

Democracy Now published its programmatic pamphlet on 12 September; Democratic Awakening was founded on 1 October. Most important, however, was the collective movement, New Forum (Neues Forum), which understood itself not as a political party, but rather as a (constitutionally permissible, at least in theory) association (*Vereinigung*), intended to open up the public sphere for open discussion and debate. The founding document of New Forum, proclaimed on 10 September, urged the importance of free and open discussion of the manifold, often contradictory, imperatives of policy and public welfare, arguing that the time was ripe for the energies of citizens to be directed to the issues of the day:

Communication between state and society is visibly disrupted in our country. Evidence of this ranges from the widespread sense of being fed up (*Verdrossenheit*) through the retreat into private niches to mass emigration . . . The disrupted relationship between state and society cripples the creative potential of our society and hinders the solution of pressing local and global tasks. We fritter ourselves away in bad-tempered passivity and yet we have so many more important things that we could be doing for our life, our country and humanity.⁸⁶

It was precisely this mobilization of ever-increasing numbers of formerly passive citizens that was to bring movement into the system in the coming weeks.

⁸⁶ Quoted in C. Schüddekopf (ed.), *'Wir sind das Volk!'* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1990), 29.

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THE END OF A DICTATORSHIP

MASS MOBILIZATION AND REGIME IMPLOSION, AUTUMN 1989

No revolution, historically, has been a simple matter. In no case is it sufficient to seek to explain only the growth of popular discontent: dislike of prevailing political conditions has never been a sufficient explanation even of an isolated revolt, let alone a successful revolution. As argued above, dislike of the GDR was relatively constant throughout its forty-year history, and does little to elucidate its final collapse.¹ While every revolution is in a very real sense unique, there are certain recurrent features. All successful revolutions appear to be characterized by a particular combination of factors. One of these is the growth of a revolutionary movement which at crucial moments is capable of mobilizing large numbers of people to mount a serious challenge from below. But equally important is the question of the claims to power and exertion of effective rule. Historically, notable revolutions—including the English Revolution of 1640 and the French Revolution of 1789—have originated, not with a challenge from below, but rather with splits among ruling élites (although of course emerging splits are often simultaneously exploited and exacerbated by growing challenges from below).² The course taken by revolutionary developments may also depend crucially on international circumstances. In the East German case, the state was characterized by a lack of national legitimacy and the artificial nature of its construction and dependence on the Soviet Union:

¹ It is therefore not sufficient to emphasize this factor as the final explanation of the revolution, although this sort of emphasis is prevalent in many essays on the GDR; cf. e.g. David Childs's essay in Janet Wharton (ed.), *German Politics and Society from 1933 to the Wende* (Nottingham: INGASA, 1992).

² For a path-breaking comparative analysis of the conditions for successful social revolutions, see Theda Skocpol, *The State and Social Revolutions: France, Russia, China* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979). For my own analysis of the historiographically rather contentious English Revolution, see M. Fulbrook, *Piety and Politics: Religion and the Rise of Absolutism in England, Württemberg and Prussia* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983).

thus it was peculiarly fragile with respect to changes in the international system.

The period from late 1987 onwards was more polarized, more unstable, than at any time since the early 1950s. Some of the reasons for instability were strikingly similar to those of the early 1950s; other factors were markedly different. As far as the international context was concerned, there was a new lability, a new willingness to rethink the post-war settlement, on the part of the Soviet Union. Under Gorbachev, the German question was open again, in a way in which it had not been since the rejection of the Stalin notes and the incorporation of the two parts of Germany into their respective NATO and Warsaw Pact military alliances. As far as the East German political élites were concerned, it would be exaggerating to suggest that there was the degree of open factionalism and political or ideological difference characteristic of the newly 'unified' Socialist Unity Party of the early 1950s, but there was in more muted form a new climate of uncertainty, dissatisfaction with Honecker's resistance to reform, and the sense that change was on the agenda, although the manner and timing of any shift could neither be predicted nor openly plotted. At the same time, however, the repressive forces were infinitely larger, more sophisticated in their techniques of observation and control, and more efficient in their capacity to repress. A key difference, however, lay in the character of dissent. Popular opposition to the regime in the 1950s had been diverse, largely spontaneous, and easily isolated. In the late 1980s, while the vast majority of the population had in many respects found a *modus vivendi* of grumbling conformity, there was a new and ultimately crucial leaven in society: a network of organized groups, who, for all their internecine differences, for all the state infiltration and control, were determined to set in motion realizable processes of democratization and reform. It was this peculiar combination which was to eventuate in the 'gentle revolution' of the autumn of 1989.

The roles of different elements and historical actors at different phases of the GDR's collapse have contributed to the complexity of the debates over whether or not the GDR experienced a revolution from below, an implosion from above, or a collapse from without. Is the beginning of the end of the GDR best explained in terms of the 'growth of political opposition'; or by a palace revolution or leadership coup followed by communist abdication from power; or by the end of the Cold War and the loss of the protective Iron Curtain imprisoning an unwilling population? Different accounts have tended to emphasize one or another factor.

Clearly the end of the GDR has to be understood in terms of a combination of factors: any explanation must be couched in terms of the ways in

which challenges from below interacted with responses from above in the context of unfolding international circumstances. When one analyses the course of events in the GDR, however, it would seem that the pressures from *below* and from *outside* were in fact of paramount importance. The 'implosion' of the regime, or the effective abdication of the domestic élites, came largely as an initially unintended reaction to what had become an increasingly uncontrollable situation.

The Soviet Union effectively renounced the GDR. This was the crucial precondition for its eventual demise. Since this chapter will explore in more detail the unfolding of domestic politics, it is important to stress this point at the outset. In the later 1980s, in the context of increasing domestic economic (and hence social and political) difficulties within the USSR, leading Soviet strategists began to moot the possibility that hegemony over the Eastern European states could and should no longer be sustained. The cost was effectively greater than the benefits. As Martin McCauley has demonstrated, between 1986 and 1988 the Gorbachev leadership 'came to the momentous conclusion that a military presence in [Eastern Europe] reduced rather than enhanced Soviet security'; and in 1987, in a development completely at odds with the official line in the GDR, the Soviet leaders began to entertain the idea that there was, after all, only *one* German nation.³ At the same time, the Moscow leadership began to explore the possibility of removing Honecker from power. It is of course not suggested here that the Soviet intention at this stage was anything more than the replacement of Honecker by a more reform-minded leader, who might introduce a degree of restructuring and debate in the GDR; nevertheless, this introduced an element of movement and uncertainty in the situation.

