

**The image of the German Democratic Republic in the British press  
1972-1989**

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The candidate confirms that the work submitted is his/her own and that appropriate credit has been given where reference has been made to the work of others.

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## **Abstract**

### **The image of the German Democratic Republic in the British press 1972-1989**

Despite growing interest in British-East German relations in recent years, little academic attention has thus far been paid to the British perception of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) during its existence. This thesis therefore aims to broaden this still rudimentary academic discourse by exploring the image of the second German state in the British quality press between 1972 and 1989. As an active contributor to the shaping of the GDR's image in Britain, the press has thus far been predominantly ignored by academic scholars. Using discourse analysis, it will be demonstrated that the substantial level of British press coverage was able to present a more detailed picture of the GDR, and with it, a more multifaceted image of the country than was detectable in other discourses of the time. In particular, the inclusion of several newspapers with differing political biases helps to show the range of opinions which existed in British society. This study investigates the five main subject areas that received the most attention from the press: identity, foreign policy, opposition, the Wall and sport. In order to offer a comprehensive picture of the press discourse, this thesis additionally investigates the working conditions of British journalists in the GDR. For this purpose, qualitative interviews with nine journalists who reported for British quality newspapers and the news agency *Reuters* have been conducted.

## Table of Contents

<b>Acknowledgements</b>	<b>III</b>
<b>Abstract</b>	<b>V</b>
<b>Table of Contents</b>	<b>VI</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>1</b>
A.    How did other discourses present the GDR before 1989?	3
B.    Image and perception of the GDR in contemporary research	7
B.1    The GDR and the press – cliché-ridden and ignorant?	9
C.    A brief history of British-East German relations	11
D.    Thesis outline	14
E.    Theoretical background and methodology	17
E.1    Discourse Analysis	17
E.1.1    Press discourse	19
E.2    Methodology	20
E.2.1    Choice of data	24
<b>Chapter 1: Reporting on the GDR</b>	<b>26</b>
1.1    The British press and its significance in British society	27
1.1.1    Newspapers – a general overview	28
1.2    General information about the interviews	33
1.3    The GDR's attitude towards Western journalists	35
1.3.1    Legal framework	38
1.4    Working routine and conditions	39
1.4.1    Consequences of East German restrictions: Berlin was	

	Mordor	42
1.5	Between influence, manipulation and surveillance	44
1.5.1	Foreign journalists and the State Security: ‘It was just like <i>Das Leben der Anderen.</i> ’	44
1.5.2	Working with and around restrictions	48
1.6	‘Gathering information in Eastern Europe was never easy.’	50
1.7	East German strategies to influence Western journalists	54
1.8	The GDR as a subject of news coverage	56
1.9	British attitudes vs. newspaper readers	58
	<b>Chapter 2: The GDR – a kaleidoscope of images</b>	<b>63</b>
2.1	The GDR’s struggle for identity	66
2.2	Images in the British press	67
2.2.1	Prussian roots between East German self-portrayal and British perception	67
2.2.2	The good Germans? – East Germans in the British press	78
2.2.3	The GDR – a country far, far away	88
2.2.4	Myths: antifascism	96
	<b>Chapter 3: Between the Federal Republic and the Soviet Union – The GDR on the international stage</b>	<b>107</b>
3.1	The press’ view on relations between the Soviet Union and the GDR	109
3.1.1	Ally or colony? – A more complex view	110
3.1.2	The GDR’s risky fight against reforms in the light of the press	126
3.2	The German Question – between pretence and reality	132
3.2.1	Academic discourse on the German Question during the	

1970s and 80s	133
3.2.2 The press discourse on the German Question and the Role of the GDR	136
3.2.2.1 Honecker predicts reunification under socialism	138
3.2.3 No British angst	142
3.2.4 State visits in the eyes of the British press – 1984 and 1987	145
<b>Chapter 4: Opposition as a factor for a changing image of the GDR</b>	<b>155</b>
4.1 1976-1978: Dissidents in the GDR	161
4.1.1 The perception of East Germans in opposition, 1976-1978	162
4.1.1.1 The case of Oskar Brüsewitz	162
4.1.1.2 The case of Wolf Biermann	164
4.1.2 Reporting Perspective: Presenting the failure of dissent	170
4.1.3 The GDR = Berlin	172
4.2 1982/83 – The appearance of a movement	174
4.2.1 The perception of East Germans in opposition, 1982/83	175
4.2.2 Changing perspective	183
4.2.3 Geography: The discovery of a country beyond East Berlin	185
<b>Chapter 5: When the Berlin Wall reached Great Britain - The image of the Wall in the British press</b>	<b>190</b>
5.1 Representation of the GDR and the Wall during the early 1970s	195
5.1.1 1974 – British readers discover the Wall through a British woman	201
5.1.2 Guilty? – An unimportant question	210
5.1.3 Alan Watson – similar case but a different story	213



5.2	The border during the second half of the 1970s	215
<b>Chapter 6: Sport as an important aspect of the East German image in the British press</b>		<b>224</b>
6.1	Successful presentation of the GDR	230
6.1.1	The GDR as a superpower?	231
6.1.2	Team GB against the East Germans – an inverted relationship	234
6.1.3	‘Outstanding’ – ‘Exciting’ – ‘Magnificent’: A language analysis	236
6.2	East German sport and the minor importance of doping in the press coverage	238
6.2.1	20 years of doping and the GDR in the press	240
6.2.2	Language as a reflection of uncertainty	247
6.2.3	Alternative explanation for success	249
6.3	Female athletes – the heart and face of East German sport	251
6.3.1	‘Communism has never been so attractive’ – Katarina Witt in the British press	256
<b>Conclusion</b>		<b>262</b>
<b>Bibliography</b>		<b>267</b>

## Introduction

*'a newspaper cannot live in the past. It is only as valuable as the words that are printed in it today.'*<sup>1</sup>

This statement is taken from a leading article published in *The Guardian* in 1964, at which time the newspaper had relocated from Manchester to London so that it would finally be held as a country-wide quality newspaper. Intended as a symbol of the bright future of the publication, this statement fundamentally underestimates the value of press coverage beyond its immediate function as a source of information. International action is based upon the image of international reality,<sup>2</sup> and as such the role of the elite press is not to be underestimated. These publications provide information about foreign countries, and are therefore able to participate in the setting of foreign-policy agendas.<sup>3</sup> The frequent coverage of the GDR in British newspapers provides an early indication of the press' significance in informing British society about the GDR. In 1974, for example, *The Times* published 359 articles containing the term 'East Germany', and 213 featuring the term 'East German'. Ten years later, these figures had hardly changed, with 345 articles including the former, and 262 the latter. In general, the foreign image of a state is shaped by a number of differing factors including personal impressions and contacts, professional relations abroad and diplomatic dispatches. However, as a result of the global political constellation during the Cold War, the media also played a significant part in determining how the GDR was perceived in Britain.<sup>4</sup> As the GDR was only first recognised by Britain in 1972, until that point there had been no official contact and only a very small proportion of the British public had any first-hand knowledge of the country. Even during the following decades personal

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<sup>1</sup> Geoffrey Taylor, *Changing Faces: A History of The Guardian 1956-1988* (London: Fourth Estate, 1993), p. IX.

<sup>2</sup> Johan Galtung and Mari Holmboe Ruge, 'The Structure of Foreign News: The Presentation of the Congo, Cuba and Cyprus Crises in Four Norwegian Newspapers', *Journal of Peace Research*, 2.1 (1965), p. 64; see also: Stefan Berger and Norman LaPorte, *Friendly Enemy: Britain and the GDR, 1949/1990* (New York, Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2010), p. 4.

<sup>3</sup> Sophia Peterson, 'International News Selection by the Elite Press: A Case Study', *Public Opinion Quarterly*, 45 (1981), p. 158.

<sup>4</sup> Galtung and Holmboe Ruge, p. 64.

contact remained very limited. These restrictions strengthened the role of the media in shaping the country's image for a British audience.

This thesis will explore the role of the press as an historical source and investigate the representation of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) within the daily news coverage of several British quality newspapers between 1972 and 1989. By using discourse analysis, the thesis will look beyond the individual newspaper articles and will place them within their historical and social context. Firstly, this will show that the British press is a very important source in understanding how the GDR was represented in Britain. The press clearly differed from other discourses of the time, and has thus far mostly been ignored by scholars. The sheer number of articles available due to newspapers' daily circulation means that they can offer a very detailed picture. This also means that newspapers were able to show different sides of the GDR, including its broad population, the state authorities, its political opponents as well as different elite groups, thus allowing for a multifaceted image of the country to emerge. Furthermore, newspaper coverage was able to show the development of events and did not just focus on particular moments of significance. The immediate nature of newspapers offers an insight into everyday opinions containing ideas, assumptions and misinterpretations which may already be out of date by the following day. Moreover, the British press covered developments in the GDR from a number of different perspectives. The different political standpoints of individual quality newspapers contributed to this, along with the variety of topics covered, such as local and foreign news, economy, culture and sport. As a result, for readers of British quality newspapers, the GDR was not just 'another far away little country', as the scholar David Childs claimed.<sup>5</sup> In the following section, the discourses surrounding the GDR which emerged during the 1970s and 80s will be examined in order to highlight their special features and to show the differences between them and the quality press. Moreover, it will demonstrate that the multi-layered and detailed image of the state which can be identified in the British press was not represented to the same extent in other discourses.

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<sup>5</sup> David Childs, 'The Changing British Perception of the GDR: A Personal Memoir', in *Britain and the GDR: Relations and Perceptions in a Divided World*, ed. by Arnd Bauerkämper (Vienna: Philo, 2002), p. 375.

## A. How did other discourses present the GDR before 1989?

Apart from the British press, other discourses in Britain also portrayed the GDR. This section will present an overview of important sources in this regard. Firstly, the following summary shows the development of GDR-related research over a period of four decades.<sup>6</sup> Apart from a very small number of publications dealing with the GDR or the Soviet Occupation Zone, no relevant research concerning the GDR was carried out in the UK before the late 1960s. In 1969, David Childs published one of the first more comprehensive and significant publications about the GDR and with it took the first step in establishing the topic within British academia.<sup>7</sup> In line with such a pioneering endeavour, he presented a broad picture of the second German state, portraying among others the political, economic and educational system of the GDR. Thereby, Childs described in a rather positive tone the GDR which becomes obvious in statements which depicted the GDR as ‘a land of opportunity for the young’.<sup>8</sup> Eight years later, *The Guardian* journalist Jonathan Steele published another important account of the GDR under the title *Socialism with a German Face*.<sup>9</sup> In a similar way to Childs’ monograph, Steele presented a detailed view of the GDR; however, it often lacked critical contextualisation.<sup>10</sup> This, for example, can be seen in Steele’s statements regarding the fairer school system in comparison to pre-war times and the more equal position of women in the East German society than in the Federal Republic’s without further explanations and without showing the negative sides of these achievements. Despite their approaches, both books can be considered as important fundamental research that not only widened awareness and knowledge of the GDR in Britain, but, more importantly, stimulated further research. Overall, GDR-related research increased from the mid-1970s onwards, but visible results were not seen before the end of the decade. Noticeably, Marianne Bell was the first to analyse the British-East German relations in 1977.<sup>11</sup> Her MPhil thesis laid the foundation for related research in

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<sup>6</sup> In addition, the following chapters contain more explicit analyses of research results concerning the topics discussed in the respective chapters.

<sup>7</sup> David Childs, *East Germany* (London: Ernest Benn, 1969).

<sup>8</sup> *Ibid*, p. 71.

<sup>9</sup> Jonathan Steele, *Socialism with a German Face: The State That Came in from the Cold* (London: Jonathan Cape Ltd., 1977).

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid*, p. 11.

<sup>11</sup> Marianne Bell (now Howard), ‘Britain and East Germany: The Politics of Non-Recognition’ (unpublished master’s thesis, Nottingham, 1977).

the following decades. However, as the study was not widely published, only a small circle of researchers benefited from it.

During the 1980s, GDR studies developed markedly in Britain. Along with an increasing number of publications, research activities were generally characterised by a greater spread of different and more specialised subjects such as women, opposition, sport and international politics. British scholars published several monographs, which in contrast to earlier publications, offered a more critical approach.<sup>12</sup> Childs, for example, discussed amongst others critical topics such as doping as a reason for the East German sport success, the discontent of East German citizens with their lives or the GDR's claims regarding the equality of women in society.<sup>13</sup> However, research interests were not equally distributed. East German literature in particular aroused a lot of interest, while other areas attracted less attention. Scholars such as Ian Wallace, Mike Dennis, Martin McCauley, Dennis Tate and David Childs were primarily responsible for promoting the subject in Britain. The foundation of the first GDR-related research journal (1979, *GDR Monitor* edited by Ian Wallace) and the establishment of regular conferences marked the transition from individual researchers to a small but active research community.<sup>14</sup> Despite these changes, even in the mid-1980s the number of researchers working on the GDR remained fairly small and certainly numbered no more than 50.<sup>15</sup> During this decade, a younger British generation of researchers contributed new innovative work concerning the GDR.<sup>16</sup> In 1986, Roger Woods, for example, investigated opposition in the GDR, a subject which had only been briefly mentioned in earlier publications. But even such ground-breaking accounts were often merely valuable introductions and required further investigation. Apart from David Childs, who described increasing economic problems and the GDR's lack of will to reform, British researchers tended to depict the East German state as

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<sup>12</sup> David Childs, *East Germany to the 1990s: Can It Resist Glasnost?* (London: Economist Intelligence Unit, 1987); David Childs, *The GDR: Moscow's German Ally* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1983); Mike Dennis, *German Democratic Republic – Politics, Economics and Society* (London: Pinter Publishers Limited, 1988); Martin McCauley, *The German Democratic Republic since 1945* (London: The MacMillan Press Ltd, 1983).

<sup>13</sup> Childs, *The GDR*, pp. 188, 255, 317.

<sup>14</sup> Mike Dennis, 'GDR Studies in the UK: From the Berlin Wall to the Wende of 1989', in *The Other Germany*, ed. by Stefan Berger and Norman LaPorte (Augsburg: Wissner Verlag, 2005), p. 276.

<sup>15</sup> Ian Wallace, 'DDR-Forschung in Großbritannien', in *Die DDR in der Ära Honecker*, ed. by Gert-Joachim Glaeßner (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1988), p. 140.

<sup>16</sup> Roger Woods, *Opposition in the GDR under Honecker, 1971-85* (London: MacMillan Press, 1986).

stable and successful, even during the growing crises from the mid-1980s onwards.<sup>17</sup> While the earlier problem of isolated researchers had been overcome in the 1980s with the establishment of a research community, other problems continued to affect British researchers. The late introduction of the topic during the 1970s was often mirrored in descriptive and factual approaches to overcome the knowledge gap as Mike Dennis and Hans-Georg Golz demonstrate.<sup>18</sup> Most importantly, restricted access to primary sources in the GDR probably represented the most decisive problem.<sup>19</sup> The East German authorities closely observed foreign researchers, often with the help of its State Security Service, and rarely provided any useful research support. As a result of this, researchers had to rely on secondary West German sources or had to use information from biased East German publications, and therefore faced difficulties in producing innovative research.<sup>20</sup> The lack of financial support for research projects posed another problem. In particular during the 1980s, the research area received inadequate funding in Britain as Ian Wallace points out.<sup>21</sup> In this regard, libraries were also unable to provide a great deal of support to researchers and students, especially as the subject was not widely established in Britain.<sup>22</sup> Overall, after a late start, British researchers were able to build up GDR-studies on a small scale in the UK, yet before 1989 they had to face many difficulties which hindered the establishment of the subject on a broader basis in Britain. In addition to the limited research which had been done, the extent of the actual readership of such publications has to be questioned. It is unlikely that British scholars were able to reach any big audience beyond the academic circle.

Academic sources were not alone in facing problems such as reaching a wider audience, presenting the topic from different perspectives or expanding knowledge about the East German country in Britain. In 1987, John Theobald published a study

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<sup>17</sup> David Childs, *The GDR: Moscow's German Ally*, 2nd edn (London: Unwin Hyman Ltd, 1988), p. 317; Hans-Georg Golz, 'Von East Germany zur GDR', *Deutschland Archiv*, 36.1 (2003), p. 22; McCauley, *The German Democratic Republic since 1945*, pp. 3-4; Ian Wallace, *East Germany: The German Democratic Republic* (Oxford: Clio Press, 1987), p. XIII.

<sup>18</sup> Dennis, 'GDR Studies in the UK', p. 272; Golz, 'Von East Germany zur GDR', p. 13.

<sup>19</sup> David Childs, 'Schwierigkeiten und Möglichkeiten der britischen DDR-Forschung vor 1990', in *Views from Abroad: Die DDR aus britischer Perspektive*, ed. by Peter Barker, Marc-Dietrich Ohse and Dennis Tate (Bielefeld: W. Bertelsmann, 2007), pp. 31-39.

<sup>20</sup> McCauley, *The German Democratic Republic since 1945*; Ian Wallace, 'The GDR's Cultural Activities in Britain', *German Life and Letters*, 53.3 (2000), pp. 406-407.

<sup>21</sup> Wallace, 'DDR-Forschung in Großbritannien', p. 143.

<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 141.

which looked at British students' opinions about the GDR.<sup>23</sup> In this context, he referred to the often negative representation of the GDR in Britain. Theobald, for example, noted the lack of information about the GDR in language learning material. He explained that before 1986, the BBC language course was one of the most popular and widespread ways to introduce the British public to German language and culture, but it seldom mentioned the GDR.<sup>24</sup> In 1986, new material was finally introduced, including three chapters about the East German state, however it contained only a very small amount of basic information and instead primarily showed stereotypes about the GDR such as militarism being an essential part of East German society. Beyond academic publications and language learning courses, novels presented another source which dealt with the GDR. In contrast to the two aforementioned sources, novels were able to attract a much wider audience. Several scholars have pointed out the significance of spy thrillers by authors such as Len Deighton and John Le Carré in particular in shaping the image of the GDR in Britain.<sup>25</sup> A number of books were made into films, and therefore able to reach an even bigger audience. In this context, Jamie Lee Searle rightly stresses the importance of John Le Carré's, *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold*, in reinforcing the image of a totalitarian system.<sup>26</sup> The novel was published in 1963 and made into a movie only two years later, featuring Richard Burton as the main character. The book's view of the country is very limited, and shows a country consisting of not much more than the Wall, its border fortifications and a smooth-running state system. At the same time, this grey and dark country is presented as consisting of only willing supporters of the state system such as spies, members of the Security Service, border guards and judges. Ordinary people did not seem to exist in Le

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<sup>23</sup> John Theobald, 'The Image of the GDR in Britain – What the Students Think', in *GDR: Individual and Society: Conference Proceedings of the International Conference on the GDR, Held at Ealing College of Higher Education, September 1987*, ed. by Ingrid K. J. Williams (London: Ealing College of Higher Education, 1987), pp. 6-14.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid, p. 6.

<sup>25</sup> Arnd Bauerkämper, 'Sympathie mit dem Gegner: Wahrnehmungen der DDR in Großbritannien und ihre Träger', in *Vom Gegner lernen: Feindschaften und Kulturtransfers im Europa des 19. und 20. Jahrhunderts*, ed. by Martin Aust and Daniel Schönplüg (Frankfurt, New York: Campus Verlag, 2007), p. 334; Childs, 'The Changing British Perception of the GDR', p. 386; Patrick Major, *Behind the Berlin Wall: East Germany and the Frontier of Power* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), p. 182.

<sup>26</sup> Jamie Lee Searle, 'The Depiction of the GDR in Prominent British Texts Published between Official Recognition of the "Other" German State in 1973 and the Fall of the Berlin Wall in 1989', *ETransfers. A Postgraduate Ejournal of Comparative Literature and Cultural Studies*, 1 (2011), p. 2  
<<http://www.sllf.qmul.ac.uk/research/anglogerman/etransfers/docs/43366.pdf>> [accessed 05/08/2013].

Carré's GDR. Le Carré created a fictional world which reduces the GDR to a dark prison where people get shot on a regular basis. *The Spy Who Came in from the Cold* was not the only novel to show this stereotypical image of the GDR. However, despite the success of the stories in the UK and their potential influence on the perception of the GDR in Britain, they were an occasional source of entertainment for the readers in contrast to the daily coverage of the newspapers. Moreover, the majority of the readers of such novels were surely aware of their fictional nature.

## **B. Image and perception of the GDR in contemporary research**

The following overview shows the on-going lack of research regarding the image of the GDR in Britain and moreover, it explains the significant insights a press analysis can provide. Since the reunification of the two German states in 1990, GDR-related research has been a fast growing area. However, particularly in the early 1990s, it often concentrated on the GDR itself and transnational studies remained rare. This approach changed in later years.<sup>27</sup> In 2010, Stefan Berger and Norman LaPorte published the most comprehensive study to date exploring relations between the GDR and Great Britain, bringing together research findings from the last two decades.<sup>28</sup> Their book will be discussed further below. In light of such considerable research results, it is surprising that research on the perception of the GDR in Britain is still in its infancy, despite its importance for understanding relations between the two countries.

