays principle, since "in interstate affairs in general—not only in relation to the GDR—[this was] only possible to a limited extent" and could "only be achieved through the dogged and patient efforts of all parties involved." It also pointed out that cross-border pollution emanated from FRG territory as well, and that the prevailing wind direction was from west to east. With regard to the CSSR, however, the West German government was prepared to elevate the cat-pee-smell issue to the ministerial level.

In Bavaria in particular, state politicians pushed for the initiation of diplomatic odor negotiations.[51] In February 1979 Environment Minister Alfred Dick (CSU) had informed the foreign minister about "extremely strong odor nuisances, some of which have led to serious physiological reactions such as vomiting and breathing difficulties among the affected population," and therefore "urgently" requested negotiations with the CSSR.[52] The Federal Minister for Foreign

Affairs, Hans-Dietrich Genscher of the Free Democratic Party (FDP), promptly replied that he had been told confidentially that the CSSR had already decided to equip "the existing plants with modern provisions against white smoke."[53] He assuaged concerns with the hope that "there will soon be some relief from the odor nuisance in Bavaria, and the problem will be solved by 1980."[54] This was an optimistic forecast that proved to be false. Bavarian Minister-President and CSU Chairman Franz Josef Strauß also became involved in the affair. He called on Federal Chancellor Helmut Schmidt and Foreign Minister Genscher to "personally" exert influence on the government of the CSSR, especially since frustration had grown significantly among the population. At this point, officials at the Ministry of the Environment were even being "attacked with insulting accusations in late-night phone calls."[55] Schmidt responded with reluctance as far as a joint border commission or any financial contribution from the federal government was concerned, but was prepared to push for expert talks.[56]

In reality, against the backdrop of the Cold War, there were few means of exerting pressure available, and hardly any legal norms or even treaties existed that spanned the Eastern and Western Blocs. Policies to prevent harmful emissions were still incipient at the national level, too: the FRG's Federal Emissions Control Act had only come into force in 1974.[57] In the GDR, measures against air pollution had been in place since 1966,[58] but they were nonbinding and had few practical consequences. In the CSSR a law on atmospheric protection had been passed in 1967, a law on water protection in 1973, and a law on forestry in 1977,[59] but according to "competent"—that is, intelligence—sources these had had "no effect."[60] It was therefore doubtful whether Czechoslovakia would commit itself to the international legal obligation of mutual consideration.[61] Various forms of cooperation against air pollution did exist between the GDR and the CSSR as part of the supranational program of the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (COMECON).[62] Between the FRG and the GDR, on the other hand, there was the Basic Treaty of 1972, whose supplementary protocol provided for "damage-prevention agreements." Internationally both the 1975 Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), which had a chapter dedicated to the environment, and the multilateral Geneva Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution of 1979 were applicable, although the latter did not come into force until 1983 and was difficult to enforce.[63]

Odor Diplomacy: The Foreign Office and the Cat-Pee-Smell

Nevertheless, as early as March 1978, the West German Foreign Office had raised the issue of the "intense odor emissions" via the embassy in Prague and

at a meeting between Genscher and President Gustáv Husák.[64] Yet these early interventions had met with resistance. Therefore, "owing to the importance of the matter," they considered summoning the ambassador of the CSSR to "explain the German point of view" to him; the German ambassador in Prague also delivered a démarche to the deputy foreign minister.[65] In an exchange with Prague's ambassador in Germany, Jiří Götz, in April 1979, State Secretary Peter Hermes "emphatically" underlined the "political significance of the emission problem for German-Czechoslovak relations."[66] Ambassador Götz, who "after initial hesitation" revealed that he was familiar with the problem from his own experience as a hunter in the forests around Karlovy Vary, eventually spoke out in favor of expert talks. And Klaus von Dohnanyi, the social democratic minister of state, once again "urgently" suggested an expert commission to the Czechoslovak prime minister Josef Korčák, because the population feared another increase in pollution as autumn approached.[67]

However, at a meeting of the environmental advisers of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe[68] in Geneva in November 1979, CSSR environmental experts still repudiated the accusation that the cat-pee-smell originated on their territory.[69] The establishment of a joint border commission, on the other hand, was fully welcomed by the CSSR. On this point the West-German Foreign Office hit the brakes, partly because cross-border emissions were "a thoroughly double-edged issue." After all, the Czechoslovak side had repeatedly complained about the discharge of toxic substances such as mercury into eastward-flowing waters such as the Röslau/Reslava or Eger/Ohře. The Foreign Office therefore urged bilateral caution.[70]

The suggestion of Federal Minister of the Interior Gerhart Baum (FDP) to include the odor problem among the tasks of a future border commission was considered "neither desirable nor feasible" by the diplomats, as the competencies of existing Bavarian-Czech institutions such as the Border Waters Commission and the Border Police Commissioners were extremely limited, and the Czechoslovak side could react with extreme sensitivity to an expansion.[71] The discussion of such transnational issues would touch upon the course of the border, which was then a subject of dispute between Bavaria and the CSSR.[72] The establishment of a joint border commission had already failed years earlier because the FRG had insisted, for reasons of Cold War politics, on a West Berlin clause. However, the CSSR had refused, stating correctly that it did not share a border with Berlin.[73]

The cat-pee-smell affair now offered the opportunity to set up a border commission after all—albeit this time without the recognition of West Berlin—and the diplomats of the CSSR did not pass it up.[74] Their persistent refusal to discuss the odor problem anywhere other than in a joint border commission was

thus motivated by larger foreign policy objectives and not solely by a desire to downplay their own harmful emissions. And the strategy paid off: at the end of 1981 the FRG's Foreign Ministry consented to the appointment of border commissioners on the national level.[75] This did not yet officially amount to the existence of a joint border commission, as there was no treaty in place to establish such a body, but the appointment of commissioners offered the chance to enter into negotiations without such an agreement.

At the first meetings of the German-Czechoslovak border commissioners in March 1982 in Cheb and in June in Regensburg, Gerhard Köhler, the ministerial councillor appointed as the commissioner for border affairs, presented documentation illustrated with odor maps.[76] The experts from the CSSR, led by negotiator Emanuel Havlík, expressed their "astonishment at the German problems." They themselves were not equipped with sufficient measurements, but after pointing to their own "strict" environmental laws, they conceded that burning at open-pit mines, especially a combine in Vřesová, were a "theoretical possibility." Owing to the scarcity of resources, however, no quick solution was to be expected—a hint at the sought-after foreign currency transfers or loans from the West.[77] Köhler therefore recommended a "cautious approach."[78]

Meanwhile, the *Frankenpost* had reported on "political maneuvering" within the commission by the Czechoslovaks.[79] The background to this was their refusal to conduct joint measurements: "for such a measure" the "conclusion of an intergovernmental agreement" would be required, "similar to how it is, for example, in the relationship between the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic and the Polish People's Republic."[80] Even so, in January 1982 a Bavarian state secretary visited Sokolov, where he saw "twelve smoking chimneys," but it "did not stink," presumably owing to the height of the chimneys, which transported their emissions deep into the countryside.[81]

In response to a letter from Bavarian parliament member Josef Grünbeck (FDP), who came from the Dux/Duchcov district, Hildegard Hamm-Brücher (FDP), minister of state at the Foreign Office, intervened in the affair.[82] She considered the Geneva Convention of 1979 to be "the suitable instrument" and referred to the Stockholm Environmental Conference of 1972, even though it had been boycotted by all Warsaw Pact states (except Romania) owing to the non-inclusion of the GDR.[83] Interior Minister Baum turned to the responsible minister for technical and investment development of the CSSR, Ladislav Šupka, and referred to an article in the Czechoslovakian weekly *Tribuna*,[84] as the Czech-language press had also reported on the odor problem.[85] Baum supplemented his detailed offer with that of a "technical-scientific exchange of experience," but did not neglect to remind him admonishingly of the necessary "contribution to

the fulfillment of the commitments entered into in the CSCE Final Act in the area of environmental protection."[86]

At the beginning of 1983, Bavarian Minister-President Franz Josef Strauß also pushed for further action at the level of international relations. He thus bypassed the Foreign Office and abruptly entered the diplomatic arena himself. He did not stop at expressing his concerns to the Czechoslovak ambassador "in a personal conversation," but directly addressed the government of the Czechoslovak Republic in January 1983. In his letter Strauß espoused the demands of the environmental movement by asking for harmful emissions "from industrial areas in the CSSR to be reduced to such an extent that our environment can be passed on intact to the next generation."[87]

Strauß's foray was not welcomed by the Czechoslovaks. On February 25, the official Czechoslovak news agency ČTK reported that the Socialist Republic firmly rejected accusations that it was responsible for tree damage in Bavaria and criticized Strauß for blaming "the CSSR for the death of Bavarian forests in the 'German environmental election campaign.'" On the other hand, in a show of unity with the West German foreign minister, the statement declared that Genscher had "only recently asserted on his visit to Prague that there was no one in the federal government who did not welcome the positive development between Bonn and Prague."[88] The agency also pointed out that the winds blew predominantly from west to east: a total of around 56,000 tons of sulfur substances had fallen on the Federal Republic from the CSSR in 1980, but more than double that amount, 129,000 tons, in the opposite direction.[89]

Even if the West-German news magazine *Der Spiegel* disapproved of the Prague "orgy of insults,"[90] these numbers could not be entirely dismissed—in the German press, the import/export balance of air pollutants was assessed as "even" overall. As one map illustrated, "nearly as much [comes] in as goes out." Around half of what fell from German chimneys "travels in all directions with the wind and clouds," with "the largest quantity of deposits" received by the GDR.[91] This calculation allegedly did not apply to Bavaria, however, which in fact suffered from sporadic winds from the east-southeast, and from the weather inversions typical of mountainous regions with minimal exchange between atmospheric strata, especially in winter.

As a matter of fact, despite all the foreign policy skirmishes, the CSSR had already faced up to this problem. As early as the 1960s, air pollution had been openly addressed in a series of publications, not only in reformist writings but also in official papers and announcements, for example by the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences and official hygienists.[92] In 1971 the Prague government had initiated and hosted a United Nations environmental conference; in 1972

the Academy in Prague had appointed an interdisciplinary council for environmental issues, and developed plans in several declarations concerning the creation of a "socialist environment" via various measures to improve air hygiene, social conditions, and the aesthetic quality of the landscape. The CSSR may have boycotted the Stockholm Conference in 1972, but it was a fully engaged participant in a number of other international environmental talks, such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization's Man and the Biosphere Programme, in 1975.[93] In 1982, however, the Prague government declared the reports by the Ecological Section of the Biological Society of the Czechoslovak Academy of Sciences on environmental problems to be virtually a state secret.[94] Nevertheless, democracy activists from Charter 77 leaked the corresponding information to the Western media in the mid-1980s.[95]

At the meetings of the border commissioners, the CSSR negotiators insisted that the expert reports from the West could not prove that there had been any health damage. They therefore refused to intervene on the basis of their counterparts' data—a strategy also used time and again by the GDR.[96] It was not until the third meeting in Prague in November 1983 that the Czechoslovaks expressed willingness "in principle" to undertake joint measurements on both sides of the border, but insisted on the need for an intergovernmental agreement in order to do so. "Suitable technical measures" were now promised as well, especially for flue-gas desulfurization, with the goal of eliminating the odor problem by 1985, for which the CSSR had provided a sum of 50 million crowns. In addition, SO_2 emissions—with an annual total of 800,000 tons—were to be reduced by 40,000 tons by retrofitting older power plants. Furthermore, it was agreed to draw up a smog alarm plan for the border region.[97] On February 2, 1983, the news agency Deutsche Depeschendienst reported the preliminary results of the meeting under the headline: "CSSR wants to diminish 'cat-pee-smell' by 1985."[98]

In the run-up to a visit by the Czechoslovak ambassador to Federal Minister of the Interior Friedrich Zimmermann (CSU), who took office in early October 1982, the embassy of the CSSR announced that the Federal Republic was exposed to far greater concentrations of pollutants from Western countries such as Belgium, France, and Britain than Bavaria was from the East.[99] Furthermore the CSSR had signed numerous international environmental cooperation agreements; for example, a "completely unique" agreement on mutual information on and control of power plants near the border had been in force between Austria and the CSSR since 1982.[100] The embassy reaffirmed the will to "eliminate the pungent odors" emanating from the plant in Vřesová. It stated that filter systems and the increased use of natural gas instead of coal had already contributed to

the reduction of emissions, and that various technological measures had been taken to prevent the escape of harmful gases.

