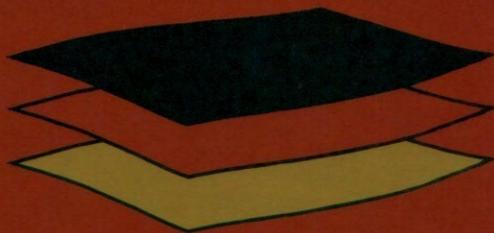


GERMAN MONITOR

RE-ASSESSING THE GDR
PAPERS FROM A NOTTINGHAM CONFERENCE



Edited by J.H. Reid

REASSESSING THE GOR
Papers from a 1990-1991 Conference

Edited by [illegible]

J.H. Rott

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Notes on the Contributors

Rolf Badstübner: Bereichsleiter am Institut für deutsche Geschichte der Akademie der Wissenschaften der DDR bzw. der Deutschen Akademie der Wissenschaften zu Berlin bis 1991; nach Abwicklung der Akademie im Ruhestand. Publications include *Die Spaltung Deutschlands 1945-1949* (1966); *Geschichte Deutschlands 1945-1949* (1989); *Friedenssicherung und deutsche Frage 1943-1949* (1990); co-editor of *Wilhelm Pieck - Aufzeichnungen zur Deutschlandpolitik 1945 bis 1953* (1993).

Mike Dennis: Senior Lecturer in Contemporary History and Interdisciplinary Studies, University of Wolverhampton. Publications include: *German Democratic Republic: Politics, Economics and Society* (1988); *Social and Economic Modernization in Eastern Germany from Honecker to Kohl* (1993). Editor-in-Chief of *East Central Europe*.

Peter Geist: befristeter Assistent an der Universität Leipzig. Publications include: *Kurzbesichtigung eines Arsenal: Die Lyrik der Moderne* (1992) and articles on GDR poetry. Editor of *Ein Molotow-Cocktail auf fremder Bettkante: Ein Lyriklesebuch von Dichtern aus der DDR* (1991); *Im Spiegel ein anderer: Europäische und amerikanische Lyrik der Moderne* (1992).

Gert-Joachim Glaebner: Professor for Political Science, Humboldt University Berlin. Publications include: *Herrschaft durch Kader: Leitung der Gesellschaft und Kaderpolitik in der DDR am Beispiel des Staatsapparates* (1977); *Die andere Republik: Gesellschaft und Politik in der DDR* (1989); *The Unification Process in Germany: From Dictatorship to Democracy* (1992). Editor and co-editor of *Die DDR in der Ära Honecker: Politik, Kultur, Gesellschaft* (1988); *The German Revolution 1989: Causes and Consequences* (1992).

Günter Minnerup: Lecturer, Department of German Studies, University of Birmingham. Publications include: *DDR — Vor und hinter der Mauer* (1982); *Citizens and Comrades: Socialism in a World of Nation States* (1984), and numerous articles on East Germany and Eastern Europe.

J. H. Reid: Professor of Contemporary German Studies, University of Nottingham. Publications include *Heinrich Böll: A German for his Time* (1987), *Writing without Taboos: The New East German Literature* (1990) and numerous articles on East and West German literature.

Detlef Schubert: Leiter, Abteilung Wissenschaftspublizistik, Universität Halle. Publications include *Philosophische Untersuchungen zur Dialektik der Produktivkräfte* (1980); articles on labour theory, *perestroika*, the end of East European communism.

Ian Wallace: Professor of German, University of Bath. Publications include: *Volker Braun* (1986), *The German Democratic Republic* (1993) and numerous articles on cultural policies in the GDR. Editor of *GDR Monitor*, *German Monitor*, *World Bibliographical Series* (Clio Press), and of the series *The New Germany*.

Janet Wharton: Librarian, Institute of German, Austrian and Swiss Affairs, University of Nottingham; secretary of the German Studies Library Group. Publications include: *Germany 1946-1981: Archiver of Newspaper Cuttings* (with William Goldsmith) (1993). Co-Editor

Between Gain in Prosperity and Loss of Competence: Reflections on the Social and Political Situation of the East German People after German Unification

There can be no doubt that the introduction of the Deutschmark and German unification in October 1990 fundamentally changed the lives of East Germans, one day confronted with the adversities but also with the comforts of socialist society, and the next, having fought for democracy and freedom in the autumn of 1989, virtually overnight plunged into completely new conditions of life. It is true that many had some idea, vague or otherwise, of what they would be faced with. Yet only a few had a rough notion as to how the society which was being established really functioned. Nobody had the equivalent practical experience of life. A German but essentially foreign world broke over them.