The consequences of these shifts in Soviet policy under Gorbachev were multiple. Domestic movements for change within Eastern bloc countries were enthused and motivated by hopes that processes of glasnost and perestroika might be set in motion within their states. Reformist currents were particularly strong in Poland and Hungary, with very immediate effects on the character of the Iron Curtain. The Soviet Union, operating its new 'Sinatra doctrine' ('letting them do it their way') remained content to look on, without intervening; there were no invasions of Soviet tanks, no closing of the borders with displays of force. And the very incapacity—exacerbated by serious physical illness, necessitating surgery and hospitaliz-

³ Martin McCauley, 'Gorbachev, the GDR and Germany', in G.-J. Glaebner and Ian Wallace (eds.), *The German Revolution of 1989: Causes and Consequences* (Oxford: Berg, 1992), 164.

ation in July and August 1989—of Erich Honecker in the face of these crises only confirmed Gorbachev's irritation with the East German leader and his rising sense of the need for renewal and reform in the GDR leadership. Renewal and reform did not of course at this stage mean the renunciation of the GDR; but that was the ultimate effect of the train of events which were set in motion by the snowballing crises of the summer of 1989.

Within the GDR, dissident hopes had for long been fuelled by the notion of a post-Honecker, pro-reformist leadership. These hopes were moreover not limited to those of dissident persuasions: within the leadership of the SED itself, a process of differentiation was developing—if only in very muted form—which culminated ultimately in the replacement of Honecker by Egon Krenz. As we shall see, this proved in the end to be a 'last revolution from above': the lack of national legitimacy of the GDR, and the existence of another Germany according automatic rights of citizenship to fleeing East Germans, swept away the ground from under the new leadership's feet. Within weeks, the domination of the SED, which had held sway so effectively for forty years, was in ruins. The will for power—and with it the capacity to exert effective authority—collapsed with the crumbling of the physical boundaries to this artificial state. All that remained, in the succeeding months, was the negotiation of the manner and speed of the collapse, the sealing of the USSR's renunciation of its creation, and the conditions of East Germany's effective take-over by the West.

Bearing this wider context in mind, let us proceed to examine in more detail the role of different domestic political currents in the unfolding story of the demise of the GDR.

The mobilization of the masses

Up until the late summer of 1989, there had been, as we have seen in previous chapters, several forms of popular response to the regime. There was the very small minority of activists, engaged in their discussion groups and mini-campaigns for changes on particular issues; the retreatists who were prepared to take the risks entailed in applying for exit visas or seeking some means of more rapid escape, including, of course, those seeking to leave for the West in increasing numbers as the borders became more permeable; and the very much larger numbers of essentially passive subjects, who made do with a grumbling quiescence and constrained conformity. In late September 1989, there were stirrings of change. The leaven of dissident

groups began to raise the bread of the largely subordinate masses, slowly at first, but with gathering strength over the ensuing few weeks. Unspoken taboos, internalized self-censorship, inner fears and constraints were overcome, in a process of learning, as the Germans put it, an *aufrechten Gang*—learning to walk upright, one's head held high. A new element entered East German politics: increasing numbers of East Germans began to change from being passive subjects to active citizens.

The accounts of this period rightly stress the emotion and atmosphere of the heady few weeks from late September to early November: a period when the masses emerged on to the streets of the GDR, demonstrating peacefully for change in their own society; when, in a sense, they finally came to assert that it *was* their society, they *they* were the 'people' in whose best interest the party had claimed to rule. There was a complex interplay, in the space of a few short weeks, between, on the one hand, the growing self-confidence and overcoming of fear on the part of the masses, guided and supported by the political activists in the environs of the Church, and, on the other, the growing uncertainty and incapacity to initiate effective responses on the part of the authorities. The implicit social contract of conformist subordination below and largely non-violent repression above had been broken; ever-growing numbers were no longer willing to act the role of obeisant subjects, while the willingness to put into effect the perpetual threat of open, violent force came increasingly under question. At the same time, increasing numbers of those who had previously sustained the regime in a variety of official capacities began to dare to say openly that, in effect, the Emperor had no clothes. The binding spell of mutual complicity in mass deceit began to be broken.

The demands of the New Forum for legal recognition played a role in mobilizing the masses on to the streets; but the demonstrations were larger than this, and the long prehistory of political activism with a puritanical flavour played a major part in the course of what became known as the 'gentle revolution'. Moreover, there was a mutual shaping of action and response: the very non-violence of the demonstrators served to defuse the possibility of violent repression by the authorities; while at the same time the loss of the external cordon of force, the Iron Curtain, made the issue of internal use of force all the more central. Violence would have to be employed directly against the population on the ground, now that it could no longer be employed indirectly, at one remove, through their effective imprisonment in their own country. Immediate and visible repression was either imperative—or obsolete, if the claim to be the people's regime were to be rendered real.

Throughout the summer months, there was a growing ferment of ever more open discussion and debate about the sense of crisis in the GDR. People turned up to work, not knowing from one day to the next which of their colleagues would have fled in the meantime; they debated with family and friends whether they, too, should take the opportunity to flee while the possibility was there—on the historically not unfounded assumption of a possible clampdown on the lines of 1953, 1956, and 1968. The exodus of thousands of East Germans from their homeland prompted those who remained to question more urgently whether they themselves should leave or stay; and, if the latter, what they should or could do to help to make the GDR a place in which people would be willing, voluntarily, to stay. There was no longer any possibility of repressing public debate; of retaining the complicity of the niche society.

This was perhaps the crucial mobilizing factor. Private grumbles—which had been mounting in insistency in the later 1980s—over material and existential problems in the GDR now became publicly articulated and expressed. The regime's attempts at *Verschönerung*—the Potemkin village images beloved of Mittag and Honecker—could no longer be sustained. Although the precise extent of the GDR's indebtedness was not known, and what figures existed were suppressed, public attention was increasingly focused on the ever more visible problems of economic stagnation, even collapse, and, in particular, on the increasingly evident environmental pollution and decay.⁴ The exodus to the West then in some ways lifted the taboo on open debate; private grumbles could no longer be isolated, ignored, denied. There was also, too, perhaps for the first time since 1953, a perception that coordinated protest might have the capacity to effect real change; in this sense, there was a key shift in the perception of opportunity structures, rather than solely in the level of discontent as such.