In 2007, Arnd Bauerkämper published the first significant overview regarding the image of the GDR in Britain.<sup>29</sup> In this highly informative article, he describes the ambivalence of the GDR's image in Britain in the past, and how it was always dependent on the specific historical context and individual representatives.<sup>30</sup> Although Bauerkämper indicates that the media is partly responsible for distributing a certain image of the GDR amongst the British public, he does not investigate the process in detail. Overall, the article does not differentiate between different elements in the image of the GDR in Britain such as the state, its citizens or its society. Moreover, he

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<sup>27</sup> *Britain and the GDR: Relations and Perceptions in a Divided World*, ed. by Arnd Bauerkämper (Vienna: Philo, 2002); *The Other Germany: Perceptions and Influences in British-East German Relations, 1945-1990*, ed. by Stefan Berger and Norman LaPorte (Augsburg: Wissner Verlag, 2005).

<sup>28</sup> Berger and LaPorte, *Friendly Enemy*.

<sup>29</sup> Bauerkämper, 'Sympathie mit dem Gegner', pp. 316-340.

<sup>30</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 318.



focuses on specific groups in British society such as politicians, particularly from the more GDR-friendly Labour party, the British Communist Party or the peace movement in Britain. By focusing on the stance of these often pro-GDR groups and individuals, it is impossible to obtain a greater sense of the views of British society in general. Additionally, their relationships with the GDR had been covered in earlier studies.<sup>31</sup> In this context, an investigation of the British quality press, with its greater outreach and the ability of individual newspapers to show different stances towards the GDR, would provide a significant addition to Bauerkämper's results, and therefore allow for more general conclusions about the image of the GDR in Britain to be drawn.

Other researchers have only occasionally referred to the British perception of the GDR and the resulting attitude towards the country. Noticeably, either this information remains limited to individual groups or, when applied more generally, a deeper analysis is not included. General descriptions primarily position the British attitude somewhere between ignorance and holding explicitly negative opinions towards the GDR. Mary Fulbrook, for example, stresses that the most widespread perception of the GDR was determined by the Cold War discourse and that the country was therefore primarily seen as an illegitimate state puppet of the Soviet Union.<sup>32</sup> Barbara Rowe similarly argues that for the average British citizen, the GDR represented 'a model tyranny' and Moscow's marionette.<sup>33</sup> Others have emphasised the lack of interest in the GDR amongst British citizens. Martin McCauley suggests that, 'There was a remarkable level of ignorance about the GDR among the British public.'<sup>34</sup> The former *Guardian* journalist, Michael Simmons, also notes that the GDR had been 'the most maligned, most disparaged and most misunderstood state in Europe.'<sup>35</sup> Even Berger and LaPorte's study remains superficial and often too general when considering the perception of the East German state in the UK. They describe public interest in the GDR as marginal and generally assess the state's public image as negative – 'invariably

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<sup>31</sup> Berger and LaPorte, *Friendly Enemy*.

<sup>32</sup> Mary Fulbrook, *Anatomy of a Dictatorship: Inside the GDR 1949-1989* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1995), p. 9.

<sup>33</sup> Barbara Rowe, 'Das Ende der Mauer aus britischer Sicht', in *Deutschland: Ein Rückblick auf 50 Jahre* (= Dokumente und Schriften der Europäischen Akademie Ötzenhausen, vol. 93), ed. by Heiner Timmermann (Berlin: Duncker & Humblot, 2001), p. 919.

<sup>34</sup> Martin McCauley, 'British-GDR Relations: A See-Saw Relationship', in *Britain and the GDR: Relations and Perceptions in a Divided World*, ed. by Arnd Bauerkämper (Vienna: Philo, 2002), p. 61.

<sup>35</sup> Michael Simmons, *The Unloved Country: A Portrait of East Germany Today* (London: Abacus, 1989), p. 1.

grey and drab'.<sup>36</sup> Moreover, the scholars have noted that the GDR was seen as a hard-line communist state and its image combined 'Germanophobia and anti-communism'.<sup>37</sup> Moreover, Berger and LaPorte, as Bauerkämper, tend to focus on specific groups and their respective relations with the GDR and do not discuss the broader perception of the GDR in British society.

This short overview of the current research regarding the perception of the GDR demonstrates a number of gaps therein. Clearly, the public perception of the GDR has so far been neglected and those studies which do exist show a tendency towards generalisation and inconsistency. Building on the research of Bauerkämper, Berger and LaPorte, my analysis aims to expand research on the image of the GDR. On the basis of the national quality press, it will allow for conclusions to be drawn about the opinions of the wider British public beyond individual groups, which academic publications often focused on, as the press is characterised by a far larger circulation (*The Daily Telegraph's* circulation, for example, was 1.3 million in 1975 and 1.4 million in 1980).<sup>38</sup> Along with the existing research gaps regarding the image of the GDR, a lack of interest in and misconceptions of the British press as a valuable source for scholars to discover the image of the GDR exists. The following section will summarise key research opinions surrounding the role of the press in portraying the GDR in Britain.

### **B.1 The GDR and the press – cliché-ridden and ignorant?**

Until now, there has not been any comprehensive examination of the image of the GDR in the British press and its influence upon the British-East German relations. Such a study is, however, essential in order to reveal information about the general perception of the GDR in the 1970s and 80s in Great Britain. Antje Robrecht's 2010 study of the role of correspondents in German-British relations does not fill this research gap.<sup>39</sup> Not only does her analysis lack a significant amount of material about the GDR, but she also uses a media-related approach, which focuses solely on the correspondents and their working conditions whilst their articles are excluded entirely from the analysis. Furthermore, her analysis is limited to the 1950s and 60s. The

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<sup>36</sup> Berger and LaPorte, *Friendly Enemy*, pp. 4, 121, 172, 176.

<sup>37</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 18, 533.

<sup>38</sup> Colin Seymour-Ure, *The British Press and Broadcasting since 1945*, 2nd edn (Oxford: Blackwell Publishers, 1996), p. 28.

<sup>39</sup> Antje Robrecht, *'Diplomaten in Hemdsärmeln'? Auslandskorrespondenten als Akteure in den deutsch-britischen Beziehungen* (Augsburg: Wißner-Verlag, 2010).

scholars Christoph Peters and Ines Lehmann have investigated the British press' representation of Germany between 1989 and 1994, a time which was dominated by the reunification and its aftermath.<sup>40</sup> Here, they address the GDR only marginally. Therefore, their studies are also of limited value in understanding the image of the GDR prior to these historical events.

Apart from these press studies, scholars dealing with British-East German relations have thus far inadequately investigated the role of the British press and its significance for the representation of the GDR. Overall, two key trends can be identified in British scholarship: firstly, several publications state that the press showed little interest in the GDR and mostly ignored the country and related topics. Childs, for example, claims that the country had 'no image' at all in Britain as the media tended to focus solely on America and the Commonwealth. He additionally points out that writers were more interested in the National Socialist past and the Cold War when it came to Germany.<sup>41</sup> Secondly, scholars argue that the press represented the GDR from a particularly one-sided, often negative angle. In 1987, Ian Wallace had already noted that despite the tendency among serious commentators not to regard the GDR simply as an oppressive Soviet satellite, the predominant image of the GDR in the British mass media was that of 'a particularly inhuman prison'.<sup>42</sup> Even after the fall of the Wall, his standpoint remained prevalent as several scholars such as Mike Dennis and Hans-Georg Golz, amongst others, refer to Wallace's claim.<sup>43</sup> Reiner Oschmann, for example, who was the London correspondent for the East German newspaper *Neues Deutschland*, describes the media coverage as 'cliché-ridden', while Martin McCauley even claims that the media was 'hostile towards the GDR.'<sup>44</sup> Overall both claims - the ignorance of the country and the one-sided representation of the GDR - are superficial statements which cannot be supported by a detailed investigation of the British quality

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<sup>40</sup> Ines Lehmann, *Die deutsche Vereinigung von außen gesehen: Angst, Bedenken und Erwartungen der ausländischen Presse* (Frankfurt/Main: Peter Lang GmbH, 1996); Christoph Peters, *Deutschland und die Deutschen im Spiegel britischer Tageszeitungen: Die Berichterstattung der überregionalen Presse Großbritanniens 1989-1994* (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2000).

<sup>41</sup> Childs, 'The Changing British Perception of the GDR', p. 375; Childs, 'Schwierigkeiten und Möglichkeiten', pp. 31ff.

<sup>42</sup> Wallace, *East Germany*, p. XV.

<sup>43</sup> Hans-Georg Golz, *Verordnete Völkerfreundschaft: Das Wirken des Freundschaftsgesellschaft DDR-Großbritannien und der Britain-GDR Society – Möglichkeiten und Grenzen* (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2004), p. 159; Dennis, 'GDR Studies in the UK', p. 284.

<sup>44</sup> McCauley, 'British-GDR Relations', p. 50; Reiner Oschmann, 'Recollection of a GDR Correspondent in London during the Thatcher Years', in *The Other Germany*, ed. by Stefan Berger and Norman LaPorte (Augsburg: Wissner Verlag, 2005), p. 311.

press during the 1970s and 80s, as this analysis will later demonstrate. That being said, the press also occasionally misinterpreted events in the GDR, however, this still does not mean that the press' view was as clear cut as academic commentators tend to suggest.

### **C. A brief history of British-East German relations**

To fully understand the results of the upcoming press analysis, it is necessary to first place the press coverage within its historical context and to depict the trajectory of British-East German relations over the period from an international relations perspective. It has to be noted that any interaction between Britain and the GDR was always embedded in the realities of the Cold War and each country's alliances in this bipolar world. Both Britain and the GDR regarded their relationship with the Federal Republic as a priority, and this also determined their relationship with one another.<sup>45</sup> The GDR's dependence on the Soviet Union regarding its foreign policy also represented a decisive factor in British-East German relations. Overall, their mutual relations were of higher significance to the GDR than to the British government, however, neither party regarded the other as a particularly significant international partner.

Until the Basic Treaty in 1972, the prime objective of the GDR's foreign policy in Britain was to overcome its non-recognition. As one of the four allied powers and a highly developed industrial nation, Britain naturally became a subject of interest for East German foreign activities. However, despite East German efforts and individual demands from within Great Britain, the British government followed a strict non-recognition policy according to the West German *Hallstein Doctrine* and even discouraged other Commonwealth countries from official contact. As a result, the GDR could not conduct official bilateral relations through, for example, the exchange of ambassadors and meetings between representatives of the two governments. Instead, it had to find other possibilities to establish contact in Britain and promote its request for recognition and acceptance as a sovereign state. Golz terms the GDR's alternative

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<sup>45</sup> Arnd Bauerkämper, 'It Took Three to Tango: The Role of the Federal Republic of Germany in the Relationship between Britain and the GDR, 1949-1990', in *The Other Germany*, ed. by Stefan Berger and Norman LaPorte (Augsburg: Wissner Verlag, 2005), pp. 45-60; Marianne Howarth, 'Das Berliner Dreieck: Großbritannien und die beiden deutschen Staaten 1989/90', *Deutschland Archiv*, 34.6 (2001), p. 956.

approach to realise its interests abroad as ‘cryptic diplomacy’.<sup>46</sup> As part of this ‘cryptic diplomacy’, the GDR attempted to establish personal relations with influential British citizens from a variety of backgrounds, including business contacts, politicians and trade union leaders. Due to the growing recession after the Korean War and the collapse of the British Empire, Britain was on the lookout for new markets in Eastern Europe,<sup>47</sup> hence trade agreements with the GDR started to look more attractive. During the 1950s, a small number of British companies established initial trade contacts with the GDR, and in 1959/60, the East German government set up two private companies in Britain which reflected growing economic links between the two countries.<sup>48</sup>

Left-wing Labour politicians and members of the trade unions were amongst the most vocal supporters of the GDR and often promoted the international acceptance of the state. To many of them, the GDR appeared to be the better German state. This perception was, in part, a reaction to the degrading image of the West German state. In particular, political scandals during the Adenauer Era and the rearmament of the Federal Republic reinforced the image of the GDR as an antifascist state, a perception the GDR itself was keen to reinforce.<sup>49</sup> Additionally, the fear and negative attitude towards an increasingly strong Federal Republic supported the GDR’s objectives. Yet despite growing resentment towards the FRG, the GDR was still generally considered as the second German state in the minds of British politicians.<sup>50</sup> The Communist Party in Britain was only of minor importance for British-East German relations as its limited size restricted the party’s potential influence. Friendship societies and the development of personal contacts by exiles who had spent the war in Great Britain formed two other important groups of GDR supporters in the UK.<sup>51</sup> In

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<sup>46</sup> Golz, *Verordnete Völkerfreundschaft*, p. 3.

<sup>47</sup> Klaus Larres, ‘Britain and the GDR: Political and Economic Relations 1949-1989’, in *Uneasy Allies: British-German Relations and European Integration since 1945*, ed. by Klaus Larres (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000), p. 74.

<sup>48</sup> The *Kammer für Außenhandel (KfA)* fulfilled a vital role in the British-East German relations, whereas the travel agency *Berolina* was less successful. In: Marianne Howarth, ‘KfA Ltd und Berolina Travel Ltd: Die DDR-Präsenz in Großbritannien vor und nach der diplomatischen Anerkennung’, *Deutschland Archiv*, 32.4 (1999), p. 591.

<sup>49</sup> Henning Hoff, ‘The GDR and the Labour Party, 1949-1989’, in *The Other Germany*, ed. by Stefan Berger and Norman LaPorte (Augsburg: Wissner Verlag, 2005), p. 129.

<sup>50</sup> Howarth, ‘Das Berliner Dreieck’, p. 956.

<sup>51</sup> Stefan Berger and Norman LaPorte, ‘In Search of Antifascism: The British Left’s Response the German Democratic Republic during the Cold War’, *German History*, 26.4 (2008), pp. 539ff; Golz, *Verordnete*

many cases these two groups were connected. The friendship society, *BRIDGE* (Britain-Democratic Germany Information Exchange), was established in 1965.<sup>52</sup> Along with supporting the recognition of the GDR state, it aimed to increase awareness and popularity of the GDR.

In 1973, Britain and the GDR finally established official relations between their countries. This became possible through a period of détente between the superpowers and the signing of the Basic Treaty in 1972 by the two German states. After finally reaching its long-term objectives, the GDR now focused on enhancing its image and status abroad and broadening its influence. The two countries signed a number of contracts regarding their mutual relations; the Cooperation Agreement in 1973, the Consular Agreement in 1976 and a Culture Agreement in 1980. Despite initial hopes and in light of bilateral and international agreements, the relations remained cool and formal.<sup>53</sup> Colin Munro even describes a stagnation of relations after a short enthusiastic period.<sup>54</sup> One explanation for this was that neither side considered their mutual relations to be a priority. From the East German perspective, relations with other Western states such as the Federal Republic, France and the United States, were of greater importance. Moreover, after the official state-recognition, British expectations to expand trade and export opportunities could not be fulfilled. The trade deficit with the GDR continually increased and did not help to improve relations.<sup>55</sup> In spite of these strains, trade continued to play a significant role in relations between the two countries until the end. In 1978, Britain was the GDR's second most important trading partner in the west.<sup>56</sup> Initially, the change of government in 1979 from Labour to Conservative did not substantially change relations with the GDR;<sup>57</sup> indeed they actually seemed to improve. In 1985, the British Foreign Minister Howe visited the GDR, and a year later this was followed by Oskar Fischer's (East German Foreign Minister) return visit. Finally, during the second half of the 1980s, the GDR's lack of

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*Völkerfreundschaft*, p. 7; Marianne Howarth, 'Freundschaft mit dem Klassenfeind: Die Image-Politik der DDR in Großbritannien nach der diplomatischen Anerkennung', *Deutschland Archiv*, 36.1 (2003), p. 26.

<sup>52</sup> In 1973, *BRIDGE* was renamed Britain-GDR Society.

<sup>53</sup> Howarth, 'KfA Ltd und Berolina Travel Ltd', p. 591; Larres, p. 93; Oschmann, p. 309.

<sup>54</sup> Colin Munro, 'The Acceptance of a Second German State', in *Großbritannien und Ostdeutschland seit 1918: Britain and East Germany since 1918*, ed. by Adolf M. Birke and Günther Heydemann (Munich: Saur, 1992), p. 128.

<sup>55</sup> Bauerkämper, 'It Took Three to Tango', p. 53.

<sup>56</sup> Berger and LaPorte, *Friendly Enemy*, p. 176.

<sup>57</sup> Golz, *Verordnete Völkerfreundschaft*, p. 115.

willingness to support Gorbachev's reforms impaired relations. The Thatcher government supported Gorbachev and his policy and at the same time distanced itself from the GDR as it showed no intention to introduce a similar policy.

The East German leader, Erich Honecker, was particularly determined to establish the country as a peaceful and internationally respected state. However, within the context of growing international acceptance, the East German state also anxiously noticed growing foreign influence inside the GDR, for example, through an increased number of international visitors. Consequently, the GDR suppressed grassroots relations and kept direct contacts between foreign visitors and its own citizens to a minimum, while it continued to promote high-level contacts in Britain. While East German choirs, theatre groups and orchestras regularly travelled through Britain promoting the East German state, its government was unwilling to allow a British cultural centre to be established in East Berlin.<sup>58</sup> Despite official countermeasures, exchanges also took place on a number of other levels. During the 1970s and 80s, links between churches in Britain and the GDR flourished. Moreover, with the growing peace movement throughout Europe at the end of the 1970s and during the early 1980s, the developing peace movement in Britain, particularly prevalent within academic circles, demonstrated a growing interest in the GDR. As a result, an increasing number of universities and individual researchers established contacts in the GDR through academic and student exchanges. Overall, these unofficial contacts were restricted to individual groups and had a limited impact, while the majority of citizens in both countries never experienced any personal contact with the other.

#### **D. Thesis outline**

This thesis is divided into six chapters. While the first chapter focuses on the press itself and the working conditions of British journalists, the following five chapters cover topics of high interest for the British press and are therefore particularly helpful in showing the diverse perception of the GDR in British newspapers.

The first chapter shows the production process of news coverage. It explores the ways in which news from the GDR was transmitted to the British readership and

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<sup>58</sup> Wallace, 'The GDR's Cultural Activities in Britain', p. 408.

provides information about related conditions such as the working routines of the journalists responsible for shaping the news coverage. It is primarily based on in-depth interviews with journalists who covered the GDR for British quality newspapers and news agencies during the 1970s and 80s. The nine interviews conducted as part of my PhD represent a unique source which illustrates working conditions in the GDR. Additionally, the chapter contains background information about the British press itself and an introduction to the newspapers upon which my analysis is based.

In Chapter Two, I focus on the ambivalence surrounding the GDR's image. Whilst contemporaneous research findings tend to focus solely on the general image of the GDR without distinguishing different elements within this image, I will demonstrate that the press actually presented a structured and nuanced image of the country during the 1970s and 80s. It distinguished between the GDR's appearance, its population and its political representatives. This view contributed to a divided perception of state authorities and the East German population and therefore challenges the generalisations about the image of 'the GDR'.

Chapter Three considers the representation of the GDR within the context of foreign policy. Special focus will be placed on the country's relationship with the Soviet Union and the Federal Republic. In particular, the representation of relations between the Soviet Union and the GDR in the British press will show an evolving perception of the GDR. Moreover, this chapter will demonstrate that for the most part, the press steered clear of one-dimensional representations of the GDR as a 'Soviet puppet' or the 'better Germany' to be found elsewhere in the representation of the state. Furthermore, the value of the press as an historical source for the perception of the GDR in Britain will be highlighted, as the press focused on events that were retrospectively deemed to be of minor historical significance. Therefore, the press offered a detailed image of the GDR. Moreover, newspapers were able to incorporate subtle political changes more immediately than other sources due to their daily coverage.

The fourth chapter looks at the perception of opposition in the GDR and its changing representation during the two decades under investigation. The British press regularly reported on the subject and was therefore offered a more comprehensive image of both the subject itself and of East German society. This chapter will show that



the press sometimes even overvalued the potential of opposition in the GDR and portrayed a stronger and more influential opposition movement than that which actually existed. As a result, the news coverage added new facets to the overall image of the GDR at the time and contributed to a stronger focus on the East German population than is seen in most other contexts.

The fifth chapter discusses the representation of the Berlin Wall and the division of the two German states. It explores the relevant press coverage during the 1970s. It will be demonstrated that despite the strong concentration on the Berlin Wall and division in contemporary research, the subject did not stand out in British press coverage at the time and represented just one topic amongst several connected with the GDR. In general, it will be shown that a particularly negative representation of the Wall and the border fortification cannot be detected in the British press. As part of the analysis within this chapter, press coverage of incidents which involved British citizens will be discussed and their outstanding position in the overall coverage will be demonstrated.