These statements from the CSSR glaringly contradicted a report by the West German Intelligence Service.[101] The analysis of the environmental situation by the BND painted a dramatic picture. The result of the devastating "sulfur dioxide balance" was a reduced life expectancy of three to ten years and an increased incidence of skin cancer and respiratory diseases. In Severní Čechy (North Bohemia) 50 percent of the population and up to 72 percent of adults in districts near the power plants were reportedly affected. On top of that, the rate of "high-risk pregnancies" increased drastically to 50 percent of all pregnancies. There were also reports that the rain was "eating holes in clothing" (presumably due to an accident that was swept under the rug). The government responded to these conditions with bans on collecting medicinal herbs, bans on growing potatoes among other things, curfews for children, and even with forced abortions and an alleged "burial allowance"—the latter being in fact only a stand-in for government payments in the Czechoslovakian population which the report confused with real intel.[102] Overall, Bonn expected "an increase in SO_2 emissions even after 1985" in spite of all the technical measures taken by the CSSR, which—according to the concluding assessment—"is not capable on its own of solving the pressing problems of environmental protection to be expected in the future." One way out was a switch to nuclear energy, but this could "probably only [be paid for] with the help of Western loans."[103] By the time these assessments were made, the cat-pee-smell affair had gone from an annoyance to an existential problem.

In June 1984 the cat-pee-smell finally reached the highest level of international negotiations with the CSSR. In a letter Chancellor Helmut Kohl personally addressed Gustáv Husák, general secretary of the Communist Party of the CSSR since 1969 and president since 1975. With an implicit reference to the secret service report, Kohl stated that in Germany the situation had led to "severe agitation and lasting uncertainty among the population" about a "spread of the ecological collapse to our territory." Kohl offered the North Bohemian power plant operators technical know-how, while also pointing to the Munich Environmental Conference and European efforts to harmonize national emissions policies, and concluded by expressing hope for trustful cooperation.[104] Husák took four months to reply, but on October 17 he finally assured Kohl that he had "read [the letter] carefully."[105] In the spirit of the Cold War, Husák opened with a preamble-like comment on the stationing of US medium-range missiles. He then addressed the burden put on the CSSR by Western pollution, but assured Kohl that the country had "a significant and genuine interest" in

solving the complex problems of environmental protection and was prepared to cooperate at the bilateral and multilateral levels. Internal documents show, however, that there was no wish to have the foreign ministers settle the issue, as proposed by Kohl.[106] Instead, Husák called for an exchange "at the technical level," more specifically for "a meeting of competent experts from our states."[107]

In December 1984, in the context of a visit by Genscher to Prague, the first environmental talks with the CSSR at the level of government delegations were officially announced.[108] The bilateral talks were thus shifted from the border commissioners to a joint expert group on "ecological issues." Just one year later, however, their work was regarded "as finished" from the Czechoslovak perspective until the environmental agreement under discussion had been concluded.[109] Once again the Czechoslovak Republic used the cat-pee-smell to press for the conclusion of international treaties.

Malodorous Intruders and the German-German Paper War

In the meantime, negotiations between the Federal Republic and the GDR had gotten underway. In summer 1977 the West German Foreign Office had already proposed via the permanent mission a dialogue on "potential and actual cross-border environmental degradation." A joint border commission, which concerned itself with malodors from intensive livestock farming as well as pollution from power plants on either side of the border, already existed between the two German states.[110] However, the dialogue on environmental questions had run into difficulties since the opening of the Federal Environment Agency in West Berlin in 1974. In the view of the GDR, the Bonn government's choice of location violated the text of the Four Power Agreement on Berlin of 1971 (a text which, as it happens, had not been uniformly translated). The GDR protested by breaking off the follow-up negotiations on environmental protection provided for in the Basic Treaty of December 1972.[111] As a result, the GDR and the Soviet Union also urged the CSSR to refrain from any cooperation with the Federal Environment Agency.[112]

Although the Council of Ministers in East Berlin had taken the first steps toward solving the problem in the first half of the 1970s with its resolutions on air pollution control, these efforts stagnated near the end of the decade and finally gave way to a decidedly restrictive authoritarian policy in the early 1980s.[113] The decision to keep environmental issues secret, which was made on November 16, 1982, is considered a turning point in domestic politics, a "black day in GDR environmental policy." In line with this, the GDR leadership stonewalled other countries' environmental efforts as well.

The West had become aware of the problems at the Rosenthal Pulp and Paper Mill VEB in Blankenstein an der Saale at an early stage, as confidential information was available from a West German engineer whose company had repaired the chimney there.[114] In September 1980 the Federal Republic's representatives in the inner-German border commission demanded DM 162,000 in compensation for damage that had already occurred, and threatened to increase the sum to DM 500,000 if the pollution from the factory continued.[115] Various GDR ministries had been keeping track of this damage since 1976, and the paper mill had to pay fines for violations of emission guidelines. Within the GDR it was acknowledged that damage had also occurred beyond the border, primarily due to accidents in 1978/79, which had led to increased SO_2 emissions.[116] There was also a "high background exposure" to SO_2 within a radius of at least ten kilometers around the factory, which is why "the information provided by the FRG appeared to be factually justified," even if the pollution primarily affected the spruce trees in the GDR. It was therefore recommended not to reply to the Federal Republic and instead to "portray" the tree damage as mainly due to extreme changes in weather, in particular the harsh winter of 1978/79. The plan was to reject the claim for damages, as background contamination "was not the subject of the intergovernmental agreement on damage control," while at the same time internally developing further proposals for reduction.[117]

Bavarian Minister-President Strauß exerted pressure behind the scenes, as he had with the CSSR, but this time more successfully. In the run-up to Chancellor Schmidt's visit to the GDR, *Die Welt* reported under the headline "Chancellor should also talk to Honecker about foul smells" that on his way to the "Eastern stinker" Honecker, Helmut Schmidt would be carrying in his luggage the request of Strauß (his "rival for the chancellery") to solve the odor problem.[118] Strauß also turned directly to the Permanent Mission of the GDR, for while the smells had decreased by 1982, the actual SO_2 emissions had not.[119]

In the following years, however, "pungent odor pollution" kept reoccurring; on top of that, "foam flakes" fell on federal territory.[120] When the odors persisted in September 1984, authorities in the Federal Republic suspected only "low-lying sources," since the harmful emissions could not arise from chimneys "with heights of 175 m or 110 m."[121] Thus, even after five years of research into the causes, the source of the invisible nuisance had still not been clearly determined. The "persistent, very strong, and pungent odor pollution" that reoccurred in November could have been prevented by the odor reduction equipment that had already been installed by a West Berlin company, but owing to a lack of experience with GDR technology the company had installed it improperly.[122]

In the GDR, however, in a "strictly confidential" report of June 1983, an in-

terministerial working group on cross-border air pollution had frankly admitted that the paper mill in Blankenstein had caused pollution on West German territory through dust emissions.[123] An internal document listed numerous measures planned up to 1987 and beyond to reduce the harm caused by the paper mill's SO_2 and chlorine emissions.[124] Yet the GDR authorities still considered the exchange of information "inappropriate," as it could raise questions of international law and claims "with possibly major economic disadvantages," as "no internationally recognized regulations in the field of environmental protection" yet existed. Those involved also took into account incidents outside Germany, which increased their sensitivity to the problem. For example, when defoliants blew over the Berlin Wall in 1977, exposing 12,000 people to the toxic substance TCDD (also known as dioxin), comparisons were drawn with the accident in the Italian community of Seveso (the previous year).[125]

The Bavarian Ministry of the Environment, for its part, made reference to the "Trail smelter dispute," which, although it had occurred five decades previously, was "comparable to the situation in northeastern Bavaria" in terms of the conditions under which it happened, as a ministerial department head explained.[126] Cross-border SO_2 emissions from a smelter (ironworks) in the Canadian town of Trail had caused damage in the US State of Washington through emissions, for which the US had demanded compensation in 1927. Instead of invoking territorial law, according to which "a state is ostensibly allowed to do or not do whatever it wants on its own territory with no regard for neighboring states," Canada first agreed to a bilateral commission and finally, in 1935, to a court of arbitration charged with finding a solution in the interests of all parties involved.[127] The case thus made international legal history.[128]

In this context of international law, an East German lawyer caused a stir when he claimed that "air pollution that reaches 'Central Germany' from other states [represents] a violation of the sovereignty of the GDR." Here the author applied the principle of air sovereignty to airborne intruders, which in the judgment of the East German Council of Ministers went a step too far, as this interpretation, if validated, could also be applied in reverse. To make matters worse, the article had appeared in a West German magazine and had been reported on by the West German media. A discussion was therefore arranged with the author, the Halle legal scholar Reinhard Müller, since his legal interpretation was "diametrically" opposed to the "'imprecise' neighborhood principle" advocated by the GDR leadership "in all negotiations" up to that point—and for good reason, since it was determined to counter "the polluter-pays principle and the principle of liability for damages."[129]

Toward the end of 1985, CSU parliamentary group leader Theo Waigel ap-

proached the Permanent Mission of the GDR with an unusually pragmatic suggestion regarding the cat-pee-smell: since "a pungent smell" was still causing "a great deal of unpleasantness" in northern Bavaria, particularly around Hof and Lichtenberg and especially in Bad Steben, a spa town that advertised its good air, Waigel offered to connect the responsible factory "to a nearby natural gas pipeline on the territory of the Federal Republic," thereby switching its source of energy.[130] Following a bout of rather perplexed inter-ministerial correspondence in East Berlin, the decision was made to reject the initiative by Waigel, whose imputations were said to be inaccurate, although it was conceded that "the brief occurrence of certain odors, which [are] typical of pulp mills in any country," could not be entirely ruled out in the future.[131]

Agreements and Cooperation: Détente as a Catalyst for Deodorization

In the mid-1980s the discussion with both the GDR and the CSSR shifted away from the Cold War logic of confrontation and toward détente. Cooperative solutions were now sought for the odor problem, focusing on plant collaboration and scientific and financial aid. However, the issue of technical assistance was complicated by the fact that both the GDR and the CSSR had had bad experiences with West German equipment that did not meet the promised specifications.[132]

Meanwhile the governments came under further pressure. The issue was discussed in both the Bavarian state parliament and the West German Bundestag and was covered in the press, on the radio, and on television.[133] Forest dieback, smog, and acid rain were recurring themes in the media of the 1980s.[134] Citizens' initiatives had formed, such as the "Sick from the cat-pee-smell and environmental toxins" alliance in Wunsiedel and the "Northeast Upper Franconian initiative for healthy air,"[135] which exerted pressure on the state government in Munich and the federal government in Bonn. The town of Hof presented the minister-president with an environmental resolution demanding extensive measures to put an end to the "periodically recurring environmental scandal."[136] After the Greens entered the Bundestag in March 1983, the environmental movement to some extent had a parliamentary arm at its disposal. Oppositional environmental movements formed in the socialist states, particularly in the CSSR with Charter 77.[137] The party youth organizations also rebelled across political factions: in the CSSR the youth magazine *Mladý svět* and the newspaper of the communist youth organization *Mladá fronta* published several reports,[138] and in Bavaria the Junge Union (the CSU's youth organization) sent Chancellor Kohl documentation

about the paper mill's air pollution with a demand to get Erich Honecker to put a stop to the odor pollution, but also to regulate harmful emissions at home.[139]

In terms of foreign policy, however, West Germany's willingness to provide financial aid seemed to bring a solution closer. Strauß had already declared to Chancellor Schmidt in 1980 "that a German financial contribution [will have to be] included in the considerations"—a pragmatic attitude that was somewhat at odds with the stance of the CDU/CSU parliamentary group of the previous year.[140] The formation of a bilateral environmental commission was discussed in the run-up to a visit to the GDR by Interior Minister Zimmermann.[141] By July 1983, when Strauß orchestrated a billion-euro loan to the GDR, the taboo on financial aid had been lifted in the CDU/CSU as well.[142]

With a view to the CSSR, Bavarian Environment Minister Dick planned to propose the establishment of a multilateral fund at the Munich International Environmental Conference in June 1984. Through this fund the Western countries would grant financial aid to their "socialist neighbors in the East" for power plants and industrial facilities.[143] The CSSR no longer wanted to invest its money in desulfurization plants but in new nuclear power plants, as the country's lignite reserves would only last for another thirty years anyway, and a massive energy crisis was looming.[144]