Even those who had served, through their functions, to sustain the regime in an official capacity began publicly to articulate the need for more open debate. The Evangelical Synod meeting in Eisenach emphasized, in its closing declaration of 19 September, the urgency of dialogue: 'In order not to obstruct the way into a just, democratic, internally and externally peaceful and ecologically sustainable society, an open dialogue involving the whole of society has now become urgent. This entails also an opening up of

⁴ Cf. Karl-Dieter Opp and Peter Voß, *Die volkseigene Revolution* (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1993), 84–95. The highest source of dissatisfaction in their survey appears to have been the environment (93).

currently existing political structures.⁵ On 20 September, even the leader of the LDPD, Manfred Gerlach, openly stressed the need for new ideas and new thinking to deal with the ever more evident crisis facing the country: 'The GDR needs people who question, are impatient, are curious; it needs everyone who bridles at "normality" and in this way helps to discover and implement new ideas.'⁶ But although two of the pillars of the system of domination—the Church and one of the bloc parties, whose leader was one of Honecker's eight deputies and hence closely implicated in the structures of power—openly acknowledged the time for dialogue, this was not yet true of the ruling SED, which publicly maintained a steadfast silence, pretending that all was for the best in the best of people's republics. It was to take considerable pressure from below to nudge the SED into concessions and acknowledgement of the need for reform.

The small circles and groups of reformers which had been growing over the preceding years began, in the late summer and early autumn, to develop into a proliferating set of firmer political organizations, each with its own rather broad statements and visions, arguing most basically the need for dialogue. The New Forum, the Social Democratic Initiative, Democracy Now, Democratic Awakening, and a variety of other newly formed and often quite minuscule groups, built on the experiences of the preceding years to network, organize, and pressurize for change.⁷ At the same time, a quite new phenomenon emerged: the almost inchoate growth of a sense among at least some of the people that they were, after all, and after decades of subordination, a significant force in their own land.

In a demonstrative, politically effective sense, the public mobilization of the masses as a power on the streets can be dated from events in Leipzig on 25 September. Leipzig was an important trade and university city, with a degree of debate and openness to the world comparable to Berlin, facilitated by the regular Leipzig trade fairs and their local implications in terms of provisions and news. There was also a history of local political concern, building on dissident intellectual circles in the 1950s as well as reactions to specific events such as the demolition of the University Church in 1968. The Monday evening services in the Leipzig Nikolaikirche had been a regular event over a considerable period, dating back as far as the introduction of

⁵ Reprinted in Günter Fischbach (ed.), *DDR-Almanach '90* (Stuttgart: Bonn Aktuell, 1990), 241.

⁶ *Ibid.* 242.

⁷ For documents relating to these and other opposition groups up to the end of Nov. 1989, see e.g. G. Rein (ed.), *Die Opposition in der DDR* (Berlin: Wichern, 1989).

regular Monday peace prayer services in relation to the Swords into Ploughshares campaign of 1982; they continued to be a regular, if often muted, feature in subsequent years. In the late summer of 1989, their significance increased dramatically.

On the occasion of the peace prayers on 25 September, a new phenomenon developed.⁸ As on many previous occasions, those who wanted a rapid exit from the GDR started to demonstrate, chanting 'We want out! (*Wir wollen raus!*)'. But, on this occasion, a new chant was raised. Against the voices of those seeking to leave were raised the voices of those proclaiming 'We are staying here! (*Wir bleiben hier!*)'.⁹ On this evening, demonstrators on a march around the town sang 'We Shall Overcome' and other songs; there was a growing sense of the power of the people to express peacefully their will to stay, but also the need to engage in dialogue, to effect changes. Those who were choosing to stay were at the same time emphasizing the need for the party to *listen* to the people, not to suppress them and expect unquestioning obedience to the diktat of the party.

From then on, the Monday Leipzig demonstrations became a growing political factor; it was remarkable how fast the weekly cycle became a significant factor in the making of a peaceful revolution. The extraordinary regularity, and yet distance, of this cycle, which did not interrupt the normal patterns of a working life ('No strikes: the revolution takes place outside working hours'), was a remarkable feature of the unfolding revolution.¹⁰ The banners and slogans have by now entered the mythology of the revolution, most notably the ubiquitous 'Wir sind das Volk! (We are the People)', epitomizing the assertion of self-empowerment by the people. 'Neues Forum zulassen!', the demand for the legalization of New Forum, was another focal rallying cry; 'Keine Gewalt!' was an essential, recurrent reminder to desist from violence—on both sides. The concerns and at the same time the sustaining wit of the people were expressed in a wide variety of often rhyming slogans ('SED—das tut weh!', 'Visa-frei nach Hawaii', 'Mit dem Fahrrad durch Europa, aber nicht als alter Opa') on home-made banners in the following weeks.¹¹ It is notable that the common theme of these home-

⁸ Cf. Opp and Voß, *Die volkseigene Revolution*, 44; and Reiner Tetzl, *Leipziger Ring* (Frankfurt-on-Main: Luchterhand, 1990), 7.

⁹ See the eye-witness reports in Neues Forum Leipzig, *Jetzt oder nie—Demokratie. Leipziger Herbst '89* (Munich: C. Bertelsmann Verlag, 1990), particularly 33, and Tetzl, *Leipziger Ring*. See also the account in Hartmut Zwahr, *Ende einer Selbstzerstörung. Leipzig und die Revolution in der DDR* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck und Ruprecht, 1993), 23–6.

¹⁰ 'Gestreikt wird nicht. Die Revolution findet am Feierabend statt', in Tetzl, *Leipziger Ring*, 33.

¹¹ Roughly translated as: 'SED—that hurts', 'Visa-free as far as Hawaii', and 'Bicycle tour round Europe, but not as an old grandfather' (a reference to the greater ease of travel for

made banners and slogans was simply the desire for greater democracy, freedom, and dialogue, rather than any specific social or economic demands. But the most important thing was less the articulation in words of specific views, let alone policy proposals, than the mere fact of ever larger numbers of people daring to come out on the streets and march, together, without violence.

Slowly, too, people in other cities and towns across the GDR began to follow the Leipzig example—beamed to them on Western television news, in contrast to 1953 when it was extremely difficult to collate accurate news and to coordinate strategies across different regions—and began to come out, in smaller numbers, but with similar restraint and dignity, to assert their right to be heard. The accounts of demonstrations in late September and early October emphasize the complexity of the motives and emotions of those daring to come out on the streets at this time. Some demonstrators had attended the relatively 'safe' church services—under the protection of the church premises, to which they had grown accustomed during the 1980s—and then, strengthened by the hymns, the prayers, the words of pastors, had walked out into the dangerous territory of the public domain to face the uncertainties of Stasi and police surveillance, as they embarked on their open defiance of the ban on mass demonstrations (denigrated in official terminology as *Zusammenrottungen*). Others had flocked to the churches and found they were already full: they either waited outside or joined other services in nearby churches. Services at the Nikolaikirche in Leipzig, for example, were soon complemented by concurrent services in two neighbouring churches, before the congregations met for the common march. Other participants were initially bystanders, watching out of interest as the train of demonstrators marched by: they were urged to join the march, as demonstrators chanted 'Gorbi! Wir bleiben hier! Neues Forum zulassen! Reiht euch ein! (Gorbi! We are staying here! Legal recognition for New Forum! Join in with us!)'.¹² There was an air of expectation, of excitement mixed with apprehension; people knew that 'something was happening', and wanted to watch; they were often then pulled into a bodily, physical commitment from which it was hard to extricate oneself, and became at the same time emotionally, psychologically involved and changed in the complex process of total mobilization.

pensioners). For further examples, cf. Opp and Voß, *Die volkseigene Revolution*, Tetzl, *Leipziger Ring*, and Zwahr, *Ende einer Selbstzerstörung*.