If one asks what was new for East Germans to cope with in 1990 then it was, in the first place, Western consumption. In the shops the shortage of consumer goods which characterised GDR socialism suddenly disappeared. Moreover, East Germans could buy large quantities of goods because of the currency change. A certain degree of prosperity entered into the private lives of former GDR citizens. Yet secondly a growing number of people from the West came, too. They took leading positions in state institutions, society and the economy. New competences in line with the West German pattern were created which could obviously not be handled by most East Germans.

This gain in prosperity and loss of competence might therefore be taken as the characteristic features of the social and political life of the East Germans after the introduction of the Deutschmark and unification. But what does the increase in prosperity mean in concrete terms? Has there really been a loss of competence on the part of the East Germans? What does competence mean in this connection? What relationship is there between prosperity and competence, and how is this relationship manifested in East Germany today?

All of this shows a variety which, incidentally, marks not only the current upheavals in East Germany. As Gisela Riescher notes, in order to develop the forecasting ability of political science dealing with Eastern Europe (including East Germany) a more detailed analysis seems to be badly needed.¹ However, it is also the case that detailed

¹*Die Politikwissenschaft und der Systemwandel in Osteuropa* (Munich 1993), p. 13 and p. 161.

analyses are not sufficient. It is at least equally important to understand the complexity of the upheavals. Here, it is not only necessary to press forward to the core structures of the political system.² The dynamic relationships of the entire political, economic and social structure have to be discovered, too. My analysis of the problems of the development of prosperity and competence is intended as a contribution to this.

The first question is: what starting-point should be chosen for the analysis? If one proceeds from the fact that it was the people of the GDR who wanted and brought about the upheaval, and that it is they who have mainly borne the brunt of it, the expectations of these people should form the starting-point. Neglecting their expectations would mean failing to see the most important factor in this upheaval. But what expectations did the people of the GDR connect with the upheaval? An analysis of the attitudes of the majority of people in the GDR in autumn 1989 reveals that, besides their interest in democratic conditions, the need for a better material life, for prosperity, played an at least equivalent role from the beginning.

The increase in prosperity between expectation and reality

Of course, to begin with it must be noted that, at that point in time this latter need had fallen into the background. Tearing down the political power structures of the socialist system appeared to be not only an important concern for the political opposition, but also for the overwhelming majority of people in the GDR. They wanted democratic rights and liberties like, for example, freedom of speech, the right to travel freely and democratic elections. At one moment it even seemed that this concern could gain priority over the development of a better material life.

However, even then many people in the GDR had attitudes which expressed at the very least a lack of interest in a democratic self-renewal process that went beyond the introduction of democratic conditions. True, the number of politically active people in the Monday demonstrations was large in some towns and regions. Yet this cannot disguise the

²Cf. *Gesellschaftliche Differenzierung und Legitimitätsverfall des DDR-Sozialismus. Das Ende des anderen Weges in der Moderne*, ed. Winfried von Thaa, Iris Häuser, Michael Schenkel, Gerd Meyer (Tübingen 1992), p. 7.

fact that the mass of the people remained politically passive. This was already manifested by the many people who fled from the GDR as became possible across the open Hungarian border in the summer of 1989. The wave of desertions did not abate even after the political changes in the autumn of 1989. Above all it was younger people who 'wollten jetzt was vom Leben haben und nicht, wenn der Sozialismus irgendwann mal funktioniert'.³

If one asks the reasons for this attitude of the people in the GDR, it surely has to be seen first of all that, even in this socialist society, prosperity had advanced to the position of an essential value in a person's life. People were increasingly enjoying modest prosperity as a result of the relative competitiveness of the GDR's economy and other factors, including the specific terms of trade with the Federal Republic. The SED leadership for its part focused more and more on the improvement of material life in their ideology and policy. In 1987, at the zenith of his power, Honecker spoke of the growing importance of the production of consumer goods, which should be the concern of the whole economy. It should be possible to shop well for one's money.⁴ In some academic circles of the party, even the English word 'shopping' was used, although the reference was of course to Berlin rather than Leipzig.

The fact that since the mid-eighties the developments in the GDR were shaped by specific conditions, a growing isolation of the GDR in the Eastern Bloc, certainly has to be taken into account. *Glasnost* and *perestroika*, the reform of socialism as carried out in the Soviet Union and other socialist countries, were out of the question for the leadership of the SED. Other means of keeping the people in order were desperately sought. The turning towards material needs appeared then to be the only possibility. This policy, however, was always a reaction rather than action. It corresponded to a general challenge which applied only to the GDR, lacking as it did a national identity. West German television, which flickered in living-rooms up and down the country every evening, as well as parcels and diverse gifts from relatives and friends in the other Germany served as a constant reminder to the people of the GDR for decades that prosperity could take on quite different proportions. In the Federal Republic in the 1950s and the 1960s a prosperity had developed which, besides

³Vera M. Baehr, *Wir denken erst seit Gorbatschow. Protokolle von Jugendlichen aus der DDR* (Recklinghausen 1990), pp. 56-7.