Even though the two German states and the CSSR all signed the Helsinki Protocol on the reduction of transboundary sulfur emissions in 1985, reliable bilateral agreements on scientific and technical cooperation were still lacking, particularly between the Federal Republic and the CSSR.[145] The environmental agreement that the CSSR sought with the FRG was finally ratified on October 5, 1987.[146] The result of years of negotiations, the agreement was concluded just before the end of the Cold War in Europe—but it still bears its mark.[147] Shortly before it was signed, the Bundestag once again addressed the cat-pee-smell. Now it was the Social Democrat opposition and the Greens who submitted minor interpellations to put pressure on the CDU-led federal government.[148]

At around the same time as the rapprochement between the FRG and Czechoslovakia, inner-German odor abatement was also making headway. In the border commission it became clear that the "responsible authorities of the Bavarian government" were "fundamentally willing" to make a financial contribution.[149] Subsequently, they came to an agreement that odor removal was "solvable by technical means" and planned concrete measures for plant construction.[150] Yet in 1987 it was still proving technically difficult to identify odors, because the "relevant technology and correspondingly sensitive measuring techniques [were] not available in the FRG either." Rather, the model used was the blanket capture and incineration of all emissions in a collection pipe. This had been carried out

on a trial basis in a comparable plant in Stockstadt in Lower Franconia, which "largely eliminated" the plant's odor pollution. In order to achieve comparable results in the GDR, new technical components such as corrosion-resistant pipelines or fans were needed, which could be produced there but were "not part of economic planning."[151]

Plainly stated—as put bluntly in an internal memo by the head of the GDR delegation, Volkmar Fenzlein—this meant securing "the highest possible participation by the FRG in odor removal."[152] The inclusion of a West Berlin clause in the inner-German agreements was considered a red line.[153] Furthermore, domestic political sensitivities were to be taken into account. The main issue here was the elimination of low-lying chlorine emissions. While these did not spread across the border, they attracted "increased attention" from paper mill employees and local residents for "environmental and health reasons." It was therefore necessary to "put paid to perceptions that priority is being given to the implementation of measures in which the FRG has an interest."

In the summer of 1988, GDR Foreign Minister Fischer ramped up the implementation of the "odor removal project."[154] A year earlier the Bavarian State Office for Environmental Protection had provided the GDR with analyses of air samples from the area around the Rosenthal Pulp and Paper Mill, which detected acetic acid "as the odor-intensive component."[155] The plans had been preceded in March by a visit to Blankenstein by the joint border commission, during which West German representatives were able to inspect the notorious areas of the VEB for the first time and sniff around, so to speak.[156] "In keeping with the international trend toward the reduction of odor pollution typical of pulp mills and of chlorine emissions," the East German side showed itself open in principle to the financial assistance offered by the Bavarian government in May 1987.[157] In the meantime sensitivity to this problem in the GDR had grown to the point that the Ministry for State Security (MfS) collected information about odor pollution from the CSSR in order to press the government of their socialist ally for a solution.[158] For years the Ministry for Environmental Protection and Water Management of the GDR had already been receiving data from its own measuring stations, which were ordered to investigate odor pollution in the southern districts, including Fichtelberg, Marienberg, Zwickau, and Aue. Here, too, the "long-distance transportation" of odors from the "North Bohemian Basin" and especially from the plant in Vřesová was considered "significant."[159]

An expert report on the paper mill by the Bavarian Technischer Überwachungsverein (TÜV—Technical Control Board) estimated the cost of the necessary remedial measures to be between DM 8 and 11.4 million.[160] The West German government agreed to contribute DM 7.6 million, half of which would

be paid by Bavaria.[161] Payments of less than DM 8 million were still "out of the question" for the GDR in early 1989, although the negotiators were still hoping to conclude the treaty by the end of the year.[162] But owing to the events of 1989/90, the contract they had already drafted was rendered obsolete. Nonetheless, the unification treaty insisted on an "obligatory remediation of pollution" for plants on GDR territory, and some cooperation efforts did bear fruit in the long term.[163] While many plants in the former GDR had to be closed owing to their emissions, the paper mill in Blankenstein was auctioned off in 1994 to a Canadian investor by the Treuhandanstalt (the agency set up to privatize East German enterprises) and continues to operate—for the most part odor-free—to this day.[164] Some odor-emitters from the former CSSR that became notorious in the affair, such as the Tisová I plant, were modernized with German money well after 1989.[165]

And the cat-pee-smell? It had by no means blown over, even if the currently available records end around 1989/90. In late January 1997 a CDU representative brought it up again in the Bundestag because the smell had returned—this time in the Ore Mountains, however, which now lay inside the "new federal states."[166] The state secretary assigned to the issue gave a well-known response to this well-known question. He explained that the responsible federal minister had commissioned experts to propose how the stench in the Ore Mountains could "be quickly, durably, and substantially reduced." Little had changed besides the nationality and job title of the interlocutor: now they were dealing with the environment minister of the Czech Republic.[167] And the federal minister handling the affair had a new name: Angela Merkel.

Conclusion and Epilogue

In the cat-pee-smell affair, industrial odors and their impact on humans were prominently debated and politicized in a variety of ways. The realization that everyone, regardless of origin and convictions, breathes the same air—which has since solidified into a familiar adage—became a matter of trans- and international politics at the FRG-GDR-CSSR trijunction. The sources show that it was initially pressure from below that turned the stench into an issue of intense concern for the political and diplomatic leaders of three different countries. In the ten years between 1976 and 1986, international contact was made forty-eight times between the Federal Republic and the CSSR alone, on occasion every two months.[168] In terms of international relations, agreements—whether they already existed or had to be negotiated—were of central importance, although it was often the case that nonbinding multilateral treaties were no

guarantee of solutions. Only sustained pressure from civil society led to concrete deodorization measures. The prerequisite for such action was the ability to measure the sense of smell, yet this proved difficult. Although there were guidelines available for harmful components in the air, the subjective perception of these components largely eluded objectification.

The role played in this by the term "cat-pee-smell" is an ambivalent one. For one thing, it identified malodors as a central problem for the human sensorium and pointed to the outstanding importance of the sense of smell. Hence this affair is in keeping with odor conflicts of older epochs, especially the nineteenth century, when the first attempts were made to arrive at a systematic standardization of sensory perceptions. The expert reports and measurement data produced in the cat-pee-smell affair were based on such attempts and continued the trend toward the establishment of standard values that legitimized political intervention.[169] In the commissions, agreements, and collaborations, one can also see a move away from early smokestack diplomacy[170] toward a more comprehensive "environmental foreign policy" and supranational structures.[171] At the same time, other terms came into usage in the 1980s to describe the substances (especially SO_2) measured in the air: smog, acid rain, and forest dieback.[172]

The curious label thus also fulfilled the role of a semantic demarcation: under the trivializing label "cat-pee," environmental problems could be addressed without being linked too closely to contentious issues of the Green movement. It was not until the 1980s that the sensory problem was increasingly subsumed under the more abstract concept of the environment, which differentiated and established itself as a field of national and international politics at around the same time. Previously, in the context of the Cold War, the environment had often been deliberately exterritorialized by all sides.

In the GDR of the 1980s, air pollution and industrial odors were presented as failures of the state in petitions and complaints as well as by environmental initiatives. In the CSSR the opposition, especially Charter 77, developed an environmental policy agenda that included foul smells. The ecological situation in Severní Čechy was furthermore the subject of demonstrations in Teplice in the first days of November 1989 under the slogan "We can't breathe," with its double meaning. This was followed by the mass demonstration in Prague on November 17, 1989, which heralded the end of state socialism and led the environmental activist Bedřich Moldan to become the first Czech minister of the environment.[173] It should not be overlooked in this regard that Western states such as the FRG had homemade odor problems that detrimentally affected their neighbors. This was evident in the Ruhr and Saar, in the smog alarms of the industrial centers and population centers on the Isar, Main, Spree, and Elbe, and in

numerous local conflicts concerning harmful emissions from individual industrial and commercial enterprises, but also, and above all, in emissions resulting from mass consumption and mass automobility.[174] Both were considerably higher in the societies of the Western world than in the socialist economies of scarcity.

In conclusion it should therefore be noted that industrial odors were by no means a unique feature of the Eastern Bloc, even if the authoritarian regimes of the East reacted less flexibly to complaints, owing to a lack of democratic accountability, or were unable to react at all, as was often the case, owing to the lack of innovation and foreign currency typical of late socialism. For the GDR and the CSSR, however, the odor affair offered a welcome opportunity to renegotiate foreign policy issues and obtain foreign currency for plant modernization. For the liberal-democratic FRG and the Free State of Bavaria, it was about eliminating problems, but also about the economic involvement of German companies and their commitment to nuclear power.

Taken together, the late 1970s and the 1980s—the period when the cat-pee-smell affair emerged—thus appear to have been a time in which the odor conflicts of the twentieth century reached a high point in the sense of a new sensory shock.[175] With the introduction of filters, catalyzers, and a gradual switch to nuclear power, natural gas, and, all too hesitantly, renewable energy sources, as well as the "pollution outsourcing" that followed the relocation of industry to other regions of the world, emissions in Europe lost their pungency in a literal sense but by no means disappeared, certainly not on a global scale. The fact that in this part of the world they are no longer immediately perceptible to the senses but often become apparent only in terms of their aftereffects—and therefore no longer immediately trigger protests that put governments under pressure—has already been demonstrated, one might argue, by climate change as a central problem of the twenty-first century.

The cat-pee-smell has not vanished entirely. A current travel guide mentions it as a kind of negative attraction: although the facilities have mostly been modernized, people in Saxony still complain "about odor nuisances ('cat-pee-smell') and increased concentrations of air pollutants [. . .] from Bohemia during weather inversions (in autumn and winter)."[176] The *Sächsische Zeitung* reported in 2018 that scientists had already been busy tracking down the origin "for two years." Prompted by the publication of the original German article, the German Hygiene Museum in Dresden devoted a section of its 2025 special exhibition on the topic "air" to the cat-pee-smell.[177] Analogous to Barbara Tuchman's definition of contemporary history as history that "is still smoking," the cat-pee-smell affair is history that still smells.[178]

Notes

Translation by Charlie Zaharoff

1. Bayerischer Rundfunk (hereafter BR), Main Department Archives, Documentation, Research, "Jetzt red i—Wunsiedel," July 27, 1977 (TC 00:22:30–00:23:49). The underlying research for this paper was supported by the Czech Science Foundation (GAČR), Research Grant GA22–01953S, and by the German Research Foundation, Project 446388013. About Schönhuber, see Moritz Fischer, *Die Republikaner: Die Geschichte einer rechtsextremen Partei 1983–1994* (Göttingen: Wallstein, 2024).

2. "Katzendreckgestank," *Sechsämterbote (Ausgabe Wunsiedel)*, June 23, 1977; "Fuchsmühler Hotelier beschwerte sich bei Chnoupek über Katzendreckgestank," *Hofer Anzeiger/Frankenpost*, April 15/16, 1978.

3. Tobias Huff, *Natur und Industrie im Sozialismus: Eine Umweltgeschichte der DDR* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015), 219–41; Astrid M. Eckert, *West Germany and the Iron Curtain: Environment, Economy, and Culture in the Borderlands* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019), 143–58.

4. The "subject of smell" does not "always have transnational-European dimensions"; German-German discussions about the cat-pee-smell affair did not break off "with the fall of the wall or else when the GDR demanded financial subsidies from the Federal Republic of Germany" (to the contrary); there was no joint "economic commission" of the CSSR and the Federal Republic (none existed in the Cold War); the letter by "Franz-Josef" (*sic*) Strauß referenced from the "PAA, PA" (*sic*) can hardly convey the view of the Foreign Office; and this referenced letter of 1980 is addressed not to "Helmut Kohl" but to chancellor Helmut Schmidt: Christoph Lorke, "'Pestialischer Gestank' und 'penetrante Gerüche': Geruchsgeschichtliche Annäherungen an das geteilte Deutschland," *WerkstattGeschichte* 31, no. 87 (2023): 57–70, here 67–68.

5. *Akten zur Auswärtigen Politik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland 1983*, vol. 1, *1. Januar bis 30. Juni 1983*, ed. Tim Geiger, Matthias Peter, Mechthild Lindemann (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2014), 151n26, 162n28; *Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik*, 7th ser., vol. 1, *1. Oktober 1982 bis 31. Dezember 1984*, ed. Annette Mertens (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2018), 360n6.

6. See the explorative account of Camille Grapa, "Une histoire de l'Allemagne de l'Est par l'olfaction," Regards sur la RDA et l'Allemagne de l'Est: Un carnet des germanistes du CEREG, Université Paris Nanterre et Université Sorbonne Nouvelle, April 1, 2023, https://allemagnest.hypotheses.org/3170#more-3170.

