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Censorship mechanisms in the theatre of the German Democratic Republic 1971-1989

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**CENSORSHIP MECHANISMS
IN THE THEATRE OF THE
GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC 1971-1989**

A Thesis

Presented to

**The Faculty of the Department of Theatre Arts
San Jose State University**

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

by

Yvette Koth Smith

December 1999

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ABSTRACT

CENSORSHIP MECHANISMS IN THE THEATRE OF THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC 1971-1989

by Yvette Koth Smith

Although censorship officially did not exist in the German Democratic Republic (GDR), public communication, including the arts, was rigidly controlled by numerous agencies in the state apparatus of the Socialist Unity Party. Nevertheless, the theatres played an important role by providing a niche in which a public forum could still take place.

This thesis examines the underlying structure of mechanisms with which the theatre of the GDR was censored by analyzing archive material of the Ministry for Culture and associated agencies of the GDR. It expands the view of censorship beyond the function of inhibiting the dissemination of certain information, using Pierre Bourdieu's model of discourses that are allowed within a given society (orthodoxy); not allowed, but nevertheless occurring (heterodoxy) and such that are not occurring because certain issues are beyond dispute and taken for granted (doxa).

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Introduction

The result [of censorship] is a theatre cleaned of all that is “dubious and impertinent” by those “sorrowful existences, who try to take away all its freedom and temerity, who are only satisfied when in this laboratory of nice rebelliousness things go as stale and asexual as in a Sunday school of an older or newer kind.”

Armin Stolper (SAPMO-BArch, DY30 vorl. SED / 86434)

A Relevant Personal Note:

Germany is the country in which I learned to walk, distinguish between private and public life and between one kind of TV show and another. The German Democratic Republic (GDR) is precisely the place in which I first felt a strong political and moral consciousness when I was only fourteen years old. In 1989, the East German media first degraded the tens of thousands of citizens who were leaving the country via the so called “green border” of Hungary or the West German embassies of the Czech Republic to a few misled enemies of the state, and later on accused West Germany of forcefully kidnapping these people. It was impossible to me to still pledge unconditional allegiance to this country, no matter how superficial the pledge was. The events of October and November 1989 are unexpected milestones in the history not only of Germany, but also the world.

Since then, many different agencies have been put in place to come to terms with East Germany’s past: A vast number of state security files became available to the people to find out who spied on them or was responsible for their arrest and to attorneys in order to prosecute crimes. Factories were closed or sold; real estate was given back to former

owners, decisions had to be made on soldiers protecting the borders and shooting at people who attempted to escape and on politicians who ordered these measures. Schools had to get new, more objectively written books. Teachers who were heavily involved with the state security had to be replaced. The people had to get accustomed to a new set of rules such as the “market economy,” unemployment, increasing prices for rent, but also the freedom to travel, speak their opinion, choose between different media and political parties--and the possibilities to buy all sorts of things, granted they could afford them. And somewhere, in the midst of finding out “how bad it really was” or what was actually “better in the GDR,” there was the writer re-positioning him- or herself to the people, the state, the past and the works he/she had produced. There are accusations against the writers that they were conformists. There are accounts of artists and intellectuals who were imprisoned for no other ‘offense’ than voicing their own opinion; and the accounts of others, who were an affirmative part of the state apparatus in one form or another. This part of German history is still being written--by people with different interests. My attempt is to add to the accounts of all those personally involved an independent, but not disinterested, scholarly perspective of the censorship that tried to reduce the arts, especially literature and the theatres, to a mere tool of the socialist state and party apparatus. At the same time, the theatres were granted such a status of extraordinary importance, which was accepted by large parts of the population, that their function as an invaluable last frontier for a public forum could not be prevented.

By showing the bureaucratic web that had been spun around the theatres of the GDR, neither do I intend to rehabilitate anyone in saying that there was no way to oppose

the cultural doctrine of the Socialist Unity Party (SED), nor will I join in condemning the theatrical work produced in East Germany. My objective is to show broad mechanisms through which censorship is enabled or executed and that those mechanisms could be applied anywhere without much ado, given a different ideological support frame. Censorship is more than inhibiting the dissemination of information. What else it involves will be demonstrated. This research does not investigate the role of the state security in the censorship of literature and the theatres, but relates to the control exercised by Ministry for Culture of the GDR. I am not at all implying that the constant supervision by the state security and the involved threats and arrests did not contribute to the self-censorship of many artists. It was certainly an important part of the censorship system. But the role of the state security has been described in detail by Joachim Walther in Sicherungsbereich Literatur as well as Matthias Braun in Drama um eine Komödie. I intend to reveal the structure that is less obtrusive, more readily acceptable under given ideological parameters. This is the less spectacular realm. We will not find husbands spying on wives, deportations in the middle of the night and torture in prisons. Instead, we will find immense administrative power, a standard array of “political-ideological” phrases, meticulous supervision, and a network of bureaucratic control aligned into strict hierarchy called “democratic centralism,” in which one could be a celebrated hero or declared enemy of the state for the very same reason, depending on the interpretation of a number of factors including the overall political situation at the time.

The relevance of this work in a German context would not even have to be argued. The mere historical portrait of the censorship of the East German theatres would

be considered an asset. It would provide enough arguments to discuss the role of the artist in relation to power during the Nazi-era as well as during the SED-reign and therefore directly enter the German debate on the condition of the nation. But the relevance of this paper goes beyond the national. It is intended to show that the mechanisms of censorship can be—and are—applied to different circumstances and have not vanished with the disappearance of East Germany. Furthermore I will argue for an expanded view of censorship.

Away from the Censor's Red Pen

Censorship has traditionally been defined in terms of a “censor,” a person or entity regulating what is allowed to be said and what is not allowed to be said in a given society. A common metaphor is the “censor’s red pen,” implying that after certain information has been produced, the dissemination of such information is controlled and can be prevented. For example: “Censorship in modern practice may be generally defined as action taken by any governing authority to prevent the dissemination of false statements, inconvenient facts or displeasing opinions among the governed,” according to the Encyclopaedia Britannica (114) in 1949. Hereby the traditional target of censorship is also defined: all means by which the dissemination of information of such nature can be conducted. Those means are media such as newspapers, books, radio, TV, film, but also paintings, public assemblies, classrooms, live readings or performances. Censorship is driven by the assumption that certain information has certain effects on the people exposed to it. It is generally to be associated with the concern of authority over the

“governed.” The magnitude of the need for control is determined by the “governing,” or “influential,” authorities. There is a wide variety of measures that can be taken against the dissemination of information. Some of the more drastic but well-known ones are the burning of books, the licensing of publications, arrest and imprisonment of authors and artists etc. The effect of those measures, even upon those who have not personally experienced them, may be tremendous.

But in order to control what kind of information people are exposed to and therefore be able to influence the way people think or behave—under a particular hypothesis of cause and effect—a system becomes necessary that supports the control in all areas and all stages of communication, not only the dissemination. The traditional definition has to be expanded in order to include the production, distribution, reception and interpretation of communication material in the censorship process.

Modern views of censorship as in Bourdieu widen the perspective on the subject when discussing censorship in terms of discourses that are allowed/non-sanctioned (orthodoxy) within a given society or discourse community—or not allowed/sanctioned (heterodoxy). Additionally, the realm of issues that is taken for granted and therefore beyond discussion, so called doxa, can be very well related to an authority that attempts to extend its control past manifest, institutional corrections into the conscious and subconscious acceptance and non-dispute of their claim to power and rightness.

In this work, I want to examine the mechanisms with which orthodoxy is re-enforced, heterodoxy suppressed and doxa are established, and which therefore enable censorship to occur in its different forms. I will do so on the example of the theatre in the

German Democratic Republic between 1971 and 1989. This is particularly interesting for numerous reasons, one of which is that censorship officially did not exist in the GDR. What existed was euphemistically called cultural policy. There are no books of rules according to which censorship was executed, yet there must be some structure that holds all the drastic measures in place, that provides a basis for the mere ability of an institution to make far-reaching decisions that can affect all stages in communication processes at any given time. A seeming arbitrariness in those decisions is a common characteristic of communist forms of control. The decision about publication or performance of a work depended in each individual case on various circumstances, including the momentary cultural policy of the government, its relation to West Germany at the time, the advocates and agencies involved in the case, and the extent of the involved artist's fame.

As will be described in the following literature review, certain topics--such as a positive description of life in any of the Western countries, criticism of the East German government or other socialist countries--were taboo. But also problems within the East German society, such as suicide, alcoholism, unemployment were not to be discussed. In theatre productions, for example, the use of masks was denounced as decadent.

In the process of my research I corresponded with several authorities in the field: scholars, writers, directors and publishers. Due to the sensitivity of the topic, conducting the research proved to be very difficult. For two months, I was rigorously pursuing sources in Germany, without any success. A former East German editor, who was responsible for new stage scripts in the Henschel Verlag, and who is now working for a different publishing house, strongly urged me to look for an easier topic. He stated that he

could not remember how the “editing” in the GDR took place, and that he was also unwilling to talk about it. After having received contradictory information on the current location of the archive of the Henschel Verlag, the GDR publishing house that had the sole rights on all new theatre scripts, I was then told that all documentation had actually been destroyed in 1991/92.

It was obvious that my quest for information on the censorship processes was unwelcome. In accordance, I had to adjust my methodology and work with the material that was available in German archives.

In order to further the understanding of the political and ideological frame work in which the theatres of the GDR operated, I will explain in the first chapter of this thesis the basic structure of the state apparatus, the foundations of the GDR’s cultural policy in Marxist-Leninist aesthetics as well as different theories on censorship and the function of different censorship agencies in the GDR. In the second chapter, I will present my methodological considerations including the necessary clarification of terminology. The third chapter consists of the description of the control network culminating in the Ministry for Culture, with which the theatres were monitored, administered and censored. This includes the role of the city and district councils, performance plans, cadre politics, the problems with guest performances, the control of reviews and advertisements of performances. In the final chapter, I will offer a discussion about the applicability of these mechanisms in different forms as well as establish relations to communication theories, in order to stress the importance of understanding communication and communication inhibiting processes.

A Technical Note:

All of the archived documents and many of the sources cited in this paper were originally written in German. Unless cited from an English source, all translations are mine. For relevant terms and phrases that I translated into English, I will offer the German terminology in italics in parenthesis, but for practical reasons, I will not include German translations of entire sentences or passages.

Archive materials will be cited as demanded by the Federal Archive (*Bundesarchiv*) of Germany. The information relevant to this thesis was provided by the Foundation Archive Political Parties and Mass Organizations of the GDR in the Federal Archive (*Stiftung Archiv Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv, SAPMO-BArch*). The German “vorl.” in citations (for example “SAPMO-BArch, DY 30 vorl. SED / 86434”) stands for “*vorläufig*,” which means temporary. The material has not yet been archived permanently, therefore page numbers were unavailable for most documents.

1 Literature Review

1.1. The Theatre in the Marxist/Leninist Aesthetic Context

The literature of the German Democratic Republic, the East German state that existed for almost 41 years (1949-1990), is of great interest to scholars not only because it exemplifies the intellectual thought process in a socialist country within and outside government-imposed limitations, but also because literature¹ was taken very seriously. Many artists and scholars such as Antony Meech, Guntner and McLean, Christoph Hein or Heiner Müller share this view. Meech opens his article on “Eingreifendes Theater” with the passage: “Theatre in the GDR is a serious business. This is not meant to imply that it takes itself too seriously, or overestimates its potential, nor that the theatre in the GDR lacks a sense of humour... In the GDR the theatre is a significant employer of labor and, playing as it does to almost capacity audiences six nights a week, a major medium for communication within society.” (qtd. in Sebald 110) Or as Heiner Müller, playwright and director, stated in an interview with Guntner and McLean: In England, theater was entertainment--in Germany it was war (Gunter and McLean 192). The GDR has been called a “*Leseland*”, a “reading country” emphasizing that reading is an important part of its citizens’ lives. Christoph Hein clarifies in his much quoted speech at the tenth convention of the Writers’ Union (*Zentraler Schriftstellerverband*) of the GDR, November 25, 1987, that the GDR was specifically a *book*-reading country (Kreuzer and Schmidt 574).

¹ For the purpose of this paper, theatre is traditionally considered part of the literature of the GDR, because it is based on scripts and uses language as manifest part of its existence as do the other literary genres.

He states that people in other countries read just as much, but in different media such as newspapers and magazines. Since the mass media portrayed national and international affairs only in a view that was approved by the leading political party, the Socialist Unity Party, the people expected some greater “truth” from literature. This “truth” might be criticism of the existing living conditions, or a part of human life that should not be talked about e.g. a feeling of imprisonment behind the wall to West Germany, suicide or the like, even constructive criticism that principally agrees to the socialist mission of the GDR. Although literature itself was rigorously controlled by several agencies of the GDR, for example the Department of Culture, the Bureau for Copyrights and the secret service with its vast network of official and unofficial members, literature’s artistic means, e.g. the use of metaphors and fables provided some freedom of expression. The reasoning for this strict control can be found in Marxist/Leninist Aesthetics which presupposes a far reaching influence of literature on man’s mind and considering the active influence of modern art its major task (Zis). Guntner and McLean go as far as claiming the significance of the GDR theatre in the intellectual preparation of the so called peaceful revolution that found its climax in the fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989. Here it becomes obvious that the literature of the GDR cannot be understood without its political, historical, and social context. I will now explain the position and purpose of art within the GDR’s parameters of ideology.

The German Democratic Republic (GDR) developed in the Soviet zone on German soil after World War II as a clear alternative to Nazi Germany and also to

Many dramatic writers also produced poetry, novels etc. The views of some contemporary aestheticians

capitalism. After the founding of West Germany (the Federal Republic of Germany) as a separate state, the GDR was founded as a socialist state on October 7, 1949. The sovereign state existed until October 3, 1990, the date of the reunification with West Germany. The political organization of the Soviet Union served as a role model for the new country. This included the ideological foundations in Marxism and Leninism, the Marxist goal of overcoming the “exploitation of the human being by the human being” which was based on overcoming the class structure of society. In socialism, the working class (including farmers) was said to be in power until human consciousness has risen to the classless society which would then be communism.