⁴Erich Honecker, *Die Aufgaben der Parteiorganisationen bei der weiteren Verwirklichung der Beschlüsse des XI. Parteitag der SED* (Berlin 1987), pp. 50-1.

its sheer extent and the pride in the new Constitution ('Verfassungspatriotismus'), functioned as a decisive factor of a renewed national self-confidence.

Consequently a growing tension existed in the GDR caused by the people's own if modest prosperity and their knowledge of the 'real' prosperity of the people in the Federal Republic. For a long time this relationship was compensated for by a policy of social security by the SED leadership. The release from this tension came about when, at the beginning of 1990, it became more and more obvious that the new GDR government was not able to handle the complex social crises, nor above all the economic difficulties, and then Bonn offered quick prosperity with a union of the economy, currency and welfare provisions. With that it was clear that prosperity had gained absolute priority over all other demands of the people in the GDR.

'Clutching at the banana', which was deplored by some, was, therefore, not only evident but inevitable. It was also to a certain extent justified. If one considers the East European revolutions as 'nachvollziehende' or 'rückspulende Revolutionen', as Jürgen Habermas has quite rightly done,⁵ one should do so, even if it seems banal, not only with reference to the intellectual and political areas of society. Material aspects are also of importance in this context. Moreover, it was the East Germans who had to bear a large part of the consequences of World War Two. The people of the GDR wanted to correct a historical disadvantage which had determined their lives for forty years.

However, have the people of the former GDR really gained in prosperity and have their expectations come true? In a certain respect, yes. Compared with the former GDR, the material life of the people has got better since the introduction of the Deutschmark and unification. Despite all its concentration on prosperity, and despite all the modest gains in prosperity, in comparison with Western societies and especially the Federal Republic the GDR remained a society of shortages. Many things which now are not only on display in the shops but which can also be found in East Germans' private households were never or only rarely obtainable before. As economic analysis shows, a purchasing revolution has meanwhile taken place. In its report of autumn 1992 the newly founded Institute for Economic Research in Halle points out:

⁵*Die Moderne - ein unvollendetes Projekt* (Leipzig 1992), p. 215.

Im Vergleich zu DDR-Zeiten konsumieren die Haushalte mengenmäßig weitaus mehr Südfrüchte, Gemüse, Fertiggerichte, Molkereiprodukte, alkoholfreie Getränke und weniger Fleisch, Wurstwaren, Brot und Backwaren [...]. Der gleich nach der Währungsunion einsetzende Kaufboom bei langlebigen Gebrauchsgütern wie Pkw, Farbfernsehern, Videorecordern, Waschvollautomaten ließ die jeweiligen Ausgabenanteile für Verkehr und Nachrichtenübermittlung sowie Bildung, Unterhaltung und Freizeit am privaten Verbrauch in die Höhe schnellen.⁶

There has also been a boom in foreign travel. After the building of the Wall in 1961, the people of the GDR particularly suffered from their limited opportunities for travel. This led to freedom to travel being one of their central demands. The spectacular fall of the Wall on 9 November 1989 and the subsequent provisions by the transitional government created the political and legal framework for these opportunities. But very soon it became clear that money was needed for travelling, too. Today East Germans still travel less than West Germans. But with the Deutschmark in their pockets many of them, for example, now enjoy travelling to Eastern Europe, because they also want to obliterate the memory of their painfully perceived status as second-class holiday-makers in the West.

However, the people of the former GDR have a better life in comparison not only with their own past but also with regard to developments in the living standard of East Europeans. In Eastern Europe there are either the typical manifestations of shortages as under socialism, or else, in the meantime, a development has taken place which has pushed a growing number of people to the brink of poverty. According to statements by economic research institutes in Russia the economic transformation of the system is stagnating or even regressing. In 1992 an acceleration of inflation towards hyper-inflation took place, which contributed to the return to a barter economy.⁷ In the recent elections in Poland, which was once the cradle of the revolution in the East with the trade union Solidarity, the voters rebuffed a too rigorous route towards a market economy. It has to be acknowledged that, as far as material living standards are concerned, the difference in level between the East Germans and the East Europeans has become greater.

⁶ *Ostdeutschland 1992 und 1993: Zwischen Skepsis und Hoffnung, Herbstgutachten 1992*, ed. Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung Halle (Halle/Berlin 1992), p. 47.

⁷ Cf. *Die wirtschaftliche Lage Rußlands, Systemtransformation auf dem Rückzug? Zweiter Bericht*. Deutsches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung Berlin, Institut für Weltwirtschaft an der Universität Kiel, *Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung Halle*, Forschungsreihe 2/1993, ed. Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung (Halle 1993), p. 7.