7. Constance Classen, David Howes, and Anthony Synnott, *Aroma*: *The Cultural History of Smell* (London: Routledge, 1994); Jonathan Reinarz, *Past Scents: Historical Perspectives on Smell* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2014); Érika Wicky, "History of Smell: What Is Yet to Be Studied?," *Senses and Society* 11, no. 3 (2016): 363–65; Mark M. Smith, *Smell and History: A Reader* (Morgantown: West Virginia University Press, 2019).

8. Stephen Halliday, *The Great Stink of London: Sir Joseph Bazalgette and the Cleansing of the Victorian Metropolis* (Stroud: Sutton, 1999); Constance Classen et al., eds., *A Cultural History of the Senses*, 6 vols., (London: Bloomsbury, 2014); William Tullett, *Smell in Eighteenth-Century England: A Social Sense* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2019); Mela-

nie A. Kiechle, *Smell Detectives: An Olfactory History of Nineteenth-Century Urban America* (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 2019).

9. Bodo Mrozek, "Die achtzehn Sinne," *Merkur* 74, no. 852 (2020): 59–66, here 65.

10. Alain Corbin, *The Foul and the Fragrant: Odor and the French Social Imagination* (Boston: Harvard University Press, 1986).

11. See for instance Franz-Josef Brüggemeier and Thomas Rommelspacher, *Blauer Himmel über der Ruhr: Geschichte der Umwelt im Ruhrgebiet 1840–1990* (Essen: Klartext, 1992), 19; Frank Uekötter, *The Age of Smoke: Environmental Policy in Germany and the United States, 1880–1970* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2009), 67–112. For an intersensory approach to the history of smoke control, see Bodo Mrozek, "From London Fog to Frankfurt Smog: Sensing Anthropogenic Weather Conditions from a Transurban Perspective in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries" (in three parts), *German Historical Institute London Blog*, April 28, 2025, https://doi.org/10.58079/13tsx.

12. This does hold true for consumer fragrances, as noted by Robert Jütte, *A History of the Senses: From Antiquity to Cyberspace* (Cambridge: Poity Press, 2005), 265–80.

13. Mark M. Smith, *A Sensory History Manifesto* (University Park: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2021); Jan-Friedrich Missfelder, "Ganzkörpergeschichte: Sinne, Sinn und Sinnlichkeit für eine Historische Anthropologie," *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur* 39, no. 2 (2014): 457–75.

14. In German language, *Emissionen* refer to solid, gaseous, liquid, or odor-emitting substances as well as wave or particle radiation; *Immissionen* refer to the effects of the former. See Michael Olsson and Dirk Piekenbrock, *Kompakt-Lexikon Umwelt- und Wirtschaftspolitik* (Bonn: Gabler, 1993), 91–92, 156.

15. Margrit Pernau, "Global History: Wegbereiter für einen neuen Kolonialismus?," *HSozKult*, accessed September 26, 2024, https://hsozkult.geschichte.hu-berlin.de/index.asp?id=572&view=pdf&pn=forum&type=artikel.

16. J. Douglas Porteous, "Smellscape," in *The Smell Culture Reader*, ed. Jim Drobnick (Oxford: Routledge, 2006), 89–106, here 92.

17. On October 10 and 19, 1976. On this and the following, see Bundesarchiv (Federal Archives) Koblenz (hereafter BArchK), B 295/7434, Documentation from the Bavarian State Office for Environmental Protection on the odor nuisance referred to as the "cat-pee-smell" occurring in the northeastern Bavarian border region.

18. "'Stinkt wie Katzendreck': Landesamt untersucht geheimnisvolle 'Duftwellen,'" *Der Neue Tag/Oberpfälzischer Kurier*, February 8, 1977.

19. "Mief über den Eisernen Vorhang stinkt Grenzbewohnern gewaltig," *Mannheimer Morgen*, May 22, 1979.

20. Bodo Mrozek, "Sensed Communities," *Merkur* 76, no. 879 (2022): 43–53.

21. Interviews were conducted, among other places, at the Schirnding border crossing. Bayerisches Hauptstaatsarchiv (hereafter BayHStA), Border Police Headquarters 631, Accounts of travelers on March 8, 1979; Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amts (hereafter PA/AA), B 42/ZA 139674, Typescript: "Bundesrepublik Deutschland: Schwefeldioxidbelastung im nordostbayerischen Grenzgebiet," n.d.

22. PA/AA, B 42/ZA 139674, Typescript: "Bundesrepublik Deutschland: Schwefeldioxidbelastung im nordostbayerischen Grenzgebiet," n.d. See also Miroslav Vaněk, *Neda-*

lo se tady dýchat: Ekologie v českých zemích v letech 1968 až 1989 (Prague: Maxdorf, 1996); Miroslav Vaněk, "Porobení přírody," in *Proč jsme v listopadu vyšli do ulic*, Toman Brod et al. (Brünn: Doplněk, 1999), 133–54; Eagle Glassheim, *Cleansing the Czechoslovak Borderlands: Migration, Environment, and Health in the Former Sudetenland* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2016), 164, 170; BayHStA, Border Police Headquarters 631, Information and survey report of the Selb Border Police: Statements of a uniformed forest engineer who fled to the FRG on June 24, 1981, in the Rehau area; the following is based on this document.

23. Quoted in Huff, *Natur und Industrie*, 219.

24. BayHStA, StK 19664, Preliminary report by the Bavarian State Office for Environmental Protection on the results of pollution measurements and bioindicator studies in the Lichtenberg area, March 12, 1980. On the effects on farm animals, cf. Eckert, *West Germany*, 143.

25. PA/AA, B 42/ZA 139674, Hans Werner Lautenschlager's note on odor nuisances in the northeastern Bavarian border region, March 6, 1979, and Hans Köstner to Hans-Dietrich Genscher, March 17, 1982.

26. Bodo Mrozek, "The Smell of the Berlin Wall: Olfactory Border Management at the Inner-European Frontier," in *Sensory Warfare in the Global Cold War: Partition, Propaganda, Covert Operations*, ed. Bodo Mrozek (University Park: Pennsylvania University Press, 2024), 147–64, here 151–55.

27. Horst Förster, Julia Herzberg, and Martin Zückert, "Umweltgeschichte(n) Ostmitteleuropas: Eine Einführung," in *Umweltgeschichte(n): Ostmitteleuropa von der Industrialisierung bis zum Postsozialismus*, ed. Horst Förster, Julia Herzberg, and Martin Zückert (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013), 1–5, here 3; in the same volume, 7–30, is the essay by Julia Herzberg, "Ostmitteleuropa im Blick: Umweltgeschichte zwischen Global- und Regionalgeschichte."

28. Horst Förster, "Raumbewertung und Kulturlandschaftswandel: Das Beispiel Nordböhmen," in Förster, Herzberg, and Zückert, *Umweltgeschichte(n)*, 83–103, here 84; see also Jana Piňosová, *Inspiration Natur: Naturschutz in den böhmischen Ländern bis 1933* (Marburg: Herder-Institut, 2017).

29. "In Böhmen kochen sie Kaffee." Quoted in Huff, *Natur und Industrie*, 81; on the data from the 1970s, see ibid., 221–22.

30. BArchK, B 228/12124, Paul-Gerhard Maurer et al., *NUKEM—315: Erfassung und Verminderung von belästigenden Geruchsemissionen*, 2 parts (Hanau: self-pub., 1978); the quote is from the unpaginated preamble. NUKEM stood for Nuklearchemie und Metallurgie GmbH.

31. Ibid., part 1, Summary, unpaginated.

32. Ibid., part 2, 34.

33. See ibid., part 1, 24.

34. Ibid., part 2, 51.

35. Ibid., part 2, Summary, unpaginated.

36. BR, Main Department Archive, Documentation, Research, "Jetzt red i—Wunsiedel," July 27, 1977 (TC 23:00–24:31).

37. In October 1977 in Tröstau and in April 1978 in Hohenberg an der Eger; BArchK,

B 295/7434, Documentation of the Bavarian State Office for Environmental Protection, 11 and table in annex.

38. For a history and critique of this procedure, see Claudia Godau and Robert Gaschler, "Wahrnehmung von Datengrafiken: Ein verzerrter Eindruck?," in *Haare hören—Strukturen wissen—Räume agieren: Berichte aus dem Interdisziplinären Labor Bild Wissen Gestaltung*, ed. Horst Bredekamp and Wolfgang Schäffner (Bielefeld: Transcript, 2015), 79–85. On the primacy of the visual or ocularcentrism in the hierarchy of the senses, see Mark M. Smith, *Sensory History* (Oxford: Berg, 2007), 9–11.

39. BArchK, B 295/7434, Documentation of the Bavarian State Office for Environmental Protection, 14. The sulfur concentration in an area of around 1,000 m^2 was more than 2,000 parts per million (ppm), while comparable maximum levels extended no further than 400 m^2. The abbreviation ppm was commonly used until 1992. See Irene Mueller-Harvey and Richard M. Baker, *Chemical Analysis in the Laboratory: A Basic Guide* (Cambridge: Royal Society of Chemistry, 2002), 41.

40. On this and the following, see BArchK, B 295/7434, Documentation of the Bavarian State Office for Environmental Protection.

41. PA/AA, B 42/ZA 139674, Bundesinnenministerium (BMI), signed Dr. Pettelkau, to AA, Dept. 414, regarding odor nuisances in the northeastern Bavarian border region, February 20, 1980, and BMI, signed Dr. Pettelkau, to AA, regarding odor nuisance in the northeastern Bavarian border region, March 7, 1980. The Barvy a Laky (Paints and Varnishes) plant produced printing ink, zinc white, spray plaster, PVC coatings, and aerosols; the Sokolov Chemical Works produced crude calcium cyanamide, borax, soda, ferrochromium, sodium chlorate, and various acids.

42. BayHStA, Minn 111158, Staatsministerium für Landesentwicklung und Umweltfragen (hereafter StMLU), Odor nuisances in the northeastern Bavarian region, here: Implementation of the Council of Ministers' decision of January 15, 1980—Medical investigations, January 29, 1980.

43. BayHStA, Minn 111158, Call by the CSU Arzberg for reports from people who feel that their health has been damaged or impaired by air pollution "smelling of cat pee," February 1980.

44. StMLU, *Medizinische Untersuchungen über die Zusammenhänge von Immissionsbelastungen und gesundheitliche Beeinträchtigungen im nordostbayerischen Raum: Toxikologische Abteilung der II. Medizinischen Klinik und Poliklinik rechts der Isar der Technischen Universität München, Leitender Arzt: Priv. Doz. Dr. med. Max von Clarmann* (Munich: self-pub., 1983), 58.

45. Including dimethylnaphthalene, halogenated hydrocarbon, carbon dioxide sulfide, monomethylnaphthalene, and various sulfur compounds.

46. BayHStA, Minn 111158, Psychiatric Clinic and Polyclinic "rechts der Isar" of the Technical University of Munich, Director Prof. Dr. Hans Lauter: Neurological evaluation, November 26, 1982.

47. Jürgen Link, *Versuch über den Normalismus: Wie Normalität produziert wird*, 5th ed. (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2013). For an English explanation of his term *Normalismus*, see Anne Mihan and Thomas O. Haakenson, "Standard Deviation: An Interview

with Jürgen Link; Modernity and the Reign of Normalism," *Cabinet: A Quarterly Magazine of Art and Culture*, no. 15 (Fall 2004), 83–87.

48. Bundestags-Drucksache (hereafter BT-Drs.) 9/1527, March 30, 1982, Cross-border air contamination from the GDR and CSSR: Minor interpellation by the CDU/CSU; the quotes can be found on 1–3, https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/09/015/0901527.pdf.

49. Dr. Hans Fersch, the spa physician at Bad Steben, was quoted to this effect; "Bedrohlicher als Atomkrieg—Arzt warnt vor Lungenpest," *Frankenpost*, December 2, 1982.

50. BT-Drs. 9/1569, April 13, 1982, Reply of the West German government—Cross-border air contamination from the GDR and CSSR, https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/09/015/0901569.pdf.

51. PA/AA, B 42/ZA 139674, State Parliament Member Peter Jacobi (FDP) to Hans-Dietrich Genscher, February 14 and March 27, 1979.