In the GDR, one political party, the Socialist Unity Party (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands*, SED) that emerged from the unification of the Communist Party (KPD) and the Social Democratic Party (SPD) in 1946, was organized in a strictly hierarchical manner throughout the entire society in order to enforce the Leninist principle of “democratic centralism.” Today we would call it a “top down” decision making structure. In its statute of 1976 (“Programm der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands,” in Klaus Schroeder, *Der SED-Staat*), the SED claimed hegemony in leading the country in *all* relevant functions: Politically, economically, socially, culturally and ideologically, based upon the teachings of Marxism-Leninism. This claim to power is even manifest in the GDR-constitution of 1968, Article 1, Paragraph 1: “The German Democratic Republic is a socialist state of the German nation. It is the political organization of the workers in the cities and countryside, who, united under the

such as Nicholas Wolterstorff to categorize theatre as a performance work *only* shall here be neglected.

leadership of the working class and its Marxist-Leninist party make socialism become reality.”

The hierarchical organization of the party culminates in the Party Convention (*Parteitag*) and the interwoven bodies of the Central Committee (*Zentralkomitee, ZK*), the Political Bureau of the Central Committee (*Politbüro*) and the Sekretariat. The Politbüro had several commissions and working groups that were led by the same people who are secretaries of the Central Committee for these (and often additional) departments (Schroeder 390-422). Relevant to this paper is the Department of Culture under the supervision of Secretary Kurt Hager. Hager was a key decision maker regarding theatre performances, personnel and publications. His department also played a crucial role in the control of the literature published in the GDR. At the sixth convention of the Central Committee in 1972, Hager stated: “When we decisively argue for the width and variety of all possibilities of social realism, for a large scope of creative search in this direction, this excludes every concession toward bourgeois ideologies and imperialistic views of art” (Schroeder 217).

It is important to understand that the political system in the GDR operated holistically, meaning that almost every part of human life became political. The goal was to educate the people to become “socialist personalities”, a term frequently used in the Honecker era (1971-1989). Since Marxist theory argues from a materialist perspective that the circumstances a person lives in determines his or her consciousness, the entire living situation in the GDR consisting of cultural and political aspects was supposed to reflect a clearly positive attitude toward Marxism/Leninism throughout. The mass media,

as well as work place, the schools, the theatres, the literature, and mass organizations—they all were part of the system that intended to homogenize society in order to achieve the goal of communism.

Although freedom of speech and the mass media was guaranteed in the constitution (Article 27), the parameters for their freedom were very narrow. The Cultural Political Dictionary (Kulturpolitisches Wörterbuch) of 1978 defines cultural policy on page 403 as follows: “Part of the entire politics of the Marxist-Leninist party of the working class, the socialist state led by it and the allied parties and mass organizations of the National Front; Entirety of principles, goals, tasks and *measures* [my emphasis] for the conscious and planned support of the socialist culture and its interrelation with the political, economical, social, ideological etc. tasks of the societal development.” This dictionary presents the officially approved terminology and ideology regarding the arts and is often quoted to highlight the regulatory features and justifications for them. The goals of the cultural policy are in accordance with the strategic goal of the SED and include the shaping of the developed socialist society as a presupposition for communism, the friendship and cooperation with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries, improvement of the material and cultural living conditions of the working class, the “creation of developed personalities who think, feel and act as patriots and internationalists”, support of cultural activities of the people, especially the youth, “socialist acquisition of the cultural heritage in its lively relation to the tasks of the present” (Kulturpolitisches Wörterbuch 404). Art therefore is one of the propaganda tools for the Marxist ideology. The SED does not deny this or view it as a limitation of the

freedom of art, on the contrary, in order to improve the society in the described manner, every part of it has to help achieve the goal. Again, the Soviet Union served as role model. A. Zis explains in his book Foundations of Marxist Aesthetics, which was published in Moscow in 1977 with the intention of reaching out to foreign countries, the purpose, position and methodology of aesthetics *as applied* in the two socialist countries. Marxist (material interpretation of history) / Leninist (theory of reflection) Aesthetics views art as a manifestation of social consciousness. It is considered a science, not, as in most Western countries, a field of philosophical inquiry. Although the subject of aesthetics is much broader than just the arts, it finds its most complete expression in art. Therefore Marxist/Leninist aesthetics “scientifically substantiates the experience involved in the most diverse manifestation of aesthetic perception” and derives its significance from “the role it plays in developing art” (Zis 8). It does not only play a passive role in analyzing movements in art and phenomena of aesthetic perception, it also considers the active and deliberate shaping of art its most important task. In presupposing a “far reaching influence of art on various spheres of the material and cultural life”, art is supposed to take part in “the process of transforming the real world” (Zis 8) to a communist world. That includes the absence of metaphysic, mystic or idealistic elements. Marxist/Leninist Aesthetics applies materialist dialectic to the cognition of aesthetic phenomena with which it attempts to explain the vast influence of art on people. It interprets the past socio-economically and projects a bright future. So is it, for example, the role of the tragedy “not to aestheticise human suffering but to sing of the inevitable triumph of positive principles, of the progressive forces of society” (Zis 216).

It is explained that there are great opportunities for every artist of the German Democratic Republic whose works express dedication to peace, democracy, and anti-imperialistic solidarity. It does not say what happens to artists who do not show that kind of dedication. The “creative atmosphere” that the SED wants to support shall be “characterized by high idealistic, moral and aesthetic demands and a principle-strong and at the same time trustworthy behavior toward artists” (Kulturpolitisches Wörterbuch 404). Obviously, when the party sets such narrow parameters, it must have means to enforce its policies, otherwise they become meaningless.

All of this is an integral part in what is called the socialist culture revolution, a movement in the arts and general culture of the socialist countries that parallels their projected political, economical and social development. It is based on a historical-dialectic interpretation of the past which progressively develops toward communism. In the GDR, the culture revolution had three phases (up to 1978) that the previously quoted dictionary depicts as follows: The main concerns of the *first phase* from 1945 to 1949 were interrelated with the full abolishment of the political apparatus of the Nazis, dethronement of the bourgeois business owners and the land reform in which the farmland formerly governed by big landowners was given to regular farmers. This was seen as a first step in overcoming the cultural differences of the urban and rural population. In the cultural realm that meant getting rid of the fascist, militaristic ideology and planting the seeds for the new democratic, anti-fascist, anti-imperialistic ideology. Included was the institutional changeover for the mass media (Broadcast, press, film, publishing houses) into the peoples’ possession (*Volkseigentum*). The humanistic

tradition of the German cultural heritage was emphasized, “progressive influences” from other countries, especially the Soviet Union were allowed in, and the arts and sciences should become accessible to the broad public. The *second phase* of the culture revolution describes the transition from capitalism to socialism (1949–early 1960’s) and encompasses the founding of the GDR as a sovereign country, the dictatorship of the working class, the creation of the foundations of socialism and the further development of the ideological change on a higher level (since the process is seen as continuing progress). A new intelligence grew out of the working class, and the rift between art and people and artist and life was bridged. However, critiques or censors of artworks in later years will argue that a work which has not yet reached the “high standard” of socialist art may be denied publication or the like, although actually it might only be because work’s immanent criticism of certain political, social or moral circumstances. One dominant theme of reflection is the membership of West Germany in the “aggressive enemy”-block of the NATO, which was interpreted as a continuation of the imperialistic, anti-Soviet ideology of the Nazi-era. The *third phase* from the beginning of the 1960’s on marked--according to official GDR interpretation--the completion of the time of transition and focused on shaping the “developed socialist society.” The dictionary praises the efforts and achievements of the working class in improving their cultural *niveau* (Kulturpolitisches Wörterbuch 409).

The theatre in the German Democratic republic embodies a contradictory double importance. It was one of the showpieces of the country’s cultural life. The Berliner Ensemble, for example, the theatre in which Bertolt Brecht had worked, or the Komische

Oper, were frequently invited to international festivals. The brochure-like book Theatre in the GDR, published by the 'Centre GDR of the International Theatre Institute,' shows the official position of the country voiced by leading members of its Socialist Unity Party, towards its theatre. It is praised by the Minister of Culture Klaus Gysi with the words: "As a country with a highly developed theatre culture rich in tradition, the German Democratic Republic with its theatre system, with the... international prestige of its theatrical work and the mass appeal of its theatre, belongs to the foremost countries in the world" (Ebermann, Wolf, and Gebhardt 15). At the same time it is pressed into the scheme of the GDR's cultural policy:

"The universality of the repertoire of the GDR theatre... finds its natural borders where in works of contemporary drama injustice or inhumanity is glorified or excused, the senselessness of human existence and human actions is preached, the surrender of man to a blind fate or mechanistic determinism is demonstrated, where the picture of man as a creative subject of history is revoked or destroyed. That means that the works of the so-called Theatre of the Absurd or the Theatre of Cruelty find no place in the repertoire of our theatre because they contradict our humanistic principles... The main problem was the dramatic representation of new social relationships resulting from new human relations, the presentation of man freed from the bonds of capitalist exploitation as creator of himself" (Ebermann, Wolf, and Gebhardt 15-16).

On the other hand, the theatre played an important role in breaking out of the prescribed monotony in the content of the arts. As mentioned earlier, the theatre was a medium for communication, a forum for progressive dialog. Adolf Dresen, director in the GDR, responds to the question whether the theater in the GDR was a niche to survive the ideological winter, in an 1990 interview and confirms that the theatre played an important role in keeping a balance between control of the arts and freedom of expression. "I wouldn't exactly call it a niche. It was the last remains of the public sphere. Or perhaps it

was exactly the opposite. We didn't really have anything like a public sphere any more in the GDR, apart from in the churches and to an extent in the theater. They could control radio and film and the publication of novels... Nevertheless, in the theatre, you still had more freedom because actors have a unique way of speaking..." (Guntner and McLean 161). With "public sphere" Dresen refers to the ability of having a public debate expanding beyond the very narrow ideological parameters, the freedom of thought.

Examining the theatre of the GDR specifically in terms of the mechanisms with which it was controlled can provide a unique perspective from which the existing works can be interpreted and re-interpreted on a more advanced level. This thesis intends to provide means to enhance understanding of the interwoven complexity of context and work against isolationist theories of interpretation that seek to understand the work only out of the manifest properties of the work without regards to the circumstances under which it was produced.

1.2. An Examination of Censorship

In all the documentation of control processes completed by GDR officials, the word "censorship" is avoided. Even the Kulturpolitisches Wörterbuch--which clearly defines all other aspects of the role and limitations of the arts within the GDR--does not have an entry for censorship. In order to examine the mechanisms of *censorship* I must define what it means. Since no government or otherwise official documents of the GDR determine exactly what it is, I will need to review other sources to describe how far reaching the concept of censorship is. The Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary defines

it as “the act of censoring” and “censor 1 person authorized to examine books, films, plays, letters, etc and remove parts which are considered indecent, offensive, politically unacceptable or (esp in war) a threat to security: *the British Board of Film Censors*. 2 (in ancient Rome) official who prepared a register of all citizens and supervised morals” (181).

The German DUDEN refers to the Latin word “censura” which means examination or assessment/judgement and defines similarly as “control undertaken by appropriate, esp. government, agencies, examination of letters, print works, films or the like regarding political, legal, moral or religious conformity” (1773). Control and examination in this definition do not specifically include “changes” as the Oxford Advanced Learners Dictionary does. According to Wichner and Wiesner, GDR authorities did urge authors to make changes and did not publish the work unless those changes were made by the author, but they did not change the relevant parts without the consent—however forced—of the author or publish it without the author’s consent. Wiesner offers the definition of censorship as published in the East German Dictionary of Literary Science (Wörterbuch der Literaturwissenschaft) in Austellungsbuch, a work that documents texts from an exhibition on literature censorship in the GDR. The definition here is not as ‘objective’ as the two previous ones. It states that censorship historically originated in the class society as means for the control and suppression of progressive, democratic forces that were questioning the existing circumstances. Therefore it was primarily geared against print products, serving the goal of protecting the ideological hegemony of the dominant forces of society. Censorship can occur in the form of

examination before publication (pre-censorship) and prosecution of publication (post-censorship). West Germany is said to be undermining the generally granted freedom of the press by economic concentration as well as by modifying it through court sentences against authors with socialist and democratic orientation, even disqualification from their profession. In the socialist society, however, the full responsibilities lie within the producers of such works (authors, publishers, editors) and works which endanger peace, relations to other peoples, the dignity of a person or social progress are principally excluded from publication. This last statement opens the door to tie back to the beginning of the definition: censorship as a means to suppress forces that are critical towards the given circumstances. The Socialist Unity Party's declared program was "social progress" toward communism. Therefore everything that did not conform to their program then was principally excluded from publication. This entry for "censorship" ends with the remark that in times of strict censorship, as for example art-censorship at the turn of the last century, results are exile of authors and different forms of literature that favor disguising statements such as fairy tales and fables. There is evidence that writers in the GDR used those very means to save their works from not being published (Wiesner, Ausstellungsbuch 81-83; Rüter, Zwischen Anpassung und Kritik 43-47).

In a broader perspective, censorship can be viewed in terms of different discourses. Especially when the theme of self-censorship will be discussed, it is important to understand that the mechanisms of censorship are much more subtle than just the mere red pen that crosses out some lines or pages. Richard Burt (ed.) gives a good insight into the subtleties of censorship in his book The Administration of Aesthetics. Censorship.

Political Criticism and the Public Sphere. He discusses Pierre Bourdieu's distinction between generally accepted and generally not accepted discourses, and the undisputed.

“As Pierre Bourdieu argues, discourse is divided not only between the realms of orthodoxy and heterodoxy, but also between the realms of the disputed, (which includes both orthodox and heterodox discourses) and the undisputed, that which is taken for granted and hence beyond dispute. Heterodox discourses are opposed not only to orthodox discourses, but to *doxa* (what is taken for granted) as well” (Burt xvi).