Finally, Chapter Six explores the representation of East German sport and its contribution to the overall image of the state. The press extensively reported on East German sport and its successful athletes. The coverage in this context is in clear contrast to the topics discussed in previous chapters, as no other subject presented such a positive picture of the GDR. Negative aspects such as the misuse of illegal substances were of much less interest at the time than one might expect, especially in light of contemporary discourses. Moreover, the chapter will show that sports coverage was far less influenced by political realities than other subjects, as in this context the GDR was able to be presented as a sport 'superpower'.

Superficially, these topics seem to reflect the typical elements of the GDR's foreign image, as confirmed by a 1974 article in *The Times* which stated that the East Germans 'shine in sport, built the Berlin Wall, own Colditz Castle, export Wartburg cars in increasing numbers, and occasionally escape to the West'.<sup>59</sup> These aspects were indeed regularly covered. Based on a detailed analysis of the press, however, it will be established that these were not static images, but rather changing and dynamic

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<sup>59</sup> Jeffrey Johnson, 'The view of Britain from over the Wall', *The Times*, 01/08/1974, p. 14.

representations which evolved as circumstances changed, be they relations between the GDR and Britain or internal development of the GDR.

## E. Theoretical background and methodology

### E.1 Discourse Analysis

The following section will introduce discourse analysis (DA), the theoretical approach upon which my study is based. I will explain why DA represents the best tool with which to investigate the British press, in order to gain a comprehensive view of the image of the GDR in the quality newspapers. Discourse analysis is based on the assumption that newspaper articles, as one type of text, constitute discourses. Therefore, the term 'discourse' should be briefly summarised. The term 'discourse' can be described as language in use.<sup>60</sup> This means any form of language that is not perceived as an isolated or abstract verbal object, but rather as a form of social interaction.<sup>61</sup> With this functional approach towards language, attention extends from the limited focus on the text to the various contexts within which language is embedded.<sup>62</sup> However, the text not only represents the context; the relationship between text and context can be described as a dialectic.<sup>63</sup> The context influences and shapes the text, while the text also has implications for its context. As a result, the text cannot be sufficiently studied without taking into account its context.<sup>64</sup> Furthermore, language is not only linked to its immediate surroundings, but also to a wider socio-political, cultural and historical context.<sup>65</sup> Based on this definition of discourse, discourse analysis focuses on the organisation of language above the level of sentence

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<sup>60</sup> Gillian Brown and George Yule, *Discourse Analysis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), p. 1; Teun A. van Dijk, 'Introduction: Levels and Dimensions of Discourse Analysis', in *Handbook of Discourse Analysis: Volume 2 Dimensions of Discourse*, 3rd edn (London: Academic Press, 1989), p. 1; Norman Fairclough, *Analysing Discourse: Textual Analysis for Social Research* (London, New York: Routledge, 2003), p. 3; James Paul Gee, *An Introduction to Discourse Analysis: Theory and Methods*, 3rd edn (London, New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 11; Jan Renkema, *Introduction of Discourse Studies* (Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins Publishing Company, 2004), p. 54; John E. Richardson, *Analysing Newspapers: An Approach from Critical Discourse Analysis* (Basingstoke: Palgrave MacMillan, 2007), p. 23; Michael Stubbs, *Discourse Analysis: A Sociolinguistic Analysis of Natural Language* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1998), p. 1.

<sup>61</sup> van Dijk, 'Introduction', p. 3.

<sup>62</sup> Idid, p. 11.

<sup>63</sup> Gee, p. 101.

<sup>64</sup> Renkema, p. 35.

<sup>65</sup> Richardson, pp. 23ff.

and clause.<sup>66</sup> Along with focusing on the text as it is presented in the newspaper, it is also interested in the analysis of various contexts, cognitive processes of production and consumption, socio-cultural dimensions of language and communication.<sup>67</sup> Discourse analysis presents a method for exploring text as a product of its context. Moreover, it provides an explicit and systematic methodology for understanding the complex interaction between text and other forms of knowledge, belief and attitude.<sup>68</sup> This link explains why the inclusion of former journalists and the production conditions of news coverage is an essential part of my thesis, and why newspaper articles represent such a valuable source with which to explore the past. Therefore, this approach can be considered the best approach for investigating how the British press reflected on topics related to the GDR. It can help to show how the inherent character of the press as an institution, the production process and the social context influence language and, finally, the representation of the GDR in the British press.

Within discourse analysis two different trends can be identified, a text oriented approach and critical discourse analysis (CDA). CDA focuses on the social actors in discourses. In relation to this study, this aspect can offer valuable insights into the coverage of the GDR as the country's press coverage differs in this respect from the common representation of other countries in the press.<sup>69</sup> Generally, quality newspapers are characterised by focusing more on elite groups and individual actors than on common, unknown people.<sup>70</sup> Elite sources are not only generally perceived to be more newsworthy, but they also display a higher perceived reliability as observers and formulators of opinion.<sup>71</sup> Regular press conferences and press releases by official institutions and other leading actors additionally promote their representation. In the case of the GDR and its representation in the British press, one would not expect the same pattern of elite representation to be identified as it would enhance the status of the East German elite actors, who are a representation of the political system and the state. Therefore, it will be observed if the British press applied the same significance to

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<sup>66</sup> Stubbs, p. 1.

<sup>67</sup> Teun A. van Dijk, *News as Discourse* (Hillsdale: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1988), p. 2.

<sup>68</sup> van Dijk, 'Introduction', p. 6; van Dijk, *News as Discourse*, p. 24.

<sup>69</sup> Theo van Leeuwen, 'Critical Discourse Analysis', in *Discourse, of Course*, ed. by Jan Renkema (Amsterdam, Philadelphia: John Benjamins, 2009), p. 277.

<sup>70</sup> Theo van Leeuwen, *Discourse and Practice: New Tools for Critical Discourse Analysis* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), p. 37.

<sup>71</sup> van Dijk, *News as Discourse*, p. 87.

elite actors in the press coverage of the GDR, or whether an inversion can be recognised and a stronger concentration on non-elite figures occurred. Within this context, attention must be paid to the possible exclusion and generalisation of certain groups and people.

Overall it should be stated that conclusions about the context (British society during the 1970s and 80s, national press during this time) and also about participants can be drawn from the text while at the same time the articles can only be fully understood when placed within their historical and social context. As a press discourse constitutes a particular type of discourse, its features will be outlined in the following section.

### **E.1.1 Press discourse**

The media and the connected discourse play a powerful role in our contemporary social life.<sup>72</sup> As with all discourses, press discourse reflects its social and historical context and additionally its production process. Individual newspapers are associated with and also part of different political discourses. Furthermore, the British quality press is positioned within the overall newspaper and media discourse, but also within the political discourse of a Western democracy in the 1970s and 80s. News coverage is characterised by very specific textual qualities, methods of production and consumption.<sup>73</sup> Foremost, it should be stressed that news coverage is neither an objective, neutral nor value-free reflection of the real world, nor what happens in it.<sup>74</sup> With the statement 'All news is views', Jan Renkema expresses the idea that news is presented from a certain perspective, and at the same time he stresses the bias of the media through their respective political stance. Even if his statement seems too simplistic, Renkema rightly discounts the idea of the media as a mirror of actual events.<sup>75</sup> News production is a complex communication process which involves journalistic activities and is rather characterised by specific institutional processes.<sup>76</sup> Furthermore, journalists and editors with responsibility for media coverage are not independent agents, but an integral part of the media discourse and of course several

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<sup>72</sup> Norman Fairclough, *Media Discourse* (London: Edward Arnold, 1995), p. 201.

<sup>73</sup> Richardson, p. 1.

<sup>74</sup> van Dijk, *News as Discourse*, p. 11.

<sup>75</sup> Renkema, p. 266.

<sup>76</sup> van Dijk, *News as Discourse*, pp. 95ff.

others discourses which influence, shape and constrain their attitudes, beliefs and subsequent behaviour. Moreover, journalists work within the confines of institutional and social expectations.<sup>77</sup> Journalists' choices with regards to language, for example, must conform to their employer's view and the newspaper's style.<sup>78</sup> Noticeably, scholars tend to reduce possible influences which shape the news coverage to social constraints and internal media processes. Active influences also exist outside the actual production process in the narrower sense, and journalists cannot always control those influences which are often inadequately discussed by scholars.<sup>79</sup> Chapter One of this thesis will particularly explore the restrictions journalists had to face when reporting on the GDR. By ignoring these conditions or by paying inadequate attention to them, conclusions about the context within which the discourse is embedded could be fragmentary or even wrong.

Furthermore, the specifics of the GDR discourse in the British press have to be considered as it is distinguished from the representation of other foreign countries, especially Western countries. The press discourse on the GDR is not an isolated discourse. It is part of the overall Cold War discourse that determined the world and of course British society for over four decades. Britain, as one of the victorious powers of the Second World War, was strongly on the side of the United States, and was against the Soviet dominated Eastern bloc of which the socialist GDR formed an integral part. It was also influenced by other discourses such as politics, gender, sport, moral and identity in Britain. With all of this in mind, the methodological approach as applied in this thesis will be outlined in the following section.

## **E.2 Methodology**

As this analysis aims to draw conclusions regarding the perception of the GDR in the British press, the applied method has to facilitate this demand. A period of 20 years has been chosen which will allow me to draw conclusions about developments and changes, as it should not be assumed that perceptions remain static. More importantly, I have applied an inductive approach to the research data, the press

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<sup>77</sup> Martin Conboy, *The Language of the News* (London, New York: Routledge, 2007), p. 117.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid*, p. 57.

<sup>79</sup> Teun A. van Dijk, *News Analysis: Case Studies of International and National News in the Press* (Hillsday: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 1988), p. 37. Hall and Richardson, for example, overemphasise journalists' choices in this process while they do not discuss further restriction. In: Stuart Hall in: Richardson, p. 77; see also: Renkema, p. 266; Richardson, p. 38.

coverage, to determine the press' main focus. This approach, which does not apply pre-selected criteria to the data, has been chosen to avoid any pre-supposed limitations and to consider the entire spectrum of news coverage in order to determine the overall image of the GDR. As a result, I have identified five central topics regarding the GDR which form individual chapters in this thesis: the nuanced image of GDR, the country's representation in an international context, opposition within the GDR, the Wall and sport. The British press also covered other topics, but these are the topics that were most prevalent.

Other comparative media analyses have also been considered for this study, but had to be discounted as they are unsuitable for the production of statements about the image of the GDR in the British press for such a long period as 20 years. These approaches either focus on distinct historical events or are limited to a certain limited period of time.<sup>80</sup> Particularly in light of the extensive daily press coverage, these methods with their smaller data set allow a closer analysis. However, these methods also show clear shortcomings. For example, if only a distinct period is covered, more general conclusions cannot be drawn. Christoph Peters' and Ines Lehmann's work which focuses on the perception of Germany abroad during the time period between the fall of the Wall and the German reunification clearly demonstrates how such an outstanding event determines perception. By focusing on a number of selected, mainly political events, researchers restrict the outcome of their work as the entire analysis is directed in a particular and limited direction. A national image comprises not only political components, but also has to take other elements into consideration such as culture, sport and everyday events. Therefore, such an approach cannot determine an overall national image. In light of the increasing sports coverage in British newspapers and the international success of East German sportsmen and sportswomen, for example, the subject sport should not be discounted.<sup>81</sup> The considerable size of the study's data set has to be addressed as such a great amount of data does not allow for a detailed linguistic analysis of each item. Van Dijk recognises

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<sup>80</sup> Christian Chmel, *Die DDR-Berichterstattung bundesdeutscher Massenmedien und die Realität der SED (1972-1989)* (Berlin: Metropol, 2009); Beatrice Dernbach, *DDR-Berichterstattung in bundesdeutschen Qualitätszeitungen* (Berlin: Lit Verlag, 2008); Lehmann; Peters.

<sup>81</sup> Seymour-Ure, p. 148. In 1975, *The Times* devoted 14% of its news space to sport, only articles dealing with political, social and economic issues had a larger share. In: Jeremy Tunstall, *The Media in Britain*, 5th edn (London: Constable, 1983), p. 124.

this problem and recommends reverting to traditional content analysis.<sup>82</sup> His suggestion will be applied in this study and will be supported by quantitative methods and selected qualitative methods. Furthermore, each chapter will include at least one significant case study relating to the overall topic. Each case study will contain a more detailed microanalysis.

Following the assumption that a discourse is *language in use*, any analysis also has to consider processes of production and consumption of the individual texts and discourses.<sup>83</sup> However, it has to be questioned how feasible such a cognitive approach is with regard to historical data as it is all but impossible to accurately trace particular readers' perceptions in retrospect. Therefore this analysis will focus predominantly on the press output. Additionally, news gathering and particular aspects of news production directly linked with the work of foreign journalists in the GDR will also be taken into account. For this purpose, qualitative interviews with former journalists reporting on the GDR have been conducted. In this respect, journalists function as eyewitnesses and experts and their accounts therefore provide further information about their work and readership. Chapter One will include further information about the interviews and an analysis of their content.

In any communicative event, there are always conscious and unconscious choices of how to present a text.<sup>84</sup> In the following section, it will be asked which options have been chosen in the individual texts and why. To identify these choices, van Dijk suggests that discourses can be distinguished in their macrostructure, which represents the global meaning and structure of a discourse, and their microstructure, which requires a closer textual analysis.<sup>85</sup> The macrostructure of the GDR-related press discourse will be revealed through a content study providing information on prime topics of the discourse. This will be complemented with a linguistic analysis on the micro-level of the discourse. Structure and wording will be examined not only through a lexical and semantic analysis, but also through a grammatical one. Michael Halliday demonstrates that grammar also has 'meaning potential' and is not just a set of rules.<sup>86</sup> The employment of a passive agent instead of an active one, for example, has

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<sup>82</sup> van Dijk, *New Analysis*, p. X.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid*, p. 2.

<sup>84</sup> Fairclough, *Media Discourse*, p. 107.

<sup>85</sup> van Dijk, *News as Discourse*, pp. 26ff.

<sup>86</sup> Michael Halliday in: van Leeuwen, *Discourse and Practice*, p. 23.

implications for the understanding of the content. Through lexical and semantic choices, information can be prioritised, or equally placed in the background. These decisions are worthy of investigation as they can provide information relating to the attitudes and perspectives of the producer and the context of the discourse. Along with the information which is present, discourse analysis also pays attention to that which is missing, what is not said and who is not represented, for example, through the exclusion or suppression of whole topics, individual information or participants, as this can reveal important insights into general perceptions and values. Due to the character of data (newspaper coverage) neither speech act theory by John L. Austin and John Searle nor Paul Grice's cooperative principles are of particular use for this analysis despite their general value for investigating other discourse types such as oral conversations. Newspaper articles constitute primarily assertive sentences and, therefore, no essential further information can be drawn from them.<sup>87</sup>

One set of criteria which has shaped news coverage is the so-called *news values*, which were first identified by Johan Galtung and Mari Ruge. Galtung and Ruge developed a catalogue which determines the likeliness of whether an article will get published. Journalists apply these values to their daily work in order to select newsworthy events.<sup>88</sup> This selection, which is also shared by the public, embodies the professional beliefs and attitudes of newsmakers.<sup>89</sup> As journalists and their readers are part of social and cultural discourses, this selection reflects economic, social and ideological values of the respective society.<sup>90</sup> Therefore, a closer investigation of these news values can provide further information about this analysis.

Texts do not only exhibit grammatical, semantic and lexical features. Oral conversations, for example, also contain phonological features and non-verbal elements.<sup>91</sup> This multimodality is also displayed in written discourses. Press articles often contain photos and statistics in addition to the written account. Graphical features such as differing fonts and questions of layout support the article's written information. Despite this important element, I will mostly restrict my examination to

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<sup>87</sup> van Dijk, *News as Discourse*, p. 26.

<sup>88</sup> Galtung and Holmboe Ruge, pp. 64-91. Later, Harcup and O'Neill developed them further. In: Deidre O'Neill and Tony Harcup, 'News Values and Selectivity', in *The Handbook of Journalism Studies*, ed. by Karin Wahl-Jorgensen and Thomas Hanitzsch (New York, London: Routledge, 2009), pp. 162-174.

<sup>89</sup> van Dijk, *News Analysis*, p. 27.

<sup>90</sup> van Dijk, *News as Discourse*, pp. 120f.

<sup>91</sup> Renkema, p. 76.



the textual content. Images or layout will exceptionally be considered in cases within which they represent a key feature of the coverage and add vital insights to the analysis.

### E.2.1 Choice of data

Finally, this section introduces the chosen data for the analysis, describes its selection process and explains the motivation for the selection. The data set consists of newspaper articles from several British quality newspapers (*The Daily Telegraph*, *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, *The Observer* and *The Times*) published between 1972 and 1989. The focus has been placed on the written press in light of a recent lack of research interest in written media, as other forms of media, such as films and TV shows, have received considerable attention. Furthermore, only quality newspapers have been examined since tabloids do not regularly contain foreign affairs stories.<sup>92</sup> Overall, quality newspapers deal with political topics, especially international affairs, in more detail and with more sophistication than the middle-ranking and tabloid press.<sup>93</sup> As Juncker points out, all tabloids in Britain present the world from a very British perspective and pay little attention to foreign news stories.<sup>94</sup> This approach is also evident in the fact that from the 1960s onwards, popular newspapers refrained from employing their own foreign correspondents.<sup>95</sup> Moreover, a range of British quality newspapers have been selected as they can present a detailed and comprehensive image of the GDR through their distinct political identities. These are reflected, for example, in the newspaper readers' electoral behaviour. In 1992, 72% of *The Daily Telegraph* readers supported the Conservative Party,<sup>96</sup> constituting the highest number of supporters amongst all of the quality newspaper readers. In the same year, *The Times* followed with 64% of its readers voting conservative, whereas the majority of *The Guardian* readers (55%) supported Labour. *The Independent's* readership also displayed stronger support for Labour, with 37% of its readers voting for them in comparison to the 25% who voted for the Conservatives. Additionally, the Sunday

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<sup>92</sup> Conboy, p. 30.

<sup>93</sup> Seymour-Ure, p. 142.

<sup>94</sup> Andreas H. Juncker, *Social Stylistics: Syntactic Variation in British Newspapers* (Berlin, New York: Mouton de Gruyter, 1992), p. 57.

<sup>95</sup> Tunstall, p. 339.

<sup>96</sup> Daniel C. Hallin and Paolo Mancini, *Comparing Media Systems: Three Models of Media and Politics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004), pp. 212ff.

newspaper *The Observer* has been included in the analysis as it contained regular articles regarding the GDR and can add a further facet of the British press landscape. The *Financial Times* has not been considered due to its economic orientation and therefore specialized readership. Moreover, the newspaper does not contain a sports section. The individual newspapers and their specific profiles will be outlined in more detail in Chapter One.

The newspaper articles which have been analysed within this thesis have been accessed via electronic databases and manually in several libraries.<sup>97</sup> Electronic databases exist for several newspapers, for example, *ProQuest* provides electronic copies of *The Guardian* for the years 1821-2003. The following search terms such as synonyms for the GDR (East Germany, E Germany, German Democratic Republic) and other relevant related terms (East German, East Germans, E German, East-West Germany, East-West German, Ulbricht, Honecker, Germanies, East Berlin, E-Berlin) have been used in order to identify topic-relevant articles. Noticeably, the British press largely abstained from using the term GDR and instead primarily referred to the country as East Germany. Afterwards the results were reviewed and those articles which clearly reported on the GDR were chosen for further analysis. Search faults and indexes were not considered. It cannot totally be ruled out that isolated articles have been overlooked, however, considering the large data set, this small error ratio can be ignored as it does not prevent general conclusions about press view. A subsequent content analysis facilitated the detection of the most prominent GDR-related topics in the British press which afterwards have been reflected in the chapters of this thesis.

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<sup>97</sup> *The Guardian* and *The Observer* in *ProQuest Historical Newspapers* <<http://search.proquest.com/hnpguardianobserver?accountid=14664>>; *The Sunday Times* and *The Times* in *Nexis* <<http://www.lexisnexis.com/uk/nexis/auth/bridge.do?rand=0.8021724415974397>>; *The Times* in *The Times Digital Archive 1785-2008* <<http://find.galegroup.com/ttda/dispAdvSearch.do?prodId=TTDA&userGroupName=leedsuni>>.