52. PA/AA, B 42/ZA 139674, Telex from the StMLU to Hans-Dietrich Genscher, February 20, 1979.

53. This had previously been confidentially reported to border officials by West German mining specialists who had demonstrated a flue-gas desulfurization technique in the CSSR. BayHStA, Border Police Headquarters 631, Accounts of travelers on March 8, 1979.

54. PA/AA, B 42/ZA 139674, Hans-Dietrich Genscher to Alfred Dick, n.d.

55. PA/AA, B 42/ZA 139674, Franz Josef Strauß to Helmut Schmidt, January 25, 1980, and to Hans-Dietrich Genscher, March 27, 1979, and January 30, 1980.

56. BArchK, B 136/30460, Helmut Schmidt to Franz Josef Strauß, March 14, 1980.

57. *Bundesgesetzblatt* (hereafter *BGBl.*) 1974, part 1, March 15, 1974, 721–43: Gesetz zum Schutz vor schädlichen Umwelteinwirkungen durch Luftverunreinigungen, Geräusche, Erschütterungen und ähnliche Vorgänge (Bundes-Immissionsschutzgesetz).

58. Bundesarchiv Berlin (hereafter BArchB), DC 20/I/4/1412, fol. 196, Decision on measures to prevent air pollution—excerpt, October 1, 1966, and *GBl. GDR*, 1973, part 1, January 17, 1973, 157–62: Fünfte Durchführungsverordnung zum Landeskulturgesetz—Reinhaltung der Luft.

59. Zdeněk Madar, *Právo socialistických států a péče o životní prostředí* (Prague: Academia, 1983); Barbara Rhode, ed., *Air Pollution in Europe: A Collection of Country Reports on Air Pollution and National Policies*, vol. 2, *Socialist Countries* (Vienna: European Coordination Centre for Research and Documentation in the Social Sciences, 1988).

60. BArchK, B 295/7436, Classified record of the Unterabteilung Technik und Wissenschaft (TWI—Technology and Science Sub-Division) of the West German Intelligence Service, for official use only: Environmental situation in the CSSR: Attempt at a summary of facts and impressions, March 8, 1982.

61. BArchK, B 295/7433, Ministerialrat (ret.) Jäger to Ministerialrat Buchner, regarding odor nuisance from the CSSR in the northeastern Bavarian border region, February 1, 1982.

62. PA/AA, B 42/ZA 109272, Environmental Protection of the GDR within the framework of COMECON, confidential—for official use only, October 16, 1971, 12. See Huff, *Natur und Industrie*, 225–41; A. V. Leont'eva, "New Aspects in the Structure and Jurisdiction of the COMECON regarding the Protection of the Environment," *Pace Environmental Law Review* 7, no. 1 (Fall 1989): 179–83.

63. *Europa-Archiv* 1972, D 68–76: "Supplementary Protocol to the Treaty on the Basis for Relations between the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic," December 21, 1972. Point 5 of the Helsinki Final Act regulated, among other things, "the abatement of air pollution, desulfurization of fossil fuels and exhaust fumes; the abatement of pollution by heavy metals, particulates, aerosols, nitrogen oxides, in particular those emitted by means of transport, power plants, and other industrial facilities [. . .] including the dispersion of air pollutants over long distances," last accessed September 30, 2024, https://www.osce.org/files/f/documents/6/e/39503.pdf. The Geneva Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution was signed in the framework of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe (UNECE) and came into force on March 16, 1983; protocol in UNECE, *Updated Handbook for the 1979 Convention on Long-Range Transboundary Air Pollution and Its Protocols* (New York: United Nations, 2015), 15–21.

64. "Minister Dr. Dohnanyi beantwortet Anfrage wegen Katzendreck-Geruchs," *Hofer Anzeiger/Frankenpost*, April 24, 1978. First contact was successfully made in 1976; PA/AA, B 38/ZA 139248, Environmental collaboration with CSSR, here: Chronology of previous efforts regarding the problem of air pollution in northeastern Bavaria, March 19, 1986.

65. PA/AA, B 42/ZA 139674, Dept. 4, Note of the speaker, Legation Councillor Dr. Hoffman, for the state secretary regarding odor nuisance in the northeastern Bavarian border region, April 1979, and speaking notes, goal of discussion: Agreement on expert talks or Czechoslovakian pledge to end the odor emissions, March 7, 1979.

66. PA/AA, B 42/ZA 139674, Note, April 27, 1979, regarding discussion of State Secretary Hermes with Ambassador Götz about odor nuisance in the Bavarian border region on April 26, 1979.

67. PA/AA, B 42/ZA 139674, Klaus von Dohnanyi to Josef Korčák, August 1979.

68. Sophie Lange, "Die Genfer Konvention der UN ECE von 1979 über weiträumige Luftverschmutzung," in *Themenportal Europäische Geschichte*, 2022, https://www.europa.clio-online.de/essay/id/fdae-98763.

69. PA/AA, B 42/ZA 139674, Telex (encrypted) regarding odor nuisance in the northeastern Bavarian border region, November 13, 1979.

70. PA/AA, B 42/ZA 139674, AA (internal) to Dept. 414, October 31, 1980.

71. The responsible department head in the Foreign Office, Renate Finke-Osiander, feared that an expansion of these institutions' competencies could "call their existence into question," considering that the CSSR only "tolerated [them] with skepticism." PA/AA, B 42/ZA 139674, AA (internal) to Dept. 414, regarding treatment of the problem in the existing Bavarian-Czech Border Waters Commission, December 3, 1979.

72. Archiv des Außenministeriums der Tschechischen Republik (hereafter AMZV), Territorial-Department (hereafter TO-T) 1980–89, Country: FRG, inv. no. 016 812/80–4, Tajné—NSR—Návštěva ministra zahraničí H.-D. Genschera v ČSSR/návrh do PÚVKSČ [Visit of Foreign Minister H.-D. Genscher in the CSSR/Suggestion to the Presidium of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia (hereafter PÚVKSČ)].

73. Documents from January 1978 are found in: Národní archiv (Czech National Archive, hereafter NAČR), PÚVKSČ, Gustáv Husák file, box 1245 (415), inv. no. 11615; additionally NAČR, PÚVKSČ, file P27/81, inv. no. 19, Úprava spolupráce na státních hranicích

mezi ČSSR a NSR [Modalities of cooperation on the state border between the CSSR und FRG], December 8, 1981; PA/AA, B 42/ZA 139674, State of affairs on the odor nuisance in the northeastern Bavarian border region, March 7, 1979, and Dietrich von Brühl's assessment commissioned by the federal foreign minister, January 19, 1981.

74. NAČR, PÚVKSČ, file P27/81, inv. no. 19, Úprava spolupráce na státních hranicích mezi Československou socialistickou republikou a Německou spolkovou republikou [Modalities of cooperation on the state border between the CSSR und FRG], December 8, 1981.

75. PA/AA, B 42/ZA 139674, Note regarding odor nuisance in the northeastern Bavarian-Czech border region, here: Treatment of the problem through border commissioners, December 22, 1981.

76. BArchK, B 295/7435, Dept. P II 1 (Gerhard Köhler), November 15, 1982, regarding German-Czechoslovak border commissioners, here: third meeting on November 23/24, 1982.

77. BArchK, B 295/7434, Report of Dr. Pettelkau about the official trip to Regensburg, June 24–25, 1982.

78. BArchK, B 295/7434, Gerhard Köhler to "Herrn Minister," regarding German-Czechoslovak border commissioners, July 15, 1982.

79. "Hart in der Sache," *Frankenpost*, March 6/7, 1982.

80. PA/AA, B 42/ZA 139674, Emanuel Havlík to Gerhard Köhler, September 29, 1982 (translation from Czech into German).

81. "Staatssekretär Fischer vom bayerischen Umweltministerium: Thema Katzendreckgestank wird Völkerrechtsfrage," *Frankenpost*, January 22, 1982.

82. BArchK, B 295/7434, Hildegard Hamm-Brücher to Josef Grünbeck, August 11 [no year].

83. Jiří Janáč and Doubravka Olšáková, "On the Road to Stockholm: A Case Study of the Failure of Cold War International Environmental Initiatives (Prague Symposium, 1971)," *Centaurus* 63, no. 1 (February 2021): 132–49; Astrid Mignon Kirchhof, "East Germany's Fight for Recognition as a Sovereign State: Environmental Diplomacy as Strategy in Cold War Politics," in *Nature and the Iron Curtain: Environment Policy and Social Movements in Communist and Capitalist Countries, 1945–1990*, ed. Astrid Mignon Kirchhof and J. R. McNeill (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 2019), 219–32, here 230; Thorsten Schulz-Walden, *Anfänge globaler Umweltpolitik: Umweltsicherheit in der internationalen Politik (1969–1975)* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 2013), 177–86.

84. BArchK, B 295/7435, Embassy of the FRG, Prague, to the Foreign Office, regarding environmental stress in the CSSR, April 27, 1983.

85. Including even the central organ of the Communist Party; "Der Schutz der Reinheit der Luft. Geldstrafen sind nur eine nachträgliche Lösung," *Rudé Právo*, June 1, 1983. A German translation can be found in BArchK, B 295/7436.

86. More concretely, Baum offered information on the "large-scale technical implementation of the dry-additive process in lignite-fired power plants or low-pollutant combustion using the fluidized bed process."

87. A portion is quoted in "Unser Land wird bald unbewohnbar," *Der Spiegel*, March 20, 1983.

88. Quoted in a report by the (West) German Press Agency of February 25, 1983: "CETEKA [*sic*]: Bundesrepublik belastet CSSR-Umwelt zweimal so stark."

89. In a later press report (BArchK, B 295/7436, n.d.), the embassy of the CSSR in Bonn gave widely differing numbers for 1980: 4,800 tons of sulfur compounds from the CSSR on Germany and 10,800 tons from the Federal Republic on the CSSR.

90. "Unser Land wird bald unbewohnbar," *Der Spiegel*, March 20, 1983; see also "Grausame Werte: Im nordostbayrischen Grenzland erreicht die Luftverschmutzung alarmierende Ausmaße—der Dreck kommt aus allen Himmelsrichtungen," *Der Spiegel*, May 20, 1984.

91. BArchK, B 295/7435, Newspaper excerpt with map of air pollution: Where from—where to?, n.d.

92. On this and the following, see Eagle Glassheim, "Building a Socialist Environment: Czechoslovak Environmental Policy from the 1960s to the 1980s," in Kirchhof and McNeill, *Nature and the Iron Curtain*, 137–50, here 140–42.

93. Doubravka Olšáková, "The International Biological Program in Eastern Europe: Science Diplomacy, Comecon and the Beginnings of Ecology in Czechoslovakia," *Environment and History* 24, no. 4 (November 2018): 543–67; Doubravka Olšáková and Giulia Rispoli, "Science and Diplomacy around the Earth: From the Man and Biosphere Programme to the International Geosphere-Biosphere Programme," *Historical Studies in the Natural Sciences* 50, no. 4 (September 2020): 456–81.

94. D263—December 12, 1983: "Rozbor ekologické situace v Československu zaslaný s průvodním dopisem předsedovi vlády ČSSR L. Štrougalovi" [Analysis of the ecological situation in Czechoslovakia, submitted with an accompanying letter to the chairman of the government of the CSSR, L. Štrougal], in *Charta 77: Dokumenty 1977–1989*, vol. 1, ed. Blanka Císařovská and Vilém Prečan (Prague: Pulchra, 2007), 561–78, and "Unser Land wird bald unbewohnbar," *Der Spiegel*, March 20, 1983.

95. Glassheim, "Building a Socialist Environment," 148; Doubravka Olšáková, "Environmental Journalism? Radio Free Europe, Charter 77 and the Making of an Environmental Agenda," *Environment and History* 28, no. 2 (May 2022): 203–27; Vaněk, *Nedalo se tady dýchat*. Also Vera and Donald Blinken Open Society Archives at the Central European University, Budapest (hereafter HU/OSA), 300-8-47-77-14, Charter 77 on Ecological and Social Devastation in North Bohemia, in: Situation Report: Czechoslovakia, August 9, 1983, 11–12.

96. BArchK, B 295/7435, Press release of the Commissioners of the Federal Republic for Border Affairs to the CSSR at the third meeting with the border commissioners of the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, November 25, 1982.

97. BArchK, B 295/7435, Transcript of the third meeting of the German-Czechoslovak border commissioners on November 23/24, 1982, in Prague.

98. "Eine gute Meldung aus Prag: Schluß mit Katzendreck-Gestank?," *Frankenpost*, November 27, 1982; "Umwelt-Staatssekretär: 'Sehr erfreulich,'" *Frankenpost*, November 30, 1982.