He continues with a quote from Bourdieu (Outline of Theory and Practice): “The subordinate classes have an interest in pushing back the limits of *doxa* and exposing the arbitrariness of the taken for granted; the dominant classes have an interest in defending the integrity of *doxa* or, short of this, of establishing in its place the necessarily imperfect substitute, *orthodoxy*” (qtd. in Burt xvii).

This understanding of censorship in terms of *doxa* is perfectly applicable to the control—or censorship—of the literature in the GDR. The subordinate or suppressed classes here are the intellectuals, the progressive but suppressed forces (as the GDR-definition even calls it) and the dominant classes, the SED's political apparatus, which is interested in *doxa*, namely taking their claim to power and necessary rightness as well as their methods for granted. Short of that, they establish orthodoxy, namely a vast realm of unaccepted discourses, such as criticism of their policy, the description of any unaccepted ideas or lifestyles such as drug abuse or unemployment etc. Furthermore, Burt shows in his book that censorship not only regulates discourses, but is itself part of a performance.

The goal of burning books for example, might be not so much the destruction and therefore inaccessibility of those prohibited works, but more the staging of an opposition between “corrupting and purifying forces and agencies” (xviii) in a society.

Sue Curry Jansen explores in Censorship. The Knot that Binds Power and Knowledge (1991) different aspects of censorship in liberal and totalitarian societies. I will focus on a summary of her historical overview on Marx, Lenin, and Stalin since they most significantly influenced the policies on literature control in the GDR. Curry Jansen referring to Lukacs makes plausible that censorship is forcing a separation upon the dual, not separable—univocal and equivocal—functions of language: Poets will pretend that language is strictly equivocal whereas theorists (or functionaries) will pretend it is univocal. “Our censor provides pragmatic affirmation... of the theory of double meaning: that it is impossible to ever completely purge language of equivocation. Thus, for example, the Soviet censorial bureaucracy *Glavit* proscribes irony and Aesopean language. But no bureaucratic manual—no grammar of administrative rationality—can ever fully articulate the procedures for identifying it” (200). She mentions that even under the strict Stalinist control (Zhdanovism) of literature, occasional relaxation of that control was necessary in order to avoid total lack of liveliness and therefore administrative uselessness of literature. She concludes that “the univocal and equivocal affects of language cannot be separated and isolated by censors ... without disrupting or aborting communication” (201).

Karl Marx, himself a journalist in his young years, stated in On Freedom of the Press and Censorship (qtd. in Curry Jansen) that his style was his property and his style

was humorous and daring. But the law which permitted him to write at the same time forced him to write in a style different from his own: in a serious and modest style. Herein he implies a violation of his property rights and describes the “only permissible color of freedom” as “gray on gray”. Marx also dispels the myth that censorship enhances freedom, a phrase often heard in defense of such institutions when it is argued that the conflict with the censor sharpens the awareness of the authors etc. “The greatest orator of the French Revolution...--Mirabeau—trained himself in prison. Are prisons therefore the colleges of oratory” (10). Censorship in Marx’s view guarded the entitlement to power of the existing elites, which is similar to Bourdieu’s notion of doxa. Censorship can keep certain aspects of circumstances from being recognized or at least suppress heterodox discourses. Curry Jansen summarizes Marx’s arguments against censorship: It demoralizes the public sphere, corrupts the arts, punishes thought rather than action and suspends due process since the censor unites the three legal entities of plaintiff, judge and defendant in one person. Ironically, Marx’s works were censored even by the countries that tried to build a society according to his ideas. Curry Jansen concludes that the advocacy of censorship by Lenin and Stalin which authorized the censorship (or control) of literature in the GDR was a betrayal as well as a logical consequence of Marx’s arguments. It was mainly founded on his remark in the Kommunistisches Manifest that the means of communication and transportation should be centralized in the hands of the state. However it is unclear, whether he included the press and the arts in “means of communication” or not. It nevertheless became the justification for censorship of communication in a broader sense.

Lenin made the voluntary procedure of turning new manuscripts into the *Glavlit*, the Chief Administration for Literary Affairs, in 1922 a mandatory one, first temporarily only to prevent the circulation of counterrevolutionary texts but not to administer aesthetics (see: The Policy of the Party in the Field of Artistic Literature, 1925). Later this restrictive bureaucratic institution became permanent and broadened its demands into the aesthetic. He saw it to be a necessary step in building a new society. Curry Jansen describes the role of literature as “translating private outrage into public contempt for the prevailing powers” (102). Lenin himself was afraid that the Proletkult could inspire philosophical and political formation rivaling the government and was therefore in favor of certain kinds of censorship. In his significant essay Party Organization and Party Literature (1905) he proposed not to confuse literature with other party affairs, but at the same time demanded that literature “must become party literature... a part of the general proletariat cause... a part of organized, systematic united Social Democratic party work” (qtd. in Curry Jansen 106). Lenin also urged all writers to join his political party. Curry Jansen sums up what is expelled from works of art in Marxist-Leninist socialist realism, the prescribed form in which art had to content itself: “irony, satire, ... allegory, non-essential use of foreign terms or foreign settings, ... virtually anything that could be interpreted as a possible index of deviationist tendencies” (114). Depicted here is the attempt of reducing equivocation of artistic language to univocal party-conformity. The publishing house “Neues Leben” in the GDR had a list of words that they demanded to be replaced by others (Wiesner, Ausstellungsbuch, 29). Consumer-thinking had to be replaced by striving for material wellbeing; dying forest (*Waldsterben*) by damaged

forest (*Waldschäden*), creature by living being, wife by woman, generation conflict by togetherness of young and old.

Stalin's obsession with control also pertained to the arts. Curry Jansen tells the story of the arrest of a famous Ukrainian actor for treason. Stalin is said to have seen the actor portraying a traitor . "Captivated by the effectiveness of the performance, Stalin concluded that only an actual traitor could play the part so well..." (99) and called for the arrest of the traitor-actor Buchma.

Not only was politics concerned with the theme of censorship, literary professionals also were caught between the belief in a better system, their willingness to contribute to it and their frustration about not being able to publish their works, even when they were supportive of the socialist ideals, and having to fight a bureaucratic apparatus. The concept of self-censorship, a form of censorship that does not allow certain thoughts to slip into ones mind, is well described in "Literaturentwicklungsprozesse," edited by Wichner and Wiesner. Actual censorship as described in the DUDEN definition is unnecessary when things are not being said out of fear of suppression or other major disadvantages—and the denial of publication of an author's work. Erwin Strittmatter, a well known GDR writer, states in his journals (Rüther, Greif zur Feder, Kumpel 113), that he was trying to prevent this subconscious diminution of his work by pretending to write for the far-away future, that the publication of the work now was impossible, but that even in the journal he could not be totally honest out of fear of house searches. This exemplifies the fear of an author to be drawn into the realm of doxa, in the realm where too many things are taken for granted, the

stagnation of thought. Gerhard Bransten treated this topic in his book titled The donkey as official or the animal is also just a human being. Fables (qtd. in Wiesner 80).

In the following section, I will give an overview of the agencies associated with literature and theatre censorship in the GDR. It is important to keep in mind the complexity of the system with which the artist had to interact.

1.3. Censorship Agencies in the GDR

Literature censorship specifically has been the subject of several authors' attempt to come to terms with the East German state. Richard Zipser sent out 240 questionnaires between 1992 and 1993 to well and lesser known authors of the former GDR and asked them to respond. He divided censorship into four categories that shall be described briefly.

- 1) **Self-Censorship:** The author uses his knowledge about what is allowed to censor his own work.
- 2) **Censorship by the publishing houses**
- 3) **State-Censorship:** Censorship by two government institutions, the Main Administration Book trade and Publishers (*HV Buchhandel und Verlage*) and the Bureau for Copyrights (*Büro für Urheberrechte*). The Main Administration licensed everything that was being published and coordinated the related activities such as determination of how the work should be marketed and how many copies should be

distributed where. The Bureau for Copyrights in its censorship function mainly dealt with controlling the publication of works by GDR authors outside the GDR.

- 4) Party-Censorship: Zipser here refers to censorship on all levels since party members were found in each institution that could censor writers, including the Writers' Union.

The previous discourse has established good references about developments regarding new scripts in the GDR (Franke 209-356; Profitlich 297-320), the production of existing plays (Guntner and McLean), dramaturgic notes (Kreuzer and Schmidt), and the effects and partially also the means of literature censorship in the GDR (Wichner and Wieser 7-49; Rüter, Literatur in der Diktatur 252-282; Zipser 13-36; Walther 169-319; Fuchs 146-190) as well as descriptions of the political, historical and ideological context of the GDR (Schroeder 199-310, 387-483; Krug 115-252; Walther 83-167). What is missing is an analysis of the mechanisms of censorship for the theatre, that takes into account their general applicability. The performance character adds unique qualities to plays that other literary genres traditionally not being performed cannot offer. The body language and interpretation of words by the actor are more difficult to censor than the words themselves. In much of the literature dealing with the censorship issue in the GDR, including scholarly writings, comments and works of artists, interviews etc., it is still very unclear how exactly the process worked. Often authors mention "the censor" without referring to a particular institution or person. Matthias Braun provides a case study on the censorship of a play by Heiner Müller in 1961 in Drama um eine Komödie. In interviews, writers and directors tend to answer the question about details of the

copyright process in a way that indicates that there were many different ways, some very blunt, others very subtle.

From a variety of sources on the general theme of literature censorship, the following institutions, means and people playing a crucial role in the censorship of GDR literature can be extracted. Artists like Dresen refer to the Ministry for Culture (*Ministerium für Kultur*) as *the* censorship agency. Located in Berlin (East), all new manuscripts had to be reviewed and granted permission for publication there. If a publication could not be published as is, because the text did not adhere to the prescribed standards of socialist culture described above, suggestions for changes were made and the author urged to make those changes. The publisher or author could bring in an expert's evaluation of the work implying the harmlessness of the work. This expert sometimes deliberately misinterpreted ambiguous parts of the work in favor of publication. According to Joachim Walther (qtd. in Wiesner 24), the publisher or *lektor* were performing a pre-censorship whereas the Department of Culture performed the final censorship. In the case of new plays, the Henschelverlag, a publishing house in Berlin (East), had the monopoly as well as censorial rights or responsibilities.

In the case of Walther, the system worked as follows. He was dismissed as *lektor* for a publishing house because he did not deny publication for a work that he, as an editor, had already accepted. The censorship agency (Hauptverwaltung Bücher und Verlage) with its head Klaus Höpcke did not want to appear as the censor and therefore ordered the director of the publishing house that the decision of the Department should be

argued by the publisher and therefore the editor. Walther did not want to play this role and was sanctioned by the publisher, the censorship agency, and the State Security.

The Ministerium für Staatssicherheit (MfS, Department for State Security) was the secret service of the GDR. It played an important role in controlling all aspects of the conformity of the GDR citizens. A vast network of “unofficial members” (*Inoffizielle Mitarbeiter, IM*) recruited from all parts of society was put in place to be informed about literally everything. The words “spy” or “informer” were of course avoided in official terminology. They nevertheless characterize well the methods of the persons involved. Walther (qtd. in Rüter, Literatur in der Diktatur 295-301) stresses that people agreed to become an IM for a number of different reasons, some of which are the belief in contributing to the victory of a new society, fear of sanctions, certain gratification offered within the system, trying to get a dear person out of prison or make desired medical treatment available. Also, the IM’s involvement was very differentiated. Some refused to give information about persons, others volunteered to go further than expected. And some people denied cooperation at all. Nevertheless, writers were subject to IM control as well as part of the system. Hermann Kant, for example, a recognized author in East and West Germany was head of the GDR Writers’ Union for many years and also IM for the MfS. In 1969, the State Security created a Main Division XX/7 (Hauptabteilung XX/7) and the corresponding departments (*Referate*) seven in each of the 16 districts’ administrations of the GDR whose sole task it was to control the cultural activities in the country. In 1978 a department was created within the Main Division with special emphasis on the publishing houses and the Writers’ Union (*Zentraler Schriftstellerverband*). In the 1980s The Main

Divisions 7 and 9 of the MfS also concentrated on fighting political underground activity in the literature (Walther qtd. in Rüter, Literatur in der Diktatur 287). According to the same source, the Main Division XX/7 had 40 main and 350 unofficial members in 1989.

Walther depicts the methods most commonly used in the “security area literature.” First, key positions in all literary areas (Writers’ Union, publishing houses, literary magazines, PEN-center, Department of Culture, Bureau for Copyrights etc.) were filled with IM or official State Security officers. Secondly, the public influence of the writer was to be diminished. This measure included the prohibition or restriction of the contact between reader and writer through publication, concerts or public readings. Often, the MfS did not actively have to interfere because the so called partners of political-operative cooperation (*Partner des politisch-operativen Zusammenwirkens*, POZW) suggested “appropriate” administrative measures before hand. Yet the MfS and SED agencies sent their members to events at which they expected political non-conformity in order to monitor and disrupt if necessary. Ironically, they sometimes formed the majority of the audience. In 1978, for example, Brigitte Martin read a piece for 120 people whom 70 were MfS members. A third way is the perfidious system of influencing the perception of books that did get published by controlling reviews of the books. Sometimes not a single review of a book could be published anywhere in the country; in other occasions only negative (with a given percentage of negative characterizations) were allowed. Last but not least Walther argues that corruption or subversion (*Zersetzung*) of a person by using psychological pressure with the goal of resignation and self-doubt of the person was the most common practice. Some examples of this method are the systematic

destruction of a person's public reputation, the systematic organization of private and social failures, creation of mistrust and mutual suspicion within groups of people, anonymous calls or letters, goal oriented spreading of rumors about a person in a certain group or organization etc. These are all phrases cited by Walther (289) from a directive of the MfS in 1976.