There is, therefore, an empirically recognisable gain in prosperity. It can also be said that, in this respect at least, in the first period after the introduction of the Deutschmark and state unification the expectations of the people of the GDR have come true. Despite all the nostalgia ('Ostalgie') for the GDR and criticism of the current economic situation, nobody basically wants to re-install the old GDR conditions.

What then are the problematic aspects of this prosperity? An analysis of East German prosperity reveals three features which should be considered in this context. In the first place, unlike the prosperity of Western societies, including the old Federal Republic, East German prosperity has not grown gradually. The fact that everything became available in the stores overnight and with the currency exchange people were from one day to the next in a position to buy things meant that they were basically not able to prepare themselves for the prosperity with which they were suddenly and massively confronted. Reasonable standards of value began to reel and stagger. At least for the moment buying and consuming not only rose to become the main content of the individual's life but the only meaning of his life.

It is true that, all in all, the majority of the people remained astonishingly level-headed. Moreover, the behaviour of the minority was quickly relativised. Other realities of individual and social life did, of course, not disappear. However, it is possible that the very suddenness of this prosperity rather than prosperity as such has left traces in the consciousness of East Germans. The long-term negative effects of this are not yet visible. They will probably assume social and political importance if there is no success in developing reasonable attitudes to prosperity. At any rate rational social behaviour was by no means promoted by sudden prosperity. In this respect one can agree with Hans-Joachim Maaz's opinion that the course of unification should have been taken more consciously.⁸

A second aspect relates to the question how this prosperity came about. It was and still is an imported and consequently foreign prosperity. It is true that to a certain extent this can also be said about prosperity in the West. Prosperity in the Federal Republic in particular has causes in which 'diligence' only represents one factor. Favourable exterior conditions were also if not more decisive for the success of the West German market

⁸Cf. Lucian von Hölscher et al., *DDR + BRD = ?*, *Die Deutschen und ihre Identität. Walsroder Forum IV, Deutsche Angestellten-Gewerkschaft*, 28.09.1990 (Hamburg 1990), p. 30.

economy.⁹ Furthermore it cannot be claimed that the import of West German prosperity was a gift. There was a West German economic interest in the prosperity of the East Germans because on the private consumer market there were high surpluses. Not only could these surpluses be partially reduced, but the sudden demand from the East Germans once again stimulated the slack West German economy. Prosperity in the East ultimately brought advantages for the West German economy, too.

However, it is surely right to say that at least a certain share of home-grown production is a condition for turning prosperity into a value. The fact that the prosperity of East Germany is imported and foreign makes it difficult for the East Germans to develop a feeling of ownership towards it. Passive acceptance of everything that comes about can be one result. Indeed today too much is purely accepted in the East. Another attitude can consist in excessive demands. One therefore should not wonder in the West if arguments that the level of wages has to be related to labour productivity are difficult to understand in the East. This is not only a question of knowledge. Thus even the specific nature of how East German prosperity came about makes it important to create and to secure jobs not only for common social or purely economic reasons.

A third aspect consists in the most recent trends in the development of prosperity in East Germany. It has been calculated that in 1992 the material standard of living of the East Germans had reached that of West Germans in 1971. However, at the present moment further progress is more than uncertain. In 1992 there were only 5.5 million jobs against about ten million in the former GDR. A high rate of unemployment continues. This does not include those who either lost their jobs through early retirement or already find themselves at the level of social welfare. Meanwhile the income of part of the population has stagnated or has even become lower again. A further rise in prices and rents took place at the beginning of the year 1994.

The main reason for this situation is to be found in the collapse of the industrial centres which were once the pillar of the GDR. According to analyses in 1991, the level of industrialisation of the new German *Länder* was lower than in the industrially weakest

⁹Cf. Wolfgang Behr, *Bundesrepublik Deutschland — Deutsche Demokratische Republik. Systemvergleich Politik, Wirtschaft, Gesellschaft* (Stuttgart 1985), pp. 123-4.

developed Federal state Schleswig-Holstein, and compared with the EC the strength of the economy was below that of Greece and Portugal. A real economic boom has not yet taken place. It is recognisable only in certain industries. In addition problems of growth are now becoming increasingly apparent in West Germany, too. It is clear that the current economic state of affairs will not encourage the readiness of West German investors to transform the East Germans from consumers into producers. That means that the sudden and imported prosperity of the East Germans is also crumbling.¹⁰

Nevertheless, as I have already indicated, the gain in prosperity described is not the only new thing which the East Germans had to face and to cope with after the introduction of the Deutschmark and unification. With unification West Germans took on responsibility for developments in policy, society and the economy of East Germany. A loss of competence seems to characterise the lives of East Germans since unification. It is necessary to devote attention to this problem before the connection between prosperity and competence can be analysed.