¹² Evidence of a 24-year-old student, Dirk Barthel, on the way in which he became involved in the Leipzig demonstration of 2 Oct., reprinted in Neues Forum Leipzig, *Jetzt oder nie—Demokratie*, 45–6.

For, once in, it was difficult to get out: chains of uniformed police and Stasi officers in civilian clothing separated demonstrators from escape routes; police vans were ready in side streets to block off exit routes and to take those arrested into custody. As one demonstrator put it, 'We . . . set off with a mixture of determination, courage, and doubt. We are flanked on both sides by a strong police presence, I start to become frightened.'¹³ There was, however, a momentum of mounting solidarity, as people sought to help those who had been struck by batons or mishandled by policemen, and to surge forward in a disciplined crowd seeking a degree of safety in numbers, infused with a real sense of the power of the people, 'a courageous mass of people (*eine mutige Menschenmenge*)'.

The retreat from the use of repression and force by the authorities, however, was by no means a predetermined matter. In late September and early October, it looked as if the incipient revolution could very easily become yet another in the history of failed revolutions in Germany, a tale of martyrs felled by brutal and efficient state repression. What then determined the responses of the authorities to the pressures for change which were being articulated with increasing forcefulness on the streets of this formerly apparently so quiescent state? Why were SED and Stasi so helpless in the face of mass popular unrest, despite the massively increased numbers of those working in the state security apparatus, and in stark contrast to the smooth, effective repression of unrest in 1968? What really lay behind the façade of the would-be reformers who soon appeared on the stage of the GDR to represent the SED in the weeks of crumbling communist rule from late September to early December? In short, as Erich Mielke subsequently rather plaintively put it, 'How did it come about that we simply gave up our GDR, just like that?'¹⁴

The renunciation of repression?

There are several strands and stages to the story of the collapse of rulership and the implosion of the East German dictatorship.

First of all, there was the issue of whether or not to use force to repress the growing popular unrest. Here, several elements appear to have played an important role, including: the reliability (or otherwise) of the troops on the ground; the political assessments and persuasions of regional functionaries; and central orders from above. In a situation essentially driven from below, the orders from above were more a last attempt to set a stamp of

¹³ S. Gradt, in Neues Forum Leipzig, *Jetzt oder nie—Demokratie*, 46.

¹⁴ Erich Mielke, 'Spiegel-Gespräch', *Der Spiegel*, 46: 36 (31 Aug. 1992), 39.

authority on what was happening on the ground than a prime determinant of changing policies. Moreover, the character, not only of the demonstrations, but of the crisis facing the country as a whole, played a role in the very widespread decision to desist, ultimately, from violence. It was no longer possible to misrepresent demonstrators as 'rowdies', agents provocateurs, or the misguided victims of Western campaigns to undermine the GDR. For once, it was widely recognized that the causes, and not merely the symptoms, of popular unrest would have to be addressed. The old labels, techniques, and strategies, developed to perfection in the arcane manuals and practices of the Stasi, were simply no longer applicable.

In the early phases of the autumn, the deployment of force was a major strategy of the regime in the attempted suppression of visible popular unrest. Around eighty people were arrested in East Berlin on 7 September, for protesting against the falsification of the May election results. On 18 September, around a hundred people were arrested in Leipzig for seeking to take part in a demonstration after the regular Monday evening service in the Nikolaikirche. Eleven people who had participated in the Nikolaikirche services were sentenced to up to six months' imprisonment; two dozen others were given fines ranging up to 5,000 Marks. On 2 October in Leipzig, water cannons, batons, and dogs were used to frighten and disperse demonstrators. Several demonstrators sustained serious injuries as a result of clashes with the security forces. On 4 and 5 October, as special trains brought would-be refugees from the embassies in Prague and Warsaw across the territory of the GDR to the West, demonstrators were dealt with quite brutally by security forces, and there were violent clashes in Dresden and Magdeburg. On the weekend of 7–8 October, the occasion of the blatantly dishonest anniversary 'celebrations' staged by the Honecker leadership for the visit of Gorbachev to Berlin, popular demonstrations were suppressed only through massive police and Stasi interventions with numerous arrests and the very physical intimidation of participants.¹⁵

In preparation for the expected ever larger turnout at the by now regular Monday Leipzig demonstrations, on 8 October Erich Mielke ordered a state of red alert for the GDR's security forces. It is worth reprinting the order at some length, to reveal the inimitable (and virtually untranslatable!) flavour of the Stasi view of the world at this stage:

Because of the enemy's unrestrained campaign of incitement, slander, and massive intervention attempts, the political-operative situation inside the GDR has very significantly worsened of late.

¹⁵ Cf. e.g. the account in Zwahr, *Ende einer Selbsterstörung*, ch. 4.

There has been an aggravation of the nature and associated dangers of the illegal mass gatherings of hostile, oppositional, as well as further hostile-negative and rowdy-type forces aiming to disturb the security of the state as well as public order and security and in this way to bring about an endangering of the socialistic state and society of the GDR.

For the consistent and effective suppression and repression of all behaviour and activities in this connection I hereby order:

1. A state of 'full alert' according to Directive No. 1/89, Para. 11, for all units until further notice. Members of permanently armed forces are to carry their weapons with them constantly, according to the needs of the situation . . .

Sufficient reserve forces are to be held ready, capable of intervention at short notice even for offensive measures for the repression and breaking up of illegal demonstrations . . .

3. All appropriate and available IM/GMs [unofficial and societal collaborators of the Stasi] are immediately to be brought into play in capacities appropriate to the situation . . .