The MfS process was organized on four levels starting with the report of some suspicion of "hostility" reported by an IM and could lead to preliminary proceedings with and without arrest on level four. Some of the articles in the GDR criminal law that were used most often against writers were the following: article 99 StGB (Strafgesetzbuch), betrayal of the country by transmitting information, sentence: 2-12 years prison, this could be caused by as little as a letter to West Germany; article 106 StGB, hostility against the state, sentence: 1-10 years prison; article 219 StGB, illegal contact, paragraph 2, giving material that could harm the GDR to organizations or people in foreign countries (that could be a manuscript or a poem), sentence: monetary fine or up to five years; and article 220 StGB, "Public degradation," which could be practically anything, sentence: monetary fine or up to five years prison etc. Between 1945 and 1989 at least 43 authors were arrested. Approximately 80 literary persons left quasi voluntarily or were forced to leave the GDR (Walther qtd. in Wichner and Wiesner 291).

Another agency that was heavily involved in controlling the publication of literature, especially in the prevention of publication of critical works or pieces that described a darker side of the GDR (esp. such that are referring to a feeling of being imprisoned or controlled) in West Germany is the Bureau for Copyrights (*Büro für*

Urheberrechte, BfU). Wichner and Wiesner give an excellent case study about the publication of the anthology Leila Anastasia in Literaturentwicklungsprozesse (128-143). The editor Elke Erb was working with the East German Aufbau-Verlag and the West German Verlag Kiepenheuer & Witsch in 1984/85. The GDR publisher denied publication and also demanded to end relations to the West German publisher on grounds of the above mentioned article 219 StGB. All authors were personally contacted by the BfU and made aware that they are performing an illegal act if they granted or will grant their pieces to an editor who intends to publish the works in West Germany. On a larger scale, other East German Publishing houses stopped cooperative projects with the West German Verlag Kiepenheuer & Witsch and had to look for different partners--which also resulted in financial loss.

Censorship of literature was well accepted in the beginning years of the GDR—even by the artists themselves (see Christoph Hein's "Rede auf dem X. Schriftsteller kongreß DDR" qtd. in Kreuzer and Schmidt 571-580). This must be seen in the light of the first stage of the so called socialist culture revolution in which it was the declared goal to overcome all fascist remnants, in the minds of the people as well as in the social and economic structures of Germany.

Later, authors criticized censorship more and more. Hein argued in his above mentioned speech at the Tenth Writer's Convention of the GDR in November 1987, that censorship was in character obsolete, useless, paradox, illegal and punishable and an enemy of the people (the author, the reader, the publisher, the censor) and peoples. Censorship, according to Hein, cannot prevent literature, it can only delay literature (qtd.

in Kreuzer and Schmidt 571.) Readers are sovereign enough to evaluate given literature and discuss it themselves. Also, censorship defeats the purpose of building and artistically supporting a new society. It damages the reputation of the GDR and equates to a "Public Degradation" (573).

Other authors, such as Heiner Müller and Peter Hacks, were less radical and only demanded in a paper on measures for improvement of the relationship between GDR-Dramatics and GDR-Theatre, a censorship process order (*Zensurprozeßordnung*), in which the censor had the duty to reason his changes and denials. Hein on the other hand believed that the censorship process order would not help the dramatic literature. The theaters themselves were the problem. Even if a play passes the central control mechanisms, it can still be denied production in each individual theater.

2 Methods and Definitions

2.1. Mechanisms versus Cases of Censorship

I will limit my research to the timeframe around 1971 until 1989. The year 1971 is of great significance to the development of literature in the GDR. It marks a change of government in the GDR, Erich Honecker became General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Socialist Unity Party and announced a liberalization of the arts at the VIII Party Convention. The early 1970s were characterized by a fresh debate on the role and means of art in and for the socialist society. New provocative plays were published and produced, among others Ulrich Plenzdorf's Die neuen Leiden des jungen W., (The New Sorrows of Young W., 1972) which was performed in East and West Germany, but was far more successful in the East as critiques and reviews show, since the audience had to be able to understand subtle ambiguities and relate to phrases typical in the socialist language, but unfamiliar to West German audiences.

Matthias Braun, scholar and author of the case study on the censorship of Heiner Müller's Drama um eine Komödie, gave the advice to only conduct case studies because the decisions in different situations were made seemingly arbitrary in relation to various outside factors such as the political relationship to West Germany at the time, the general cultural policy of the SED, the intentions or rank of the person reporting to the Ministry for Culture and the fame of the artist. Therefore he also advised carefulness with the term "mechanisms" which implied a standard set of rules or actions, something that seemingly

did not exist in the GDR, a country that officially had no censorship. Yet the control of the theatres was so complete that one has to wonder how the MfK could have had the opportunity at any given moment to step in and declare a play, a manuscript or a person censored, unhealthy for the good of socialism and the country—which had to be protected from such harmful influences. There must be a huge underlying systematic and bureaucratic structure that enables government institutions to have that freedom to interpret and reinterpret works, to prohibit them at one point and then praise them at another, once certain circumstances have changed. In other words, the questions they ask must be staying the same: only the answers change depending on which other factors—situated outside this structure—are taken into account. Using case studies, one would be able to examine more closely determining factors for a particular censorship decision, but be unable to uncover the structure underneath.

The legitimacy of the question for the *mechanisms* of censorship rather than *cases* of censorship can be defended when being able to present evidence of systematic instruction to control the theatre independent of individual persons or institutions. The fact that in the actual situation, factors only remotely related to structure may be determining the interpretation of a work as either helpful and good or destructive and bad, and therefore its fate regarding censorship, does not invalidate the underlying structure of reference, that, which is to be determined with this thesis.

Examining the theatre of the GDR specifically in terms of its control can provide a unique perspective from which the existing works can be interpreted and re-interpreted

on a more advanced level. This thesis will not serve as a defense for an artist's conformity with the system or evaluate/devalue the artistic potential of the works. It intends to provide means to enhance understanding of the interwoven complexity of context and work against isolationist theories of interpretation that seek to understand the work only out of the manifest properties of the work. Furthermore, it is my goal to provide a summary of mechanisms of censorship that can be used to identify censorship in other areas and provide for a democratic tool in the enforcement of the right to freedom of expression.

2.2. The Theatre Beyond Mere Performance

First, the object of examination, the "theatre of the GDR," has to be specified. I will limit my research to productions and all persons involved in such productions of new or existing plays at professional theatres of the GDR and guest performances of ensembles, parts of ensembles or individuals that are at the time of their guest performance or guest work citizens or residents of the GDR and are working under GDR regulations, excluding the workers', children's and underground theatre. Furthermore, there is only very little documentation about the underground theatre and their control would not represent the standard procedure in dealing with theatres. Included in my research are theatrical productions of new and existing scripts, and their artistic processes as well as administrative, personnel and publicity decisions, which involves a variety of agencies and institutions such as the Ministry for Culture (several divisions and associated agencies), the city and district councils and the Theatre Union.

GDR theatre scripts and performances shall be defined as all scripts intended for theatrical performance (this may include cabaret art or musical work) that were written on East German soil, independent of the birthplace of the author. All writers, directors and theatrical persons had to adhere to the same standards within the country.

Performances and productions of theatrical artists who are at the time of the production or performance citizens or registered residents of the GDR are included, even if the work itself was carried out in a different country e.g. as a guest performance.

Accordingly censorship of the theatre can be defined as all measures taken by the state and its organs to establish or maintain doxa, to suppress heterodox discourses and to establish or enforce orthodoxy². This includes all measures taken to control all stages and processes of creating, distributing, receiving and interpreting theatrical works. It involves writing as far as even “thinking about certain issues,” publishing, performing, producing, administering, advertising, reviewing etc. any theatrical work (including technical questions) that are *politically reasoned*. In this particular system, a political dimension was inherent in every aspect of life serves, in many cases as an empty terminology, justification and motive for all sorts of actions. Yet the political can be substituted with the free market economy, the family or utopia, anything that detracts from the conscious realization of the actual processes that shape communication in a society, and the structure of power in the society and possible alternatives to it.

Resulting from what I would like to call “active” censorship is self-censorship, the conscious or subconscious choices of the artist not to use certain means of

² As defined according to Bourdieu on pages 20-21 of this paper

representation that could endanger the publicity of the work, his personal safety etc.

Those cannot be determined from the outside. When an author does not write about taboo topics, it might still be the case that he simply did not have the intention to do so. To determine conscious self-censorship, testimonies of the authors, directors or other persons involved in the artistic process can be used. Without those testimonies or statements, one can only estimate the extent of conscious or subconscious self-censorship for example by using empirical research methods such as content analysis of numerous texts³ determining which topics are addressed and which are not compared to what is established through expert knowledge about taboo topics. This cannot and will not be accomplished with this work.

I would like to add that especially when applying the to-be-extracted recurring structures in censoring the GDR-theatres to other circumstances, the censoring institution, the “state,” in my definition for the GDR-theatres, naturally will reason politically to justify censorship, even if it is called differently, yet in other systems this institution may be replaced by others that will justify it differently, such as advocates of the “free market” and the “choice of the consumer” etc. Every social system so far has set boundaries for the accepted against the unaccepted to protect itself—and its existing structures. It is in the discretion of other researchers to draw the line between “normal” social boundary-setting and censorship in the particular environment they are investigating. Nevertheless, the answers provided in this work will be applicable as censoring structures to other given circumstances.

³ “Text” means here in the widest sense material of examination, which can be manuscripts, notes, letters,

There are several methods available in order to provide answers to the question of the mechanisms of censorship in the GDR theatre.

- 1) *Historical research*: It was planned to analyze material about the editing of new scripts by the Henschel Verlag to analyze the suggested changes, approvals and disapprovals. These materials reportedly have all been destroyed in the 1991/92 time frame. Although I am not entirely convinced that this is true, I have no way of proving otherwise. Therefore, I contacted other archives which contain material on supervision and censorship according to above definition of the GDR theatres.
- 2) *Expert Interviews*: with Matthias Braun, Günther Rüter, Heinz-Uwe Haus. These interviews were conducted mainly in the beginning phase of the research and served, with the exception of the interview with Professor Haus, as orientations on where to look, which perspectives to consider. Prof. Haus offered interesting perspectives on the results of the theatre censorship in comparison to the West German theatres.

The presented materials were found and evaluated in the Federal Archive (*Bundesarchiv*) of Germany in Berlin Lichterfelde and provided by the Foundation Archive Political Parties and Mass Organizations of the GDR in the Federal Archive (*Stiftung Archiv Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv, SAPMO-BArch*). This particular archive was chosen because it contained a variety of material on the theatres from a political perspective: Correspondence to and from the Ministry of Culture and other related agencies. Other archives, such as the one of the

recordings of performances etc.

Academy of the Arts (*Akademie der Künste*) mostly contain information on authors, directors and productions, and were not included.

The categories under which to search consisted of documents pertaining to theatrical artists and technicians or other persons working at or with a theatre, theatres and ensembles, political persons (defined as members of the SED or one of its block parties or contributors to one of its or the state's agencies) or institutions who are involved in theatrical activities in the timeframe of 1971-1989. Such institutions are the Bureau Kurt Hager and the Theatre Division in the Ministry for Culture, the head office for theatres and orchestras and the head office for the stage repertoire as well as the Theatre Union.

Out of the material received through searching for these criteria, those documents were selected that directly pertained to the theatres and their control. These documents were then summarized and *a posteriori* categorized in the different areas presented in the results that can largely be divide into the areas of a) surveillance or monitoring, b) personnel decisions and c) intervention (excluding personnel decisions). Since some of the procedures and argumentative structures are very similar, only exemplary evidence will be included.

An analytical summary and phenomenological discussion of the results will be presented in the concluding chapter.

3 RESULTS

3.1. Monitoring Theatrical Activities

The first and, in my assessment, most important prerequisite of consequent and effective censorship is extensive knowledge about the object of censorship—as complete and up-to-date as possible. The GDR has repeatedly prided itself to be one of the countries with the most theatres—as a way of showing its cultural superiority over West Germany. In 1977, the GDR had 134 theatres with a total of 49,022 seats, 25,700 performances and 11.08 million people attending performances (Kulturpolitisches Wörterbuch 670). A strictly confidential paper of the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, dated 3/20/1984, shows some statistics on the development of the GDR theater: The GDR has 68 theatre companies that work on 140 fixed stages and 250 “guest” stages (*Abstecherspielstaetten*). There are 49 play oriented theatres, 43 musical theatres, 39 ballet and 16 puppet ensembles. The total repertoire of the area “plays” consists of 57% from socialist countries including the GDR, 13% classical German heritage, 29.4% from capitalistic countries, and 0.6 antique plays. The most performed GDR authors are: Strahl, Hacks, Brecht, Baurl, Braun, Ensikat, Kratzig, Hammel, Groß, Kerndl, Kohlhaase and Maxi Wander—who contribute ca. 30 % of the performance plan (SAPMO-BArch, DY30 vorl. SED / 34862). Additionally, in 1962/63, for example, the GDR already had 3.3 theater seats per 1000 inhabitants, whereas West Germany only had 1.6 (Funke, Hoffmann-Ostwald, and Otto 369). Different agencies in the GDR were concerned with the theatres: The Ministry for Culture (MfK), Theatre Department, was the one into

which the principal of democratic centralism mounted. Others are the Direktion für Theater und Orchester at the Ministry for Culture (DTO, the head office for theatres and orchestras) and the Direktion für das Bühnenrepertoire (the head office for stage repertoire).

The dominant organizational form for GDR theatres is the ensemble. Ensembles are defined as groups of artists that consist of individually and collectively creative people of different artistic professions under the supervision of the Intendant and his co-workers, whose object of work is the performance of dramatic or music-dramatic works. Their purpose is entertaining the audience with different goals according to the needs of the society (SAPMO-BArch, DY 30 vorl. SED / 32800).

