

Editorial

The theme of this issue was born of the essay by *Michael Richter*. He claims that the GDR was initially democratised from within, so that it would be in a position to accept the democracy of the Federal Republic half a year later. The “first democratisation” occurred in seven phases. Against the backdrop of activity in civil rights groups over several years, the networking and the structures for the overthrow of the system were available in 1989. In regard to their ideas of a liberal constitutional state the civil rights campaigners partially leaned towards the model of the Federal Republic of Germany. However, others, such as Friedrich Schorlemmer, specifically sought democratic alternatives to the model of the Federal Republic of Germany. During the second phase in spring 1989 the citizen’s committees and civil society orientated civil rights groups, which exercised influence over a large proportion of the population, played an important role in overthrowing the system. In the third phase or “Dialogue phase”¹, which Richter chronologically orders as between 10th October and mid-November, the civil rights movements, in this case predominantly the “Neue Forum” (the new forum) emitted important impulses. It was probably not only for tactical reasons that the Soviet Reform policy also played a certain role. In the fourth phase between November 1989 and the end of January 1990 an organisational differentiation of the different political grouping, both old and new, occurred. The two opposing camps, which in turn were divided into factions, opted on the one hand for either a democratic-social GDR or visionary new GDR model of society, or on the other hand for a joint German solution under the domination of the Federal Republic or in the form of a new joint German constitution, which had yet to be drafted. The majority of the population with the parties and other organisations in their wake favoured with increasing dynamic the unity concept, although until the end of January 1990 the Kremlin was against this option. During the forty years of partition the majority of the GDR population had constantly shown a lively interest in the political developments of the FRG and by doing so they had positioned themselves in the party spectrum, as if they also could have voted. Furthermore, Richter draws attention to the fact that through the efforts of West Germans in the GDR since the turn of the year 1989/1990 a process had begun, which may be described as the start of a “German-German domestic policy”. The fourth phase also saw the establishment of the “Runder Tisch” as an “instrument of democratisation” – a Polish invention. The fifth phase began with Kohl’s visit to Gorbachev on 10th February 1990, which paved the way to German Re-unification. It ended with the election to the Volkskammer (people’s parliament of the GDR) on 18th March, which initiated the sixth phase of the “institutionalisation of the GDR democracy”. However, the German majority voted for a quick entry into the FRG, which also constituted a

1 On its problematisation see Neubert in this issue, p. 57.

decisive step towards reunification. A democratised GDR population in a democratised GDR had voted for the dissolution of the state and as such had rendered it a “transformation democracy”. The Unification Treaty of 30th August 1990 definitively determined the “path of transformation”. During the seventh phase, which according to Richter, began on the 3rd October (Unification day), he encourages the differentiation between exogenous and endogenous factors in the “transferral of institutions”. The latter includes the “continued existence of the remainder of the GDR institutional order, the continuity of staff [...] as well as the political attitudes and the values of the population [...]”

At the beginning of his contribution “*Aufbruch der Zivilgesellschaft – Zur Einordnung der [deutschen] friedlichen Revolution*” (The change in the civil society – On the classification of the peaceful revolution in 1989) Konrad H. Jarausch emphasises the Europe wide “extent of the change” between 1989 and 1991. He highlights that the “German unification was a product of the severe change”. He would like to introduce the term and meaning of *Zivilgesellschaft* (civil society) and its recovery to the discussion on the phenomenon of the “peaceful revolution”. After the forced harmonisation of the real existing socialist society it was a question of a “re-differentiation” of society. At first Jarausch names the steps in the process of harmonisation from 1946 until the end of the 1950s i.e. the unfair privileges of one party, the measures to nationalise industries and the formation of mass organisations. All of this lead to a “completely dominant” state (Jürgen Kocka) and to the loss of societal self-organisation. At the very latest the 1970s saw the development of a critical minority, which introduced the step-by-step reactivation of society through cultural-political protest, despite the self-set limitations of democratic socialism. The refusal to do military service and the topic of peace formed the focal points of this protest. Despite the “official church’s” co-operation with the regime² “in their (the Churches’) shadow” civil rights groups emerged, which in turn formed the “core of an active opposition” along with Samisdat (underground) literature and symbolic activities such as the creation of “Gegenöffentlichkeit” or counter publicity. When Jarausch talks of the “official church” he means the protestant State Churches: the Roman Catholic Church is never mentioned. From these diverse groupings an oppositional culture developed, which despite aligning itself with the social movements in the West alongside the dissidents in other Central and Eastern European countries, it managed to develop into an independent “growth” through the positive reception of their proposals. The disappointment in real existing socialism and the brutal action against the dissidents resulted in the minority opposition turning into the mass protest movement, which took to the streets at the end of 1980s. From the informal opposition groups public acting organisations, such as the “Neue Forum,” were formed and challenged the regime to “democratic dialogue” via reforms. Above all the tactically limited concessions on the