6. Political-operative resistance work in the armed organs as well as in the workers' combat groups is to be strengthened through directed measures on the part of the relevant service units.¹⁶

This state of full alert was clearly explicitly designed as a massive operation for the suppression, by violent means if necessary, of the growing demonstrations which posed an ever-increasing threat to the stability of the GDR. But, in the event, the East German revolution did not develop into a civil war or a massively bloody period of struggles. The turning-point came on the very day following the issue of Mielke's effective licence for massacre. A number of elements played a role in the ultimately essentially non-violent outcome.

A major factor was the very peaceful, positively non-violent, character of the demonstrations. The slogan 'Keine Gewalt! (No Violence)', frequently chanted on marches, was directed as much at the participants themselves as at the forces ranged against them. As one participant in a demonstration reported, 'At the end [of a speech by a representative of New Forum] the speaker calls out for presence of mind: "Don't damage anything, resist any kind of provocation that could lead to violent conflicts!"'¹⁷ Had the demonstrators initiated violence, the response would have been massive. A directive of 16 October was quite clear on this: '[The command] is to be observed that a direct intervention of police forces and means will only occur when persons or property are attacked or other serious incidents of

¹⁶ MfS, 'Mielke an Leiter der Dienstseinheiten' (8 Oct. 1989), repr. in Armin Mitter and Stefan Wolle (eds.), *Ich liebe euch doch alle! Befehle und Lageberichte des MfS, Jan.-Nov. 1989* (Berlin: BasisDruck, 1990), 201-2.

¹⁷ Tetzl, *Leipziger Ring*, 36.

violence take place.¹⁸ It was a source of some irritation to Mielke that the demonstrators proved so disciplined, so restrained: as he put it on 7 November, two days before the opening of the Wall, it was evident 'that demonstration organizers—to some extent supported by Church forces—are increasingly taking their own measures to hinder any sort of provocation (their own orders, prematurely breaking off events, creating human chains to protect MfS property)'.¹⁹ Demonstrators were determined to emphasize their desire for dialogue, for a chance to be heard and to engage in democratic debate; a vital aspect of this was to refuse to be pulled into violent confrontation.

A second factor of considerable importance was the reliability—or other wise—of members of the police, auxiliary troops or workers' armed brigades, and other forces on the ground. A somewhat ambiguous but highly suggestive body of evidence points in the direction of a crumbling of the willingness on the part of the troops to obey orders and employ force against the demonstrators. The Magdeburg SED leadership sought to downplay the alleged unwillingness of security forces to engage in confrontation: 'At the same time, leading oppositional forces are trying, even in public meetings, to create the impression that the security forces who have to intervene doubt whether what they are doing is right.'²⁰ On the other hand, the Stasi central headquarters had rather precise figures tending to confirm the opposition's claims. As a Stasi report of 15 October noted:

In the course of the action, the readiness of various combat group units to engage in battle and intervention was markedly hindered, as was their political-moral condition, by various incidents, modes of behaviour and appearance.

This was above all expressed in

- individual collectives and combat troops refusing to intervene as intended,
- resigning from the SED and from the combat groups
- refusing to obey orders.

According to reports currently available, for example, 188 combatants have resigned from the combat groups of the working class and 146 combatants refused to follow orders to intervene when these had been given.

The main centres in which combatants have resigned from the SED and the combat groups are the Bezirke Karl-Marx-Stadt (136), Leipzig (18), and Magdeburg

¹⁸ Repr. in Roland Pechmann and Jürgen Vogel (eds.), *Abgesang der Stasi. Das Jahr 1989 in Presseartikeln und Stasi-Dokumenten* (Braunschweig: Steinweg-Verlag, 1991), 254.

¹⁹ Repr. in Mitter and Wolle (eds.), *Ich liebe euch doch alle!*, 251.

²⁰ SED Bezirksleitung Magdeburg (16 Oct. 1989), repr. in Pechmann and Vogel (eds.), *Abgesang der Stasi*, 258.

(15). The most frequent refusals to obey orders were found in Leipzig (85), Karl-Marx-Stadt (28), and Magdeburg (27).²¹

One participant in the Leipzig demonstration of 2 October reported on the basis of personal experience: "The young conscript police have an almost despairing, uncertain expression on their faces. I let myself be pulled along, go up to them: "You wouldn't ever shoot at us, would you?" "But we've only got rubber truncheons!" And then they call to each other: . . . "I've only got another couple of days, then I'm going to be marching along with them!"²² One of the enduring visual memories of the television coverage of the autumn revolution must be the extraordinary, almost palpable psychological power of the people as they overcame their fear, attained the courage of their convictions, and physically approached uniformed troops to engage them in dialogue, offer them flowers, and suggest they should break out of their allotted roles and recognize the common humanity which bound together the East German citizens across the imposed, external divides of repressors and repressed. The indirect influence of strong cultural strands of the Protestant tradition (such as the Quaker teachings of 'that of God in every man' and the active desisting from violence) cannot be overlooked in this connection, however secularized through the prisms of the new social and cultural currents of the minority movements in the GDR of the 1980s, now reaping their harvest in influencing the masses.

For all the complexities and the partial breakthroughs and setbacks which characterize any real sequence of historical developments, there was a particular, significant turning-point in the decision to engage in dialogue rather than repression as far as the authorities were concerned. This turning-point came on 9 October, the day after Mielke had issued the red alert described above. The Leipzig demonstration of 9 October was the largest yet; it was accompanied by massive preparedness on the part of the security forces for a clampdown of Chinese proportions.²³ Yet, in the course of the evening, the decision to refrain from forcible intervention was taken, and officially ratified by the then security chief Egon Krenz in Berlin. From then on, the momentum of growing mass mobilization and the overcoming of fear was to snowball, accompanied by the ever more speedy collapse of authority above. This key turning-point has been the subject of considerable discussion. Subsequently, Egon Krenz sought to take the acclaim for the decision. In fact, the main initiative appears to have been taken by regional

²¹ Mitter and Wolle (eds.), *Ich liebe euch doch alle!*, 221.

²² S. Gradt, repr. in Neues Forum Leipzig, *Jetzt oder nie—Demokratie*, 47.

²³ Cf. the very moving account of participants' fear, and attempts to boost their courage in the strength of numbers, in Tetzl, *Leipziger Ring*, 15–19.

and local functionaries of the SED in conjunction with Leipzig Gewandhaus Orchestra Director Kurt Masur. Their joint declaration was read out over loudspeakers and in effect gave the demonstrators an assurance of safe conduct; the security forces were held off, the demonstration allowed to proceed in peace. With Krenz's somewhat belated ratification of this policy of—at least implicitly—conceding the right to demonstrate, a major watershed had been passed.

On the other hand, the use of repression in principle had by no means been definitively renounced. The Stasi documents from the subsequent weeks reveal that tactical retreat and regrouping by no means implied any final concession of total defeat. The war was simply to be fought, for the time being, by other means.