99. BArchK, B 295/7436, Report of the press department of the CSSR embassy in Bonn: Statement of the CSSR on the problem of environmental pollution in Europe, n.d. [early September 1983].

100. On Austrian-Czechoslovak environmental relations, see Kateřina Vnoučková, "The Iron Curtain Could Stop People, But Not the Environment," *Der Donauraum* 59, no. 1/2 (July 2019): 47–58.

101. BArchK, B 295/7436, Classified record TWI, March 8, 1982. In addition to this, HU/OSA 300-8-47-74-23, The Environment in Czechoslovakia—A Steady Deterioration, in: Situation Report: Czechoslovakia, September 22, 1980, last accessed September 30, 2024, https://hdl.handle.net/10891/osa:8d6946bc-752f-43e3-add3-455d81dd0b02. Assessments by the opposition came to similar conclusions in 1983. See D251—July 19, 1983: "Dopis předsednictvu vlády ČSSR o ekologických, zdravotních a sociálních problémech Severočeského kraje s přílohou" [Letter to the presidency of the government of the CSSR about the ecological, health, and social problems of the North Bohemian region with an appendix], in Císařovská and Prečan, *Charta 77*, vol. 1, 531–36.

102. BArchK, B 295/7436, Classified record TWI, March 8, 1982. This probably refers to the subsidy of 2,000 crowns paid out around 1982 to residents of the most heavily affected Bohemian regions, which was derided by the population as a "burial allowance" but taken at face value in the secret service report, which raises doubts about its trustworthiness as a source. On the "burial allowance," see Glassheim, "Building a Socialist Environment," 149.

103. BArchK, B 295/7436, Classified record TWI, March 8, 1982.

104. NAČR, PÚVKSČ, Gustáv Husák file, box no. 1246 (415), inv. no. 11652, Helmut Kohl to Gustáv Husák, July 3, 1984 (courtesy translation into Czech); in BArchK, B 136/30460, several drafts of this letter can be found.

105. PA/AA, MfAA/ZR 2230–90, Gustáv Husák to Helmut Kohl, October 17, 1984.

106. Relevant materials can be found in NAČR, PÚVKSČ, Gustáv Husák file, box no. 1246 (415), inv. no. 11652.

107. PA/AA, MfAA/ZR 2230–90, Gustáv Husák to Helmut Kohl, October 17, 1984.

108. AMZV, TO-T 1980–89, Country: FRG, inv. no. 010 401/85–4, "Informace o průběhu a výsledcích oficiální návštěvy ministra zahr. věcí NSR H.-D. Genschera v ČSSR" [Information about the course and results of the official visit of FRG Foreign Minister H.-D. Genscher to the CSSR], December 18–20, 1984; BArchK, B 295/7438, Press release, December 11, 1984: "Bundesminister Zimmermann: 'Sichtbares Zeichen für konstruktive Lösung bilateraler Umweltprobleme'; Erste Umweltgespräche mit der CSSR auf Ebene von Regierungsdelegationen."

109. BArchK, B 295/7438, Dept. U II 2, regarding West German-CSSR cooperation on environmental protection, here: Third expert meeting of the "Ecological Questions" group, November 11, 1985.

110. For instance dust and soot precipitation from the Harbke power plant and a planned power plant near Stendal (GDR), as well as a coal-fired power plant in West Berlin. PA/AA, MfAA/ZR 2230–90, Foreign Minister Oskar Fischer to Minister for Coal and Energy Klaus Siebold, August 12, 1977, and his answer of August 30, 1977. The commission addressed the smell caused by cattle breeding on June 3, 1982; MfAA/ZR 2230–90, deputy minister for agriculture, forestry, and the food economy to Erwin Neu, June 9, 1982 (receipt), and Kurt Nier to Deputy Minister for Environmental Protection and Water Management Thomas, May 15, 1984.

111. Hermann Wentker, "Bundespräsenz in West-Berlin," in *Hauptstadtanspruch und symbolische Politik: Die Bundespräsenz im geteilten Berlin 1949–1990*, ed. Michael C. Bienert, Uwe Schaper, and Hermann Wentker (Berlin: be.bra wissenschaft, 2012), 241–62, here 255–56; Eckert, *West Germany*, 137–38.

112. NAČR, PÚVKSČ, Gustáv Husák file, box 1237, inv. no. 11524, Ministry of Foreign Affairs: Information on the stance of the Soviet Union toward the establishment of an environmental agency in West Berlin, July 1974.

113. Huff, *Natur und Industrie*, 241; this is also the source of the following quotation.

114. BayHStA, StK 19664, Findings from the GDR, here: Environmental pollution from the Blankenberg [*sic*] paper mill, August 13, 1979 (receipt).

115. PA/AA, MfAA/ZR 3559–94, Information about the pollution of West German forests through emissions from the Rosenthal Pulp and Paper Mill VEB in Blankenstein an der Saale, September 22, 1980.

116. Huff, *Natur und Industrie*, 240–41; Eckert, *West Germany*, 148.

117. PA/AA, MfAA/ZR 3559–94, Information about the pollution of forests, September 22, 1980.

118. "Kanzler soll mit Honecker auch über üble Gerüche reden," *Die Welt*, July 24, 1981. Strauß had circulated the contents of his letter in advance. BayHStA, StK 19664, Communication of the Bavarian State Chancellery, August 22, 1980, and Franz Josef Strauß to Helmut Schmidt, n.d.

119. PA/AA, MfAA/ZR 2330–90, Franz Josef Strauß to the Permanent Mission of the GDR, Ewald Moldt, January 13, 1984.

120. PA/AA, MfAA/ZR 3359–94, Federal Republic of Germany (appendix 5): Intergovernmental agreement on principles of damage control, here: Air pollution in the Lichtenberg area (Admin. District Hof) from the Blankenstein paper mill/GDR (Art. 2g Principles of Damage Control), September 21, 1983; BayHStA, StK 19665, Border Police Headquarters Coburg: Photo of foam flake in Unterwolfenstein, February 28, 1983.

121. PA/AA, MfAA/ZR 3559–94, Federal Republic of Germany: Odor nuisances in the area affected by the paper mill/GDR, September 26, 1984.

122. PA/AA, MfAA/ZR 3559–94, Deputy of the Minister for the Glass and Ceramics Industry Josef Kuffner to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, Volkmar Penzlein, November 12, 1984, upon request of Oskar Fischer from November 7, 1984. Penzlein led the GDR border commission.

123. PA/AA, MfAA/ZR 2230–90, Working group: Information on the question of sulfur dioxide emissions in the inner-German border region, June 29, 1983, appendix 2, 2.

124. PA/AA, MfAA/ZR 2230–90, "Luftbelastungen durch den VEB Zellstoff- und Papierfabrik Rosenthal, Blankenstein/Saale" (Air pollution from the Rosenthal Pulp and Paper Mill VEB, Blankenstein/Saale), September 25/26, 1985.

125. 2,3,7,8-Tetrachlorodibenzodioxin. See Mrozek, "Smell of the Berlin Wall."

126. BArchK, B 295/7433, Werner Buchner, StMLU, to Hermann Jäger, April 7, 1982.

127. BArchK, B 295/7433, StMLU, regarding odor pollution from the CSSR in the northeast Bavarian border region, February 1, 1982.

128. Rebecca M. Bratspies and Russell A. Miller, eds., *Transboundary Harm in Interna-*

tional Law: Lessons from the Trail Smelter *Arbitration* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006).

129. PA/AA, MfAA/ZR 2230–90, Hans Reichelt to Günter Mittag, August 22, 1984.

130. PA/AA, MfAA/ZR 2230–90, Theo Waigel to Ewald Moldt, November 28, 1985, and April 14, 1986.

131. PA/AA, MfAA/ZR 2230–90, Minister for the Glass and Ceramics Industry Karl Grünheid to Foreign Minister Oskar Fischer, January 6, 1986, as well as Minister for Coal and Energie Wolfgang Mitzinger to Oskar Fischer, January 17, 1986.

132. BArchK, B 295/7437, State Secretary Max Fischer, StMLU, to Friedrich Zimmermann, November 24, 1983, appendix.

133. Cf. the exemplary inquiry of representative Willi Kaiser (SPD) into the "sulfur dioxide pollution in the Hof/Lichtenberg area": Stenographic report on the 65th session of the Bavarian state parliament on July 16, 1980, 3986–87. Franz Josef Strauß was asked on ZDF about the cat-pee-smell on December 2, 1982; the program *Monitor* also broadcast a report.

134. "Saurer Regen—Lebensgefahr für Babys," *Der Spiegel*, January 8, 1984; "Ärzte schlagen Alarm: Die Luft macht unsere Kinder krank," *Quick*, May 10, 1984.

135. BArchK, B 295/7437, Dept. V II 2, regarding collaboration with the CSSR on environmental protection, here: Expert talks about basic questions of air quality maintenance and other environmental questions (documents for the talk), January 13, 1984. On environmental initiatives see BayHStA, Minn 111158, Health Office Wunsiedel, Medical Director Dr. Schippe: Podium discussion in Selb on environmental pollution, March 11, 1983; BArchK, B 136/30460, Northeast Upper Franconian initiative for healthy air: Catalog of pressing demands, May/June 1984. See Ute Hasenöhrl, *Zivilgesellschaft und Protest: Eine Geschichte der Naturschutz- und Umweltbewegung in Bayern 1945–1980* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2011), esp. 283–325, 494–503.

136. BayHStA, StK 19668, Environmental resolution of the city of Hof, May 5, 1986.

137. Vaněk, *Nedalo se tady dýchat*; Arnošt Novák, *Tmavozelený svět: Radikálně ekologické aktivity v České republice po roce 1989* (Prague: Sociologické Nakladatelství, 2017); Michael Beleites, "Die unabhängige Umweltbewegung in der DDR," in *Umweltschutz in der DDR: Analysen und Zeitzeugenberichte*, vol. 3: *Beruflicher, ehrenamtlicher und freiwilliger Umweltschutz*, ed. Hermann Behrens and Jens Hoffmann (Munich: Oekom-Verlag, 2007), 179–224.

138. Alexandra Wedl, "Green Volunteers in Czechoslovakia: The Youth Magazine *Mladý svět* and Its Environmental Campaign, 1970s–1980s," *Labour History Review* 86, no. 3 (December 2021): 397–423; "Better Air over Vřesová," *Mladá fronta*, February 11, 1978.

139. BayHStA, StK 19668, Junge Union Bavaria, Hof County chapter: Documentation on air pollution by Rosenthal Pulp and Paper Mill VEB, August 25, 1984.

140. PA/AA, B 42/ZA 159674, Franz Josef Strauß to Helmut Schmidt, January 25, 1980. This letter is in stark contrast to the false reading of Christoph Lorke ("Pestialischer Gestank"), who claims that the FRG backed off from financial aid to the GDR throughout the late 1980s while referencing this very letter that he—again falsely—cites as being written to Helmut Kohl.

141. PA/AA, MfAA/ZR 2230–90, Hans Reichelt to Chairman of the GDR Council of Ministers Willi Stoph, April 9, 1985.

142. Stephan Kieninger, "'Niemand will einen Rückfall in den Kalten Krieg': Franz Josef Strauß, Alexander Schalck-Golodkowski und der Milliardenkredit für die DDR 1983," *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft* 65, no. 4 (2017): 352–71; Marco Gerhard Schinze-Gerber, *Franz Josef Strauß: Wegbereiter der deutschen Einheit und Europäer aus Überzeugung* (Hildesheim: Georg Olms Verlag, 2020), 217–40.

143. "Chance zur Eindämmung der Schadstoffimmissionen in Nordostbayern: Geld für DDR und CSSR? Finanzhilfe der westlichen Länder zum Bau von Entschwefelungsanlagen," *Nürnberger Nachrichten*, February 23, 1984.

144. BArchK, B 295/7437, Referat. U II 2, regarding collaboration with the CSSR on environmental protection, here: Expert talks on basic questions of air quality maintenance and other environmental questions (documents for the talk), January 13, 1984.

145. The Helsinki Protocol of 1985 on the reduction of sulfur emissions or their transboundary fluxes raised the guidelines by at least 30 percent compared with those of 1980; see *Official Journal of the European Communities* 41, L 326/37 (December 1998), https://eur-lex.europa.eu/legal-content/EN/TXT/?uri=OJ:L:1998:326:TOC.

146. *BGBl.* 1988, part 2, October 5, 1987, 66–68: Vereinbarung zwischen der Regierung der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und der Regierung der Tschechoslowakischen Sozialistischen Republik über die Zusammenarbeit auf dem Gebiet des Umweltschutzes.