## Chapter 1

### Reporting on the GDR

This chapter focuses on the journalists who were responsible for the news coverage about the GDR in the British press, their working conditions and the circumstances under which the articles were produced. In order to address these issues, this chapter will include information collected from interviews with former journalists from British newspapers and the news agency *Reuters*, published memoirs and information from the state files of a number of GDR bodies including the State Security Service. It will be argued that whilst covering GDR-based stories, these journalists were confronted with circumstances which influenced how the GDR was to be presented to British newspaper readers. In this context, the discrepancy between journalists' perception of their relative freedom on the one hand and the reality for foreign journalists in the GDR, on the other, will be presented. In particular, the role of the State Security Service is of interest within this context. During the interviews, British journalists confirmed that they were to some extent aware of intensive surveillance taking place; however they were, for example, unable to detect the often indirect influence of the Stasi on their sources. The impact of other restrictions will be shown, such as the difficulties faced by foreign journalists in gathering newsworthy information. Furthermore, it will be demonstrated that personal attitudes and conditions related more generally to foreign press coverage and newspaper production affected the press coverage of the GDR. In this way, the chapter provides essential information for the subsequent content analysis of British newspapers.

In contrast to several existing analyses of the West German press in the GDR, in-depth research exploring the work of British journalists in the GDR is almost non-existent.<sup>98</sup> Given the particular nature of inter-German relations, West German

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<sup>98</sup> For further information about West German journalists in the GDR see: Chmel; Dernbach; Jürgen Döschner, 'Zehn Jahre bundesdeutsche Korrespondenten in der DDR: Eine Zwischenbilanz', *Deutschland Archiv*, 17.8 (1984), pp. 859-869; *Drinnen vor der Tür*, ed. by Eberhard Grashoff and Rolf Muth (Berlin: Edition Ost, 2000); Gunter Holzweißig, *Klassenfeinde und 'Entspannungsfreunde': Westmedien im Fadenkreuz von SED und MfS* (Berlin: Landesbeauftragter für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen DDR, 1995); Denis Fengler, 'Westdeutsche Korrespondenten

journalists form a very specific case. Therefore, such research cannot be easily transferred to Western journalists based in other countries. With the overall lack of interest in media perception of the GDR in Britain, it is hardly surprising that the published memoirs of individual journalists such as Peter Millar, Timothy Garton Ash or Dan van der Vat currently form the only available sources relating to journalists' experience of the GDR during the 1970s and 80s.<sup>99</sup> These accounts provide only a very personal view of events; however, they will be used to place the results of the interviews and the archive files within the broader context, and the combination of different sources will help to provide a more sophisticated overview. Moreover, the results of a standardised set of questions, as used for the interviews in this thesis, has helped to deliver more specific information and allows easier comparison in contrast to accounts of individual journalists with potentially very different objectives. Before presenting these journalists and their work in detail, the features of the British press in general and of the newspapers which provide the basis for this study will be outlined.

### 1.1 The British press and its significance in British society

The print media has always enjoyed great popularity in Britain with one of the highest circulation figures in Europe<sup>100</sup>, making it a highly significant contributor to the GDR's image. During the early 1980s, with the Falkland War, escalating unemployment, terrorist bombings, the miners' strike and the deployment of cruise missiles, the importance of the press increased and, as Roger Fowler puts it, newspapers became compulsory reading in Britain.<sup>101</sup> Moreover, the influence of the media on political institutions and their representatives should not be underestimated.<sup>102</sup> Sophia Peterson has noted the ways in which the elite press plays an important role in foreign policy; along with providing information, newspapers can also influence agenda

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in der DDR: Vom Abschluss des Grundlagenvertrages 1972 bis zur Wiedervereinigung 1990', in *Journalisten und Journalismus in der DDR: Berufsorganisation – Westkorrespondenten – 'Der schwarze Kanal'*, ed. by Jürgen Wilke (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 2007), pp. 79-216; Hubertus Knabe, *Der diskrete Charme der DDR: Stasi und Westmedien* (Berlin: Ullstein, 2002).

<sup>99</sup> Timothy Garton Ash, *The File: A Personal History* (London: Harper Collins Publishers, 1997); Peter Millar, *1989 The Wall: My Part in Its Downfall* (London: Arcadia Books, 2007); Dan van der Vat, *Freedom Was Never like This: A Winter's Journey in East Germany* (London: Hodder & Stoughton, 1991).

<sup>100</sup> Juncker, p. 3; Peters, p. 83.

<sup>101</sup> Roger Fowler, *Language in the News: Discourse and Ideology in the Press* (London, New York: Routledge, 1991), p. 6.

<sup>102</sup> James Curran and Jean Seaton, *Power without Responsibility: The Press and Broadcasting in Britain*, 5th edn (London, New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 1.

setters.<sup>103</sup> In 1987, British up-market newspapers accounted for only 16.8% of the national newspaper circulation. However, quality newspapers generally attract a more highly educated readership<sup>104</sup>, with 50% thereof belonging to the middle and upper middle classes.<sup>105</sup> Considering the readership of the newspapers examined within this study, which included the country's political, economic and cultural elite, the relationship between media and politics becomes noticeable.<sup>106</sup> Additionally, the role of the media in the image-building process of the GDR is of particular importance as most British citizens lacked any first-hand experience of the country. Another central feature underlining the importance of a close media analysis is that newspapers tend to represent the hegemonic discourse in Britain meaning that press coverage can therefore provide much more information about mainstream attitudes in British society. Despite the existing reluctance to treat media as a historical source, it has become apparent that the role of the press in British society should not be underestimated and can illustrate how a society comes to know and make sense of events.<sup>107</sup>

### **1.1.1 Newspapers – a general overview**

During the 1970s and 80s, the British press went through significant changes. Along with changes in ownership and the establishment of new titles, above all this period was determined by battles over new technologies related to the newspaper printing process.<sup>108</sup> In the following section, each of the newspapers that have been considered in this analysis will be briefly introduced, showing particular attention to their political views, their position in the British newspaper market and also their political stance towards the GDR, as these aspects are particularly pertinent to the subsequent analysis.

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<sup>103</sup> Peterson, p. 158.

<sup>104</sup> Bob Franklin, 'British Newspapers', in *Encyclopedia of Journalism*, ed. by Christopher H. Sterling (Thousand Oaks: Sage, 2009), p. 209.

<sup>105</sup> Juncker, pp. 57ff.

<sup>106</sup> Curran and Seaton, p. 1.

<sup>107</sup> Kevin Williams, *Get Me a Murder a Day! A History of Mass Communication in Britain* (London, New York: Routledge, 1998), p. VII.

<sup>108</sup> Seymour-Ure, p. 37.

### ***The Daily Telegraph***

*The Daily Telegraph* was, and still is, the most popular quality newspaper in Britain with a circulation of 1,154,018 (October 1987 – November 1988).<sup>109</sup> It was launched in 1855. The newspaper has always supported the Conservative Party (for example, during the election in 1987).<sup>110</sup> Therefore, Ralph Negrine, researcher on political communication, rightly labelled it the ‘ever-loyal’ newspaper.<sup>111</sup> Together with its right-wing bias, *The Daily Telegraph* also stood for well-informed and authoritative coverage.<sup>112</sup> In 1985, the Canadian businessman Conrad Black took over *The Daily Telegraph* from the Berry family<sup>113</sup> and made it part of an international conglomerate, as was the case with other British newspapers during the 1970s and 80s. Of all the newspapers discussed in this study, *The Daily Telegraph* generally displayed the most critical view towards the GDR and related topics. This can be identified not only in the paper’s content, but also in its omission of significant GDR-related stories which other papers deemed worthy of coverage. The newspaper’s West German correspondent also reported on the GDR from Bonn. The relevance of locations outside of the GDR itself will be discussed in a later section.

### ***The Guardian***

The newspaper was founded as the *Manchester Guardian* in 1821. In 1959, it had changed its name to *The Guardian* and moved to London five years later. It is a liberal broadsheet which can be politically located as left-of-centre.<sup>114</sup> It is the most left-oriented newspaper in this analysis and also among the British quality newspapers in general. In 1975, its circulation was 315,000 and ten years later it was 480,000, a circulation comparable to *The Times*.<sup>115</sup> *The Guardian* is controlled by a family trust, the Scott Trust,<sup>116</sup> and hence, in a similar fashion to *The Independent*, it did not

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<sup>109</sup> 1975: 1,351,000 and 1985: 1,221,000, in: Bob Franklin, *Newszak and Newsmedia* (London: Arnold, 1997) p. 88.

<sup>110</sup> Peters, p. 111; Seymour-Ure, p. 199.

<sup>111</sup> Ralph Negrine, *Politics and the Mass Media in Britain*, 2nd edn (London, New York, Routledge, 1994), p. 53.

<sup>112</sup> Brian McNair, *An Introduction to Political Communication* (London, New York: Routledge, 2011), p. 72.

<sup>113</sup> Seymour-Ure, p. 38.

<sup>114</sup> McNair, *An Introduction to Political Communication*, p. 55; Richardson, p. 107.

<sup>115</sup> Franklin, *Newszak and Newsmedia*, p. 88.

<sup>116</sup> Seymour-Ure, p. 38.

become part of a conglomerate as several other British newspapers did during the 1970s and 80s.

Overall, the newspaper demonstrated the highest interest in stories concerning the GDR among the publications examined. This became visible through its regular news coverage and the fact that the newspaper was the only one with a permanent foreign correspondent responsible for the GDR. Hella Pick worked for the newspaper for many years as a correspondent and reported on the GDR. However, she did not live permanently in the country and instead used her status as a 'permanent' correspondent to gain easier access to stories and sources.<sup>117</sup> Furthermore, in comparison with other quality newspapers, *The Guardian* displayed the least critical view of the country. The study will highlight regular examples in which *The Guardian* can be clearly distinguished from other newspaper through a more positive or optimistic attitude towards the GDR. Together with Hella Pick, several other and often very experienced journalists such as Norman Crossland and Marc Arnold-Foster also reported on the GDR, both of whom who worked for the paper during the 1970s. Later, Siegfried Buschschrüter, Michael Simmons, James Fenton and Anna Tomforde wrote articles about the country. Additionally, the author and journalist Jonathan Steele wrote regularly for *The Guardian*.

### ***The Independent***

*The Independent* is the newest of the newspapers examined within this study. It was founded in 1986 and can be regarded as a liberal broadsheet.<sup>118</sup> As the name suggests, it was founded in order to provide an independent newspaper which would not conform to the traditional left-right sympathies of the existing British press.<sup>119</sup> However, it is often regarded as left-of-centre but further right than *The Guardian*.<sup>120</sup> As the newspaper was only available during the second half of the 1980s, its general attitude towards the GDR is difficult to compare with the other British newspapers. Overall, the paper showed an interest in the GDR and regularly followed related events. However, due to its comparably late foundation, the newspaper was only

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<sup>117</sup> Hella Pick explained that the status meant she could easily enter East Berlin. In: London, Guardian News and Media Archive (GNMA), Interview with Hella Pick, OHP/65.

<sup>118</sup> Richardson, p. 107.

<sup>119</sup> Negrine, p. 53.

<sup>120</sup> Mick Temple, *The British Press* (Maidenhead: Open University Press, 2008), p. 88.

published during a time of generally growing interest in the developments in Eastern Europe and a more critical attitude to the GDR government. *The Independent* reported, amongst other things, on the growing opposition in the GDR during the late 1980s. In addition to its news coverage, the autonomy of the newspaper was meant to be expressed in the newspaper's ownership, as 30 different sources originally provided the funding to produce the paper.<sup>121</sup> The former *Times* journalist Patricia Clough reported for *The Independent* on the GDR. She was located in Bonn and travelled into the country when necessary. In particular, in the final months before the fall of the Wall, Eastern Europe editor Steve Crawshaw supported the coverage by writing regular articles about the on-going events.

### ***The Observer***

*The Observer* is the world's oldest Sunday newspaper and was founded in 1791. As several other British daily newspapers, it experienced changes of ownership during the 1970s and 80s. In 1976, *ARCO (Atlantic Richfield)* bought the newspaper and in 1981 *Lonrho* took it over. During the 1990s, it became part of the *Guardian Media Group*. The newspaper's political stance can be described as liberal with a pro-European outlook.<sup>122</sup> Overall, the newspaper frequently published articles critical of the GDR. Neal Ascherson was a constant name in *The Observer's* GDR coverage, and for 30 years, he reported from Bonn about the two German states. The experienced Berlin correspondent Leslie Colitt supported Ascherson during the early 1970s, whilst in later years, Tony Catteral and the stringer<sup>123</sup> Catherine Fields reported on the GDR from Bonn for *The Observer*.

### ***The Times***

Founded in 1785, *The Times* is the oldest national daily newspaper still in existence. It can be considered as a conservative middle-class newspaper and is often regarded as

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<sup>121</sup> Peters, p. 100.

<sup>122</sup> Eileen Kennedy and Laura Hills, *Sport, Media and Society* (Oxford: Berg, 2009), p. 17; Lehmann, p. 393; Kevin Williams, *Read All about It! A History of the British Newspaper* (London, New York: Routledge, 2009), p. 6.

<sup>123</sup> Stringers are freelance journalists who are not regularly hired by the newspaper and instead work only on individual request. However the press coverage of the GDR shows that several stringers worked over a longer period for the individual newspaper such as Gretel Spitzer for *The Guardian*.



the 'newspaper of the establishment' and the 'newspaper of record'.<sup>124</sup> At the same time, *The Times* has been and still remains a symbol of British quality journalism.<sup>125</sup> Its circulation figures reached 315,000 in 1975 and 487,000 ten years later.<sup>126</sup> Key elites, decision makers and scholarly communities all belong to its readership.<sup>127</sup>

The 1970s and 80s represented a period of significant change for the newspaper. The attempt to modernise the news production process led to an industrial dispute and eventually resulted in the closure of the newspaper for almost a year between 1978 and 1979. Two years later, Rupert Murdoch bought *The Times*. The Australian businessman displayed a very authoritative style in his management of the newspaper and soon, under his influence, it became even more conservative in its stance. As a 'Thatcherite paper', it strongly supported the policy of the then Conservative Prime Minister.<sup>128</sup> In contrast, before Murdoch's takeover, *The Times* had claimed a special kind of independence.

Despite, Murdoch's general lack of interest in Eastern Europe and the newspaper's later increasingly conservative bias, its coverage of the GDR was considerable and tended not to display an overtly negative attitude towards the country.<sup>129</sup> Together with *The Guardian*, it provided the majority of the information about the country for British readers. During the 1970s, journalists Richard Davy and Dan van der Vat contributed most of the GDR-related articles featured in *The Times*. While Davy wrote leading articles from London, van der Vat was located in Bonn. The Berlin citizen Gretel Spitzer supported *The Times* as a free-lance journalist until 1981. Her knowledge of the city and its people provided detailed coverage of the country.<sup>130</sup> During later years, Frank Johnson and Roger Boyes were responsible for coverage of the GDR.

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<sup>124</sup> John Eldridge, Jenny Kitzinger and Kevin Williams, *The Mass Media and Power in Britain* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p. 34; van Leeuwen, 'Critical Discourse Analysis', p. 286.

<sup>125</sup> Eldridge, Kitzinger and Williams, p. 34.

<sup>126</sup> Franklin, *Newszak and Newsmedia*, p. 88.

<sup>127</sup> Peterson, p. 143.

<sup>128</sup> Curran and Seaton, p. 74; Brian McNair, *News and Journalism in the UK*, 2nd edn (London, New York: Routledge, 1996), p. 138.

<sup>129</sup> Sally Bailey and Granville Williams, 'Memoirs Are Made of This: Journalists' Memoirs in the United Kingdom, 1945-1995', in *A Journalism Reader*, ed. by Michael Bromley and Tom O'Malley (London, New York: Routledge, 1997), p. 363.

<sup>130</sup> Interview with Dan van der Vat, 03/12/2010.

A final remark has to be made concerning the published memoirs of a number of journalists. Titles such as Dan van der Vat's *Freedom Was Never Like This, 1989 The Berlin Wall: My Part in Its Downfall* by Peter Millar or *The File* by Timothy Garton Ash are able, in connection with other material, to supplement important details and perspectives. However, if taken in isolation, they often tend to represent too much of a one-sided view of the GDR.<sup>131</sup> With reference to West German journalists, historian Hubertus Knabe has observed that they still looked nostalgically back on their time in the GDR. This sentiment can also be seen within publications by British journalists and they often support, intentionally or not, an image of the GDR as a country of walls and spies. That being said, the function of these books has to be considered. Their authors and publishers wanted to sell copies and provide an entertaining view of their past. In particular, the often unspectacular nature of everyday life would have had no space in such books. They do not aim to represent a balanced and detailed account of the country or the profession of a foreign journalist, but they also do not pretend to do this. Unfortunately, they do however represent almost the only published accounts about the British press so far. Therefore, they support the demand for a more detailed overall analysis. Hence, this chapter proposes to provide a more subtle and multifaceted overview than any one journalist could present.

## 1.2 General information about the interviews

For this analysis, I conducted nine interviews with journalists who were employed by a range of British quality newspapers and news agencies during the period 1972-89. Eight of these journalists reported directly or indirectly on the GDR. One interviewee, Manfred Pagel, was located in Bonn as one of seven *Reuters* correspondent (1962-1964) before the time in question. In 1971/72, he was the founding editor of the *Reuters* German-language service and chief correspondent in the Federal Republic. As European editor, Manfred Pagel had the overall responsibility for news coverage and local languages services from 1980 to 1987.<sup>132</sup> The interviews were conducted face-to-

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<sup>131</sup> Knabe, *Der diskrete Charme der DDR*, p. 101.

<sup>132</sup> Manfred Pagel was able to provide very useful background information from an editorial perspective about the general motivation to have an office in East Berlin, work with the East German authorities and also the staffing beyond the individual perspective of each journalist. In: Interview with Manfred Pagel, 28/01/2013.

face, via telephone and *Skype* in German and English, in order to accommodate the preference of the individual interviewee. Each interview lasted approximately one hour. Potential interviewees had been identified through their active participation in newspaper coverage. Furthermore, several journalists who participated in the project, and others who did not wish to be interviewed for a variety of reasons, referred to other journalists who could be of potential value for the project. As journalists often only reported for a limited number of years from a country before moving to another, a variety of journalists who reported on the GDR at different points during 20 years of interest have been included in order to capture the entire period and allow for conclusions to be drawn about potential changes during the two decades.

The interviews were semi-structured in order to identify patterns, but also to allow enough flexibility to interact with the individual participants and give space for additional questions and personal anecdotes. The interview questions focused on the journalists' working conditions especially when visiting the GDR. Special attention has also been paid to issues of information gathering to uncover potential barriers to their work. Furthermore, the journalists' attitude and also the general attitude in Britain during the 1970s and 80s from the journalists' perspective were discussed. Finally, it was asked if there had been other factors which could have influenced British news coverage on the GDR not covered by my list of questions.

Certain problems have to be addressed which generally relate to interviews as a research method, but also to these specific interviews. All data, independent of their origin, have to be regarded critically. Despite the combination of different sources and the inclusion of nine interviews, generalisations and patterns will be weighed against other available information. Moreover, it has to be taken into account that the events in question took place more than 20 years ago. Memories could have been influenced by historical developments after 1989, particularly the collapse of the Eastern bloc and the GDR. Therefore, potentially, a certain perception of the GDR could have been added retrospectively. Furthermore, other influences which could have affected the individual descriptions have to be considered such as on-going loyalties to the journalists' former employers, personal political attitudes and ageing, which could also affect memories.

### 1.3 The GDR's attitude towards Western journalists

Firstly, attention should be paid to the question of how East German authorities perceived Western and particularly British journalists, as this affected the degree of freedom - or rather the lack thereof – that journalists could enjoy during their work. The state's overall attitude towards journalists can be characterised as ambivalent - a mixture of distrust, rejection and importance. Foremost, it has to be stressed that in comparison to articles published by the West German press, the GDR authorities were far less interested in the remaining Western press and its work. While the West German press was able to reach the East Germans via West German television and radio,<sup>133</sup> British newspapers had no direct influence on the country and its citizens. As early as the mid-1960s, the State Security Service had a systematic central analysis unit for West German journalists. In contrast, non-German foreign press did not receive similar attention.<sup>134</sup> However, despite the overall lower significance of British journalists and their media coverage of the GDR authorities, they were still regularly scrutinised.

In particular, the Ministry of State Security displayed a highly negative, even hostile, attitude towards Western journalists. This standpoint was based on its overall view that the 'imperialist mass media' had only two main functions: internal intellectual-political manipulation and external ideological influence.<sup>135</sup> It identified journalists as enemies of the state and of Socialism in general, and regarded their offices and apartments as legalised enemy infiltration points.<sup>136</sup> Furthermore, they recognised Western journalists' 'feindliche Einstellung'.<sup>137</sup> According to the State Security, this was typical for the majority of journalists from the Federal Republic, the USA and Great Britain.<sup>138</sup> It noted: 'Korrespondenten bürgerlicher Massenmedien spielen im Rahmen der subversive Aktivitäten gegen die DDR [...] eine wichtige und [...]