The collapse of the will to rule

A second major watershed was of course the palace revolution itself: the replacement of Honecker by Krenz, effected on 17–18 October 1989. This palace revolt appears to have been entirely designed as a 'holding operation'. There was widespread frustration at Honecker's resistance to Gorbachev-style reforms, his increasing distance from—and unwillingness even to recognize—the mounting problems faced by the country, and his evident incapacity to deal with the refugee crisis and challenge to the very legitimacy of the GDR in the summer of 1989. These factors led to the coup against Honecker in October 1989.

On 17 and 18 October 1989, Erich Honecker was ousted from his position as General Secretary of the SED, and associated state offices, first in a closed meeting of the Politburo itself and subsequently in a plenary session of the Central Committee. At the latter, he was able to use the face-saving formula adopted eighteen years earlier by Ulbricht, of ill-health.²⁴

The palace revolution was followed by the phase of seeking to negotiate change and reform—but with the ultimate intention of retaining power, regrouping, and ensuring a strong position from which reforms might later be amended or even rescinded. It is now increasingly clear that the appearance of reform was precisely that: an appearance. All the concessions of late October and early November 1989—up to and including the opening of the Berlin Wall on 9 November—were designed in a typically manipulative and cynical fashion, with the overriding aim, not of extending genuine democ-

²⁴ Cf. the text of Honecker's resignation, quoted in Krenz's own self-serving and anodyne account: E. Krenz, *Wenn Mauern fallen* (Vienna: Paul Neff Verlag, 1990), 17–18.

racy but rather of clinging to power under altered colours. There was at this stage absolutely no intention of any real renunciation of the SED's claim to total domination. All appearances of 'pluralism' were simply designed as the best tactical means, under less than ideal circumstances, of continuing to exert effective total control by the SED.

On the other hand, however, there are signs that already during this phase, when the top leadership was still clearly determined to hold on to power, there were nevertheless increasing difficulties in the exercise of that power.

Certain political leaders in the provinces appear to have been ever less sure of the appropriate way forward. However cynical the Krenz leadership may have been about projecting the appearance of willingness to reform, there are indications that in some areas there were more genuine impulses in this direction.²⁵ Such appears to have been the case in Leipzig, and also in Dresden, where local SED leaders started discussion with a 'Group of 20' representing the citizens.²⁶ There are, however, some difficulties in the evaluation of the evidence. Local leaders' willingness to negotiate with Church leaders as an alternative to employing force was nothing substantially new nor startlingly significant: this technique of using the Church to mediate between the state and the people had of course been employed for years, even if there were some differences in the forms employed (particularly the constitution of the Group of 20) in October 1989. That it contrasted with more heavy-handed alternatives, particularly the open use of brute force, is of course clear; what is less clear is whether it was yet another tactic for the party to cling on to power or whether it genuinely represented a willingness to engage in real, irreversible processes of democratization. At this stage, the former seems more likely than the latter.

Nevertheless, whatever the motives of those leaders prepared to engage in dialogue rather than repression, there was a clear effect on the snowballing process of mass mobilization. With the lowering of the risks, ever more people found the courage to come out and march. And permitting the previously unpermitted gatherings of people, for whatever cynical or genu-

²⁵ Cf. e.g. Peter Przybylski, *Tatort Politbüro. Band 2: Honecker, Mittag und Schalck-Golodkowski* (Berlin: Rowohlt, 1992), 121 ff.

²⁶ Cf. Daniel Friedheim, 'Regime Collapse in the Peaceful East German Revolution: The Role of Middle-Level Officials', *German Politics*, 2: 1 (Apr. 1993), 97-112. There are, however, some problems with the interpretation of the material presented in this article. Friedheim's research project entailing retrospective interviews with middle-ranking officials does not seem likely to elucidate the truth of the matter, since retrospectively these officials will of course cast their actions in a pro-democratic light.

ine combination of motives, was also a highly significant concession by a regime which was clearly losing control of developments.

Moreover, would-be reformers among the co-opted intelligentsia, who had previously maintained a relatively subdued or constrained presence in the GDR, began to join the more outspoken dissident intellectuals and enter on to the political stage. The bandwagon was also joined by some of the more pro-Gorbachev spirits in the SED. The culmination of this convergence of currents was reached in the—officially permitted—mass demonstration on East Berlin's Alexanderplatz on 4 November, with speeches from individuals as diverse as the writers Christa Wolf, Stefan Heym, and Christoph Hein, representatives from the Church and from New Forum, including Jens Reich, and those who had previously been pillars of the political establishment, such as LDPD leader Manfred Gerlach, the former Stasi spy chief and deputy Minister for State Security Markus Wolf, and Politburo member Günter Schabowski.

The rising tide of pressures for reform and change led, in the following days, to waves of changes and concessions from above: a proposal for a new travel law was published on 6 November, allowing permits for travel abroad for up to thirty days a year; the entire Council of Ministers resigned *en bloc* on 7 November; on 8 November the Politburo followed suit. The Central Committee confirmed Egon Krenz as General Secretary, and nominated a new Politburo, including some reforming spirits such as the previously excluded Dresden party chief Hans Modrow. But for all the beheadings and concessions, the SED's desperate attempt to cling on to power remained. The *Wende* was at this stage one of appearance and personality, not one of policy and principle.

The real loss of the will to rule came only *after* the opening of the Berlin Wall. This itself has been the subject of much speculation. Was the breaching of the Wall on the night of 9 November a historic act, or a spectacular blunder? When the evidently weary government spokesman, Günter Schabowski, was handed a small piece of paper at the end of a lengthy press conference in the late afternoon announcing new travel regulations, he read it out without observing the embargo and date on which the new regulations were to come into effect. The response was electric: Schabowski was overwhelmed by questions from reporters. Did the new regulations mean that the Berlin Wall no longer retained its original functions? What would now be its status? Schabowski was somewhat at a loss for answers. More importantly, perhaps, the guards at the Wall were equally at a loss: they had not been prepared for the wave of popular excitement which was soon to greet them. Hearing the news, people thronged to the Wall. In-

capable of dealing with the ever-increasing crowds in an orderly, bureaucratic fashion, and instructed to avoid bloodshed at all costs, the border guards gave up the struggle and abandoned themselves to passive observation of the orgy of humanity, joy, and euphoria as the night of dancing and drinking champagne on the top of that most inhumane symbol of repression wore on.