147. Reinhard Müller and Birgit Süß, "Die Entwicklung des Umweltvertragsrechts zwischen Deutschland, der früheren Tschechoslowakei und Polen—unter rückschauender Einbeziehung der Vertragspraxis der DDR," *Zeitschrift für ausländisches öffentliches Recht und Völkerrecht* 53 (1993): 293–321.

148. BT-Drs. 10/6481, November 17, 1986: Transboundary air pollution in the Frankenwald (forest northern Bavaria): Minor interpellation by the Greens, https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/10/064/1006481.pdf; BT-Drs. 11/54, March 13, 1987: Written question from representative Hans Büchler (SPD, Hof), https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/11/000/1100054.pdf.

149. BArchB, MfS/ZAIG/No. 14511, fols. 158–59, Oskar Fischer to Günter Mittag, n.d. [early 1987].

150. On this and the following, see BArchB, MfS/ZAIG/No. 14511, fol. 36, Report on the inner-German expert consultation regarding questions of odor pollution from pulp factories on October 13/14, 1987, in Aschaffenburg.

151. BArchB, MfS/ZAIG/No. 14512, fol. 116, Directive for border commission negotiations regarding the Federal Republic's participation in the elimination of odor pollution originating from the Rosenthal Pulp and Paper Mill VEB in Blankenstein an der Saale, n.d.

152. BArchB, MfS/ZAIG/No. 14512, fols. 85–88, here fol. 86, Report on the negotiations with the FRG regarding the elimination of odor pollution originating from the Rosenthal Pulp and Paper Mill VEB in Blankenstein an der Saale on March 23/24, 1988.

153. BArchB, MfS/Office Neiber/No. 698, fols. 6–11, here fol. 10, Information about the odor removal of Rosenthal Pulp and Paper Mill VEB in Blankenstein an der Saale and recommendations for the negotiations with the FRG about contributing to the odor removal measures, n.d.; the following quotations are found on fol. 9.

154. BArchB, MfS/ZAIG/No. 14512, fols. 46–47, here fol. 46, Oskar Fischer to Günter Mittag, June 21, 1988.

155. BArchB, MfS/ZAIG/No. 14511, fol. 160, FRG: Air pollution from the paper mill in Blankenstein/GDR, here: Analysis of an air sample, February 24, 1987.

156. BArchB, MfS/ZAIG/No. 14512, fols. 85–88, Report on the negotiations with the FRG regarding the elimination of odor pollution originating from the Rosenthal Pulp and Paper Mill VEB in Blankenstein an der Saale on March 23/24, 1988.

157. Ibid., fol. 85.

158. BArchB, MfS/HA XVIII/No. 30365, fol. 56, MfS, Main Dept. XVIII, Major General Kleine to the leader of MfS District Administration Dresden, Major General Böhm, February 4, 1988.

159. BArchB, DK 5 2100, fols. 1–26, here fols. 4 and 10, Report of the Ministry for Environmental Protection and Water Management about the pollution of GDR territory by sulfur dioxide and odor-intensive substances in the winter months, 1982/83 (confidential), September 3, 1984.

160. BayHStA, StK 19669, TÜV Bayern: Rosenthal Paper and Pulp Mill in Blankenstein (GDR). Expert statement on the suggested remedial measures, May 18, 1988, 21; StK 19670, TÜV Bayern, Supplementary statement on the suggested emission-reducing remedial measures for gas production: Replacement of cooling tower with heat exchanger.

161. BayHStA, StK 10761, Council of Ministers matter: Air pollution from the paper mill in Blankenstein/GDR. Negotiations with the GDR, October 3, 1989.

162. BArchB, MfS/Office Neiber/No. 698, fols. 15–17, Report on the negotiations with the FRG about a governmental agreement on the FRG's contribution to the odor removal measures at the Pulp and Paper Mill VEB in Blankenstein an der Saale from January 16–18, 1989, in Nuremberg.

163. BayHStA, StK 19667, Preparations for the negotiations over the treaty on the creation of a unified Germany, here: Environmental sector, July 19, 1990, esp. 6.

164. The VEB was taken over in July 1994 by Mercer International with 441 employees. See Treuhandanstalt, *Dokumentation 1990–1994*, vol. 5 (Berlin: Treuhandanstalt, 1994), 759.

165. "Umrüstung des Kraftwerkes Tisova I (Tschechische Republik)—," Cleaner Production Germany, accessed October 7, 2024, http://joomla.p266994.webspaceconfig.de/index.php/de/themen/umweltfreundliche-erzeugung-speicherung-und-verteilung-von-energie/kraftwerkstechnik/2526-umruestung-des-kraftwerkes-tisova-i-tschechische-republik#weitere-projektdaten; "Sauberer mit deutscher Hilfe: Umweltschutz-Förderung in Tschechien mit Modellcharakter," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, March 8, 2004.

166. "Wegen des Gestanks machen selbst die Geduldigsten ihrem Unmut Luft: Das Erzgebirge, der Smog und die deutsch-tschechische Grenze," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, January 20, 1997.

167. BT-Drs. 13/6692, January 10, 1997: Written question from representative Christa Reichard (CDU, Dresden), https://dserver.bundestag.de/btd/13/066/1306692.pdf. The reply was issued by Erhard Jauck, state secretary in the Federal Ministry for the Environment, Nature Conservation, and Nuclear Safety.

168. These included a meeting between Wolfgang Schäuble (CDU), head of the chancellery, and Vasil Bilak, secretary of the Central Committee of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, as well as thirteen contacts between Federal Foreign Minister Genscher and his counterpart Bohuslav Chňoupek, among others, between April 1978 and May 1986. PA/AA, B 38/ZA 139248, Environmental collaboration with the CSSR, here: Chronology, March 19, 1986; AMZV, TO-T 1980–89, Country: FRG, inv. no. 016 812/80–4, Tajné—NSR—Návštěva ministra zahraničí H.-D. Genschera v ČSSR [FRG—visit of Foreign Minister H.-D. Genscher to the CSSR], November 14, 1980.

169. Jürgen Link, *Normale Krisen? Normalismus und die Krise der Gegenwart. (Mit einem Blick auf Thilo Sarrazin)* (Göttingen: Konstanz University Press, 2013), 10.

170. Robert G. Darst, *Smokestack Diplomacy: Cooperation and Conflict in East–West Environmental Politics* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2001).

171. Bernhard Glaeser, *Umweltpolitik zwischen Reparatur und Vorbeugung: Eine Einführung am Beispiel Bundesrepublik im internationalen Kontext* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1989), 90.

172. For instance BArchK, B 295/7434, Alfred Dick to Gerhart Baum, August 25, 1982.

173. D392—April 30, 1987: "Dokument o stavu životního prostředí 'Aby se dalo dýchat'" [Document regarding the environmental situation "To be able to breathe"], in *Charta 77: Dokumenty 1977–1989*, vol. 2, ed. Blanka Císařovská and Vilém Prečan (Prague: Pulchra, 2007), 880–87; Vaněk, *Nedalo se tady dýchat*.

174. Glaeser, *Umweltpolitik*, 86.

175. On sensory shock, resulting among other things from industrialization, see Constance Classen, "Green Pleasures," in *Beyond Environmental Comfort*, ed. Boon Lay Ong (Abingdon: Routledge, 2013), 175–86, here 177. On sensory shock in the twentieth century, see David Howes, "Introduction: 'Make It New!' Reforming the Sensory World," in *A Cultural History of the Senses*, vol. 6, *In the Modern Age*, ed. David Howes (London: Bloomsbury, 2014), 1–30, here 18.

176. Michael Bussmann and Gabriele Tröger, *Westböhmen & Bäderdreieck: Reiseführer Karlsbad—Marienbad—Franzensbad; Individuell reisen mit vielen praktischen Tipps*, 7th rev. ed. (Erlangen: Michael Müller Verlag, 2020), 60.

177. "Woher kommt der 'Katzendreck'-Gestank? Viele Erzgebirgler klagen über einen ekligen Geruch, der regelmäßig in die Region zieht," *Sächsische Zeitung*, April 8, 2018. The continued (if sporadic) existence of the problem, the origin of which had now been detected "in the chemical industry in and around Leutensdorf" (Litvínov), was also confirmed by the Administrative District Office of the Ore Mountain District. Cf. the reply of the head of immission protection on May 19, 2022, to a written query. The exhibition of the Deutsches Hygiene Museum Dresden "Luft: Eine für alle" (Air: One for Everybody), advised by Bodo Mrozek, was on display from November 2024 to October 2025.

178. Barbara W. Tuchman, "When Does History Happen?," in *Practicing History: Selected Essays* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1982), 25–32, here 25.

Walled Off but Not Disconnected

The GDR's Place in Central Europe

JULIA E. AULT

Bodo Mrozek and Doubravka Olšáková's excellent article on cross-border odors examines the intersection of territory, pollution, and diplomacy in Cold War central Europe. Tracing the debate around a foul smell that "wafted" through northeastern Bavaria in 1976, the authors highlight the complicated relations and negotiations between the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), the German Democratic Republic (GDR), and the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic (CSSR).[1] Although the focus of this issue of the *German Yearbook of Contemporary History* is on the GDR, Mrozek and Olšáková's article does not entirely fit that description. In some ways the GDR—presumably the source of the "*Katzendreck* [cat pee] smell"—falls into the background of West German (and Czechoslovak) perceptions and debates surrounding the affair.[2] The article devotes the majority of its attention to West German diplomatic approaches, and to a lesser extent West German domestic politics, alongside some incorporation of Czechoslovak and East German considerations.

Nevertheless, the article offers important insights into how neighboring countries viewed the GDR, and to some extent how the GDR reacted to them. This approach moves scholars beyond stale narratives about the GDR being an isolated, walled-off state.[3] It not only shared borders with other states in central Europe (on both sides of the Iron Curtain), but it also shared weather patterns, waterways, and more. Relatedly, Mrozek and Olšáková pivot away from debates over the (il)legitimacy of the East German dictatorship to instead focus on *how* and *why* the GDR acted in the ways that it did. They take seriously East German diplomatic efforts to engage with transboundary environmental pollution, even as they acknowledge the limits of the GDR's willingness (or ability) to take effective action. Mrozek and Olšáková thus fit into an important trend that transcends national borders as well as the Iron Curtain. The article contextualizes Cold War tensions, devoting attention to policy and perception across seemingly

impermeable divisions. In doing so, it builds on a trend in the scholarship that highlights the entangled character of Cold War central Europe, even as those entanglements were often asymmetrical.[4] The authors add complexity to this literature through their consideration of not only German-German but also socialist-socialist and internal West German political dynamics.

Thinking more specifically about environmental histories of these Cold War divides, Mrozek and Olšáková engage with transboundary pollution from a new perspective: the sensory history of smell.[5] This methodology proves fruitful because it emphasizes something—odors—that cannot be stopped at a political border, whether by a checkpoint or a landmine. Through their analysis of the cat-pee-smell affair, the GDR's attitude toward the environment, transboundary pollution, and diplomacy comes into focus. The GDR emerges as an actor that polluted across state boundaries, refused to engage with a polluter-pays principle or wider discussion about pollution, and sought to extract advantageous financial and scientific concessions, especially from the FRG. Complaints from West Germans spurred (or attempted to spur) action on the Bavarian and federal West German governments to negotiate a solution with the GDR.

The subjective nature of the pollution, in this case malodorous fumes, presented a challenge in terms of quantifying or qualifying the damage. The authors highlight how not only West Germans but also residents of the GDR and CSSR were impacted by the cat-pee-smell. One major source of the stench (or at least one of the sources) was presumably an East German Volkseigener Betrieb (VEB—state-owned enterprise), the Rosenthal Pulp and Paper Mill in Blankenstein an der Saale.[6] According to one complaint in Bavaria, horses "suffered burns to their nostrils and mouths" after eating grass coated with the pollutants.[7] Other reports noted complaints about nausea and headaches in the CSSR and "anxiety, sleep loss, and a 'strange tautness of the skin'" in the GDR.[8] To know exactly what caused the stench is nevertheless difficult, because pollution from all three states seems to have transcended borders. The authors imply that the pollution was East German, while acknowledging the complexity of the geographic and environmental situation.