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<sup>133</sup> Chmel, p. 419.

<sup>134</sup> Rudolf Turber, 'Die Auswertung der westlichen Medien im MfS', *Deutschland Archiv*, 25.3 (1992), pp. 249f.

<sup>135</sup> Archiv des Bundesbeauftragten für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (BStU), MfS, JHS, nr. 21949, p. 71.

<sup>136</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 115, 158, 252.

<sup>137</sup> Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv (SAPMO-BArch) DY 30 IV 2/2.040/8, p. 84.

<sup>138</sup> BStU, MfS, JHS, nr. 21949, p. 149.

spezifische Rolle. Sie sind legalisierte, mobile Späher [...].<sup>139</sup> The State Security also accused the journalists of creating incidents and provocations with their 'defamatory' press coverage.<sup>140</sup> Moreover, it often suspected a very close connection between the mass media and foreign intelligence services.<sup>141</sup>

On the other hand, with the growing international recognition of the GDR following the Basic Treaty between the Federal Republic and the GDR, the East German government acknowledged the importance of the Western press in its attempt to increase the state's profile abroad, and intended to use it as proof of the state's new openness.<sup>142</sup> Hella Pick ironically summarised the East German government's intentions in the following way: 'The East German government offered visas and accreditation to Western correspondents in order to show how wonderful they were in implementing the Helsinki Declaration [...].'<sup>143</sup> The following East German State Security document stressed the significance of the foreign press: 'die Akkreditierung imperialistischer Publikationsorgane und ihrer Korrespondenten [...] nimmt in Abhängigkeit von der jeweils konkreten politischen Lage einen festen und bedeutsamen Platz im Gesamtsystem der Beziehungen zwischen der DDR und kapitalistischen Staaten ein, ist als Element der Entspannung unverzichtbarer Bestandteil einer offensiven Außenpolitik.'<sup>144</sup> Additionally, it recognised the mass media's ability to influence governmental decisions and actions. Moreover, it hoped that the media would even promote long-term and stable foreign trade relations.<sup>145</sup> The significance of this can also be recognised in the fact that important issues regarding the foreign press were perceived as 'Chefsache' and often dealt with by Secretary General Erich Honecker himself.<sup>146</sup> The East German leader received regular information and actively influenced decisions.<sup>147</sup> Officially, the East German department of 'Journalistic Relations' (Journalistische Beziehungen) in the Ministry for

<sup>139</sup> BStU, MfS, JHS, nr. 21949, p. 158.

<sup>140</sup> Ibid, p. 147.

<sup>141</sup> Ibid, p. 108; BStU, MfS, HA II, nr. 23830, p. 12; BStU, MfS, ZOS, nr. 766, p. 8.

<sup>142</sup> Holzweißig, *Klassenfeinde und 'Entspannungsfreunde'*, p. 24.

<sup>143</sup> GNMA, Interview with Hella Pick, OHP/65.

<sup>144</sup> BStU, MfS, JHS, nr. 21949, p. 33.

<sup>145</sup> Ibid, p. 41.

<sup>146</sup> Peter Jochen Winters, 'West-Korrespondenten im Visier des Ministeriums für Staatssicherheit der DDR', *Deutschland Archiv*, 32.5 (1999), p. 804.

<sup>147</sup> SAPMO-BArch DY 30 IV 2/2.037 53, pp. 104ff; SAPMO-BArch DY 30 IV/2/2. 037 57, pp. 141-143; SAPMO-BArch DY 30/2/2. 037 58, p. 21. Additionally, several reports contain Honecker's initials, thus showing his constant awareness of the situation, for example: SAPMO-BArch DY 30 IV 2/2.037 56, pp. 26ff.

Foreign Affairs was responsible for all matters concerning the foreign press. However, nearly all decisions were made by the Department of Agitation and Propaganda of the Central Committee.

The state's view of the foreign press as a potential way of promoting a positive East German image also affected journalists themselves. Several journalists stated that they had been aware of their position and value for the government and that this had implications for their work. In particular, attempts to intimidate the journalists were therefore less successful. The former *Reuters* correspondent Mark Brayne reflected that he experienced better working conditions than West German journalists and explained this with reference to the special relationship between the two German states and the GDR's desire for international acceptance: 'The GDR wanted to be taken seriously by the whole world [...]. Thus, to throw out *Reuters* would get them into trouble internationally whereas their relationship with West Germany was a kind of family feud, it was an argument between brothers in the house, whereas I was from outside the house.'<sup>148</sup> Patricia Clough (*The Independent* and *The Times*) also demonstrated awareness of the protected position of Western journalists: 'If I had been arrested there would have been an almighty great fuss, or any western journalist, not just me [...].'<sup>149</sup> *The Guardian* journalist Michael Simmons expressed the same belief, and even suggested that 'They [the East German authorities] were also frightened for themselves - if they made a mistake with me [...] then obviously they would be in trouble.'<sup>150</sup>

Despite this recognition of the role journalists could potentially play to promote the GDR abroad, Western journalists were nonetheless predominantly perceived of as dangerous by the East German authorities. Therefore, foreign journalists were subjected to intensive control by State Security and other GDR authorities, as will be described later in this chapter. Moreover, legal regulations for foreign journalists in the GDR underlined the state's negative attitude and mistrust towards them, as the law clearly aimed to strictly control the foreign press and restricted any free reporting to a minimum. The following section will further outline legislation in this respect.

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<sup>148</sup> Interview with Mark Brayne, 15/01/2011.

<sup>149</sup> Interview with Patricia Clough, 21/12/2010.

<sup>150</sup> Interview with Michael Simmons, 23/02/2011.

### 1.3.1 Legal framework

East German authorities ensured that foreign journalists had to endure tight regulations when they entered the GDR in the 1970s and 80s. Laws concerning the foreign press created an important framework which affected the journalists and their work. From 21 February 1973 onwards, an edict in combination with the first implementation of the edict formed the legal foundation for all foreign journalists, both permanent and temporary.<sup>151</sup> The GDR's attempts to control the foreign press were already noticeable in both documents – not surprisingly, as both were compiled with the active participation of the GDR State Security Service.<sup>152</sup> Along with regulations concerning the accreditation of journalists and the process of setting up media offices, it demanded that non-permanent journalists had to seek official approval for all activities from the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Moreover, it requested from the journalists: 'Verleumdungen oder Diffamierungen der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, ihrer staatlichen Organe und ihrer führenden Persönlichkeiten [...] zu unterlassen [und] wahrheitsgetreu, sachbezogen und korrekt zu berichten sowie keine böswilligen Verfälschungen von Tatsachen zuzulassen.'<sup>153</sup> With these imprecise phrasings, the government tried to limit the journalists' right to free expression and maintained its right to censor unfavourable press coverage. In 1979, the GDR replaced the previous rule by a new, even more restrictive version. While the earlier version requested permanent journalists to inform the ministry if they intended to work outside the capital, East Berlin, they now had to register at least 24 hours in advance of every trip. Moreover, journalists had to seek permission for any kind of interview or survey. Whilst this final point already inhibited contact between East German citizens and foreign journalists, the newly adapted criminal code caused even more severe difficulties. From this point on, contact between foreign journalists and East Germans could be regarded as unlawful and could be punished with up to five

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<sup>151</sup> Verordnung über die Tätigkeit von Publikationsorganen anderer Staaten und deren Korrespondenten in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik vom 21. Februar 1973; Erste Durchführungsbestimmung zur Verordnung über die Tätigkeit von Publikationsorganen anderer Staaten und deren Korrespondenten in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik vom 21. Februar 1973.

<sup>152</sup> BStU, MfS, JHS, nr. 21949, p. 422; Winters, 'West-Korrespondenten im Visier des Ministeriums für Staatssicherheit der DDR', p. 806.

<sup>153</sup> Verordnung über die Tätigkeit von Publikationsorganen anderer Staaten und deren Korrespondenten in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik vom 21. Februar 1973, §5.

years in jail.<sup>154</sup> A letter written by the *International Federation of Journalists* indicated the consequences these new regulations would have on the journalists. The new restriction was, as the Federation pointed out, in stark contrast to the Helsinki Declaration. It finished with the request to abandon the new regulations as it would not allow 'eine freie Berichterstattung in Ihrem Land [...]'.<sup>155</sup>

#### 1.4 Working routine and conditions

The following section will point out the typical working conditions and routines British journalists experienced in the GDR, and will also reflect upon differences between individual journalists. Moreover, it will highlight how the environment affected the press coverage. With the exception of *The Guardian*, no other mainstream quality British newspaper deployed a permanent correspondent to the GDR. One reason for this decision was the high cost incurred in maintaining a press office in East Berlin. Jean-Paul Picaper explained that in 1974, prices in the East German capital were only comparable to those in Tokyo.<sup>156</sup> Instead, newspapers generally covered events in the GDR with the help of journalists who were located in the Federal Republic or Great Britain, stringers, and through news agencies' reports. With the exception of the *Reuters* correspondents, the journalists interviewed as part of this study lived variously in Bonn, West Berlin, Frankfurt and London whilst reporting on the GDR. Even *The Guardian's* permanent correspondent was located in West Berlin, despite his status. Occasionally, journalists would enter the GDR to cover a newsworthy event or to investigate a particular topic. The former *The Times* and *The Guardian* journalist Dan van der Vat stated that he travelled to the GDR, on average, once every six months.<sup>157</sup> Michael Simmons entered the country 'once every couple of months and for main events'.<sup>158</sup>

The interviews have shown that *Reuters* journalists, due to their permanent residence in East Berlin, were often able to establish a much closer relationship with the country and its citizens than newspaper journalists. Mark Brayne, for example,

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<sup>154</sup> Strafgesetzbuch der DDR in der Fassung des 3. Strafrechtsänderungsgesetzes vom 28. Juni 1979, §219, Ungesetzliche Verbindungsaufnahme.

<sup>155</sup> Bundesarchiv (BArch) DC 20/4318, p. 9.

<sup>156</sup> Jean-Paul Picaper, 'Westliche Korrespondenten in der DDR', *Deutschland Archiv*, 7.12 (1974), p. 1288.

<sup>157</sup> Interview with Dan van der Vat.

<sup>158</sup> Interview with Michael Simmons.



talked about his time as a member of an East Berlin choir, where he performed and 'went on *Chorfahrten*', and that even after having moved to the Western part of the city he continued to sing with them.<sup>159</sup> His successor, Paul Bolding, described a similar integration into East German society. He stated that he was welcomed to the local *Stammtisch* at the *Wörtereck* by the locals.<sup>160</sup> Peter Millar even described the GDR as 'home'.<sup>161</sup> Brayne argued that his high level of integration was very uncommon even for West German journalists who often actually lived in the Western part of Berlin. Such integration certainly could not have been achieved through irregular visits. Indeed, the state also tried to control the 'integration' of the *Reuters* journalists within East German communities through regular observation and surveillance by their Security Service. However, these journalists were still able to experience the East German way of life to a much greater extent than their non-permanent counterparts. Therefore, it has to be asked if this also brought an advantage in terms of knowledge and understanding.

Along with the greater difficulties faced in establishing contacts, most British journalists also faced a number of other difficulties which influenced their reporting. Certain topics were always taboo and any requests which involved topics such as security, the military, education, relations to Moscow and also surveys, talks and interviews with leading politicians would certainly be rejected.<sup>162</sup> During their visits to East Berlin, British journalists were required to stay in one of the hard-currency hotels, particularly the *Palast Hotel*. Thereby, it was easier to observe and control the journalists and at the same time, the GDR was able to limit contacts between East Germans and the Western press.<sup>163</sup> Tony Catterall described an incident upon entering the bar of the *Palast Hotel* with a friend who reminded him: 'Just one thing to remember, every woman here is at least a freelance Stasi agent.' Tony Catterall responded during the interview that he knew, simply 'because one did - the Sinus Bar

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<sup>159</sup> Interview with Mark Brayne.

<sup>160</sup> Interview with Paul Bolding, 06/05/2011.

<sup>161</sup> Millar, *1989 The Wall*, p. 166.

<sup>162</sup> Rolf Muth, 'Alltag zwischen den Fronten', in *Drinnen vor der Tür*, ed. by Eberhard Grashoff and Rolf Muth (Berlin: Edition Ost, 2000), p. 82; Gerhard Rein, 'Diamonds are Girls Best Friends oder der Korrespondenten lieben Dissidenten', in *Macht Ohnmacht Gegenmacht: Grundfragen zur politischen Gegnerschaft in der DDR*, ed. by Ehrhardt Neubert and Bernd Eisenfeld (Bremen: Edition Temmen, 2001), p. 213.

<sup>163</sup> Simmons, *The Unloved Country*, p. 41.

was notorious.<sup>164</sup> During another British journalist's stay in the *Palast Hotel*, the State Security Service ordered 'Maßnahmen A und B im Hotelzimmer' which meant the room's telephone was wiretapped and there were microphones listening in to all of the conversations.<sup>165</sup> Along with the four hard-currency hotels, the State Security also kept the journalists under close surveillance during stays in other hotels and even on camp sites throughout in the country.<sup>166</sup> To ensure the same level of control and observation outside of these facilities, and also for permanent journalists, foreign journalists and foreign press offices had to hire staff such as drivers, interpreters and secretaries via the *Dienstleistungsamt für ausländische Vertretungen (DAV)*, a subordinate office of the Foreign Ministry, which afforded the Ministry an important means of control.<sup>167</sup> Several of the staff provided by the *DAV* and employees within the Foreign Ministry also acted as unofficial informants for the Security Service to guarantee overall control.<sup>168</sup> Moreover, the Foreign Ministry ensured that a minder, a so-called *Fachredakteur*, would be appointed to every journalistic project. This minder often functioned as an interpreter for the foreign journalists<sup>169</sup>, and was also a political official with clear political instructions. His/her responsibility involved exerting influence over the journalists' work.<sup>170</sup> One of the duties would be to inform the relevant authorities in the *International Press Centre (Internationales Pressezentrum, IPZ)* of any unauthorised contact between journalists and East German citizens.<sup>171</sup> Michael Simmons explained that the East German authorities would prevent regular cooperation between a particular journalist and minder to ensure that the relationship between the two of them would remain strictly professional and therefore, would assure the state's employees' loyalty to the GDR.<sup>172</sup>

In 1977, the *International Press Centre* opened in East Berlin. It provided offices for foreign journalists and hosted regular press conferences. A plan by the 'Press Department' of the Foreign Ministry explained the purpose of the facilities in the

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<sup>164</sup> Interview with Tony Catterall, 13/04/2011.

<sup>165</sup> BStU, MfS HA II / 13, nr. 543, p. 58.

<sup>166</sup> BStU, MfS, JHS, nr. 21949, p. 382.

<sup>167</sup> Ingrid Muth, *Die DDR-Außenpolitik 1949-1972: Inhalte, Strukturen, Mechanismen*, 2nd edn (Berlin: Links, 2001), p. 126.

<sup>168</sup> BStU, MfS, JHS, nr. 21949, pp. 252ff; BStU, MfS, HA II, nr. 23830, p. 30.

<sup>169</sup> BStU, MfS, BV Berlin, Abt. II, nr. 603, p. 95.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 97.

<sup>171</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 96.

<sup>172</sup> Interview with Michael Simmons.

following way: 'Aufgabe des Hauses für Journalistische Dienstleistungen ist es, mit dazu beizutragen, auf die ständig oder zeitweilig in der DDR tätigen Vertreter ausländischer Massenmedien maximal Einfluss zu nehmen'.<sup>173</sup> To fulfil this task, a high number of unofficial informants watched the journalists' every step. In addition to the head of the service centre, four other leading employees who had regular contact with foreign journalists were unofficial informants.<sup>174</sup> Additionally, the department for Journalistic Relations in the Foreign Ministry included several unofficial informants<sup>175</sup> and the head of the travel organisation *Panorama DDR* also reported to the State Security.<sup>176</sup>

In contrast to permanent correspondents who held a so-called *Grenzempfehlung* and were therefore allowed to enter and leave the country at any time, other Western journalists needed an accreditation. All journalistic projects by these non-permanent journalists had to be approved by the East German authorities.<sup>177</sup> Patricia Clough described the usual procedure as follows: 'One would go to West Berlin and then cross at Checkpoint Charlie or Friedrichstraße and then take up residence in a hotel and ring up the [...] Außenministerium [...], their press office there, and apply for [...] accreditation for a few days and they would give it to you.'<sup>178</sup> In the case of a rejection, the journalist would not have been able to work officially during his/her stay in East Berlin. The following example on the role of Berlin shows how the restrictions influenced press coverage.

#### **1.4.1 Consequences of East German restrictions: Berlin was Mordor<sup>179</sup>**

During the 1970s in particular, a strong focus on East Berlin can be found in the British press which often resulted in the perception that nothing existed in the GDR beyond its capital. The journalist Michael Simmons confirmed that most people stayed in Berlin as it was the centre.<sup>180</sup> However, the number of newsworthy events taking place

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<sup>173</sup> Grashoff and Muth, p. 19.

<sup>174</sup> Chmel, p. 77; Hanna Labrenz-Weiß, 'Bearbeitung von Geheimdiensten, Korrespondenten und anderen "feindlichen Zentren": Die Hauptabteilung II', in *West-Arbeit des MfS: Das Zusammenspiel von 'Aufklärung' und 'Abwehr'*, ed. by Hubertus Knabe (Berlin: Links Verlag, 1999), p. 203.

<sup>175</sup> Chmel, p. 77.

<sup>176</sup> Knabe, *Der diskrete Charme der DDR*, p. 172.

<sup>177</sup> Verordnung über die Tätigkeit von Publikationsorganen anderer Staaten und deren Korrespondenten in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik vom 21. Februar 1973, §4 Abs. 1.

<sup>178</sup> Interview with Patricia Clough.

<sup>179</sup> Millar, *1989 The Wall*, p. 28.

<sup>180</sup> Interview with Michael Simmons.

in East Berlin cannot be considered as the only cause for this extreme concentration. East German state regulations for foreign journalists also contributed strongly to this limited geographic focus. Several journalists referred to difficulties they experienced when attempting to report from other parts of the GDR. It was far easier to just enter East Berlin with a day pass and journalists made use of this opportunity.<sup>181</sup> Dan van der Vat added: 'You could never get an instant visa to cover an event outside the divided city or be free to go to the GDR.'<sup>182</sup> Moreover, with reference to East Berlin, he explained: 'They couldn't keep me out of there.'<sup>183</sup> He even suggested that during the 1970s, the GDR beyond East Berlin was mostly 'Germania incognita'.<sup>184</sup> When Michael Simmons returned from an unauthorised trip to Weimar, the authorities asked him why he did not tell them that he was going there. This incident shows that this kind of trips was undesirable and also connected with further problems for the journalists. Therefore, it is hardly surprising that Western journalists chose to stay in the capital.

Aside from these restrictions, it has to be asked if the journalists themselves also contributed to the foregrounding of East Berlin. In one recollection, Patricia Clough suggested that '[...] until the very end, just before the *Wende*, one didn't tend to go very much anywhere in East Germany, largely because there wasn't any reason to, there wasn't very much that one could write about but towards the end of course one travelled an awful lot.'<sup>185</sup> Others, such as the former *Observer* and *BBC* journalist Tony Catterall also recollected that they never even tried to go to any part of the GDR except Berlin.<sup>186</sup> Along with the impression that the most interesting events only ever happened in the capital, the city had a great appeal and fascination for journalists as Peter Millar's comparison with the Tolkien's legendary *Mordor* shows. Manfred Pagel's encouragement for his fellow journalists 'über den Tellerrand zu gucken', to leave the office and travel around, indicates a realisation of this focus and some journalists' limited interest in anywhere beyond East Berlin.<sup>187</sup> During the 1980s, a shift towards a stronger interest in developments outside the capital can be detected. This can, on the one hand, be explained by journalists' increasing capability to bypass the restrictions,

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<sup>181</sup> Interview with Manfred Pagel.

<sup>182</sup> van der Vat, *Freedom Was Never like This*, p. 5.

<sup>183</sup> Interview with Dan van der Vat.

<sup>184</sup> van der Vat, *Freedom Was Never like This*, p. 5.

<sup>185</sup> Interview with Patricia Clough.

<sup>186</sup> Interview with Tony Catterall.

<sup>187</sup> Interview with Manfred Pagel.

yet on the other hand it hints at a growing awareness of the previously limited coverage, as Manfred Pagel's statement suggests. Overall, this example has shown that the East German authorities were able to influence British journalists to a certain degree in their work; however, other factors must also be taken into account. The following section will investigate the GDR's influence on British journalists in more detail and show their abilities and limitations in this regard.