The above introduced condition under which it is justified to talk about *mechanisms* of censorship and *recurring structures*, the ability to present evidence of systematic instruction to control the theatre, independent of individual persons or cases, has been met; such material has been found. Very bluntly, the report of the work group “Socialist Ensembles” (DTO, Division for Qualifications), of July 24, 1981 lists under point 3.2 the “Instruction and Control of the Theatres” (SAPMO-BArch, DY30 vorl. SED / 32800). Such control and instruction is expected to take place based on the draft of the “Decree about Theatres, Orchestras, and other Artistic Organizations and the Tasks of the Government Organs.” The theatre consultants (*Theaterreferenten*) in the councils of the districts or cities are responsible for instructing and controlling the individual theatres with emphasis on the following topics:

- 1) Performance plans and repertoire
- 2) Artistic programs and their fulfillment at the theatres
- 3) Cadre and ensemble development, including regular performance evaluations of the management/leadership cadre appointed by the councils
- 4) Theatre attendance
- 5) Planning the tasks of the budgets
- 6) Working and living conditions of the artists.

The work group concludes that, if any of the tasks are not fulfilled, the relationship between theatres and councils is disturbed, resulting in loss of trust.

Obviously, some of these tasks are necessary in each theatre operation: theatres have to have a budget, they have to or should have a concept about how many people attend what performances and have plans for the development of audience structures: But when this kind of information is gathered by theatre consultants who are first and foremost pillars of a political system, whose greatest concern is to enhance its power and endurance, and who most importantly have supervisors in the MfK who have the power to *change* a theatre's plan out of political motivation, it clearly becomes an instrument of control. The separation of state and theatre was not only not guaranteed, it was non-existent.

The *Direktion für das Bühnenrepertoire* (head office for the stage repertoire) confirmed a similar plan of tasks or duties for the year 1982 in accordance with the MfK on January 11, 1982--after the tenth party convention of the SED (SAPMO-BArch, DY30 vorl. SED /32714). I will present a selection of areas included in the plan relevant to

monitoring theatrical activities, providing means for controlling them and therefore contributing to the censorship of the theatres. The first area is summarized as “analytical and conceptional work.” It includes briefing statements and information for the work assignment meetings of the minister for culture; a report on the “theatre year 1981” that consists of assessments of the year by the councils of the 15 districts of the GDR and other informational material; information on visitation development, on the realization of the performance plans (*Spielpläne*) of the theatres; and the preparation of the performance plans for the next year. Furthermore, there are plans to support the “problem counseling” with members of the councils by the Ministry for Culture; also to conduct internal studies on the tendencies of new dramatic and music-dramatic works of the GDR; and a joint study on tendencies in the performance practices of dramatic and musical-dramatic works of the GDR, of the Soviet Union and the “third world,” of heritage drama and heritage musical theatre (which refers to mostly classical works e.g. Schiller, Goethe or Kleist). This major study should be based on the reports of performances and other available material. The *Direktion für das Bühnenrepertoire* also intended to put together internal advisories for the consultation and work with the theatres in terms of making theatrical works available for the performance practice and the repertoire. Last but not least, listed under point one is the analysis of press coverage.

The next point describes activities of different work groups, one of them being the work group “theatre visits.” Operative tasks (point three) of this agency include the main item of its work: to fulfill the assignments of the MfK in preparing the approval of the performance plans (*Spielpläne*). Cooperation efforts with theatre consultants

(*Theaterreferenten*) in the city and district councils took place in the form of program consultations, preparation of conceptions for theatre visits, talks on selected areas of the repertoire, including a list of names of members of the *Direktion für das Bühnenrepertoire* to work closely with particular districts. This work is specified as contact with the theatre consultants and an overview about the theatre praxis. Further cooperation should, according to this plan, take place with authors, composers, a group that is concerned with new dramatic works (*AG Neue Werke*) and of course with the DTO and publishing houses. Their Public Relations work includes articles for the GDR theatre journal Theater der Zeit about performance critiques, statistics about theatre visitation, the development of the repertoire and annotations on first performances in the GDR. The plan includes budget considerations, the analysis of all information regarding the realization of then program-plans for the theatres, intended productions for the next year and the archive .

3.1.1. Performance Plans

According to the Kulturpolitisches Wörterbuch (637), the performance plan for theatres includes the dramatic/stage works that are planned as new productions and the ones already in the repertoire. Changes in the performance plans have to be authorized by the agency that authorized the plan in the first place. The plans and all changes are monitored and analyzed in terms of the development of a socialist repertoire, as shown above, by the *Direktion für das Bühnenrepertoire*. The documentation does not go into more detail. The theatres suggest in a draft plan their intentions for the repertoire

development for the next few years. Those suggestions are examined carefully by ensembles, audience councils and other audience groups before they are defended before the responsible state organs by the Intendant of each theatre in the annual performance plan consultations—and finally approved or not approved. In the latter case, it was usually not the entire performance plan that the MfK did not approve, but rather certain positions within that plan. Since 1979, the state organs have authorized the performance plans according to performance years (*Spieljahre*) together with the “plans of tasks” of the theatres.⁴

The archive material shows evidence of struggles about performance plans between the more artistically oriented and the more politically oriented involved groups. Debates about adding a play to the performance plan usually involved not only the aesthetic dimension or artistic accomplishment, but most likely the political “correctness” of the play and implicitly or explicitly the question about the function of theatre in the society and its proposed effects on the audience.

In a letter on December 12, 1974 to Secretary of the Central Committee of the SED, Erich Honecker, Konrad Naumann describes the situation at the “Deutsches Theater” in Berlin as follows. “On the other hand, the Deutsches Theater is persistently trying to push through the new play by Volker Braun, Tinka, as a main position in the performance plan, although it has not yet been approved by the Ministry for Culture

⁴ Before 1977 they were authorized according to performance time (*Spielzeit*), the time in which the theatre is open uninterrupted, usually November-March. But theatres started to be open year round, therefore “performance years.”

because of *serious deficits in its basic political statement* [my emphasis]" (SAPMO-BArch, DY30 vorl. SED / 86434). Many members of the ensemble, Naumann writes, have strong concerns about the new version of the play provided by the dramaturgy of the Deutsches Theater—which has not yet been the subject of a “clarifying discussion” in the management of the theatre. Some Genossen (comrades, SED party members) questioned whether the play doubted party resolutions, but both, the Intendant, Genosse Gerhard Wolfram and Oberspielleiter, Genosse Horst Schoenemann denied that. The state management of the theatre (*staatliche Leitung*) declared that they approved Tinka as part of the performance plan and urged the party management (*Parteileitung*) of the theatre to also agree. According to Naumann, all members of the party management, except for the cadre manager (*Kaderleiterin*) who was strictly opposed, agreed.

He concludes that different opinions about the function of theatre in the society have prevented a conception and clear performance plan positions. Naumann reports, for example, that the main dramaturg at the Deutsches Theater, Armin Stolper, expressed the opinion that the current function of theatre was not clarified at all, and that the journal Theater der Zeit addressed the issue not objectively but polemically. The result is a theatre cleaned of all that is “dubious and impertinent” by those “sorrowful existences, who try to take away all its freedom and temerity, who are only satisfied when in this laboratory of nice rebelliousness things go as stale and asexual as in a Sunday school of an older or newer kind” (SAPMO-BArch, DY 30 vorl. SED / 86434). Stolper expressed a preference toward those contemporary dramatists who step out of the mass of much-too-satisfied GDR citizens and investigate the limits of what the GDR society can withstand.

Naumann characterizes Stolper's speech here as "indirect polemicizing" against the critical evaluation that the "central committee had to express about certain tendencies in contemporary dramatics" at its ninth convention. He suggests the following measures be taken:

- 1) Comrade Bauer should explain the fundamentals of the SED-politics since the VIII Party Convention in a staff meeting of the Deutsches Theater in January 1975.
- 2) The comrades of the district council in Berlin Mitte shall directly influence the party management and party group meetings at the Deutsches Theater over a longer period of time to enforce homogenous positions.
- 3) In support of the "ideological clarifying process" initiate periodic discussions with directors, dramaturgs and actors.
- 4) Individual talks with members of party organizations at the Deutsches Theater in order to more precisely register their individual "ideological condition" and registration of the members who further keep an opinion contrary to the politics of the VIII Party Convention.
- 5) Increase the influence of the MfK on the performance plans. (SAPMO-BArch, DY 30 vorl. SED / 86434)

In a letter from Schauspieldirektor Schroth to Ursula Ragwitz at the MfK, Theatre Division, in February 1984 (SAPMO-BArch, DY 30 vorl. SED / 34862) he introduces a "problem catalogue" in which he stresses that there are crisis-like appearances in the GDR-theatre that are caused by the loss of the social task and duty [as functions of the

theatre] in the consciousness of many theatre people. He sees a tendency toward depoliticization of the theatre. Schroth assesses that there is not enough specifically socialistic material; the contemporary drama is not emphasized enough. He complains that the theatre management tends to degrade theatres to pure amusement shows that strive for superficial Western fashion ideals. He partially attributes that to the general centrally formulated standards and calls for a national theatre festival.

In a different occasion, Ursula Ragwitz of the Theatre Department in the MfK expresses her disapproval that the Deutsches Theater accepted and started rehearsing Ulrich Plenzdorf's play Die Legende vom Glück ohne Ende against her explicit objection toward the theatre and the MfK. "The Order for approval of new plays" (*Ordnung zur Genehmigung neuer Stücke*) has not been followed. She feels that the Minister for Culture is personally responsible for all consequences (SAPMO-BArch, DY 30 vorl. SED / 34866).

Controlling performance plans and controlling the function that the theatre has within a society presupposes a strong hypothesis of effect. The hypothesized effect of theatrical performances on its audience as well as the involved artists must then not only be strong, but also more or less precisely calculable and directed: A certain kind of theatre—here: dedicated to socialist realism—has a certain kind of effect. Any other but realistic presentation is hypothesized to have a negative, destructive effect not only on particular audience members, but the entire society. These effects, however, are neither clearly articulated nor subject to scientific investigation. They remain vague as in "have negative effect on the political situation" or the like. Only the expected effects can

justify the control, yet they appear as doxa. The discourse about the censorship itself among artists is a heterodox one, but the 'scientific' basis for such measures seems to be beyond dispute. To believe in such strong and generally occurring effects is unrealistic today when compared to assumptions that modern media science dares to make about the effects of certain media content. First media science fragments "the audience" into individuals who are all understood to respond differently to a given media content, depending on their cognitive and emotional ability, interest in the subject matter, concentration at the time, previous experience, knowledge, age, perhaps gender etc. The three major "weapons" of the audience are selective attention, selective perception and selective retention. Not so in the GDR. By bringing forth the SED's messages everywhere, it was hard not to at least hear about them, which accounts for eliminating selective attention and perception. Also, teachers and other groups of employees had the duty to subscribe to at least one of the party's daily newspapers. By having people repeat those messages and therefore re-enforce orthodox discourses, selective retention was controlled to some extent. But even that does not explain the nature of the effect a certain performance could have on the ensemble, audience and society. Furthermore, the majority of GDR persons was able to receive West German TV or radio programs and privately enjoyed them. Therefore the limited selection opportunities were broadened.

3.1.2. Print Authorizations

Another form of monitoring theatres is to control all of their publications. Theatres have to get a print authorization number (*Druckgenehmigungsnummer*) for their

publications such as programs from the MfK, but they do not have to get a license as other publications including newspapers, plays, novels, schoolbooks etc. do. The Kulturpolitisches Wörterbuch (149-150) defends such practice as measures of “quality assurance and the state’s cultural-political and legal means of planning and administrating the different duplication products according to political, cultural, economic and individual needs.”

Legally these practices are based on the “Decree over the Development of Progressive Literature” (*Verordnung über die Entwicklung fortschrittlicher Literatur*) of August 16, 1951; “First Executive Regulations--Licenses” (*Erste Durchführungsbestimmung – Lizenzen*) of December 12, 1951 and “Order about the Authorization Process for the Production of Print- and Duplication Products” (*Anordnung über das Genehmigungsverfahren für die Herstellung von Druck- und Vervielfältigungserzeugnissen*) of July 20, 1959. The files of the Federal Archive document a case in which a theatre program for the play Der Meteor of the Theater im Palast (TiP) was mistakenly distributed into several mailboxes. The chief of “Agitation and Propaganda” accused the theatre of breaking the law by making the program a newspaper—for which they would have had to get a license. He ordered the theatre to deliver all 3,500 remaining copies to his Division of Agitation and Propaganda.

Technically, this method could also be categorized as interventions in the publicity of the theatre such as the regulation of reviews. I prefer to classify it under “monitoring” because it mainly serves as a means to activate the self-censorship of the theatres: Once a production had been approved, it would be counterproductive to try to

advertise it with especially provocative programs that might endanger the performance. I did not find evidence of active intervention in the content of program publications.

3.1.3 The Theatre Union

The Theatre Union was as little an opposing force to the party and state apparatus as was the Writers' Union. Freelance artists were first brought into these kinds of unions in order to get a tax number—without a tax number they could not get paid. Founded in 1966, the Verband der Theaterschaffenden initially served the purpose of a regular professional organization that was concerned with qualifications and social support of its members. Later, the union became merely another tool of the SED with which to gain control over the theatres. The Kulturpolitisches Wörterbuch (717) defines its main purpose as the “support of the creative discussion to clarify ideological and aesthetic development problems of the socialist theatre arts.” The union very clearly expressed this attitude during its Fourth Congress after the IX Party Convention of the SED (SAPMO-BArch, DY 30 vorl. SED / 32782). “The political-ideological responsibility of the theatrical workers has increased in the battles of our time...(qtd. in SAPMO-BArch, DY 30 vorl. SED / 32782 75),” so the opening statement in the documentation of this “Congress of confession of loyalty to the party and the state” that claims--despite its strong bias--to still be critical and constructive. The role of the GDR theatre as a mass medium in the society is to be defined along with discussions of the questions whether the theatre is needed and what can be done so it will be needed even more. Generally, the

union defended all measures of state control over the theatres, and in many cases demanded stricter enforcement. The ensemble principle including the unified management through “democratic centralism” were affirmed. The performance of the actor spouses Thate and Domröse in a West German TV show had to be analyzed from a class stand point in the light of what was seen as politically deliberate and systematic offers from West Germany and West Berlin. “We should argue objectively and soundly, but principally such director’s positions and interpretations, in which our political-ideological bases are questioned in the guise of aesthetics or are openly attacked” (SAPMO-BArch, DY 30 vorl. SED / 32782). This can be interpreted to be in essence the request for a censorship process order in defense against the arbitrariness in decision making, especially by people who were not qualified in the performing arts, but could make decisions about theatres solely because of their political position. It was requested that the state organs and party care more for the theatres, since every closure of a theatre was to be viewed not only a loss of the political and cultural-political conception but also a loss of authority of the party as well as a great international scandal. Also, the defense and justification of the performance plans compositions before the district and city councils required more party control to guarantee a better representation of contemporary dramatic works. “We must assert socialist theatre politics more consequentially and make clear that there are no subsidized private theatres and playgrounds for certain directors. This debate must be led very consequentially” (SAPMO-BArch, DY 30 vorl. SED / 32782).