Loss of competence between necessity and scope for flexibility

By 'competence' is meant actual responsibility ('Zuständigkeiten, Entscheidungsbefugnisse') as exercised by people in state institutions, in parties, organisations and associations, but also in the economy.¹¹ Thus competence also means power; it can even mean political power. But on the one hand political power comprises more than competence, because with regard to political power competence only relates to the exercising of power. In democracies competence represents the variously structured, legally regulated and objectively determined exercise of power by a relatively large number of people (politicians, officials, civil servants).

On the other hand competence cannot be restricted to the direction and management of the state. As a social activity, that is responsibility for people and affairs, it

¹⁰*Ostdeutschland 1992 und 1993* (note 6). More recent analyses do not show any real turn.

¹¹The word 'competence' has a double meaning. It comprises ability as well as responsibility. The concept of competence has various meanings and applications in various sciences. Here, it is intended to use it in the context of an analysis of the upheavals in East Germany in the framework of political science. Responsibilities and abilities are closely connected.

appears in all spheres of society. Normally competence is conferred through a procedure of selection. Its assumption presupposes an appropriate factual knowledge as well as experience and other social qualities, the subjective meaning of competence. In the economy competence is closely connected with ownership and financial power. It differs from purely executive or direct work and it is therefore to some extent elitist.

If one asks about the practical value of this notion then one is faced with the complex question as to which people have got how much say and why. And it is precisely this that is the main political problem in the current situation in East Germany. Indeed it has to be noted that East Germans have less say in Germany today. There are very few East Germans in the government and public service at Federal level. Currently only two Federal Ministers come from the East. Conversely, in 1991 ten thousand West German officials were working in the new German *Länder*, and in 1993 there were 35,000, who received an additional payment for their work (the 'Buschzulage').¹² The total number of West Germans who meanwhile have leading jobs in the society and economy of East Germany is of course much greater. Today East Germany basically no longer has its own profile of responsibility and management.

It goes without saying that there are reasons for this situation which can be found in the history of the GDR as well as in the course unification took. On the one hand, as a result of the collapse of the National Socialist dictatorship, the incorporation of East Germany into the Soviet sphere of power and its subsequent socialist development, the competence of the GDR and its people in foreign and domestic policy was always restricted. Despite all specific developments and the international recognition which the GDR eventually managed to gain, the country was never completely sovereign. This is proved by the events of 1953 and what is known as the Brezhnev doctrine. It was only with Gorbachev that the lack of competence was removed to any far-reaching extent.

Within the GDR the socialist structures and the policy of the leadership of the SED had the effect that neither a democratic and constitutional state competence nor the economic competence of a market economy could develop to more than a very limited degree.

¹²Klaus von Beyme, *Das politische System der Bundesrepublik nach der Vereinigung* (Munich 1991), pp. 316-7; *Mitteldeutsche Zeitung*, 22.11.1993, p. 1.

The most important posts were occupied by a communist elite, who were out of touch with and acted against the interests of the people, and who tried to control the whole of society. True, there was room for manoeuvre at an individual level and for responsible people, arising partly from the mechanism of the implementation of resolutions and partly from the tactics of the leadership.¹³ In addition an oppositional potential always existed. However, this competence was not a constitutional state and market economy competence.

On the other hand, German unification did not take its course as a process of the unification of two equal partners. On the contrary, it was conducted by an act of accession of the GDR to the Federal Republic. After a short democratic episode of only one year the GDR did not prove able to survive. With the Federal Republic it joined a country which was not only territorially and demographically larger, but which represents one of the most complex and economically powerful Western democracies. With that it became abundantly clear that unification essentially amounted to a process of transfer of the structures of the Federal Republic to the GDR, a process in which East Germans were not able to play a responsible role for two reasons.

Firstly there was a lack of the appropriate professional skills, which could not be gained in the brief period of sovereign democratic development between the autumn of 1989 and October 1990. In 1984 71% of the political elite of the Federal Republic had a university degree. Of these more than 60% had studied Law and some 15% Economics. In the view of Klaus von Beyme, the West German political elite thus has a degree of professionalism which, for example, surpasses that of Britain's elite.¹⁴ In other spheres of government, too, there was a lack of the skills necessary to assume responsibility in large numbers and in decisive positions. The bankruptcy of the socialist economy was an additional factor.

Secondly, political incrimination affected not only the old political elite, who had already been deposed by the revolution of autumn 1989, but a larger circle of responsible people of the former GDR. This concerned holders of state functions at lower levels, above

¹³Cf. Hans-Georg Wehling, "Sozialistische Demokratie" — Demokratie ohne Sozialismus? Chancen und Grenzen der Mitwirkung von Bürgern im politischen Entscheidungsprozeß', in *DDR heute — Wandlungstendenzen und Widersprüche einer sozialistischen Industriegesellschaft*, ed. Gerd Meyer and Jürgen Schröder (Tübingen 1988), pp. 57-8.