## 1.5 Between influence, manipulation and surveillance

### 1.5.1 Foreign journalists and the State Security: 'It was just like *Das Leben der Anderen*.'<sup>188</sup>

*'16.07 hours – "246816" was taken up for observation after leaving the Bahnhof Friedrichstrasse frontier crossing. The person to be observed went to the newspaper stand in the upper station concourse and bought a Freie Welt, a Neues Deutschland and a Berliner Zeitung.'* The observation continued for several hours and finished at 23.55 hours.<sup>189</sup>

From Timothy Garton Ash's Stasi file

Timothy Garton Ash was not the only journalist who caught the attention of the East German State Security Service. The so-called Stasi (short for Ministerium für Staatssicherheit/Ministry of State Security) was generally interested in Western journalists. Mark Brayne even compared his experience in the GDR with the events seen in the popular 2006 movie *Das Leben der Anderen* which depicts the surveillance and control of East German artists by the State Security Service. This section will show several examples which confirm the Security Service's interest in Western journalists. However, it will also suggest that the comparison with the movie, in particular the level of interference by the State Security into the lives of East Germans, cannot really be applied to foreign journalists working for British newspapers and news agencies.

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<sup>188</sup> Interview with Mark Brayne.

<sup>189</sup> Timothy Garton Ash published parts of his Stasi file. The book contains an around the clock surveillance protocol which shows impressively the State Security's interest in his person and the tight surveillance of the British journalist and researcher. In: Garton Ash, *The File*, pp. 6ff.

Moreover, it will be shown that the State Security did not represent the biggest obstacle for Western journalists in the GDR.

In March 1974, in response to the growing number of foreign journalists in the country, the State Security Service issued order 17/74 which dealt with the question of how to deal with Western journalists.<sup>190</sup> It opened files on all Western journalists and often monitored them in a very detailed manner.<sup>191</sup> Together with the focus on potential violations against existing laws, these reports also contained extensive information regarding the journalists' professional and private lives. A research paper by the State Security's own university reveals that the ministry was observing in some cases up to 70 % of all known contacts between Western journalists and East German citizens.<sup>192</sup> The journalist Michael Simmons recounted an incident which demonstrates the extent to which foreign journalists were surrounded by the State Security. He had once asked one of his former interpreters if he had worked for the Stasi. The former interpreter answered: 'Of course, everybody did.'<sup>193</sup> Along with the 'army of part time spies', as Garton Ash called the unofficial informers,<sup>194</sup> and secret observation, total control was to have been achieved by the searching of flats, the close monitoring of border traffic, mail and telephone surveillance.<sup>195</sup> A report by the State Security's main department II explains the motivation for these close investigations: 'Die Vorgänge in der Zionskirche [...] und darüber hinaus in Dresden und Leipzig zeigen, daß die Wirksamkeit innerer Feinde wesentlich abhängig ist von der Art und dem Umfang ihrer Zusammenarbeit mit Korrespondenten und Journalisten sowie von der gezielten hetzerischen Publizierungen in westlichen Massenmedien.'<sup>196</sup> Unsurprisingly, the State Security Service actively tried to restrict contact between foreign journalists and East German citizens.<sup>197</sup>

Most of the former journalists I have interviewed talked about the overall surveillance they had encountered. In 1999, former *Reuters* journalist Mark Brayne

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<sup>190</sup> Befehl 17/74 zur politisch-operativen Sicherung der in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik akkreditierten Publikationsorgane anderer Staaten, deren ständigen Korrespondenten sowie von Reise-Korrespondenten aus anderen Staaten vom 12.8.1974, in BStU, ZA, DSt 100802.

<sup>191</sup> Interview with Mark Brayne.

<sup>192</sup> BStU, MfS, JHS, nr. 21949, p. 140.

<sup>193</sup> Interview with Michael Simmons.

<sup>194</sup> Timothy Garton Ash, *'Und willst du nicht mein Bruder sein...': Die DDR heute* (Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1981), p. 20.

<sup>195</sup> BStU, MfS, JHS, nr. 21949, p. 249.

<sup>196</sup> BStU, MfS, ZAIG, nr. 15694, p. 6.

<sup>197</sup> BStU, MfS, JHS, nr. 21949, p. 176.

discovered that the State Security had meticulously written down every detail about his time in the GDR, totalling 2573 pages.<sup>198</sup> After the fall of the Wall, suspicions that his office had been bugged were confirmed when he found 29 microphones, some even in the bedroom.<sup>199</sup> Other *Reuters* journalists confirmed the extensive observation (a camera across the road and the flat next to the office occupied by the State Security).<sup>200</sup> The Stasi files contained a detailed layout of the news agency's office in Schönhauser Allee in Berlin which had the alias *Insel*.<sup>201</sup> Peter Millar noted that 'for up to ten days at a time, teams of watchers would follow us from before dawn to long after dusk.'<sup>202</sup> The Stasi file of one particular British journalist contained, for example, detailed information about close personal meetings with East Germans and foreigners, provided information about their common activities and even speculation about the journalist's future plans.<sup>203</sup> Sometimes, the State Security Service's surveillance did not even stop when a journalist left the country, but rather, as in one case, tried to secure continued monitoring during a trip into the neighbouring ČSSR.<sup>204</sup> After accessing his file, Peter Millar discovered that he even 'inherited' some unofficial informants from his predecessor. Other journalists experienced more intrusive and obvious interference from the Stasi. Patricia Clough, for example, remembers, 'Several times I was spoken to in the streets and I realised afterwards that was Stasi people trying to sort of destabilise me.'<sup>205</sup>

Despite Mark Brayne's comparison to the movie *Das Leben der Anderen* and the apparent similarities between its representation of life in the GDR and his own experience, the life and work of British journalists were not really comparable to those of the characters in the film. Journalists did experience a great deal of observation from the Security Service; however, this represented no real personal threat, as both their Stasi files and their own statements confirm. Manfred Pagel's recollection that

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<sup>198</sup> 'What the Stasi knew on our man', in *BBC news*  
[http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/from\\_our\\_own\\_correspondent/536598.stm](http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/programmes/from_our_own_correspondent/536598.stm) [accessed 24/06/2013].

<sup>199</sup> Millar, *1989 The Wall*, p. 103; Mark Brayne also talked about it. In: Interview with Mark Brayne.

<sup>200</sup> Interview with Paul Bolding; Interview with Mark Brayne; Interview with Manfred Pagel.

<sup>201</sup> BStU, MfS, HA II / 13, nr. 1324, pp. 11, 14.

<sup>202</sup> Millar, *1989 The Wall*, p. 107. Mark Brayne also confirmed that he was closely followed. In: Interview with Mark Brayne. Michael Simmons reflected in his book how he was followed during a visit in Erfurt. In: Simmons, *The Unloved Country*, p.18.

<sup>203</sup> BStU, MfS, HA II, nr. 30138, p. 13.

<sup>204</sup> BStU, MfS, AP, nr. 5229/89, p. 3.

<sup>205</sup> Interview with Patricia Clough.

journalists sometimes even made fun of the constant observation is a further sign that the Stasi did not pose a real threat to them.<sup>206</sup> Nevertheless, the Security Service was able to indirectly affect the way journalists reported; it also manipulated and intimidated sources and even, as demonstrated previously, influenced the legislation for journalists in the GDR. Several journalists, for example, felt the consequences of the East German legislation and the constant observation of the State Security surveillance and recalled difficulties in making any contact with 'normal people'.<sup>207</sup> Patricia Clough remembered that 'it was very, very difficult even to ask the way sometimes in East Berlin. [...] People would [...] pretend they did not know the name of the street for fear of talking to what was obviously a westerner.'<sup>208</sup> East German citizens suspected that Western journalists were under constant surveillance and therefore avoided them for their own safety.<sup>209</sup> On the contrary, other journalists interviewed spoke about their close contacts and even friendships in East Germany. Paul Bolding also described the East German citizens as 'very warm, very willing to let me into their lives and their homes.'<sup>210</sup> However, especially after the introduction of the new regulations in 1979, to be associated with Western journalists was a 'heikle Sache'<sup>211</sup> and could in certain cases cause reprisals for the East Germans involved. Paul Bolding reflected on the situation, stating that he 'was aware of that [restriction for East German citizens to talk to Western journalists] and I think it reflected itself in a general feeling that one had to be very careful on both sides. Mostly it was the East Germans I saw and dealt with who I was more worried about.'<sup>212</sup> The concern for their East German information sources was not unjustified as a report by the State Security's main department XX demonstrated. Under the headline 'Über die Ergebnisse der Überprüfung zu einem Artikel der britischen Zeitung *Guardian* [...]', the report stated that immediately after the article became known, the main department XX initiated an investigation which resulted in the State Security obtaining further

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<sup>206</sup> Interview with Manfred Pagel.

<sup>207</sup> Interview with Patricia Clough.

<sup>208</sup> Ibid.

<sup>209</sup> Joachim Krause, 'Westliche Journalisten in den Staaten des Ostblocks: Eine Bilanz zwei Jahre nach Helsinki', *das parlament*, 40 (1977), p. 28.

<sup>210</sup> Interview with Paul Bolding.

<sup>211</sup> Manfred Pagel talked about contacts between members of the opposition and *Reuters* journalists and stressed how precarious a meeting in the *Reuters* office could have been, particularly for the East Germans as the office was under constant surveillance. In: Interview with Manfred Pagel.

<sup>212</sup> Interview with Paul Bolding.



details, including the names of the East German citizens involved.<sup>213</sup> The Stasi regularly checked East Germans who came into contact with Western journalists, as the following report shows: ‘Am 12.05.1987 stellte ich um 9.50 Uhr vor dem Eingang zum Reuter-Büro drei männliche Personen fest, die offensichtlich auf das Eintreffen des Korrespondenten der Nachrichtenagentur warteten. Nach Vorlage entsprechenden Bildmaterials konnte durch Unterzeichner eine dieser Personen als [name blacked out] identifiziert werden.’<sup>214</sup>

The following section will further demonstrate the journalists’ awareness of the State Security and their lack of ability to intimidate them. However, it will also show that although the Stasi did not represent a real threat to them, it was able to affect British journalists to a certain degree. It will further show that journalists were often not fully aware of the Stasi’s indirect influence on them.

### 1.5.2 Working with and around restrictions

Several journalists commented on their awareness of the constant presence of the state authorities, with one stating that ‘There was always the feeling that somebody else might be listening.’<sup>215</sup> Peter Millar confirmed that it was ‘a given’ that they were spied on.<sup>216</sup> Other journalists also referred to state employees and their suspicion that these employees had an official order to monitor the journalists and were working for the State Security Service.<sup>217</sup> All of the journalists interviewed insisted that they had at least been partly aware of the restrictions and the constant surveillance. Their memories, along with official files show that they learned, to an extent, to work with and around them. Several journalists confirmed that they ‘knew that there were restrictions and you just worked with them or if you really had to [...] people worked around them.’<sup>218</sup> Paul Bolding remembered that ‘we largely ignored the rule [seeking permission for interviews, reportages] we were meant to follow.’<sup>219</sup> Dan van der Vat also confirmed that he ‘quite often’ ignored the official guidelines and talked to

<sup>213</sup> BStU, MfS, HA XX / AKG, nr. 6846, pp. 74 ff.

<sup>214</sup> BStU, MfS HA II / 13, nr. 286, p. 106.

<sup>215</sup> Interview with Michael Simmons.

<sup>216</sup> Millar, *1989 The Wall*, p. 46; others confirmed this: Interview with Tony Catterall; Interview with Mark Brayne; Interview with Michael Simmons.

<sup>217</sup> Interview with Manfred Pagel; Interview with Mark Brayne; Interview with Michael Simmons; Millar, *1989 The Wall*, p. VII.

<sup>218</sup> Interview with Tony Catterall.

<sup>219</sup> Interview with Paul Bolding.

someone he was not supposed to talk to.<sup>220</sup> The state authorities noted several strategies employed by foreign journalists to bypass official and unofficial restrictions. The journalists, for example, quite often refrained from seeking official permission or applied for such permission at very short notice. Moreover, they would provide false or incomplete information when applying for permission which led to a lack of information about the entire trip and its aim.<sup>221</sup> To avoid any attention by the authorities, journalists travelled under the pretext of visiting relatives, friends or just sightseeing and used the opportunity to research a topic for a later article.<sup>222</sup> The State Security also realised that foreign journalists generally assumed that interview partners who had been chosen by the MfAA had been rehearsed by the authorities. In response to the Orwellian state, several journalists referred to the habit of 'going for a walk' in order to reduce the risk of being overheard.<sup>223</sup> Manfred Pagel explained that if one wanted to have a serious conversation in the East, one went for a walk.<sup>224</sup> Due to constant surveillance in their offices, correspondents met dissidents either in secret locations or at parties where chatting guests and music provided background 'noise' for hidden microphones.<sup>225</sup> Paul Bolding recounted the following incident from his time in East Berlin: '[...] in the East Berlin office one or two people who would kind of drop in and say, oh, I want to read your copy of *Der Spiegel* or *Die Welt* and these would be people who were kind of checking up on us. [...] Equally one could chat to them and sometimes they would have seen a text of a speech that hadn't been published or they would leak you something or pretend to leak you something. I think it was all quite controlled. But this was an interesting interaction.'<sup>226</sup> This shows that journalists were aware of the surveillance and even occasionally tried to use it to their advantage.

Thus, journalists would ideally attempt to by-pass the East German authorities. However, despite their awareness, they were subjected to restricted working conditions and often unable to work outside the system. Patricia Clough's encounter with East German lawyer Wolfgang Schnur illustrates that the State Security was still

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<sup>220</sup> Interview with Dan van der Vat.

<sup>221</sup> BStU, MfS, BV Berlin, Abt. II, nr. 603, p. 119.

<sup>222</sup> BStU, MfS, HA II, nr. 23830, p.16.

<sup>223</sup> Interview with Paul Bolding; Interview with Michael Simmons.

<sup>224</sup> Interview with Manfred Pagel.

<sup>225</sup> Interview with Mark Brayne, Interview with Manfred Pagel.

<sup>226</sup> Interview with Paul Bolding.

able to affect journalists' work.<sup>227</sup> Due to Schnur's work with conscientious objectors and citizens who had applied to leave the country, he was a highly desirable person to interview and, as the journalist confirmed, a good conversationalist. However, as became known later, Schnur was also an unofficial informant. Therefore, in addition to reporting on meetings with journalists, he would most likely not have told them anything deviating from the official line. His value as an interviewee and source is therefore more than questionable.

Overall, it is doubtful that journalists were able to capture the extent of the State Security work. This is also reflected in Paul Bolding's remark: 'I think I was quite naive in assuming that there would just be too much effort to monitor everything.'<sup>228</sup> Most journalists did not feel affected by the surveillance and assumed their knowledge about the Stasi would help them to continue with their profession without constraints. However, several examples have already shown that the Stasi managed to indirectly restrict foreign journalists. That said, the following section will show that other problems in the GDR affected the journalists to a much greater extent than the State Security Service.

## **1.6 'Gathering information in Eastern Europe was never easy.'**<sup>229</sup>

In both the conducted interviews and written memoirs, journalists have all commented on the difficulties they faced in gathering useful information and the resentment this provoked towards the authorities. Patricia Clough describes the difficulties regarding her work in the GDR as follows: 'East Germany was not an easy country to cover; you didn't get to know what's going on.'<sup>230</sup> The *Reuters* journalist Mark Brayne compared political reporting to 'tea leaf reading' and considered the attempt to ring a ministry as 'completely pointless'.<sup>231</sup> Michael Simmons also confirmed that it was hard to gain essential facts. Selected statistics were given

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<sup>227</sup> Interview with Patricia Clough.

<sup>228</sup> Interview with Paul Bolding.

<sup>229</sup> London, Guardian News and Media Archive, Written Memories by Hella Pick, HHP.

<sup>230</sup> Interview with Patricia Clough.

<sup>231</sup> Interview with Mark Brayne; see also: Krause, p. 19.

ritualistically but there was no support if journalists wanted a ‘precise and accurate picture of what has been achieved and what was projected.’<sup>232</sup>

Western journalists covering the GDR were constrained by a number of factors. Travel restrictions posed a major problem for journalists in the gathering of information, and as already mentioned non-permanent journalists needed a visa to enter and work in the GDR. They had to apply with a precise topic and the place they planned to visit and were consequently dependent on the goodwill of the East German Foreign Ministry to allow the proposed project to go ahead. Siegfried Buschschlüter (*The Guardian*) summarised, ‘Gegenstände der Berichterstattung mussten vorher abgestimmt/abgesegnet werden, man konnte [z.B.] nicht einfach nach Güstrow fahren und von dort berichten.’<sup>233</sup> Due to the journalists’ dependence on the Foreign Ministry, it was very difficult to investigate more critical topics and nearly impossible to react immediately if an unexpected event happened in the GDR. Dan van der Vat described the difficulties journalists often experienced: ‘If you’ve heard that something [is happening] in East Germany and go to the *Ständige Vertretung* and ask for a visa and three weeks later you get it. For a journalist this is worse than useless.’<sup>234</sup> Although permanent journalists experienced clear advantages when entering and leaving the country, they often encountered similar difficulties while researching particular stories. Manfred Pagel noted that despite the *Reuters* office in East Berlin, their journalists also often had only limited access and were therefore unable to write about everything.<sup>235</sup>

Interviews with politicians, experts, participants and eyewitnesses are an essential part of journalistic work. Journalists often rely on these sources to gain basic facts, personal accounts or a certain perspective on an event. The East German authorities also tried to influence the way these interviews were conducted, the interviewees themselves and, consequentially, the press coverage. To ensure that only politically reliable and loyal citizens would come into contact with Western journalists, the Foreign Ministry arranged ‘die Auswahl und Vorbereitung der Personen; die im Rahmen des journalistischen Vorhaben in differenzierter Weise mit den Korrespondenten Kontakt haben.’<sup>236</sup> British journalists therefore often encountered

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<sup>232</sup> Simmons, *The Unloved Country*, p. 138.

<sup>233</sup> Interview with Siegfried Buschschlüter, 29/11/2010.

<sup>234</sup> Interview with Dan van der Vat.

<sup>235</sup> Interview with Manfred Pagel.

<sup>236</sup> BStU, MfS, BV Berlin, Abt. II, nr. 603, p. 94.

such pre-selected and often somewhat useless interviewees. For an article about the anniversary of the Dresden bombing, Michael Simmons talked to two survivors, both of whom he deemed to be handpicked by the press liaison authorities in East Berlin.<sup>237</sup> Hella Pick spoke about the feeling that a family she had been in touch with were saying what they had been told to say.<sup>238</sup> Interviews with official representatives, if granted at all, were also hardly ever helpful. Dan van der Vat explained that ‘if you asked for an interview, if you got one, you got the party line.’<sup>239</sup> Patricia Clough referred therefore to the ‘the political *Spiel*’ and added: ‘You keep wanting to say, “okay, okay, let’s forget that, just get down with the facts”.’<sup>240</sup> Manfred Pagel explained that a problematic effect of these regularly unsuccessful requests regarding interviews was that journalists might then refrain from future calls to the respective state department and person after several earlier unsuccessful attempts.<sup>241</sup> Mark Brayne recalled this problem: ‘When I first got there, I tried to work as a journalist, ask questions of the foreign ministry and I never ever got an answer, so I gave up very quickly.’<sup>242</sup> He summarised that there was no political information available other than what one could read in *Neues Deutschland*. The East German authorities had surely banked on this response by the journalists and hoped to discourage the foreign journalists.

Another result of this lack of access to the state’s elite sources was that journalists tried to turn to other people, often non-elite, who supplied them with information. As public interviews and surveys without permission had been forbidden by the 1979 regulations, one-to-one contact with East German citizens subsequently offered, even more so than in the previous years, the possibility to experience another more personal side to life in the GDR. Journalists who were able to make these types of contacts could uncover valuable information about life in the country that was not filtered through the state’s political propaganda filter. Aware of the danger these contacts bore - East Germans could supply Western journalists with possibly negative and subversive information about the state and journalists might then influence the

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<sup>237</sup> Simmons, *The Unloved Country*, p. 75.

<sup>238</sup> GNMA, Interview with Hella Pick, OHP/65.

<sup>239</sup> Interview with Dan van der Vat.

<sup>240</sup> Interview with Patricia Clough.

<sup>241</sup> Interview with Manfred Pagel.

<sup>242</sup> Interview with Mark Brayne.