One is tempted to conclude that opposition to party doctrines was impossible—yet where does the notion of the theatre as a sanctuary of resistance come from? First of

all, one needs to keep in mind that many of the examined documents were known and meant to become part of official party records. Secondly, the testimonies of loyalty to party and state by individuals and organizations were also, but not only designed to further careers and secure funding for different projects. They were part of the everyday life. In schools, every class from second to seventh grade started with a statement swearing readiness for peace and socialism at all times. Public assemblies and displays of all sorts usually referenced the faith in and support of the SED. A vast array of phrases such as the “political ideological...” or the leadership of the “working class and its Marxist-Leninist party” was available to make statements sound politically aware and correct. Manfred Krug, well known singer and actor, points out the following in his account of the 1976/1977 events surrounding the Biermann affair: “Identifying with and dissociating from were the most unproductive and at the same time most important activities of the GDR-person” (Krug 11) What Krug characterizes here is the constantly felt political dimension of almost every part of life in the GDR. In the late 1960s for example, Giesela May had to put the topic of permission to use black coffee cups on the agenda of a plenary assembly. The use of black coffee cups was forbidden, because black was considered a nihilistic color and therefore inappropriate for a theatrical environment that was supposed to identify with socialist realism and dissociate itself from decadent, nihilistic forms of expression. It shows to which extent the state attributed political meaning as well as potential effect to banal objects and actions, and the effort of the regime to stay in control.

People in East Germany developed the skill to very clearly distinguish between their private and their public opinion. These were congruent only in very few cases. It was common to check if a window was open before turning on a West German radio or TV station, and not to discuss certain matters in public. The content and form of the discourses in the GDR were largely determined by their publicity. Their coexistence seemed largely undisputed.

The report of the Fifth Congress of the Verband der Theaterschaffenden in 1985, emphasized again the need to perform works of GDR authors, choreographers and composers in order to increase the effectiveness of contemporary GDR dramatic in the performance plans. Kurt Hager's report to the Central Committee of the SED (SAPMO-BArch, DY 30 J IV 2/9.06/1) mentions critical remarks regarding the application of the approval process for new plays. Attendees of the congress aimed at state regulations that help secure activating the performance of new GDR works at the theatres and increase the responsibility of the Intendanten—and therefore decrease the interference of city and district council officials. "The development of an open, collegial and disputable atmosphere between authors, theatre artists and the public" shall be made a priority since it is a presupposition for further practical work with new dramatic works and for "the determination of their ideological-aesthetic quality." Hager concluded that it was necessary to analyze the suggestions thoroughly, especially the ones about the state approval process."

The responsible officials in the Ministry for Culture were well aware of the inhibiting effect of the censorship methods on the theatre. Many times they were

displeased with the development of dramatic works: the provocative works were too “dangerous” as they could expose a reality that they could not accept, while the conformist plays were often not interesting and artistically weak. The censorship apparatus became a system with its own automatic procedures without much reference to the actual needs. A system that furthered and destroyed careers, made friends and enemies as it pleased eventually lost a sense for reality. The performance itself became the escape door for the theatres. Through the strict control of the content of the performances, the form, the craft became more important and more sophisticated and incorporated what the audiences wished to receive from the theatre: a perspective.

3.2. Administrative Decisions: Personnel

3.2.1. Cadre Politics

Not only did the MfK intrude upon the artistic sphere of the theatres, it also demanded far reaching influence on vital administrative decisions. The above mentioned report of the work group “Socialist Ensembles” of the Ministry for Culture (SAPMO-BArch, DY 30 vorl. SED /32800) also focuses on the cadre politics of the MfK, cadre being persons who potentially and actually fill positions that are concerned with the control of theatres in the councils or theatres themselves. Cadre politics involve the selection, training and distribution of cadre in the sense of “development of socialist personalities.” The Ministry for Culture as well as the district and city councils who supervise the theatres, have the right to suggest/nominate cadre or cadre reserves (the cadre in the reserves are “*Kontrollnomenklaturkader des Ministeriums*”) in agreement

with the Art Union (*Gewerkschaft der Kunst*). The criteria upon which cadre are chosen are anchored in the Book of Labor Law (*Arbeitsgesetzbuch*, AGB) of the GDR as “Characteristics of the work duties of administrators of artistic facilities” (*Rahmenmerkmale für die Arbeitsaufgaben der Leiter künstlerischer Einrichtungen*).

Such criteria are:

- 1) Solidarity with the working class and its party
- 2) Graduation from a University (Hochschule) and proven expertise in the particular subject area
- 3) Willingness and ability to creatively apply the knowledge and expertise
- 4) Capability to lead large collectives, especially to initiate, instruct and lead “ideological-artistic processes”
- 5) Strength of character, a mature socialist personality (defined as unity of motivation, creed and deed)

These criteria reflect the emphasis of concern when choosing persons in charge of the arts: political accordance with the restrictive measures of the SED and the ability to enforce them as well as to keep others in line. Although one does not have to be a member of the SED to be a cadre, one has to show solidarity with it. The criteria are another instrument to control and almost certainly exclude diversity in the artistic experience and mind-expanding experiments. The arts and their administrators are confined to a “denominational school” of socialist politics that is not allowed to exist or develop independently.

There is evidence that persons who were involved in reporting the “ideological state of mind” of certain artists and theatres were even stricter about limiting and standardizing them than the Ministry of Culture itself. The competency and power struggles did not so much take place between different state organs such the state security and the MfK, but appeared to be more stirred by the will to power of those less important theatre “monitors” who where trying to make a career out of discovering and reporting ideological discrepancies to supervisory agencies. Prof. Haus also stated in the interview that the regular internal jealousy and intrigues at a theatre were just as important in determining the fate of theatrical works and workers as the state imposed suppression.

Two cadre positions are of great importance in the German theatre: the *Intendant*, the general or head director of a theatre, and the *Dramaturg*. The position of the Dramaturg is generally upvalued in Germany. Prof. Haus describes in the interview the duties of the dramaturg in an East German theatre as an “insurance function.” Positioned between politics and arts, it was the dramaturg’s responsibility to interpret the conception of a work toward the party as well as toward the director; all in the “interest of the society.” The dramaturg also filled in if the director was not very articulate, and therefore secured the production in terms of articulating the benefits of the director’s conception.

The politically more significant function in the GDR was the *Intendant*. Prof. Haus explains in the interview where this position—unknown to American theatres--historically comes from. He states that hierarchy in the German theatre principally has not changed since the feudal-age. “The Intendant is basically a feudal position which was

mostly occupied by physically disabled military people, whose only supervisor was the feudal lord or city that put them into that position. Downward they had unlimited power. Up to the 1990s the power of the Intendant was practically undisputed, even independent of the unions, he was always an 'emergency break' e.g. in refusing the production of a controversial play. He could prohibit ski-vacations or swimming in order to avoid possible injuries of the actors. The Intendant--theoretically—did not have to be a member of the party (*Parteigtuppe*).” In the same interview, Haus characterizes Intendanten as generally “egoistic, spineless and willing to sell their own grandmother” which does not constitute a potentially forceful opposition to the control through the Ministry for Culture. Haus explains that some Intendanten were very clever party officials. Under the mask of fatherliness they could win large parts of the ensemble for them easier than others who were more straightforward, obvious Stalinists. Comrade Wolfram, the Intendant of the Deutsches Theater in the 1980s, for example, got away very positively on the critiques, but all the plays he did were, according to Haus, always ones in which the system’s boundaries were stretched a little but the system itself left untouched, “there was not one gram of real criticism.” He concludes that this was a clever way of collecting positive-points from the government.

When related to the above-described criteria, Haus’ analysis of the Intendanten-situation in the GDR is not surprising. Not only does the Intendant have to meet those standards, the Ministry of Culture’s approval is needed to appoint or relieve an Intendant from office, a measure that secures even further the conformity of the person. The MfK file (SAPMO-BArch, DY30 vorl. SED / 34862) shows a document which the MfK is

asked to release an Intendant from his position because of “political-ideological” problems. In 1983, claims Naumann, the Berlin “Volksbühne“ has had ideological as well as aesthetic problems in the ensemble and the boards since the director Benno Besson had left. He blames the situation on the current Intendant Arno Rödel, who, according to Naumann’s observations, is not consequent enough, although otherwise true to the party line. “The main problem is that Comrade Rödel--an otherwise distinguished cultural-political-scientific cadre--has not been able to bond with the ensemble and the boards and obligate them to a jointly worked out position. Therefore the collective artistic production could not become a basis for the urgently necessary political-ideological formation of the ensemble” (SAPMO-BArch, DY30 vorl. SED / 34862). Naumann deems the release of the Intendant necessary and suggests a new candidate.

In addition to the above-described duties of the Intendant, the management activities are defined as a “social relationship which aims toward the conscious production, passing on/mediation (*Vermittlung*) and regulation of the processes in society in order to set and accomplish social purposes” (SAPMO-BArch, DY 30 vorl. SED / 32800). The Intendant is the state administrator (*staatlicher Leiter*) of the theatre and responsible toward the society. His management activities have to be based on the resolutions and goal orientation of the SED and on rules and advice from the supervising organs, such as city and district councils. His main tasks are to ensure that the plan guidelines are “realized creatively,” given the objective and subjective possibilities of the particular theatre as well as the conditions of the “territory” on which the theatre is situated (e.g. urban or rural), and to contribute to the enhancement of the socialist

democracy and socialist competition as well as the development of the productivity of theatrical workers and the positive application of the achievement principle⁵. The Intendant should also counteract further resignations of directors. The 1981 report recommends, that the MfK places an obligation on the Intendant to clarify the future use/work area of that cadre in cooperation with the DTO, before terminating or accepting resignation of an employment contract.

The work group recognizes “that the process of theatre development is inhibited by divergences between directors and Intendanten as well as directors and ensembles,” that lead many directors to work in capitalistic countries with no regard to the SED’s cultural policy. Factors that inhibit the individual artistic creativity are, among others, the following: “regimentation of the artistic work, unfounded interventions into the productive process, theatre-foreign methods of instructions and control of ideological-artistic processes as well as mistrust against artists” (SAPMO-BArch, DY 30 vorl. SED / 32800). Remarkably, the rigid control of the theatres is identified as one of the inhibiting factors in the theatres, but at the same time it is limited to the ‘wrong kind of control’: unfounded, mistrustful regimentation. Nevertheless, it proves the awareness of the Ministry for Culture of its impact upon the theatrical work in the GDR. Volker Braun writes in a personal letter (August 12, 1999) that the state was of little as much ashamed as of censorship. The “boldness of power,” Braun states, was a taboo in the GDR.

⁵ The achievement principle was introduced and strongly supported after the VIII Party Convention (June 15–19, 1971) and stressed the right to work in a position adequate to ones achievement.

3.2.2 Guest Performances

The policies allowing East German artists to work in foreign countries, particularly in capitalistic ones, are very peculiar affairs. One has to bear in mind that it was in essence impossible for an average citizen of the GDR to travel to West Germany before having reached retirement age and being able to claim wanting to visit relatives (the amount of “cousins” GDR citizens had in West Germany was proportionally large). Even then they were subject to rigid passport, visa and border controls. Even visits and work in the socialist “brother-countries” had to be approved by the appropriate state agencies and were strictly controlled.

The GDR used the arts—and among those especially the theatrical ensembles, writers and directors—as a tool of domestic and foreign politics. The report about the guest performance of the Berliner Ensemble (BE) in Venice in 1973 ends with the conclusion: “We realize that the direction of the BE to concentrate on plays that directly address class struggle has been right not only in regards to domestic, but also to foreign politics... We can summarize, that all colleges were party- and state conform in the discussions” (SAPMO-BArch, DY 30 vorl. SED IV B. 2.024 / 79). Due to the attention and support the theatre received from the state and party, as restrictive as it might seem, an excellent craftsmanship developed. Prof. Haus assesses (interview) that GDR theatres were artistically and craft wise far more serious and well trained than West German city theatres of equal size. Their members were desired guests at international festivals and other occasions—and therefore also brought the much desired West German mark into the state’s budget calculations. For the last ten years of the GDR, Prof. Haus says, art was

one of the major export goods. Comments in the files about allowing performances because of the financial aspect stress that. On the other hand, the regimentation of guest performances served as a tool underscoring the GDR politics toward West Germany. The more awkward it must have been for the responsible officials when despite all careful prevention measures, artists chose not to return to the GDR, and committed so called “republic flight” (*Republikflucht*).