¹⁴*Das politische System der Bundesrepublik nach der Vereinigung* (note 12), pp. 233ff.

all functionaries and members of the SED, but also higher functionaries from the so-called Block Parties and the social organisations. In the Treaty of Unification there was even a legal ruling on previous cooperation with the Secret Service of the GDR. Former collaborators with the *Stasi* have to be dismissed from the civil service.¹⁵ This was not without its effect on the political parties and associations, and in part the economy, too.

In this respect, developments in East Germany are also different from those in the other countries of the former Soviet Bloc. In these countries a political change of power has taken place, too. The old communist elite has been deposed, but the new elite was recruited either from representatives of the former opposition or from followers of the old elite at lower levels of the administration. Even though reconstructions took place and continue to take place, the whole structure of the authorities remains in the people's own hands. 'Denkende Menschen können sich umstellen [...]. Wir sind doch alle durch diese Schule gegangen', the Deputy Minister of Education of the Ukraine is reported to have said.¹⁶

In order to explain in more detail the processes in East Germany, it is intended here to refer to developments of a specific sphere, that of higher education in the former GDR. With approximately 100,000 employees, higher education has proved to be a very sensitive area in German unification for several reasons. The following statements are based upon knowledge of universities in Berlin, Leipzig and Halle.¹⁷ Developments at the University of Halle will be particularly referred to.

At the University of Halle, a university which has rich academic traditions, a far-reaching shake-up of structures and staff has taken place and is currently taking place in the course of renewal. At first complete departments, especially those in the Humanities, were closed down ('abgewickelt'). These included the Institute for Social Sciences, as the

¹⁵*Der Einigungsvertrag. Vertrag zwischen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik über die Herstellung der Einheit Deutschlands. Der vollständige Text mit allen Ausführungsbestimmungen und Erläuterungen* (Bonn 1990), p. 1059.

¹⁶'Lenin und die High-Society', *Mitteldeutsche Zeitung*, 7.12.1993, p. 19.

¹⁷Cf. *Landeshochschulstrukturkommission Berlin. Stellungnahmen und Empfehlungen zu Struktur und Entwicklung der Berliner Hochschulen*, ed. Landeshochschulstrukturkommission Berlin, Geschäftsstelle bei der Senatsverwaltung für Wissenschaft und Forschung des Landes Berlin (Berlin 1992); *Empfehlungen der Hochschulstrukturkommission zur Hochschul- und Wissenschaftsentwicklung des Landes Sachsen-Anhalt*, ed. Ministerium für Wissenschaft und Forschung des Landes Sachsen-Anhalt (Magdeburg 1992); *Hochschule im Umbruch. Zwischenbilanz Ost*, ed. Hilde Schramm (Berlin 1993).

Department of Marxism-Leninism quickly renamed itself after the *Wende*, and also the departments of Philosophy, Economics and Law. In contrast to all other universities in the former GDR the department of History was not closed down. There is no rational explanation for this.

In a second phase an appraisal of the academic and administrative staff concerning their personal and professional qualifications was conducted. Personal appraisal was the task of Personnel Commissions. 171 Members belonged to these commissions at the University of Halle. As a result of their work 3043 of the 8000 or so employees at the University were appraised, of whom 237 were recommended for dismissal to the Minister responsible.¹⁸ The work of the Personnel Commissions was not only controversial in the eyes of those employees who were appraised and dismissed. Even although basically only East Germans were active members of these commissions their political and moral integrity was not absolutely beyond doubt either. Some of them had been disadvantaged in the former GDR. However, many of them had been in positions of responsibility in bodies of the administration and management of the former GDR, too. Moreover, the reasons which could lead to dismissal went far beyond the criterion of cooperation with the *Stasi*. Not only *Stasi*-files but also personnel files were used as the basis for decisions by the Personnel Commissions. Before every single hearing a questionnaire about state and social functions held in the GDR was required. 'Close connections to the system' ('Systemnähe') was the criterion which determined dismissal or continued employment. Apart from the definite necessity of a political process of renewal, arbitrary decisions shaped by career or even vengeance motives could at least not be excluded.

Thus the work of the Personnel Commissions reveals the problems of an internal political renewal concerning persons at lower levels of responsibility and administration. As already indicated, here existing competences only had limited independence. Of course it was possible in the GDR to decline functions and refrain from concrete actions. Yet basically all who assumed responsibility in teaching, research and administration automatically served the system. Nevertheless, it has to be seen that this internal East German process of cleansing

¹⁸Cf. *Mitteldeutsche Zeitung*, 12.10.1993, p. 1.

has been taking place in a framework which had already been decisively determined by the developments of German unification.