East German population with their ideas – the GDR authorities tried to restrict journalists as much as possible through travel restrictions.<sup>243</sup>

However, in contrast to the aforementioned examples of East Germans who tried to avoid Western journalists, some citizens rather actively sought out contact with journalists. Paul Bolding noted that ‘the people who would talk to me and see me, were the people who were not worried about their face [...]’.<sup>244</sup> The Western media represented an important contact, particularly for small opposition groups and dissidents; they seemed to offer protection along with the chance of being heard.<sup>245</sup> On the other hand, considering the difficulties often encountered, these individuals were surely a welcome source of information for journalists. In light of the substantial number of articles in the British press dealing with opposition groups and dissidents, it can be assumed that this ‘win-win’-relation between the press and certain groups affected the overall press coverage. Patricia Clough confirmed that the foreign press was important for the opposition in the GDR. She argued that ‘they were aware that the foreign public opinion was on their side and strengthened their position on certain occasions.’ Chapter Four will discuss the consequences of these contacts in more detail. Several journalists also spoke of their contact with more prominent and critical East German citizens. Paul Bolding mentioned that he transported books for the writer Stefan Heym in and out of West Berlin and that from time to time dissidents would come and see him.<sup>246</sup> Stefan Heym’s willingness to talk to the Western press was also confirmed by other journalists.<sup>247</sup>

In addition to those previously discussed, journalists used several other sources for their reporting. News agencies such as *DPA*, *Reuters*, *AFP* and *AP* provided most journalists with valuable material in their daily work. They were easily available in Bonn or London, and constituted important sources, particularly in light of the constant time pressure which left journalists often unable to conduct their own research.<sup>248</sup> Moreover, individual journalists relied on a number of different sources such as West German and British media, and also had useful contacts with

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<sup>243</sup> Picaper, 90.

<sup>244</sup> Interview with Paul Bolding.

<sup>245</sup> Holzweißig, *Klassenfeinde und ‘Entspannungsfreunde’*, p. 14.

<sup>246</sup> Interview with Paul Bolding.

<sup>247</sup> Interview with Patricia Clough; Interview with Michael Simmons.

<sup>248</sup> Interview with Siegfried Buschschlüter.

diplomats.<sup>249</sup> Patricia Clough referred to the West German *Ständige Vertretung* as a source for information.<sup>250</sup> Along with the difficulties experienced by foreign journalists explored within this section, the East German authorities found further means to influence the press' coverage of the GDR.

## 1.7 East German strategies to influence Western journalists

Along with the described restrictions imposed on foreign journalists, the East German authorities used subtle methods of calculated manipulation in their attempts to control the foreign press and thereby the country's image abroad. Tony Catterall's experience as a non-permanent foreign journalist in the GDR demonstrates how the GDR tried to win over foreign press representatives if the state regarded them as beneficial. The former *Observer* journalist talked about two separate visits to the GDR and how differently he was treated on each occasion. During his first official visit to attend the SED's celebrations of the Victory in Europe Day in 1985, he recollected, 'we were greatly welcomed, I mean, sort of: a multi-entry visa [...], we didn't have to change money, [...] the *Palast Hotel* had lots of rooms still.'<sup>251</sup> The following statement by the Foreign Ministry explains the GDR's strategic considerations and motivations behind such invitations: 'Die Einladung prominenter ausländischer Journalisten (einzeln oder in Gruppen) in die DDR muß planmäßig und mit dem Ziel erfolgen, den größten politischen Nutzen für die DDR herbeizuführen.'<sup>252</sup> However, the journalist also reflected on his experience during a SED party congress also attended by Michael Gorbachev and the fact that the foreign press was less appreciated that time. This became noticeable by the issuing of single entry visas, the requirement to change money and that people were not quite as forthcoming with information as during the previous visit.<sup>253</sup>

In an attempt to influence journalists in the GDR, the Ministry of Foreign Affairs regularly produced a six-month plan. These plans mainly involved talks and day trips to showcase the state and its achievements. Moreover, they functioned to demonstrate

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<sup>249</sup> Interview with Tony Catterall; Interview with Michael Simmons.

<sup>250</sup> Interview with Patricia Clough.

<sup>251</sup> Interview with Tony Catterall.

<sup>252</sup> BArch DC 9/763, p. 3.

<sup>253</sup> Interview with Tony Catterall.

the East German state's support for foreign journalists and hoped to silence complaints concerning limited freedom of press as the authorities even 'promoted' their work.<sup>254</sup> It offered, for example, for the first six months of 1975, amongst others, talks with the Minister for Foreign Affairs, the president or vice-president of the *DTSB* (*Deutscher Turn- und Sportbund - East German Sports Organisations*) and with leading writers. Furthermore, it provided the possibility to take part in a trip which included the *Soviet War Memorial* and the national memorial *Cecilienhof*.<sup>255</sup> As interesting as some of the speakers might have been, they had little to do with the journalists' everyday work, which focused on news events. Additionally, the guest speakers were well prepared and capable of representing a highly positive image of the GDR without offering any criticism. The Foreign Ministry's press strategy for the 30<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the GDR revealed similar tactics. On this occasion, it had set up a temporary press centre which was the standard procedure for larger events. Its final report stated: 'Versuche bürgerlicher Fernseh- und Rundfunkjournalisten, besonders aus der BRD, Möglichkeiten zur Straßenbefragung zu sichern, wurde durch das gezielte und für diesen Zweck eigens vorbereitete Angebot von Gesprächs- und Interviewpartnern offensiv entgegengewirkt.'<sup>256</sup>

Siegfried Buschschlüter described a highly newsworthy incident in 1981 in which, despite increasingly icy relations between the superpowers, the West German chancellor visited Erich Honecker in the East German town of Güstrow.<sup>257</sup> The journalist recollected the strange atmosphere and explained that the people presented to the Western press as the inhabitants were in fact members of the security forces.<sup>258</sup> Although this charade did not remain undetected for long, the Western press was unable to make contact with the actual citizens of the town and were therefore prevented from reporting on the consequences of the story for the actual people living there. This experience shows how much the GDR mistrusted its own citizens, and just how far the authorities would go in order to prevent potential negative press coverage. Overall, Western journalists were aware of the working conditions in the

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<sup>254</sup> Eugeniusz Guz, 'Massenmedien und die KSZE: Arbeitsbedingungen der Korrespondenten', *das parlament*, 40 (1977), pp. 3-17.

<sup>255</sup> SAPMO-BArch DY 30/J IV 2/3/2253, p. 71.

<sup>256</sup> BArch DC 9/763, p.3.

<sup>257</sup> 'Crisis shadows Schmidt's visit to E. Germany', *The Guardian*, 14/12/1981, p. 5; 'Schmidt looks for "joint future"', *The Guardian*, 15/12/1981, p. 6.

<sup>258</sup> Interview with Siegfried Buschschlüter.



GDR and often found opportunities to by-pass the restrictions. However, the East German authorities also often found ways to make their work more difficult and to limit them.

## 1.8 The GDR as a subject of news coverage

In order to fully investigate the process of news coverage, it is important not only to consider the role of the East German authorities, but to also reflect upon the journalists themselves, their employers and the individual newspapers' readerships. The West German journalist Karl-Heinz Baum (*Frankfurter Rundschau*) stated that after Bonn and Washington, East Berlin was the most important location for a West German journalist, even ranking it above London and Paris.<sup>259</sup> His colleague Lothar Loewe (*Spiegel*) called it the last big adventure for a West German journalist.<sup>260</sup> During interviews and in written memoirs, British journalists expressed very different views. Although several British journalists expressed interest and enthusiasm for the GDR as a subject, none went as far as the West German journalists, with some even expressing quite contrary views. It will be demonstrated that these diverse perceptions of the GDR had consequences for the resulting British news coverage of the country. This comparison will underline the need for a separate analysis of the British press in addition to the existing research on West German journalists in the GDR.

The former *Observer* journalist, Mark Frankland, regarded the GDR as 'a boring country',<sup>261</sup> and Paul Bolding stated that there were 'more exciting places' than East Berlin.<sup>262</sup> Peter Millar also argued that East Berlin became 'a bit of a backwater in news terms'.<sup>263</sup> In particular, the former European editor of *Reuters* (Manfred Pagel) explained that from a western journalistic perspective, the GDR was simply not a significant news centre.<sup>264</sup> He, who for many years was responsible for staff appointments at the news agency's East Berlin office, explained that *Reuters* mainly sent younger journalists who had only been working for the news agency for a couple

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<sup>259</sup> Fenger, pp. 133ff.

<sup>260</sup> Lothar Loewe in: Chmel, p. 50.

<sup>261</sup> Mark Frankland, *The Patriot's Revolution: How East Europe Won Its Freedom* (London: Sinclair-Stevenson, 1990), p. 246.

<sup>262</sup> Interview with Paul Bolding.

<sup>263</sup> Millar, *1989 The Wall*, p. 32.

<sup>264</sup> Interview with Manfred Pagel.

of years. For several of them it was their first or second posting after completing their training. They worked under the general guidance and supervision of the *Reuters* office in Bonn. Manfred Pagel explained that no sensational stories ever emerged out of East Berlin, as everything of importance happened in Moscow, Washington or Bonn. Most journalists only stayed for 18 months to gain some experience, at which point they would move on, 'eben weil Berlin nichts bot.'<sup>265</sup> As a result of this substantially different attitude towards the GDR, British journalists potentially had a limited knowledge of the country and a lack of contacts due to their relatively short residency there. However, this statement would be a generalisation, especially considering the coverage of experienced journalists such as Hella Pick. That being said, along with the high costs of press offices in East Berlin, most newspapers' decision not to employ a permanent journalist in the GDR also shows an overall lower level of interest in the GDR. Instead, newspapers worked with stringers in places where, as the *Reuters'* Handbook of Journalism stated, 'the flow of news is not sufficient to justify the presence of a staff correspondent.'<sup>266</sup>

It is important to note, however, that the personal and professional distance of these journalists had its advantages for news coverage in Britain, especially when compared with their West German counterparts. West German journalist, Peter Nöldechen (*Westfälische Rundschau*) pointed out the often subjective perspective of West German journalists. Nöldechen stressed that it was helpful for him to see certain events in the GDR from the perspective of his Austrian colleagues, as this allowed him to gain a more nuanced understanding.<sup>267</sup> Whilst British journalists reported predominantly on foreign affairs, their West German colleagues tended to focus more on their fellow citizens behind the Wall.<sup>268</sup> Mark Brayne summarised that 'I was an observer, not a participant', and on his West German colleagues, 'they were participants'<sup>269</sup>, thus stressing the West Germans' stronger emotional involvement.

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<sup>265</sup> Interview with Manfred Pagel.

<sup>266</sup> 'Handbook of Journalism: Dealing with Stringers', in *Reuters* <[http://handbook.reuters.com/index.php/Dealing\\_with\\_stringers](http://handbook.reuters.com/index.php/Dealing_with_stringers)> [accessed 24/06/2013].

<sup>267</sup> Peter Nöldechen, 'Als dienstältester Korrespondent vor Ort', in *Drinnen vor der Tür*, ed. by Eberhard Grashoff and Rolf Muth (Berlin: Edition Ost, 2000), p. 62.

<sup>268</sup> Peter Jochen Winters, 'Korrespondenten in Ost-Berlin', in *Die DDR in Europa zwischen Isolation und Öffnung*, ed. by Heiner Timmermann (Münster: Lit Verlag, 2005), p. 415.

<sup>269</sup> Interview with Mark Brayne.

In order to shed light on the role and potential influence of editors in the process of reporting on the GDR, the journalists were also asked if they had ever experienced any restrictions with respect to articles or topics dealing with the GDR. As a result of this, it can be established that editorial staff neither directly influenced nor restricted their journalists' news coverage of the East German state. Michael Simmons, for example, stated that he had 'free rein'.<sup>270</sup> Dan van der Vat equally stated that he did not remember experiencing any difficulties with the London office, and that there were 'rarely' topics the editor did not want, but in any case they 'always backed you up'.<sup>271</sup> Siegfried Buschschlüter commented that it was not a problem for him to report on a topic if the person involved was known to the London office. If he/she was not known, it was, however, more difficult to report on it.<sup>272</sup> He also added that his editors hardly ever made any changes to the content of a finished article. If a story was not published, it was usually due to a lack of space rather than the content of the story.<sup>273</sup> For the purposes of this thesis, two significant conclusions can be drawn from this insight: firstly, it emphasises the decisive role of the individual journalist in determining news coverage of the GDR; and secondly, it underlines the significance of obtaining the journalists' points of view regarding their work. The journalists interviewed as a part of this study were the experts and held the main responsibility for the news. Moreover, in light of the often divergent views of individual British newspapers on events in the GDR, and as the following chapters will show, journalists internalised the standpoints of their newspapers and represented them in their articles.

## **1.9 British attitudes vs. newspaper readers**

In order to examine the journalists' motivations, they were also asked about general British attitudes towards the GDR and about their readership. The answers surprisingly show that the journalists often clearly distinguished between these two groups. Whilst the majority of the interviewees credited the British population with only a very limited knowledge of the GDR, they regarded their newspaper readers in a much more

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<sup>270</sup> Interview with Michael Simmons.

<sup>271</sup> Interview with Dan van der Vat; see also: Interview with Patricia Clough.

<sup>272</sup> Interview with Siegfried Buschschlüter.

<sup>273</sup> Interview with Tony Catterall.

positive way. It will be argued that the combination of these contrasting views by the journalists stimulated the coverage about the GDR.

Nearly all of the journalists interviewed stressed the British public's lack of knowledge about the GDR. Tony Catterall estimated that the British public knew 'five-eighths of 10% of very, very little.'<sup>274</sup> Others, such as Patricia Clough, assumed that 'among the general public probably very little was known about the GDR.'<sup>275</sup> In this context, others emphasised 'the filter Berlin'<sup>276</sup> through which the whole country was perceived while 'the rest [of the country] was a black hole.'<sup>277</sup> Although the public was generally thought to have a lack of awareness of the GDR, negative opinions were rarely expressed. Tony Catterall suggested that for most British citizens, the GDR was 'a kind of bad place', yet this can be interpreted as ignorance rather than rejection. Notably, Patricia Clough reflected that 'we [British journalists] had much more [of] an image of a Stasi-controlled society than the [East German] people themselves.' If Patricia Clough, a well-travelled and surely well-informed journalist describes her picture of the GDR as outlined above, it begs the question of how deep-seated this view was, or rather if it were merely a superficial perception of the GDR which many educated people would not confirm when challenged.

In contrast to the journalists' perception of the British public, several of them expressed a much more positive view of their own readership, with some describing their readers as 'more educated'<sup>278</sup> and 'intelligent'.<sup>279</sup> Dan van der Vat stressed the daily importance of *The Guardian* for those able to influence political opinion, such as diplomats, employees of the foreign office and most politicians in general.<sup>280</sup> Siegfried Buschschlüter stated, '[...] die *Guardian* Leser waren natürlich weltoffener und wahrscheinlich auch besser informiert über die Welt [...] als viele andere oder als der normale Engländer, als der Mann auf der Straße [...].' He went on to add that, 'Die *Guardian* [-Leser] hatten allein durch die Berichterstattung von Hella Pick, glaub ich, eine anständige Vorstellung, im Sinne von eine vernünftige Vorstellung, von dem was

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<sup>274</sup> Interview with Tony Catterall.

<sup>275</sup> Interview with Patricia Clough.

<sup>276</sup> Interview with Manfred Pagel.

<sup>277</sup> Interview with Patricia Clough.

<sup>278</sup> Ibid.

<sup>279</sup> Interview with Michael Simmons.

<sup>280</sup> Interview with Dan van der Vat.

sich in der DDR tat.<sup>281</sup> From these statements it is clear that Siegfried Buschschrüter mainly credited *Guardian* readers' knowledge to the work of his fellow journalists, and therefore supported the argument that journalists had the ability to influence and change readers' perspective of the GDR.

Considering the substantial and often in-depth press coverage of the GDR in the British press, it appears that the journalists' belief of an ignorant and uninformed British population did not restrict the focus of their articles. This suggests that journalists either focused entirely on the interests of their own readership, whilst ignoring those of the rest of the population, or alternatively that it stimulated an increasing number of articles which aimed to educate readers and make the country more widely known. The second suggestion would be in line with earlier British researchers who attempted to introduce the GDR to British readers. Mark Brayne suggested that 'the typical English people had no idea; they thought East Germany was not a nation of real people, it was an evil communist concept.'<sup>282</sup> However, when he talked later about his motivation and aims in reporting on the GDR, he explained that, 'I was reporting a real country with real people and trying to report real lives.'<sup>283</sup> His perception of the British public and his objective clearly correlated with one another. This shows that it was this belief which inspired him to focus on aspects that had been thus far neglected, and to portray the GDR as a comparable society to other western countries. Additionally, it should not be forgotten that all journalists want to get published. Siegfried Buschschrüter stated that to have an article published on the front page, especially the upper part, was a great professional achievement.<sup>284</sup> Overall, the examples regarding the journalists' motivation for their coverage show them as a decisive factor for the extensive news coverage on the GDR.

This chapter has provided valuable information concerning those responsible for the news coverage of the GDR and their working lives. In particular, the interviews have proved a significant source of information with regards to the more personal dimensions of the media process. Despite the fact that nearly all of the journalists had reported on the GDR at some point during the 1970s and 80s, they often experienced

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<sup>281</sup> Interview with Siegfried Buschschrüter.

<sup>282</sup> Interview with Mark Brayne.

<sup>283</sup> Ibid.

<sup>284</sup> Interview with Siegfried Buschschrüter.

the country and its society in very different ways. These differences can be attributed to variations in employer, location (for example, East or West Berlin, Bonn, London), time period, or duration of their professional engagement in the GDR. However, along with other biographical accounts by several journalists and official files, it was possible to reconstruct their working conditions and come to important conclusions with regards to how these conditions affected the nature and shape of stories reported in the press. Overall, it can be established that the individual journalists themselves played a decisive role in the news coverage of the GDR.

The journalists' work in and on the GDR was determined by the GDR's ambivalent perception of the foreign press. On the one hand, the East German authorities recognised the potential of the foreign press to support their image policy abroad. On the other hand, to an even larger extent they perceived foreign journalists to be a potential danger because of their ability to report on conditions within the country. Equally, Western journalists had the potential to influence the East German population, especially through contact with dissidents and those critical of the GDR government. The extensive observation of foreign journalists by the State Security Service and other institutions exemplifies this view. It has been shown that East German legislation associated with foreign journalists represented an essential framework to restrict the journalists. As a consequence of this legislation, foreign journalists faced difficulties not only upon entering the country, but equally once they were inside. Their access to important sources and the public was generally limited. Additionally, the East German authorities tried to manipulate journalists by providing false information, influencing and choosing interviewees or through other distractions from actual events. Above all, journalists stressed a lack of access to credible information as being problematic. In particular, the inadequate level of support they received from public authorities caused a significant problem and inhibited the work of the journalists. Furthermore, it has been shown that British journalists were able to detect the East German authorities' misinformation strategy. However, this knowledge was only of limited value. Although it indeed helped to by-pass the state and to find alternative methods to report on the country, doors consequently often remained closed and journalists were unable to obtain the required facts. Moreover, the involvement of the State Security in a variety of areas, such as the legislative process

and the control or intimidation of those surrounding foreign journalists, was able to affect journalists' work. The journalists' view of the British public and their own readership particularly emphasises their integral role in the news coverage, whereas editors played only a minor role with regards to quantitative and qualitative decisions. Nonetheless, despite the limits and restrictions they had to face in the GDR, journalists were able to show a broad and continually evolving image of the GDR in their articles, as the following chapters will demonstrate. That being said, the individual chapters will also pay attention to the question to which extent the working conditions for British journalists influenced the coverage of British newspapers about the GDR.

## Chapter 2

### The GDR – a kaleidoscope of images

This chapter will demonstrate that the British press presented a diverse and nuanced picture of the GDR. An analysis of the press as an important historical source can help to overcome too general statements about the image of the GDR, and will significantly add to the still limited research regarding the image of the GDR in Britain before 1989. A more detailed overview of the contemporary research in a later section of this chapter will show its limitations. The British press made distinctions between individual elements of the GDR, such as the country's landscape and architecture, its leadership and citizens. Whilst the East German population was often referred to as 'German', the state authorities and their representatives were primarily connected to their Prussian heritage. The history of the GDR's struggle to establish its own identity was also discussed by the British press and played a significant role in its representation of the East German leadership. In addition to this, the press presented the GDR from a visitor's perspective, as an older version of the Federal Republic or one reminiscent of the Germany of the 1920s and 30s. In contrast, the self-proclaimed antifascist image of the GDR was of little importance to the British press during the 1970s and 80s, although it did not completely disappear. As a result of the press' nuanced views of individual elements of the GDR, it was able to separate these aspects from one another and evaluate them independently, thus presenting a diverse image of the GDR.