During a guest performance of the Komische Oper in West Germany (4/28/-5/8/1980), nine members of the ensemble chose not to return to the GDR. The consequences of these republic flights for further guest performance activities as compiled by Ursula Ragwitz (SAPMO-BArch, DY 30 vorl. SED /25911) demonstrate the variety of countermeasure available to the MfK. The Minister for Culture and the district administration of the SED Berlin personally met with the members of the Komische Oper to discuss the events during the guest performance. Ragwitz analyses the causes for the republic flights and then works together with the Ministry for State Security, and reaches agreement with the Ministry for Culture and the SED district Berlin Mitte on the actions to be taken. First and foremost, she summarizes that the guest performances of GDR ensembles in capitalistic countries are, at the time, “the main point of the enemy diversion politics in the cultural realm.” Although the Intendant of the Komische Oper cannot be personally made responsible for the incidents, Ragwitz concludes that weaknesses in his leadership enhanced instability and political lapse. The guest performance had been thoroughly prepared by the MfK, MfS, district administration (Bezirksleitung) Berlin, Kreisleitung Mitte, party and Union leaders and the state

administration of the Komische Oper, but retrospectively, the preparation time was too short since for the first time in 16 years a large GDR ensemble performed in West Germany. It was deemed necessary to seriously and firmly influence the Intendant to secure a collective management style and secure interior stability by closely involving the Party Leadership, and winning over and activating all leadership cadres. The Ministry for Culture will set guidelines for the Intendant to accomplish this goal. They include goal oriented political-ideological work with the heads of the departments within the Komische Oper and the soloists in regularly scheduled work advisory sessions, qualification and cadre meetings; support for the new orchestra manager under stricter formation of the orchestra on how order, security and discipline can be established more strongly with the help of all societal committees. The Minister for Culture will supervise the proceedings according to the guidelines. Furthermore, personnel suggestions for SED cadre to support the theatre management are to be made and the percentage of party members/cadres at the Komische Oper is to be increased to enhance the fighting strength of the SED. Long term, the Intendant will have to be convinced to only work artistically and leave the management to a different cadre. The next guest performance of the Komische Oper, planned for October, nevertheless will have to take place because, Ragwitz argues, a breach of the contract by declining would have negative consequences for the GDR's foreign politics.

The following incident underscores how rigorously the MfK insisted on its power in determining who could be granted the privilege to participate in guest performances—

without reasoning or publicly discussing the selection criteria. On June 17, 1981, the Intendant of the Deutsches Theater (DT), Gerhard Wolfram, sent a report to the deputy Minister for Culture, Martin Meyer, regarding a problematic letter submitted by technical members of the DT (SAPMO-BArch, DY 30 vorl. SED / 34866). Seventeen light technicians, 13 members of properties staff, 17 stage- and five sound technicians signed the letter between June 10 and 12, 1981 and then handed it over to the Intendant. In the letter, they expressed bewilderment (*Befremden*) about the arbitrariness with which the participants for guest performances were chosen. The travel lists, for example for the Wallenstein-production in Moscow, were made and later changed without giving reasons for the changes. The workers therefore demanded the right of the collective to participate in the decision making process: "We don't just always want to be declared mature and of age (*mündig*), we want to be it now. No situation shall be permitted in which decisions about us are being made above our heads." They argue that one cannot really contribute to mutual understanding when just performing on stage but otherwise staying isolated—or it would be enough to mail the play directors' conceptions out. The head of the technical departments within the Deutsches Theater should be involved in the selection process in the sense that he will be given the number of people needed from each department. He will determine who is to participate in the guest performance in conjunction with the entire collective. If there are problems with any person chosen collectively, they should be solved in an open discussion with the involved parties. Furthermore, the department should have the right to defend persons that it trusts. The department also wants be able to control if these nominations are actually passed on to

the theatre management. The undersigned state that their demand to be involved in the selection process is a common, minimal demand. The selection process must be made understandable. They invited the Intendant, the cadre leadership and the directors to discuss their demands.

Neither the union at the DT (*Betriebsgewerkschaftsleitung*) nor the Intendant were informed about this action prior to the handing-over of the letter. The Intendant suggested an analysis of the cadre who signed the letter, because many of them might have not been aware of the “political implications of their actions.” On June 16, 1981, only a few days later, Intendant Wolfram met with all Masters⁶ who signed the petition and convinced all but one to withdraw from their standpoint and take back their signatures. The author of the letter, a sound technician, also refused to take back his signature. Ursula Ragwitz writes a note to Kurt Hager--both are high ranked MfK officials--stating: “If certain signatories insist on their position, a decision on their immediate termination from employment with the Deutsches Theater must be made” (SAPMO-BArch, DY 30 vorl. SED / 34866). The “democratic centralism” that is being enforced here appears to be far more centralist than democratic. Remarkable is the unanimity with which the heterodox discourse charging the selection procedures and therefore the omnipotence of the party is suppressed. In the eyes of the party this is necessary in order to provide for the safety of the doxa protecting its omnipotence in the remaining larger part of the discourse community, the society.

⁶ German qualification-title of a craftsman: Meister

Fifty percent of all profits an artist gained during a guest performance were to be returned to the Artists' Agency (*Künstleragentur*) of the GDR. Once a production in a foreign country was politically authorized, the director had to get another 11 signatures from the Artists' Agency to get permission to take papers such as scripts, concepts etc. all of which had to be listed individually. It was also determined which border check point was to be used. Before one left to a guest performance in West Germany, one also had to sign a paper stating not to get in contact with any West Germans, and not to visit any private homes. Traveling party officials usually took this very seriously because they were so tightly bound into the system. Professor Haus (interview) spoke from first-hand experience with such officials, who mostly stayed in their hotel rooms and never joined the rest of the troupe in any activities.

3.3. Intervention in Artistic Production and its Publicity

Volker Braun's play Tinka caused, as did many of this convinced socialist's other works, great concern among the GDR's cultural officials. Division chief Peter Heldt wrote to the MfK, Kurt Hager, on April 12, 1974 regarding the production version of the text for Tinka at the Deutsches Theater (SAPMO-BArch, DY 30, vorl. SED / 18541). "Even the suggestions to correct the elementary political-ideological deficits step by step during the rehearsals have been considered non-realizable. Comrade Wolfram stressed, that Volker Braun was unwilling to make changes 'at the desk,' but during the phase of rehearsals." Further ways of working with the author and the directors Friedo Solter and

Hans Nadolny were laid out.

The archive material provides evidence of more regulatory measures roughly two years later, concerning the opening night of Tinka (SAPMO-BArch, DY 30, vorl. SED / 18541). I will describe the findings in greater detail because they illuminate the importance of the text itself and reveal the methods of censorship even when the performance itself can—for mostly practical reasons—not be prevented. The final dress rehearsal took place on May 4, 1976 at the Städtische Bühnen Karl-Marx-Stadt. Ursula Ragwitz sent the report of this rehearsal to Kurt Hager on May 6, 1976: Except for some minor cuts, the known version was performed. It is the story of the behavior of workers in a factory after probably necessary politico-economical changes. The break in the love between Tinka and Brenner is a central element that “aims to show conflicts and hardships in our development” and vague ideas to overcome them. There are losses (e.g. the death of the leader) but most of all adjustment, desperation, indifference etc, Ragwitz assesses. The production by Hartwig Albiros attempts to find human warmth, humor and understanding in the brusque text. In her view, this attempt is most successful with the character of the party secretary—although he cannot escape the text’s limitations. “The poet Braun steps before the characters again and again with philosophizing demand, so that their relationships remain largely unintelligible ...” His writing style prevents the case to become real so that it develops as a societal constellation—raising Braun’s well known questions. These include in Ragwitz’s analysis “the anonymity of the ‘Above’ as a mechanism to which one subordinates and adjusts to because one ‘sees the necessity’ to do so, except for Tinka;” “the indifferent and helpless dependence of the workers from

the actions or non-actions of the 'management' ..." and "Tinka, who does not give in, is being isolated and 'dies'." "Tinka, viewed as the only unreasonable one, also is the only reasonably-acting one. The recognition of communism as a goal remains in the background (also mentioned by a character in the end), the way is being negated."

Ragwitz concludes that although it was attempted to put things into perspective through production elements in a "politically responsible manner," the questions could not be dialectically solved—the text does not allow for that. During the rehearsal process, many discussions about the play were held with workers, administrators of factories, party officials etc, whose reactions ranged from "singular agreement to absolute rejection." The theatre administration and representatives of the SED district administration agree that the suggested changes of some details—which Braun refused to accommodate—would not have changed the overall meaning of the play.

After setting the tone, Ragwitz suggests to treat the performance of Tinka "normally" in press and public. "Discussions with the audience must serve to confront the author with reality," which—in her own and the party's view—should be very different from the reality portrayed in Braun's play. She anticipates that certain interested parties, especially from West Germany, are looking for sensations, whereas the audience in Karl-Marx-Stadt is estimated to be rather disinterested. It has already been determined that "the Genossen of the district administration would reject the to be expected jury suggestion to show the performance at the achievement show of the professional theatres at the Workers' Festival (*Arbeiterfestspiele*) in Dresden."

As far as advertising and discussing the performance in the mass media is concerned, the following guidelines apply. It is basically right to treat Tinka normally. But, Ragwitz states, that includes “openness” in the discussion of the play. The ongoing activities such as an ADN-interview, a TV-video of the performance, and a radio-interview that had already been broadcast, “have to be reduced, put into perspective and be also used for critical behavior. It should be arranged for that the ND⁷ articulates its reviews—although with tact—with a clear political presence.” She suggests not to play Tinka at the achievement show, not to award Volker Braun for this play and to discuss the play at the usual events of the Theatre Union (*Verband der Theaterschaffenden*). The theatre should use all opportunities for an aimed discussion of the play with workers.

A fire destroyed large parts of the theatre in the night following this final rehearsal, making usage for performances impossible for several months. Media, especially West German, and other persons called Volker Braun in the middle of the night to find out whether it was true that the fire prevented the opening of his play. Ragwitz writes in response to a comment on the fire and Braun’s play which aired on ‘Rias,’ a West-Berlin radio station, “[it] shows unmistakably that this side obviously had the intention to provoke according sensations previous to our Party Convention with this play.” At a Berlin train station, 150–200 people on their way to Karl-Marx-Stadt, in order to attend the opening night of Tinka, were informed about the fire before traveling across the country.

⁷ Neues Deutschland, SED-owned, nationwide daily newspaper in the GDR

On May 5, 1976, Ragwitz asked Kurt Hager for approval of the wording for a brief statement in order to prevent “certain rumors and speculations” to be distributed to the “central press” and the broadcasters: “Yesterday during night hours, a fire in the Schauspielhaus Karl-Marx-Stadt caused greater damage. The planned performances must be cancelled until further notice.” A handwritten note on this document suggests that Hager agreed with the formulation of the statement but only wanted it to be published in certain press organs.

Volker Braun asked to meet with Ursula Ragwitz on May 6, 1976, after the Intendant of the theatre in Karl-Marx-Stadt had informed Braun that a reopening before the end of the year was very unlikely. Ragwitz’s report about the meeting reads: “Under this impression, Comrade Braun asked me for support to organize a guest performance of the Karl-Marx-Stadt ensemble in Berlin for next week or the week after that. Because I had already been informed about his intention before the meeting with Volker Braun, I had talked to the responsible secretary in the district administration Karl-Marx-Stadt, Comrade Elster...” In the meantime, a conception for the redistribution of performances to other facilities in Karl-Marx-Stadt had been prepared. Tinka could open on May 24 in the Kleines Theater der Stadthalle—a solution that Braun was equally surprised about and satisfied with. Again, Ragwitz stresses that it is important to contact the Comrades in the media to ensure that “there will be no propaganda for the performance due to interviews or large... articles.” She also suggests that Comrade Kerndl should discuss the play very clearly in the newspaper Neues Deutschland.

Further irregularities not documented in the material accessible to me, led to another delay for the opening of Tinka. Ursula Ragwitz was again in correspondence with Kurt Hager on May 17, 1976, in which she suggested to open the play on May 29, 1976, not any later, because further delays would endanger the ability of the theatre to conduct its performances, since this production had been prepared and certain discussions within the ensemble were unavoidable (DY 30 vorl. SED /18541). The 29th of May had one further advantage: While Tinka was going to be performed on the smaller stage of the Stadthalle, the national championship dancing tournament of the GDR was taking place--on the same day--in the larger hall of the Stadthalle in Karl-Marx-Stadt and would therefore detract attention from the play. Ragwitz points out that "in accordance with Comrade Arno Röder it was secured, that the announcement of the premiere will only occur in the normal form of reporting in the district press. Further announcements and preliminary discussions in other press organs, radio and television will not take place."

The efforts of the state and party to make the performance of Tinka seem "normal" to the ensemble, the author and the audience as well as the people who will perhaps only read an article in their daily newspaper about it, are remarkable. Controlled into the last detail of where and how to discuss the play and who will take on the task of "confronting the author with reality," it shows how afraid the state and party must have been on one hand of a single play. On the other hand it indicates that independent of the context, censorship itself was a large bureaucratic swamp of indoctrination in which, as Professor Haus put it in an interview, "some drowned, but in which one also learned to walk."

Although the West German media suspected an act of sabotage against Volker Braun's play, the evidence suggests that the fire was not set to prevent his play. All other 'precaution measures' described in this section indicate that the performance of Tinka was 'under control' as was provided for by the Ministry for Culture. Also, it is highly unlikely that such economic damage as a destroyed theatre would have been caused on purpose.

The importance attributed to controlling this performance can also be underlined by comparing the speed of the information flow between the Ministry for Culture and the theatre and the accordingly fast arrangements for relocating the performance to the average of 15 years an ordinary GDR person had to wait from ordering a new car to actually receiving it.