It was to be expected that jobs would be cut because, in comparison with West Germany, the universities of the former GDR were considerably overstaffed. In 1996 the University of Halle is planned to have about 6000 employees. This is in itself far fewer than the 8000 employees before the *Wende*, but in 1993 other colleges in the region with about 3000 employees were integrated into the University of Halle. The other problem was the professional appraisal which inevitably had to come with unification. All East German academics were under pressure to adapt to this new challenge. In this process a particular political attitude could be helpful. However, professional appraisal was not only a matter for the East Germans — quite the contrary. At the level of the *Länder* commissions were set up which worked out recommendations for new structures at the universities. Inaugural commissions and appraisal commissions were established for individual departments. In all of these bodies West German academics directly or indirectly held the most decisive positions. Meanwhile at the University of Halle new faculties were being founded and new posts filled. As a result there are now almost no East German academics who still have jobs in the departments of Economics, Law and Social Sciences. The process of appraisal has not yet finished.

Nevertheless, is it really right to speak of a loss of East German competence in the course of German unification? In a certain respect, no. Firstly there was no West German competence in East Germany. Depriving many of power who had assumed responsibility under the old regime was not only professionally inevitable but also politically justified. Secondly, it has to be taken into account that East Germans, whether they were activists of the revolution of autumn 1989 or not, *have* assumed responsibility. Moreover, once again on the example of the universities, developments have taken a variety of courses, too.

In spite of all this, the question must be asked whether it would not have been possible to give a larger number of East Germans the chance of keeping or assuming responsibility. In the first place, today East Germans, if they have taken on responsibility at all, rank no higher than second or third. Those East Germans who have real responsibility partially prove to be token figures of representation rather than real protagonists, which has given rise to the expression 'Vorzeige-Ossis'. At Federal level some East Germans have had

to give up higher posts for various reasons without an East German successor taking over from them.

Furthermore, with regard to those West Germans who are currently active in East Germany it should be said that their motives for coming to East Germany vary greatly. Manfred Spieker points out that the principle of solidarity makes it necessary for the West Germans to give help and support to the new German *Länder*.¹⁹ The question is whether help and support is really the main motive for West Germans to come to East Germany. Some of the West Germans are not interested in helping at all. One West German official is reported to have left East Germany with the remark that a trained singer would only upset an amateur choir.²⁰ This at the very least demonstrates a lack of understanding of history and political misjudgement. Other West Germans have only come to East Germany to pursue their own interests. As early as the autumn of 1989 a government official in Bonn said in East Berlin: 'Die sind so schwach, daß wir uns alles erlauben können.'²¹ Perhaps this was only directed at the new communist leadership after Honecker. However, there was, for example, the salaries scandal in the government of Sachsen-Anhalt in the autumn of 1993, where several West German ministers turned out to be receiving inflated salaries which were only apparently legal. Of course, using one's opportunities for one's own benefit, even breaching legal regulations is an old attitude in politics, too. Inexperience and insecurity in East Germany currently favour such attitudes. The process of unification demands a different behaviour.

Thirdly, this whole situation will probably be long-lasting. It might well be supposed that, in the future, young East Germans who are still in education and training now will attain competence not only in East Germany but also in the old Federal Republic. However, this cannot be expected in the short or medium term, namely in the next few years. Meanwhile, many positions in East Germany have become occupied on a long-term basis by

¹⁹Katholische Soziallehre und Civil Society. Der Beitrag der katholischen Soziallehre zu den Transformationsprozessen in Mittel- und Osteuropa', in *Vom Sozialismus zum demokratischen Rechtsstaat. Der Beitrag der katholischen Soziallehre zu den Transformationsprozessen in Polen und der ehemaligen DDR*, ed. Manfred Spieker (Paderborn 1992), pp. 136-7.

²⁰Cit. Klaus von Beyme, *Das politische System der Bundesrepublik nach der Vereinigung* (note 12), p. 317.

²¹Cit. Klemens Semtner, *Der Runde Tisch* (Munich 1992), p. 95.

West Germans. There will only be gradual developments in East Germany to bring East Germans into higher positions in greater numbers. Taking on responsibility in West Germany will be much more difficult for East Germans.

In view of the fact that existing scope for flexibility has not or has only in a limited sense been exploited, it is undoubtedly possible to speak of a new loss of competence not only by some but by a large number of East Germans. An excessive heteronomy of the East Germans has been revived, which is not altered by the fact that, to a certain extent, it was caused by the people themselves, it was necessary and it took place and is still taking place in a framework of democratic and legal rules. These features are even the basis which make it currently difficult for many East Germans to identify themselves with the new circumstances. However, what relevance does the gain in prosperity described have in this connection?

Gain in prosperity and loss of competence: problems of a political and social constellation

At first sight the gain in prosperity and the loss of competence by the East Germans are two separate processes, because each has affected different social groups. The gain in prosperity more or less concerns the whole population, the loss of competence only part of it. Moreover, the majority of the people are not interested in their own competence. On the contrary, if prosperity is further guaranteed they even welcome a superfluity of West Germans who assume responsibility. Prosperity is the most important matter for the people and as far as GDR competence is concerned they have had bad experiences.