Still, Mrozek and Olšáková identify that at least some of the pollution was sulfur dioxide (SO_2), the main contributor to acid rain. This fact is of particular importance, given that acid rain and the resulting *Waldsterben* (dying of the forests) was a huge source of public outcry especially in the FRG in the early 1980s. It attracted additional attention after the Green Party entered the Bundestag in 1983.[9] The *Waldsterben* panic has garnered much scholarly attention, but the sensory aspect of transboundary SO_2 pollution has received relatively less.[10] Thus, Mrozek and Olšáková add sensory history to our understanding of this time and

place, taking on the difficult task of using text to convey the olfactory aspect of the pollution debates. This approach builds layers into readers' perception of pollution and the "smellscape," even as Mrozek and Olšáková underscore that the twentieth century has been considered an era of "deodorization."[11]

The olfactory aspect of the pollution adds new levels of understanding to the West German debate about the environment, bringing together unlikely bedfellows. Bavaria tended to be more politically conservative than some West German states, and the federal government shifted to the center-right when the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) came to power in 1982. In the context of the cat-pee-smell affair, anticommunism and environmental concerns overlapped in Bavaria, though they were often championed by different political orientations. Thirty-two members of Bavaria's Christian Social Union (CSU, partner to the federal CDU) in the federal parliament pushed to investigate the GDR's transboundary pollution and especially the cross-border stench. Among their concerns were to hold the GDR accountable and force it to pay for the impact of its pollution in northern Bavaria through the "polluter-pays principle."[12] As Mrozek and Olšáková emphasize, the CSU instrumentalized the cat-pee-smell to criticize the outgoing Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (SPD—Social Democratic Party of Germay) for a more conciliatory attitude toward the GDR—and the communist bloc more generally—through the perhaps unlikely subject of environmental pollution.[13]

Despite the CDU/CSU's anticommunist stance, East Germans managed to wrangle concessions from the West Germans in the 1980s. From the perspective of the East German government, the challenge in sourcing and quantifying the stench provided deniability. Also, in 1982, the GDR classified all environmental data, making it illegal to reveal or publish pollution levels in the country. This policy, combined with the refusal to commit to a polluter-pays principle, meant that the GDR simply stonewalled West German environmental efforts until the East Germans got what they wanted. This tactic proved semi-fruitful for the East Germans, as the GDR faced mounting environmental and financial difficulties in the 1980s.[14] They coerced the West Germans into compromising on expert-level dialogue in the German-German negotiations (as opposed to public debates, as the West Germans desired). And after 1984 or so, the FRG also provided a range of technological assistance and financial aid to East German industries to reduce emissions and the related noxious odors wafting into northern Bavaria.[15]

One of the most striking aspects of the article is the way in which the authors not only examine German-German relations but also incorporate Czechoslovakia into the affair. While the CSSR was diplomatically tied to the GDR through its fellow status as a Soviet satellite state, it also pursued negotiations with the

wealthier Western FRG for technology. Conversations about a Czechoslovak-FRG border commission broke down in the early 1980s when the FRG insisted on a clause about the status of West Berlin, a major diplomatic sticking point between the two Germanys. The CSSR being allied with the GDR refused to agree to its inclusion.[16] Again, like the GDR, Czechoslovakia refused to acknowledge the extent of its industrial pollution or take responsibility for health problems or environmental degradation at home or in Bavaria. Still, the FRG and Czechoslovakia remained in contact over transboundary air pollution, with the CSSR asking for desulfurization technology for lignite coal (sulfur was a major cause of *Waldsterben*, among other concerns). Later the CSSR would change its request from desulfurization plants to investment in new nuclear power plants.[17] East German and Czechoslovak efforts to gain concessions from the West Germans for money or technology persisted into the late 1980s, and they were not fully resolved when the communist regimes began to collapse in late 1989. Cleanup efforts continued into the 1990s, often with German money (to the former CSSR).

From Mrozek and Olšáková's article, readers gain a sensory understanding of a complex central European region. Pollution brought together the border regions of western Czechoslovakia, northern Bavaria, and the southern GDR. Though divided by militarized Cold War borders, residents in each country experienced similar stenches and environmental degradation. This entangled geographic space forced (not always good faith) negotiations to improve conditions. The solutions cost money or concessions that each side was not necessarily willing or financially able to grant. Implicit in the cat-pee-smell affair are unequal relationships. The FRG was financially much better off than its communist neighbors. Neither the GDR nor Czechoslovakia was willing to reveal damning environmental data, even when it hurt their own citizens. Though not discussed in depth here, the GDR and the CSSR were also engaged in contentious conversations about their own transboundary pollution in the Ore Mountains and North Bohemia.[18] Traced through the history of smell—in an era of "deodorization"—the cat-pee-smell affair reveals the visceral, noxious experience of industrial pollution in a seemingly marginalized borderland far from each country's respective seat of power.

Notes

1. Bodo Mrozek and Doubravka Olšáková, "Die Katzendreckgestank-Affäre: Grenzüberschreitende Geruchskonflikte zwischen der Bundesrepublik, der ČSSR und der DDR 1976 bis 1989," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 71, no. 2 (April 2023): 311–49, here 311. An English translation of Mrozek's and Olšáková's article appears in this volume as "The Cat-Pee-

Smell Affair: Cross-border Odor Conflicts between the Federal Republic of Germany, the Czechoslovak Socialist Republic, and the German Democratic Republic, 1976–89."

2. Citations of West German federal and provincial (Bavarian) sources outnumber either East German or Czechoslovak ones.

3. Deliberations over the legitimacy of the GDR and its isolated nature dominated West German debates during the Cold War and continued in the 1990s after unification. Some of these were tinged with West German or Western triumphalism over "winning" the Cold War. For an overview of debates on the character of the East German dictatorship, see the introduction to Eli Rubin, *Synthetic Socialism: Plastics and Dictatorship in the German Democratic Republic* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2008).

4. Christoph Kleßmann, ed., *The Divided Past: Rewriting Post-War German History* (Oxford: Berg, 2001); Tobias Hochscherf, Christoph Laucht, and Andrew Plowman, eds., *Divided but Not Disconnected: German Experiences of the Cold War* (New York: Berghahn, 2005); Edith Sheffer, *Burned Bridge: How East and West Germans Made the Iron Curtain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2011); Yuliya Komska, *The Icon Curtain: The Cold War's Quiet Border* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2015); Simo Mikkonen and Pia Koivunen, eds., *Beyond the Divide: Entangled Histories of Cold War Europe* (New York: Berghahn, 2015); Frank Bösch, ed., *A History Shared and Divided: East and West Germany since the 1970s*, trans. Jennifer Walcoff Neuheiser (New York: Berghahn, 2018).

5. Astrid M. Eckert, *West Germany and the Iron Curtain: Environment, Economy, and Culture in the Borderlands* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019); Julia E. Ault, *Saving Nature under Socialism: Transnational Environmentalism in East Germany, 1968–1990* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2021); Andrew S. Tompkins, "Caught in the Net: Fish, Ships, and Oil in the GDR-Poland Territorial Waters Dispute, 1949–1989," *Central European History* 56, no. 2 (June 2023): 173–95.

6. Mrozek and Olšáková, "Die Katzendreckgestank-Affäre," 323.

7. Ibid., 316.

8. Ibid., 315.

9. Frank Uekötter, *The Greenest Nation? A New History of German Environmentalism* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 2014), 113.

10. Birgit Metzger, *"Erst stirbt der Wald, dann du!" Das Waldsterben als westdeutsches Politikum (1978–1986)* (Frankfurt a. M.: Campus, 2015). *Waldsterben* also served as the framework for Tobias Huff's *Natur und Industrie im Sozialismus: Eine Umweltgeschichte der DDR* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2015).

11. Mrozek and Olšáková, "Die Katzendreckgestank-Affäre," 312–13.

12. Ibid., 323.

13. Ibid.

14. André Steiner, *The Plans That Failed: An Economic History of the GDR*, trans. Ewald Osers (New York: Berghahn, 2010), 171.

15. Mrozek and Olšáková, "Die Katzendreckgestank-Affäre," 341.

16. Ibid., 343.

17. Ibid., 341–42.

18. Julia E. Ault, "A River Runs through It: The Elbe, Socialist Security, and East Germany's Borders," *Central European History* 56, no. 2 (June 2023): 196–213, here 207.

About the Contributions to this Yearbook

The contributions by Julia E. Ault, John Connelly, Eli Rubin, Lauren Stokes, and Jonathan R. Zatlin were written specifically for this volume and have not appeared previously.

Peter E. Fäßler's article was published originally as "'Diversanten' oder 'Aktivisten'? Westarbeiter in der DDR (1949–1961)," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 49, no. 4 (October 2001): 613–42.

Andreas Malycha's article was published originally as "Ungeschminkte Wahrheiten: Ein vertrauliches Gespräch von Gerhard Schürer, Chefplaner der DDR, mit der Stasi über die Wirtschaftspolitik der SED im April 1978," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 59, no. 2 (April 2011): 283–305.

Christian Schemmert's and Daniel Siemens's article was published originally as "Die Leipziger Journalistenausbildung in der Ära Ulbricht," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 61, no. 2 (April 2013): 201–37.

Astrid M. Eckert's article was published originally as "Geteilt, aber nicht unverbunden: Grenzgewässer als deutsch-deutsches Umweltproblem," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 62, no. 1 (January 2014): 69–100.

Bodo Mrozek's and Doubravka Olšáková's article was published originally as "Die Katzendreckgestank-Affäre: Grenzüberschreitende Geruchskonflikte zwischen der Bundesrepublik, der ČSSR und der DDR 1976 bis 1989," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 71, no. 2 (April 2023): 311–49.

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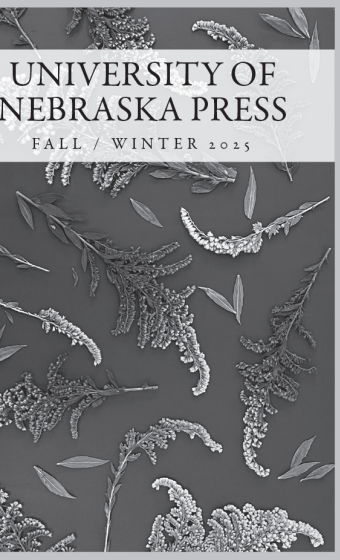

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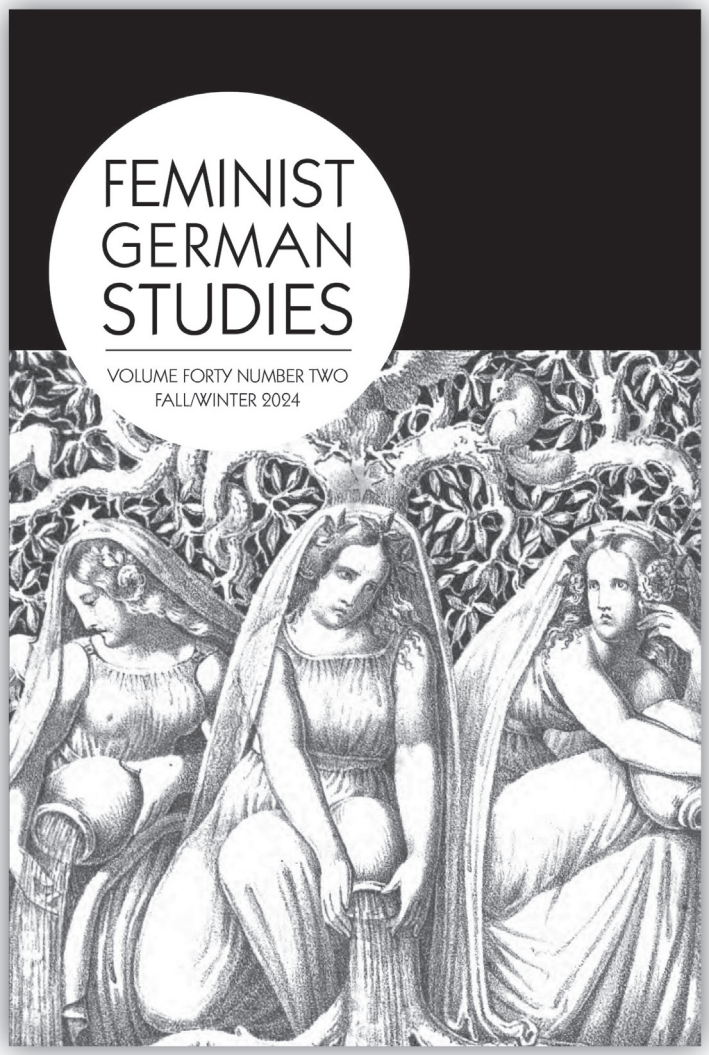

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