4 Discussion and Conclusions

4.1 The Two-Step-Flow Model and the Creation of Doxa

If the party and state believed in the effects of certain kinds of art or communication in comparison to others and had justifications for their hypothesis founded on Marx, Lenin etc. as well as a reason why to prefer these effects over others, then why did they not set stable rules that were widely applicable and could be readily accessible to ensure that all communicators (media, writers, artists etc.) remain within the realm of discourses that have a positive effect and avoid negative effect, however those may be defined? It is conceivable that a political party that anchors its right and claim to power in its country's constitution would not find it particularly uncommon to write a set of rules according to which art and other forms of communication might take place. The arbitrariness in deciding in specific situations of allowing and prohibiting, enhancing and destroying careers, that characterizes the party and state influence on the arts, seems to contradict the official goal of fighting for a better, more human-friendly, socialist world under the leadership of the working class and the farmers. Most artists and intellectuals of the GDR could identify with the ideals and goals of socialism, especially after the horrors of the Nazi era. A people that had just gone through the totalitarian madness of the Third Reich needed, according to the common understanding, stricter control of the disseminated information to come to terms with its past and be prepared for a future in which such outrageous wrongs were impossible. Such educational measures were taken in all allied zones in Germany, not only in the Soviet Zone. Naturally, the preparation of

those very same people for a new, better, very different and historically advanced society, needed the extension of such measures in the eyes of the country's leaders. Even that was something that many intellectuals and artists in the GDR could identify with, especially since their role and responsibility would be to provide the context in which to lead the masses. It was the artists' and intellectuals' hubris to believe that they could function undamaged in their integrity in the GDR's system of power.

In this sense, there are several reasons for the absence of fixed regulations for the discourses that were allowed and not allowed. For one, the GDR claimed to be a democracy and granted the right to freely express one's opinion in its constitution as was explained above. Secondly, the country was monitored closely by West Germany, which already thought of the GDR as another totalitarian system. If East Germany wanted to maintain its democratic appearance and the goal of freeing and converting West Germany to socialism, such document would have been more inhibiting than helpful. Yet most important is the fact that such document would have prevented the establishment of doxa as introduced according to Pierre Bourdieu's concept on pages 20-21 of this paper. Orthodox discourses in the GDR, discourses that could take place within the society without being sanctioned. included those that generally contained some kind of positive reference toward the SED and its goals. One can say that the creation and defense of a possibly vast number of doxa was a goal of the SED: the fewer issues people were questioning and debating and the more they were taking for granted, the more secure was the party's power and the less troublesome the control of all discourses. What this paper is dealing with, is essentially a description of the mechanisms of re-enforcing orthodox

discourses and suppressing heterodox discourses in order to establish doxa. The book of regulations would have created a source or point of culmination for heterodox discourse: by recording all unwanted discourses, even if the practical difficulties of putting such rules down in administrative language could have been overcome, anyone could have challenged the rules in their effectiveness and necessity at any point. As soon as people talk about these topics, control of such discourse becomes important for the party. It is therefore more effective to establish doxa or implied regulations that are difficult to challenge, because the state and party can decide in each individual situation how to react. The arbitrariness in the control system made it more difficult for the targeted persons to unite and form a discourse community.

In the application of the control system it becomes apparent that the SED must have had an understanding of the dissemination information similar to Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet's Two-Step Flow model. In their examination of the 1940 election, Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet noticed that the people who decided which candidate to vote for early during the campaign and who did not change their opinion, were also the heaviest media users. They also watched the opponent's speeches without being converted but were able to organize the given information meaningfully. Lazarsfeld, Berelson, and Gaudet found out that undecided voters during the campaign used less media and relied heavier on advice from others. They theorized that the same early deciders, heavy media users might also be the ones who advise people who are not so sure. They labeled them opinion leaders. This model has been modified over the years, but the notion of opinion leaders in various forms has survived. In terms of the SED one

could say that the party was interested in keeping heterodox discourses controlled, suppressed and censored among the opinion leaders such as writers and artists, and therefore have absolute control over what information flows down the second step to the masses. The chance to be successful in establishing doxa on this level is much greater than among the intellectuals and artists, who are by nature much more likely to detect such undisputed realms than the average person. To illustrate the power of doxa let me bring forth one example. I explained earlier that the average GDR citizen was not allowed to travel into any Western country until they were retired and even then only under strict conditions. In November 1989, after East German people had peacefully taken over the Berlin Wall and for the first time in decades were able to just walk into West Berlin, the government issued visas to control the flow of people and maintain its authority to some extent. The visas granted every GDR citizen the right to travel a limited number of weeks a year to a Western country. Compared to waiting for their retirement, most people were very happy about these few precious weeks and started planning how to distribute them over the year. It took some time until someone thought of it as strange that the government could still control the amount of time spent in a Western country, and finally demanded unlimited visa availability.

4.2. Appearing as a Confident Majority

The SED and its state apparatus not only rigidly defended its claim to rightness and power, it also displayed it constantly to the public, which contributed to its reputation—at least from a Western viewpoint—of an arrogant dictatorship rather than a

democracy. Yet the SED, by its omnipresence and obvious appearance as a majority created an atmosphere in which no doubt about its status as a vast majority occurred. Even political experts and certainly the citizens of the GDR did not anticipate any of the events of November 1989. The above described censorship mechanisms are often justified with “correcting wrong viewpoints,” or “confronting the author with reality,” always implying that those disloyal individuals were not only wrong, but also singular, isolated cases whose opinion had no foundation in the socialist reality but was influenced by Western decadence. They simply needed to be shaped more consequentially by the party and led to the illumination of blind acceptance.

This strategy conforms to findings of West German communication researcher Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, who, in the 1970s, theorized that the impression a social group makes regarding their confidence in being a majority largely influences the development of the group in remaining a majority or decreasing to a minority (Noelle-Neumann 378-380). The “Spiral of Silence,” as Noelle-Neumann calls this phenomenon, is based on the presupposition that people constantly watch their environment in a quasi-statistical manner, realizing slight changes in displayed opinions. Out of fear of isolation, people will not voice an opinion that does not seem to be supported by the majority, whereas an opinion that does seem to be supported by the majority, regardless of the actual numbers of supporters, will increase. The more opportunities a group has to voice its opinions confidently as majority opinions, the better are its chances of remaining or becoming a majority opinion. If a majority does not widely expect to remain a majority, it will decrease. Since the SED had far reaching control over the form of mass or public

communication, it was the party's prerogative to perform and be perceived as a strong majority. The Spiral of Silence ends either in the 'death' of an opinion, which is to be equaled to the establishment of doxa, or in a "taboo," a heterodox discourse that is sanctioned by the society. Noelle-Neumann writes that such taboo topics tend to remain hidden underneath the surface but eventually break out like a volcano. She also states that in the United States, the "taboo" was substituted by the more positively valued term "political correctness," which means that one is only allowed to speak in a certain manner, not in any other, about a certain subject.

4.3. The Mechanisms of Censorship

The Hungarian author and professor Miklos Haraszti states that in communist Hungary, the writers' "main adversary was not oppression by the police but policing our own minds" (78). He calls this self-censorship "soft censorship" and generalizes that it "has fragmented after the collapse of communist culture... No more is society one huge company that employs us all. We have many companies now. As the state's soft censorship once did, they let us do freely what is compatible with the interests of our company" (78). "Insubordination" is in many Western companies a reason for dismissal. It is unlikely that in a modern day capitalistic corporation, the workers could decide who will be representing the company at the next international convention.

Haraszti further claims that communist China tries to avoid this fragmentation in Hong Kong and Shanghai and makes a direct reference to forms of discourses. "If Shanghai keeps the tanks of Tiananmen in mind, it will be allowed to speak the language

of banking. Meanwhile, those in Hong Kong who understand the language of tanks are assured to keep their banks” (78). Haraszti questions whether the end of European Communism was the “end to a civilization of censorship, or merely the end of censorship’s most convenient pretext, the one party system” (78).

The following table will demonstrate on which levels censorship operates. The categories extracted from the findings are not mutually exclusive, but represent tendencies operating in all stages of the communication process: production, distribution, reception and interpretation.

Means of Censorship Intended Effect on Discourses	Monitoring	Administrative Decisions, e.g. Personnel	Intervention e.g. in Publicity
Re-enforcing Orthodoxy	Necessary to recognize which level of discourses is used; Enables to suggest adequate measures	e.g. placing a person with conform views in a key position	e.g. having a skilled conform propagandist discuss a work accordingly
Suppression of Heterodoxy		e.g. removing a person with non-conform views from a key position	e.g. prevent reviews or advertisements of a performance
Establishment/Defense of Doxa		e.g. “confronting the author with reality,” that is trying to make him realize that the conditions he sees do not exist	e.g. prohibit a performance, order not to review not advertise a performance

As can be easily seen, the same mechanisms that were not called censorship but are found to be censorship in the GDR, widely operate also in democratic societies. Every company’s Public Relations department would be glad to have a system in place that

allowed such control over all communication, although many would—out of political correctness—deny that. Self censorship then is already at work. In the free market economy, the “consumer demand” or the “market” are phantoms just as the “political-ideological situation” in the GDR, people make decisions for very concrete and often self-serving reasons under the mask of greater forces. Yet there are significant differences: the Western societies tend toward diversion, the socialist ones toward politicization. The advantage of the Western society is that one has choices in whom to offer a certain work of art for production, although money often times is the determining factor. In the GDR, the decisions were made centrally, no alternatives were available. Yet the arts were strongly valued in their cultural and political significance and therefore treated with a certain sincerity. The entire culture was based on legitimization through history, not only recent history, but a thousand years. For artists and intellectuals as well as many people, this seriousness served as a basis on which it was possible to deal with the political apparatus. Professor Haus stated in the interview that in the GDR, literature students would be asked about “What is really said in Faust?” whereas Western students are asked: “What do you feel, when you read Faust?”—which is usually nothing, because the teacher already had not learned to analyze the play for its content and derive meaning from it. The Western egocentric approach combined with the worship of “fun” and “diversion” create doxa in the area of showing alternatives or what is lost through this.

4.4. The Boundaries of Discourses and Art

Every society has certain goals and values that it protects, and it develops means for such protection. Communication is an essential part of this system. Through communication, ideas are passed on and developed, defended and destroyed. Controlling information flow became more and more complex through the centuries, when more people acquired the ability to read and write, when information was mass produced and – distributed, when more forms of media were invented and used by the masses. The traditional definition of censorship by the Encyclopaedia Britannica (1949), as government action to suppress dissemination of unwanted information has to be extended toward the suppression and elimination of entire discourses. Often, many people can agree that certain information should be kept away from certain audiences, such as children. The rating system for movies is one of those examples. Under the hypothesis that certain information, e.g. explicit violent or sexual content, is harmful to young audiences, children of certain ages are—ideally--being kept from watching such material. Other information, such as racist material, many people agree, should be prohibited to be disseminated at all. This is a moral judgement as well as the assumption that according to the Spiral of Silence, once such material is openly and widely accessible, a minority appearing as a majority could actually become one. The Internet as a new medium brings forth again, despite all praises of the new opportunities, suspicion and concern about abuse of the right to free speech. Cases of child pornography and hate sites quickly spurred discussions about who should control the information in what way. The question of controversy is centered around the authority which is given the right to decide which

information and discourse should be handled in which matter. Mere common sense or good taste are not sufficient enough, the tastes and senses are too different, the subject too dependent on interpretation, profit often lies in the distasteful. In a democracy, that at the time chose the system of a free market economy, should those issues be directly voted on by the people or handed over to experts? Should it be up to the industry which tries to make profit with the dissemination of communication products or to politicians, or to an independent council consisting of experts, members of all social groups and industry and lawyers? After all, the freedom of speech is guaranteed in the constitutions of all modern, Western countries and valued as a great achievement for democracy. Additionally, the information output of our time is so immense, that no agency could control all of it at all times. These questions are vital to every society. The East German SED made very clear decisions with regards to the control of information.

It is to be considered whether art can stand outside moral or political purpose, affiliation or boundaries. An Arno Breker exhibition in Germany showing sculptures and graphic works of the Nazi-era which are reflecting the Nazi ideology is enjoying a great demand. The facilitator stated that one should not accuse artists of their political involvement. DER SPIEGEL, one of the most distinguished German news magazines, finds this remarkable although it does not explicitly give an opinion. In Germany, two times in a row, have artists and intellectuals been tempted to participate in a power-“game,” a peculiar mix of art and politics in order to further their careers or belong to an elite of the “new generation” or to serve as the intellectual instructor of the government. The liberal values that the 1968 “revolution” in West Germany established, are a result of

the young generation after the war figuratively “assassinating” their parent generation. The doctrine of anti-authoritarian education of children stands along side the one that forbids politics and art to intertwine. In the GDR, however, art was a tool for a political goal as well as for career oriented interests. Yet only art that adhered to the standards of socialist realism was accepted.

4.5. Concluding Remarks

The structure with which the censorship of the GDR theatres is enabled to function is fairly clear, as demonstrated in chapter three of this thesis. The ideological justification on the other hand is convoluted and remains vague. It remains vague in the sense that there is only a set of apparently shared assumptions—that certain forms of representation, for example, are decadent and harmful—which has never been made entirely visible or plausible. Furthermore, it must be stressed that *people* are responsible for decisions, not *ideologies*. It seems that the individual, in the socialist GDR as well as in Western democracies, is less free than the political system that provides for freedom of speech and expression. Capitalism accepts the idea of the freedom of the market and therefore the freedom of the capitalist to choose in what to invest. As for the arts, that means dependence on consumption on one side, and financial support on the other. Self-censorship has been an important factor in the system: It is forceful in affirming unarticulated assumptions, or subjects that can, as in the concept of political correctness, only be treated in one particular manner. What is it that the individual is afraid of? There are different theories. As Noelle-Neumann claims, it is fear of social isolation (379). But

it could be mere ignorance, the fear of losing financial support and or a reputation ,or more likely, a combination of all of those factors.

This thesis identifies the mechanisms with which censorship generally operates on the example of the theatre in the GDR. Further research could investigate the signifying practices of the actual performances and the content characteristics of dramatic works of the GDR in comparison to current theatrical works, in terms of the relations between orthodoxy, heterodoxy and doxa. However, it is necessary to consider the process in which decisions are made about “who produces what where.” One needs to keep in mind that different discourse communities such as the producers of theatrical work, the general public, the academic community etc, all censor different discourses. I demonstrated this in my discussion of the Two-Step Flow Model of communication. Heterodox discourses being suppressed on the level of the intellectuals are supposed to remain doxa among the general public.

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