As modern Western societies show, however, there always has to be a connection between prosperity and competence in the social process. A reasonable reproduction of prosperity is only possible if at least some of the population who have prosperity also develop competence. The reduction of the quality of life to prosperity should not be the aim of modern democracies. Even the British economist Adam Smith, who was certainly a strong advocate of prosperity, once remarked that prosperity alone is not sufficient for a satisfied

life.²² Conversely, competence can promote reasonable attitudes to prosperity. The specific situation in East Germany, however, is characterised by the fact that here the necessity of the loss of competence which took place must be critically questioned with regard to its extent, its course, its political culture and its duration. This loss of competence is a destructive political factor which at the moment can be compensated for by the gain in prosperity and which will probably disappear in the course of time. Nevertheless, there is a potential for negative effects under certain circumstances.

These circumstances could come into existence if the current gain in prosperity, which as a sudden and not self-produced gain was dubious anyway, is also jeopardised. The East Germans' confidence in West German competence, which even now is already deeply damaged, would not only decline further, but new political constellations could arise which might ultimately be no less difficult than current developments in Eastern European countries, where the main problem is the drop in the standard of living. For instance, Polish scholars have claimed, 'daß die Menschen in der DDR im Unterschied zu Polen [...] nicht eigentliche Subjekte, sondern Instrumente der Veränderung gewesen [sind]'.²³

However, the wheel of history cannot be turned back. Necessities and realities in the united Germany should not be ignored. The question arises as to what has to happen for such a scenario to be avoided. Here several aspects are of importance. Firstly an additional stagnation of prosperity or even a dramatic loss of prosperity must be prevented at all costs. The prosperity in East Germany, in which not only the GDR's citizens are interested, has to be stabilised and gradually extended. A return is no longer possible.

There is, of course, the problem of feasibility. It is a fact that currently Germany is in a recession. This recession, however, was neither caused by the East Germans nor should the burden of it be shifted on to their backs. A better distribution of prosperity in Germany, smiled at by some West Germans, could indeed be an important instrument. However, with regard to the existing situation it is disquieting if one looks at the way in which material status is currently being defended with all strength in Germany.

²²Adam Smith, *The Theory of the Moral Sentiments* (New York 1966), p. 70.

²³Hermann Silies, 'Diskussionsbericht', in *Vom Sozialismus zum demokratischen Rechtsstaat* (note 19), p. 186.

Secondly, it is urgently necessary to offer further training schemes in order to acquaint the East Germans with the new social structures. Education must compensate for the lack of practical experience which the West Germans were able to gather over decades. In this regard it has to be said that not only are currently many opportunities being forfeited, but an intellectual deficit on the part of East Germans is being continued, for instance by financial cuts in political education, which ought to be of particular significance. Friedrich Schorlemmer has noted that East Germans are once again being degraded to the status of fools ('Dümmlinge') and aliens ('Fremdlinge') in their own country.²⁴ The loss of competence therefore has its intellectual aspects, too. One should not wonder at the growing lack of interest in and irritation with politics ('Politikverdrossenheit').

A third aspect, which relates to education, consists in the development of a critical and responsible democratic public. A critical public signals political and social problem areas, brings pressure to bear on the political authorities and can thus help to prevent problematic developments. Surely participation in the political and social processes of decision-making, which would have an important stabilising function even under East German conditions, has to be part of this, too.²⁵ But participation alone is not enough.

Fourthly, the loss of competence must not continue any further. More East Germans have to assume responsibility in the direction and management of state institutions, society and the economy as quickly as possible. Uncomplicated opportunities for obtaining qualifications would be necessary for that. It must after all be borne in mind that, in the process of unification, competence has taken on new contents and functions. Diverging East and West German mentalities must be understood and translated into action homogeneously. A more complex approach is required from all those who have assumed responsible posts. The East Germans can contribute to this process because they have been shaped by both West and East.

In any case in its current form the constellation of a gain in prosperity and a loss of competence will only function for a limited time. The East German identity, which grew

²⁴Cit. Habermas, *Die Moderne — ein unvollendetes Projekt* (note 5), p. 264.

²⁵Cf. Gert-Joachim Glaeßner, 'Der Weg in die Krise und das Ende des realen Sozialismus', in *Eine deutsche Revolution. Der Umbruch in der DDR, seine Ursachen und Folgen*, ed. Gert-Joachim Glaeßner (Frankfurt a.M. 1992), p. 40.

out of the negation and affirmation of socialism over forty years, has not yet disappeared. If a reasonable relationship between the East Germans' development of prosperity and competence cannot be created before the next generation, not only East Germany but Germany as a whole will face uncertain times. Negative effects on developments in Europe and beyond would be inevitable.