Yet only eight days earlier, this had been the very thing that East Germany's new 'reforming' leader, Egon Krenz, had been determined to avoid. In his discussion with Gorbachev in Moscow on 1 November 1989, Krenz had commented, in connection with preparations for the planned mass demonstration of 4 November: 'Measures must be taken to prevent any attempt at a mass breakthrough across the Wall. That would be awful, because then the police would have to intervene [with force] and certain elements of a state of emergency would have to be introduced.'²⁷ In effect, Krenz was implying that any attempt to breach the Wall would necessarily entail the kind of forcible repression he had taken such pains to distance himself from since the turning-point of 9 October.

This discussion between the reformist leader of the Soviet Union, Mikhail Gorbachev, and the newly would-be reformist leader of the GDR, Egon Krenz, is altogether highly revealing.²⁸ Krenz was clearly determined to curry favour with Gorbachev: according to his own account, Krenz allegedly only made his decision to challenge Honecker for the leadership when he saw that Erich Honecker 'did not understand or did not want to understand the statements of Comrade Gorbachev'.²⁹ In a wide-ranging discussion of internal differences within the SED over previous years, Krenz portrays himself less as Honecker's hard-line crown prince (which he was) than as the protector, almost guardian angel, of Gorbachev's preferred candidate, whom Honecker sought to oust from party office, Hans Modrow. This attempted shift in image is comparable to that relating to the savage use of force to suppress pro-democracy demonstrators in Tiananmen Square (applauded by Krenz) and desisting from the use of force in Leipzig on 9 October (for which Krenz sought to take the credit).

²⁷ SAPMO-BArch, IV 2/2.039/329, 'Niederschrift des Gesprächs des Genossen Egon Krenz, Generalsekretär des ZK der SED und Vorsitzender des Staatsrates der DDR, mit Genossen Michail Gorbatschow, Generalsekretär des ZK der KPdSU und Vorsitzender des Obersten Sowjets der UdSSR, am 1.11.1989 in Moskau', 31.

²⁸ Not least for the very frank personal comments made by Gorbachev on other politicians. He has an astute thumbnail evaluation of West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl, for example: Kohl is in Gorbachev's view 'no intellectual luminary, but rather a petty bourgeois. These are the social strata which understand him best, too. But he is, nevertheless, a skilful and obstinate politician', in some ways comparable to former US President Reagan.

²⁹ SAPMO-BArch, IV 2/2.039/329, 41.

But it is also quite clear from the Krenz-Gorbachev conversation, and from other documents from Krenz's office at this time, that Krenz was determined to introduce reforms only in so far as they would serve to rectify the currently unstable situation and regain the 'trust' of the people. A Politburo memo of 3 November 1989, for example, betrays a sense of loss of control, a loss of initiative; but nevertheless concludes that the party must 'united, with closed ranks, do justice to its leadership role . . . and so [win back] the confidence' of the people. At even this late date, the Politburo is still debating whether the party is prepared to be dictated to 'by the street', and 'whether members of the defence and security organs must now expose themselves "non-violently" to every attack'.³⁰ On 6 November, the party propaganda department evaluated the mass demonstration of 4 November. Concessions should indeed be made, but not to the extent that they might endanger the leading role of the party, or represent any real loss of the party's power: 'The demand for free elections can in principle be supported, since it corresponds to the basic principles of our socialist constitution, nevertheless this must not entail opening the door to bourgeois party pluralism[!].' However, 'demands for abolition of the leading role of the SED are totally unacceptable to us as communists. But concrete steps and measures are to be mentioned, which indicate the way in which the SED wants to win back lost trust through a democratic renewal of its party and earn its democratic legitimation through its achievements.'³¹

The conclusions reached are characteristically cynical and manipulative. The central party leadership recognized the need to conduct local dialogues in different ways, according to local circumstances. Comrades were actually *instructed* to appear to differ and deviate from the official party line, in order to gain the trust and confidence of the population: 'Involved comrades must be prepared, not to proclaim the word of the party, but rather to give the appearance of being thoughtful and realistic, in order to win back our credibility . . . [!]'.³² Other sources emphasize the need to find the most intelligent local functionaries, who are capable of projecting an image of independent thought. The SED party archive collected photographs of party functionaries coming out on balconies to meet and debate with demonstrators, no doubt with a view to the appropriate historical gloss in the course of time.³³

³⁰ IfGA, ZPA, IV 2/2.039/317, Politburo Information of 3 Nov. 1989.

³¹ Ibid., Abteilung Propaganda, 'Erste Einschätzung der Demonstration und Kundgebung am 4. November 1989 in Berlin' (6 Nov. 1989), 3, 4.

³² Ibid. 5.

³³ Cf. the interesting commentaries attached to the backs of some of these photographs in the SED Bildarchiv in Berlin.

It was only during the phase from mid-November to December 1989, that the real loss of the will to power was experienced—although at different rates among different groups. Initially, the SED leadership thought that their tactics of appearing willing to engage in reforms might have worked, as far as pressures from popular demonstrations were concerned. A report of 13 November noted with some satisfaction that, since the border crossings had been opened, the numbers on demonstrations had declined and internal pressures appeared to have eased somewhat.³⁴ But the SED itself, particularly at the grass roots, was in disarray: the functionary system was beginning to collapse. Reports from the provinces in the weeks immediately following the opening of the Wall emphasize the extent to which party members and local functionaries are 'deeply shattered (*zutiefst erschüttert*)' about the revelations of corruption among former Politburo members and ministers in the Volkskammer.³⁵ Gone are the days of bland reports signifying nothing: suddenly, there are cries from the heart. The party apparatus on the ground was seizing up and ceasing to function; the leadership at the top no longer had a base from which to exercise its claim to power.

A few excerpts must suffice to give some impression of the mood among the party apparatchiks in the week or two following the fall of the Wall and the waves of revelations of corruption in high places.³⁶ From Leipzig, on 14 November, in the context of rising numbers resigning from the party, comes the plea to Krenz: 'I beg you, take the opportunity and send words of encouragement and comfort to the hundreds of thousands of comrades, who could do nothing about it and believed that they were serving a good cause. Say again, clearly, that they bear no blame for this.' From the First Secretary in the Bezirksleitung Schwerin, on 16 November: 'Fears about the fate of our party are rising . . . triggered above all by the revelations of the bitter truth at the tenth sitting of the Central Committee of the SED and the parliamentary meeting of last week. Irritability and anxiety are increasing, and people are afraid that our party no longer has firm ground under its feet.' Functionaries were resigning their positions, members leaving the

³⁴ SAPMO-BArch, IV 2/2.039/317, 'Information der operativen Führungsgruppe. Betreff: Lage auf dem Territorium der DDR' (13 Nov. 1989).