2 On the problem of “State loyal church men and women” see Neubert in this issue, p. 64.

part of the state, “could not stop the floodgates being opened.” Jarausch marks the “first break from the civil society” as the establishment of political parties and the consequent fall of the “national block”. He regards the establishment of the round table talks, which was invented by the Polish trade union movement “Solidarność” ten years earlier, as the highpoint of the democratic change after the wall fell. The round tables talks were „an attempt to institutionalise the civil society“. At the same time in connection to the elections these instruments indicated the limit of the possibilities for action of the “political amateurs”. Professionally experienced West Germans now took over the “political business”, absorbed and/or marginalised the “media shy” often introverted civil rights campaigners, transformed the civil society in transition into “traditional parliamentary forms” and took autonomy away from the civil rights campaigners. The election decision of the GDR citizens also contributed to this development because they opted against the project of a “third way” and favoured the quick accession to the FRG. According to Jarausch the question of an improvement of their material living conditions was a priority for them (the so-called “banana reflex”). Desperate attempts by the civil rights campaigners to create a joint German debate on the constitution failed because of the unwillingness of the West German civil servants and in the end nothing came of it. With the acceptance of Western institutions the development of civil society petered out and the transferral of Western conditions lamed self-initiative in the East. Furthermore the required efforts for adjustment, which became necessary through the expected reception of the new institutions in East Germany, absorbed all strengths. Worries about the future haunted the thoughts of the new FRG citizens. After the retreat of many disappointed civil rights campaigners or their integrations in the party system, which was created by the West, the transformation of the new German Länder became the “play area of the members of factional parties as well as converted post communist and western ‘development aid workers’”. Many citizens reacted towards the new structures and organisations, which they had not developed themselves, once again with non-participation, scepticism of democracy and a renewed escape into the private sphere. They experienced the western competition norms, with which they could not identify, as economical and cultural colonisation. “In the subjective opinion of the East Germans the weakness of the civil society is ultimately just as evident because the collective and consensus based level of expectation rather suggests a post socialist idea of ‘civil society’”. Despite the sobering findings, which one can summarise as “easy come, easy go” (or as the German saying more precisely expresses: hardly won, already gone), Jarausch finishes his contribution with an optimistic historical review; 1989/90 was, in comparison to 1848, 1918 and 1945,³ practically the only democratic revolt in Germany that was successful. From this positive experience Jarausch finds that “impulses to overcome the

3 In Neubert (see below, p. 67) in the list of people’s uprisings and revolution 1945 it is missing; instead he mentions the uprising from 1953, which Jarausch does not men-

present-day globalisation crisis” and the international networking of citizenry initiatives as well as “innovative grass-roots democratic methods against the growth of casino capitalism” could arise from it.