³⁵ On the parliamentary investigations into corruption, see e.g. Volker Klemm, *Korruption und Amtsmissbrauch in der DDR* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1991). He suggests (12), that the committee set up by the Volkskammer on 13 Nov. 1989 was intended mainly to fulfil an alibi function—to act as a form of lightning conductor for popular outrage and emotion, disguising the facts of continuities in power and the more general functioning of the system as a whole. If this was indeed the intention, then it backfired spectacularly.

³⁶ The following quotations are extracts from a series of letters to Krenz from Bezirksleitung First Secretaries, collected in SAPMO-BArch, Büro Egon Krenz, IV 2/2.039/317.

party *en masse*, no decisions could be reached or carried out. 'It is all happening at great physical and psychological cost. This cannot be kept up for any length of time.' Less than a week later, the situation in Schwerin appeared merely to have deteriorated: 'The psychological situation in the party apparatus, particularly however in the district leadership offices, is strained to the utmost. Many comrades are desperate, crippled in their actions, shaken and deeply disillusioned . . . The current lack of any conception among the party leadership is bringing matters to a head. The shattering truth, daily expanded, has had a devastating effect, comrades are tearing themselves to bits, suicidal thoughts are on the increase . . .' On the same day, the First Secretary of Bezirksleitung Rostock wrote to Krenz about the 'psychological pressure and moral terror against functionaries of our party'. And two days later, on 24 November—only two weeks after the opening of the Wall—the Cottbus Bezirksleitung wrote that it was virtually no longer possible to make the party apparatus function on the ground. The end of SED domination was marked by the loss of its functionaries' will to rule.

The end of a dictatorship

When did the East German dictatorship really come to an end? The end of the GDR itself has a clear date: the two Germanies were formally united as a new political entity, an enlarged Federal Republic of Germany, on 3 October 1990; the GDR narrowly missed the embarrassment of a forty-first anniversary four days later. But the communist dictatorship had crumbled long before this, and had been successively replaced by a variety of political forms.

The first shift was marked by the movement of the balance of power away from the SED leader and Chair of the Council of State to the previously politically subordinate position of Prime Minister and Chair of the Council of Ministers—i.e. from the party to the government. On 1 December 1989 the Volkskammer formally deleted the party's leading role from Article 1 of the Constitution. Since, however, this role had only been enshrined in the Constitution since 1968 (by which time the party had of course enjoyed nearly half its total lifetime of power), it can hardly be taken as the decisive point of no turning back. Even during the following winter months of round table discussions with representatives of oppositional groups, there were still well-founded suspicions that much of the apparent change might be readily reversible should conditions prove favourable. The dreaded Ministry for State Security, for example, was initially replaced by the Office for

National Security, which evinced a remarkable degree of continuity in aims and personnel with its predecessor. It was only after a massive storming of the Normannenstraße Stasi headquarters in mid-January 1990 that the citizens' movements began to assure themselves that the multi-headed hydra was beginning to be brought under some genuine democratic control; even so, in subsequent months there were innumerable ways in which evidence was destroyed and distorted, arousing suspicions of continued networks of influence and control over the Stasi's legacy.

In many respects, the March 1990 elections mark the formal end of the East German dictatorship: for the first time since the creation of the GDR, the population were able to take part in elections in which the number of seats allotted to each party had not been determined in advance. Although many criticisms could be levelled against the (formally legitimate) means of opinion formation and political influence exercised during the pre-election campaign (with massive financial and organizational input from the West, particularly on the part of Kohl's conservative forces supporting the Alliance for Germany), this was a free election in which the population expressed a majority preference for those relatively right-wing forces which seemed to promise the most rapid unification with the West.

There are many factors involved in the manner and pace of the demise of the GDR itself.³⁷ Once the borders were opened, it could not survive as an independent, viable, socio-economic and political entity; the automatic rights of citizenship entitlement in the democratic West, combined with the infinitely higher Western standard of living, meant a continued flow of refugees and a rapidly deteriorating domestic economic situation. The seizure of the initiative by West German Chancellor Kohl—already on 10 November, when, at the newly opened Wall, he proclaimed 'Wir sind doch ein Volk!', and more specifically in his ten-point plan of 28 November—combined with a window of opportunity in relation to Gorbachev's USSR

³⁷ For more detailed accounts, see my *The Divided Nation: Germany 1918–1990* (London: Fontana, 1991; New York: Oxford University Press, 1992), ch. 13; Konrad Jarausch, *The Rush to German Unity* (New York and Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994); A. James McAdams, *Germany Divided: From the Wall to Reunification* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1993), chs. 6 and 7; Jonathan Osmond (ed.), *German Reunification: A Reference Guide and Commentary* (Harlow: Longman, 1992); Stephen Szabo, *The Diplomacy of German Unification* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992); and for a range of reactions, Harold James and Marla Stone (eds.), *When the Wall Came Down: Reactions to German Unification* (London: Routledge, 1992). There are a large number of German publications documenting the collapse of the GDR and German unification: see e.g. *Der Fischer Weltalmanach: Sonderband DDR* (Frankfurt: Fischer, 1990); *DDR-Almanach '90* (Stuttgart: Bonn Aktuell, 1990); G.-J. Glaesner, *Der schwierige Weg zur Demokratie* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1992); Eckard Jesse and Armin Mitter (eds.), *Die Gestaltung der deutschen Einheit* (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1992).

and helped to force the pace of negotiations at the international level. In the course of the following months, it became increasingly clear to the international community that the German question had to be entirely rethought: an independent East German economy could not be sustained in the face of open borders to the West; West Germany could not afford the social costs and political consequences of a continuing flow of refugees; and in light of a collapsing domestic economy and a rapidly crumbling Warsaw Pact, the Soviet Union was prepared to negotiate for the best possible terms of military and political withdrawal from its erstwhile satellite state. Currency union of the two Germanies on 1 July 1990 served simply to speed up the pace of the GDR's collapse. The unification treaty, the finalization of the two-plus-four negotiations, the broader approval of the participants in the CSCE, the reconstitution of the East German *Länder* and their accession to an enlarged Federal Republic, were but external formalities regulating and legitimating an ongoing process of disintegration and dissolution.

But the communist dictatorship itself had collapsed already before this. All the apparatus and structures of power—the dominance of the SED, the co-optation of the bloc parties and mass organizations, the compliance of the Church leadership, the unwilling collusion in subordination of the masses—all these had crumbled, at varying rates and in differing ways, in the preceding months. When the SED itself effected a purge of its leadership and a reorientation of its image at its extraordinary XII Congress in the first week of December 1989, it knew that its historic moment of domination was, effectively, at an end.