Ehrhart Neubert, the only contributor with a background in the civil rights movement, describes and analyses in his article “*Revolution und Revisionismus in Sprache, Geschichte und Recht*” (*Revolution and Revisionism in language, history and law*), the process of release as a revolt of language, the new assessment of history and the struggle for the re-establishment of the rule of law. This process was initiated by the “peaceful revolution”. He also recognises in his study of the developments over the last 15 years that the achievements of the “peaceful revolution” are threatened and blames the “almost exactly opposite forms of intellectual processing of this radical change” in East and West. This results in the cultural uneasiness of the intellectual elite and the “increased lack of orientation” in the federal German society. The fall of Communism surprised the West and found it conceptionally unprepared. The research on the GDR in old federal Länder is put into question and the currently available “partially demanding theory models on revolution and transformation” do not really explain “the SED’s loss of power in the peaceful process”. As an example of a misjudgement he mentions the West’s great overestimation of the role of Gorbachev in the process of German unification and in the Central and Eastern European process of democratisation, which is incidentally in line with the opinion of Polish academics⁴. He also does not regard the construction of a “development of the civil society as a self liberation” in relation to the self-freeing of the GDR society as explainable. With reference to Hannah Arendt and Fritz Mauthner, Neubert investigates the connection between language and power. Language guides actions, creates the illusion of reality and has a control function. Therefore, in the GDR there was a struggle over the “correct” language. Insofar the power political struggles of 1989/90 were at the same time also an acute “language revolt”, which had a subversive tradition that was observed in the way the GDR citizens spoke. The ritualised communist language opposed the protest movement’s expressions, which symbolically expressed the common desire for freedom. This happened through the new use of religious as well as secular symbols. New language creations thus indicate the reawakening of the language and the acceptance of responsibility for one’s own liberation. On the other hand the loss of language in the SED regime was an indicator for its loss of power and its growing distance from its subjects, which were once under its control. During the transformation process it comes to the partial consolidation of the post-communist language as a result of the first disappointment. “The

tion. According to Neubert in the West the 17th of June is marginalised as “a regionally limited social protest”. It “no longer fits the political concept of Germany” (p. 68).

4 Cf. for example Adam Krzemiński, *Polen im 20. Jahrhundert. Ein historischer Essay*, 2nd edition, Munich 1998, p. 172 ff.; Jerzy Maćków, *Totalitarismus und danach. Einführung in den Kommunismus und die postkommunistische Systemtransformation*, Baden-Baden 2005, p. 75 ff.

post communists had their biggest success through the linguistic neutralisation of the revolution with the help of the term ‘Wende’ (change)”. Neubert sees the first reason for the incomplete linguistic liberation also in the West. In the old FRG there was no language of freedom. In connection to the National Socialist dictatorship a politically correct language was developed, while during the SED dictatorship the language of struggle had become dog-eared and powerless. Furthermore, the West had no immediate political experience with liberation. Alongside language, history was also to be regained; the falsification of history by the SED had to be corrected. With the help of the Samisdat-Literature the political opponents carried out a new assessment of historical events, including the people’s revolt on 17th June 1953 and the building of the Berlin Wall. Neubert sees an important institutional continuation of this work in the organisation of the authority of the “Bundesbeauftragte für die Stasiunterlagen” (Federal representatives for the documents of the Stasi) and the establishment of “Stiftung Aufarbeitung der SED-Diktatur” (foundation for the reappraisal of the SED dictatorship). As a delaying element in this process of historical self-certainty he suspiciously regards the objections of the academic historians guild from the West and its leniency towards the GDR academia. In places, where GDR themes were handled, “social historical attempts and constantly new endeavours dominated in order to refute or weaken the characteristics of the dictatorship in the GDR.” Neubert feels that he can determine similar reluctance in law as that in historiography, “to react positively to the revolution”. He describes the criminal persecution of the injustices of the SED as poor and blames the Federal German criminal law tradition, which was intended to minimise the Nazi crimes. The legal positivism of the old Länder in the FRG was not moved by the re-establishment of laws in the wake of the democratic revolution in the GDR and granted the injustice of the SED “a continuous legal status”.

After the revolution the former Federal German defence minister, *Hans Apel*, worked as a university lecturer in Rostock and sat on the board of various firms. At the centre of his observations is the upheaval in Kombinat Schwarze Pumpe (an energy supplier), where Apel was appointed the chairman of the board in autumn 1990. Apel’s experience in turn throws new light on the peaceful revolution: in Lusatia the people had it relatively good. “Civil rights and freedom of speech did not play an important role for the majority of them. In so far the peaceful resolution in the GDR was in reality an affair of the city dwellers.” On the other hand SED functionaries peacefully left and the employees left the ruling party and its organisations en masse. A power vacuum ensued. The Treuhandanstalt took over the collective and new union leaders, mainly from SED successor organisations, now kept the firm running. Calls to strike, for example on the part of the Neue Forum, were not followed by the staff. As the West German industrial union “Bergbau und Energie” took over the co-decision making on the part of the steel industry it came into conflict with the East German union because in the minds of the Westerners “there is no place for grass roots democracy”. The East German personal managers lost their posi-

tions to West Germans. West German wage structures with considerable income differences were introduced. It then came to a gigantic cutback in staff, which was generally financially cushioned by “early retirement” rules, but those affected were condemned to inactivity. The cut back in positions was passively accepted, although disappointment with the new system grew. Despite everything Apel still sees signs of an economic adaptation of the East to the West.

Under the code name “Wesera” the Polish secret service observed the Federal German academics and intervened with its own activities in East European research in the FRG. Also the institutions, which had a connection to East European research, for example the Deutsche Forschungsgemeinschaft, Max Planck Institute, Goethe Institute, the regional memorial offices and other cultural institutions, were under observation. In East European institute Polish agents were planted; they were mainly scholarship beneficiaries from various German foundations. These activities, which have remained until now unknown, are investigated by *Roman P. Smolorz* in the light of new sources in his contribution “*Kommunistische Agenten in der deutschen Osteuropa-Forschung 1963–1982 vor dem Hintergrund der neuen Ostpolitik der Brandt-Scheel-Regierung*” (Communist agents in the German East European Research 1963–1982 against the backdrop of the new Ostpolitik of the Brandt-Scheel government). The hypothesis of the work of the security service was based on the supposition that the “East research” was a refuge for traditional Pan-German nationalism, which now disguised itself with anti-Communist attitudes and in reality the USA sponsored East-European research worked towards the returning of the former German Eastern regions, which endangered Polish territory. After 1970 in connection with the new West German *Ostpolitik* the one-sided opening of the West was used for the observation of the above-named West German institutions. This created another Achilles heel in the security policy of the Federal Republic. However, the informers (or unofficial collaborators) often only obtained information, “which without effort was also obtainable via the West German press”. On the other hand, they did not only observe but were active as influencing actors. Smolorz assumes that until 1989 there were lively secret service activities in the area of “East European Research”.

Wolfram Pyta in his article on “*Die Herausforderungen der neueren Holocaustforschung für die Totalitarismustheorie*“ (The challenge of the latest Holocaust research for the theory of totalitarianism) pleads for a cultural historical expansion of the totalitarian concept. The ruling structural roots of the totalitarian theory cannot suitably explain the “dynamic development of the extermination of the Jews,” according to the findings of Holocaust research. Furthermore, the so-called “Täterforschung” (perpetrator research) clarifies that not only the rulers without scruples but also a considerable part of the German society were either directly or indirectly involved in the massacres. Without their willingness to co-operation the National Socialist System, which was an ineffective conglomerate of institutions that often acted in contradiction to one other, would in no way have been able to achieve its goals. The majority of the German popula-

tion so readily followed the “charismatic leadership” of Hitler that the polycratic structures to carry out the Führer’s will and the National Socialist ideology were not necessary. Against the backdrop of the general readiness for violence the very differently reasoned Anti-Jewish philosophies could on the whole be tied together by the Nazi ideology, which finally lead to mass murder over multiple phases of exclusion and discrimination. Pyta sees in the ideological factors contained in that development the starting point for the distribution of the concept of totalitarianism, which in the future should not only analyse the “thoughtless use of the state’s means of power” by totalitarian regimes but also their “ability to mobilise politically loaded configuration of opinions” and to gain the support of the majority of the population. In addition to this it would be of great interest also to consider those factors, which immunise people against such inhumane stances and positions.⁵

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5 Cf. Ralf Dahrendorf, *Versuchungen der Unfreiheit. Der Intellektuelle in Zeiten der Prüfung*, Munich 2006.