Despite recent academic publications dealing with the perception of the GDR in Britain during the Cold War-period, a more systematic analysis is still needed. The following short overview outlines the current research results. Arnd Bauerkämper, who has undertaken the most detailed study of the East German image in the UK thus far, characterises the image as ambivalent.<sup>285</sup> However, he does not consider the different elements of the GDR's image in enough detail. Instead he focuses on the

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<sup>285</sup> Bauerkämper, 'Sympathie mit dem Gegner', pp. 316-340.



differing attitudes towards the GDR by individual groups within British society.<sup>286</sup> Overall, the existing results show a tendency towards generalisation and inconsistency in their presentation of the GDR. For example, this can be recognised in Mary Fulbrook's summary of the 'prevalent popular view' of the GDR as being 'typically German'<sup>287</sup> with a 'Prussian facade'.<sup>288</sup> The term 'red Prussia', which several authors have used to summarise the existing image of the GDR, particularly highlights the limitations of existing research on the subject.<sup>289</sup> This expression suggests that the GDR's image was simply a combination of historical German (particularly Prussian), Soviet and communist roots, while the potentially hierarchical relationship between these different elements and possible temporal shifts therein are not discussed. Moreover, this expression excludes the effect of any other external influences on the GDR or parts of it. Even Stefan Berger and Norman LaPorte's latest publication fails to shed any more light on the image discourse, as its questioning of British popular opinion of the country is limited, and instead only contains assessments such as, 'The GDR had a negative image.'<sup>290</sup> They claim that the East German image combined 'Germanophobia and anti-communism',<sup>291</sup> that 'the GDR was described as dull but successful',<sup>292</sup> and go on to suggest that it was perceived as being more German than the Federal Republic.<sup>293</sup> Therefore, the two scholars do not present a more developed view of the perception of the GDR in Britain during the 1970s and 80s. Considering the current state of research, this analysis of the British press can add more scope to the subject regarding the image of the GDR in Britain.

Since German references are part of the GDR discourse, it is necessary to reflect briefly on relevant academic research with respect to the Federal Republic's perception in the UK. Several studies confirm that there was a continuously negative perception of Germans and Germany post-1945.<sup>294</sup> Berger and LaPorte argue that the mistrust of Germany's past continued to determine the image of the West German

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<sup>286</sup> Bauerkämper, 'Sympathie mit dem Gegner', p. 317.

<sup>287</sup> Fulbrook, *Anatomy of a Dictatorship*, p. 11.

<sup>288</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 170.

<sup>289</sup> Bauerkämper, 'Sympathie mit dem Gegner', p. 318.

<sup>290</sup> Quotation of Neal Ascherson in: Berger and LaPorte, *Friendly Enemy*, p. 177.

<sup>291</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 533.

<sup>292</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 175.

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 231.

<sup>294</sup> Katy Greenland, 'Can't Live with Them, Can't Live without Them: Stereotypes in International Relations', in *Stereotypes in Contemporary Anglo-German Relations*, ed. by Rainer Emig (Basingstoke: St. Martin's Press, 2000), p. 24.

state throughout the 1960s and 70s.<sup>295</sup> This negative impression of the Federal Republic was enhanced by the contemporaneous disappearance of positive attributes such as the 'nation of poets and philosophers'.<sup>296</sup> During the following two decades, John Ramsden detects more openly anti-German prejudice.<sup>297</sup> Even nowadays, a negative image of Germany can still be perceived.<sup>298</sup> With regards to relations between the GDR and Britain, this negative attitude towards the Federal Republic was only interpreted as stimulus for a more positive disposition towards the GDR. Therefore, the contrasting positive view of 'German' characteristics in connection with the GDR, as the press described them, seems to be incomprehensible. The conflicting notions of 'Germanness' as a positive attribute in the case of the GDR and a negative one in the case of the Federal Republic has not been reflected upon or critiqued thus far. The subsequent textual analysis will examine the representation of the GDR in British newspapers in more detail.

In light of the press' recognition of a German identity amongst the East Germans, as this press analysis will show, the term 'identity' must first be defined. For the purposes of this thesis, *identity* refers foremost to national identity as a form of collective identity. It can be understood as a feeling of belonging to a particular state. National identity is shared by a group of people, recognised by this people and, moreover, is usually recognised by others who do not share the same group identity. However, the GDR continually struggled to establish a distinct identity; an identity its citizens could associate themselves with and foreign states would be able to recognise. Both international and internal recognition were closely connected, as international recognition would have helped to strengthen internal acceptance and vice versa. In order to achieve a clearer understanding of this struggle the following section will provide an historical overview of the GDR's attempts to gain international recognition and at the same time, the acceptance of its own population.

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<sup>295</sup> Berger and LaPorte, *Friendly Enemy*, p. 136.

<sup>296</sup> Manfred Koch-Hillebrecht, *Das Deutschenbild: Gegenwart, Geschichte, Psychologie* (Munich: C.H. Beck, 1977), p. 145.

<sup>297</sup> John Ramsden, *Don't Mention the War: The British and the Germans since 1890* (Little: Brown Book Group, 2007), p. 402.

<sup>298</sup> Jonathan Grix and Chantal Lacroix, 'Constructing Germany's Image in the British Press: An Empirical Analysis of Stereotypical Reporting on Germany', *Journal of Contemporary European Studies*, 14.3 (2006), p. 373.

## 2.1 The GDR's struggle for identity

The very foundation of the GDR itself was to become a huge obstacle in the country's pursuit of its own identity. Immediately after the war, German communists supported by the Soviet occupation authorities started to rebuild the Soviet Occupation Zone, which would later become the GDR. They were laying the foundation for a Soviet-style state with an economic, political and social system modelled on the USSR. When the GDR was finally founded in 1949, it was an artificial construct of the Cold-War which lacked the legitimacy granted by a democratic election.<sup>299</sup> Internationally, only a small number of Eastern European countries recognised the GDR, whilst the majority of countries (including the Western powers) refused to accept its sovereignty. From 1955 onwards the GDR's international isolation was increased by the *Hallstein* doctrine. As most countries would not accept a state 'GDR' at the time, it was difficult to convince the GDR's own population of its specific validity. Moreover, the proximity of the Federal Republic greatly restricted the establishment of an independent identity for the GDR, as the neighbouring states shared a common ethnic, cultural and linguistic German identity.<sup>300</sup> Family ties still existed between the two countries which further weakened claims of a distinct identity. As a result of the Federal Republic's economic success and its democratic foundation, the West German state represented for many East Germans, the 'better' German state. This belief is supported by the high number of refugees before the building of the Wall in 1961. Even after 1961, the Federal Republic remained the point of comparison for many East Germans. Every night, West German television channels (which could be received in most parts of the GDR) brought the shiny Western world into East German households and hindered positive identification with the GDR's own achievements and the country itself. Aiming to differentiate itself from the Federal Republic, the GDR portrayed itself as an antifascist country. According to the East German leadership, the GDR had learned from the past and freed itself from National Socialism in contrast to the Federal Republic where 'fascist' politicians still determined the fate of the country. After the GDR's international recognition during the early 1970s, East German authorities faced the

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<sup>299</sup> Fulbrook, *Anatomy of a Dictatorship*, p. 3.

<sup>300</sup> Joanna McKay, 'East German Identity in the GDR', in *East German Distinctiveness in a Unified Germany*, ed. by Jonathan Grix and Paul Cooke (Birmingham: The University of Birmingham Press, 2002), p. 19.

problem of increasing numbers of Western visitors. To discourage common German feelings, the East German leadership pursued a demarcation policy from the Federal Republic and instead emphasised its close relationship to the Soviet Union. Alongside the GDR's self-representation as an antifascist state, its leadership also created its own selective past based on chosen historical events which placed the country within the tradition of the workers' movement and omitted any bourgeois references. At the end of the 1970s and at the beginning of the 1980s, East German authorities recognised an increasing level of discontent amongst its population which led to an even lower level of identification with the state. As a strategy to boost a positive identification with the country, the authorities began to adopt appropriate – in their eyes – symbols from German history and culture. Historical figures such as Bismarck and Luther were 'recycled' for this purpose, therefore allowing identification, to some degree, with the notion of Germanness. Despite these efforts, in 1989, dissatisfaction within the East German population grew to such a point that the lack of national feelings as an element of the East German identity became a visible problem once again. In contrast to other East European countries, the East German leadership was unable to appeal to a national identity, as this could have resulted in an even stronger connection to the West German state and could equally have undermined the GDR.<sup>301</sup> Following on from this, a closer textual analysis will show the specific press' perception of competing identities in the GDR.

## **2.2 Images in the British press**

### **2.2.1 Prussian roots between East German self-portrayal and British perception**

In order to achieve a clearer idea of the more nuanced image of the GDR in the British press and how it distinguished between different elements of the country, the often negative portrayal of the East German government and its representatives in the news coverage will be discussed first. This section will demonstrate that criticism was almost exclusively directed toward the government, while other parts of the GDR were primarily portrayed in a positive or neutral way. Moreover, it will be shown that the

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<sup>301</sup> Henry Krisch, *The German Democratic Republic: The Search for Identity* (Boulder, London: Westview Press, 1985), p. 83.

government and its representatives, particularly the National People's Army, were often described in a negative manner through comparisons to 'Prussian values'. When used by the press in relation to the GDR, Prussia primarily evoked negative associations with militarism, discipline and war. In addition to the press' comparisons drawn between elements of the GDR and Prussia, newspapers noticed the GDR's attempt to capitalise on parts of German history, among others Prussian history, in order to establish an independent identity and increase its legitimacy. The press' rejection of the GDR's attempt to exploit the history of Prussia will also be subsequently considered as the country's approach to history further affected the use of the label 'Prussian' in the press coverage.

Comparisons between the East German leadership, its representatives and Prussia were part of the press coverage during the entire period of investigation. In 1973, Richard Crossman, former Labour politician and journalist, attempted to give British readers a better understanding of the GDR and its authorities in his article 'His master's voice changes his tune'. Despite Britain's official recognition of the GDR earlier that year, the country remained fairly unknown to most British citizens. The majority of the British press coverage during this time can be described as positive and even partly enthusiastic towards East Germany. Crossman seemed to aim for a more balanced view on the GDR in his article. He first described the nature of the East German leadership as 'German' but immediately corrected himself and characterised it as 'rather a mixture of Saxon communists and Prussian bureaucrats'.<sup>302</sup> To understand this assessment of the leadership as negative, it is essential to consider Crossman's later remarks about how East German authorities shaped the life in the GDR. While recognising the country's achievements regarding gender equality, health care and welfare, Crossman highlighted the GDR's 'ruthless censorship, a savage authoritarian party discipline, and a ban on foreign travel which cuts them off from the free world.'<sup>303</sup> With these examples, this sentence portrayed the GDR as an undemocratic country with a closed society. The last sub-clause further supported the negative image of the country. It claimed that the GDR was not part of the 'free world' as its citizens were 'cut off' from it. Consequently, when considering the entire article, it can be established that Crossman used the description 'Prussian' in a negative manner to

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<sup>302</sup> Richard Crossman, 'His master's voice changes his tune', *The Times*, 07/02/1973, p. 16.

<sup>303</sup> *Ibid.*

describe the East German authorities and drew parallels between the East German army and Prussian militarism. The combination of the adjective 'Prussian' with the noun 'bureaucrats' strengthens the negative understanding of the former word even more. 'Bureaucrats' are often negatively perceived as people who are more concerned with their procedures and files than acting in the interest of people. *The Guardian* also contributed to the negative perception of the adjective 'Prussian' as a description of the East German authorities. Under the headline: 'Prussian blue', *The Guardian* discussed the 'new repression in East Germany' against its writers as the subheading revealed.<sup>304</sup> 'Prussian blue' is a dark blue colour which was the main uniform colour of the Prussian army. Therefore, it symbolically represents the military Prussian state. The headline and sub-heading, as indicators of the following article, suggest a connection between the Prussian state and the suppressive political climate in the GDR at that time. The adjective 'new' points out that this was not a singular event but that repression had occurred at least once before. The references to Prussia continued in the course of the article when the journalist depicted one of Berlin's old water towers which had been designed by the famous Prussian architect Karl Friedrich Schinkel. He described the tower as 'from the depths of the Prussian psyche'.<sup>305</sup> After highlighting how the Prussian past was still part of the then current life in the GDR, the article outlined the restrictive policy towards East German which had protested against the expulsion of the singer and dissident Wolf Biermann.<sup>306</sup> The article also portrayed the oppressive atmosphere within the country which affected wider parts of the East German population. It noted the 'claustrophobia and crass coercions that afflicted young lives in the GDR'.<sup>307</sup> It can be established that due to its structure, the article stresses parallels between the repressive East German leadership and the militaristic Prussian state. Moreover, it is an example that the characterisation of the East German authorities as Prussian was understood in a negative manner.

In 1989, a *Times* leader once again exemplified the British press' limited application of Prussian images in connection with the GDR. *The Times* suggested, 'The Red Prussians may have had charge of East Germany for 40 or so years, but in the

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<sup>304</sup> W.L. Webb, 'Prussian blue', *The Guardian*, 28/03/1977, p. 8.

<sup>305</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>306</sup> The events surrounding Wolf Biermann and the protests by leading East German intellectuals is in more details discussed in Chapter Four.

<sup>307</sup> W.L. Webb, 'Prussian blue', p. 8.

towns and villages beyond Berlin, Anne McElvoy finds that socialist idealism has come to an accommodation with bourgeois power, the Church and the café ritual.<sup>308</sup> The expression 'Red Prussians' combines the colour red, which is closely associated with Communism and Socialism and has always been a visible part of Communist states, with the notion of the historical state of Prussia. The conjunction 'but' highlights a contrast between two sides, the government in Berlin and the East German life beyond its political elite. The author seems to suggest that only the ones 'in charge' represented communist and Prussian ideals, whilst beyond the borders of Berlin, the country's capital, seat of government and symbol of power, other influences were able to determine East German life to a much greater extent. The sentence points out how individual parts of the GDR were perceived differently and stresses the growing gap between government and population during the summer of 1989, when thousands of East Germans left their country and a growing number of people started to loudly voice discontent with their government. Later, McElvoy characterised this split within the country as 'casual schizophrenia'.<sup>309</sup> The disease metaphor 'schizophrenia' refers to the mental disorder which is often, but wrongly, associated with a split personality of the affected person. In this example, the journalist assigned these attributes to the GDR. The article affirmed the links between the GDR authorities and the Prussian state when it noted, 'Its [Berlin's] Orwellian ministries house Red Prussians who formulate the five-year plan with an unbending purpose that would have delighted Frederick the Great [...].'<sup>310</sup> The adjective 'Orwellian' refers to the English writer George Orwell and his novel 'Nineteen Eighty-Four'. Orwell described in his novel, the life of an individual within a totalitarian society which is characterised by surveillance and manipulation. With this choice of words, the article drew parallels between Orwell's dystopian future and the contemporaneous political establishment in the GDR. The image of the East German politicians, the 'Red Prussians' within this totalitarian atmosphere for which they are responsible and of which they play a significant part, supports the negative understanding of the term 'Prussians'. The relative clause with its reference to Frederick the Great, King of Prussia, additionally strengthens the connections between the East German state and Prussia. The clause provides further information for the

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<sup>308</sup> Anne McElvoy, 'All ghosts and Goethe', *The Times*, 08/07/1989, p. 53.

<sup>309</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>310</sup> *Ibid.*

understanding of the noun 'purpose'. However, it is only in combination with the adjective 'unbending' that its full meaning becomes comprehensible. The sentence attaches values such as discipline and hardship with the name of this Prussian king. In the context of the sentence, these characteristics have to be understood in a negative manner.

In addition to the East German authorities, the National People's Army, an important symbol of the GDR's governmental power, was, for the British press, the living embodiment in the GDR of the tradition of Prussian militarism. Negative associations with everything Prussian strengthened the disapproving press coverage of the East German army, and with it, the East German government. Michael Stone's *Guardian* article, for example, identified a strong connection between the East German army of the time and its historical predecessors.<sup>311</sup> The article's headline 'A Prussian blitz hits Berlin' already evoked memories of Prussia and connected it with a key event in the British discourse on national memory of the Second World War. The Blitz, the German bombing campaign against British cities in 1940/41, is one of the strongest and most negative symbols for the aggressiveness of the German military against Great Britain. Since the 1940s, the Blitz had turned into a strong image of British resilience and defiance. Moreover, it had also shaped the British identity since the war and, when the article was published, it was still part of living memory. Therefore, the Blitz represents the more significant notion within the phrase 'A Prussian blitz' and determines the negative perception of the term 'Prussian' and the entire headline. Finally, the headline linked the historical references to the contemporaneous city of Berlin and therefore, established a link between the German past and the present. Later on, the article confirms the negative perception of the term Prussian. It reported, 'The East German People's Army carries on where the Prussian generals [...] left off: with the goose step on parade and a Prussian-style changing of the guard outside Schinkel's *Neue Wache* [...].'<sup>312</sup> The sentence clearly establishes the GDR's military as the successor of the Prussian army with the verb 'carry on'. Especially the reference to 'the goose step on parade' supports the negative image of the two armies. The so-called 'goose step' goes back to the Prussian army and terms a parade march. For

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<sup>311</sup> Stone, 'A Prussian blitz hits Berlin', p. 9.

<sup>312</sup> Ibid.



historian Norman Davies, it is ‘the embodiment of Prussian militarism’.<sup>313</sup> However, with the rise of the National Socialists, the image of goose-stepping soldiers turned even more negative as huge deployments regularly took place within the Third Reich as a display of the National Socialist’s military power. Therefore, it became much more associated with Hitler’s army and its war of aggression against, among others, Britain. Winston Churchill claimed in 1941 that Britain was fighting both, ‘Nazis and “Prussian militarism”’,<sup>314</sup> thus supporting the merging of the two images and with it, enhanced the negative perception of the goose step and Prussia. Post-war popular British culture also supported the negative image of the goose step. For example, actor and comedian John Cleese became immortal in his role of the hotel owner Basil Fawlty in the 1970s TV show *Fawlty Towers*. In the episode *The Germans*, British audiences saw Cleese goose-stepping through the show claiming ‘Don’t mention the war’ in the face of the German hotel guests. To the present day, regular reruns of the show contribute to maintain the idea of the Germans’ military nature and keep negative associations with the goose step alive. The reference to the ‘goose step’ can also be found in several other newspaper articles in connection with the East German army.

Richard Crossman, as demonstrated earlier, highlighted some problematic and rather undemocratic sides of the seemingly successful and smoothly running East German state. He also noticed that the East German government ‘maintains an army imbued with fiercely national Prussian spirit – it still does the goose step.’<sup>315</sup> The verb ‘imbue’ emphasises that the ‘Prussian spirit’ was not just superficially present within the National People’s Army but had rather become a significant feature which had been fully adopted by the East German army. The meaning of the adverb ‘fiercely’ hinders a positive understanding of this ‘spirit’. The remark ‘still does’ restates the idea of a historical continuation from the Prussian army until the present day. Moreover, the article reinforces the connection between army and government as it highlights the authorities’ direct responsibility for its army and also, for the nature of its military.

In 1977, *The Times’* journalist Richard Davy examined the GDR situation at the time on the occasion of two new book publications about the East German state.<sup>316</sup>

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<sup>313</sup> Norman Davies, *Europe - a History* (London: Pimlico, 1997), p. 612.

<sup>314</sup> Ramsden, p. 229.

<sup>315</sup> Richard Crossman, ‘Personal view’, *The Times*, 07/02/1973, p. 16; ‘The two Germanies’, *The Times*, 14/05/1975, p. 17.

<sup>316</sup> Richard Davy, ‘East Germany: View from both sides of the Wall’, *The Times*, 20/09/1977, p. 12

One of the two publications was Rudolf Bahro's *The Alternative*. The East German author critically assessed 'the real existing socialism' and with it, the economical and political situation in the GDR. Together with Bahro's critique, the article reviewed Jonathan Steele's account on the GDR. Considering Bahro's imprisonment directly after the publication of his book and his critical stance on the GDR, an overly positive portrayal of the country within this article from the rather conservative *Times* would have been surprising. Without concealing the achievements of the country so far, the article clearly highlighted the GDR's struggles. Davy claimed among other points that the country was 'more dogmatic and less liberal than the Russians.' Moreover, he remarked: 'Some people are also unkind enough to notice the goose-stepping soldiers, the strident propaganda, the Prussian bureaucracy and the harnessing of sport to politics.'<sup>317</sup> The first part of the sentence claimed that negative sides were often deliberately overlooked but clearly existed and could have been observed if one had paid attention. Subsequently, the article highlighted several of these negative features of the East German system. The use of terms with clearly negative connotations such as 'propaganda', 'bureaucracy', 'goose-stepping' or 'harnessing' and their combined use, strengthen the statement's negative claim. By focusing on very different areas within the state system, the journalist stresses that restrictions were not limited to isolated problems, but rather a more general issue within the GDR. As Davy named 'Prussian bureaucracy' as one example within this context, the adjective can clearly be understood as a negative feature.

In 1984, *The Times* journalist Michael Binyon reported from 'one of the biggest military parades seen in East Berlin' on the occasion of the GDR's 35<sup>th</sup> anniversary.<sup>318</sup> The comment at the beginning of the article that Western powers still regarded this parade as a violation of Berlin's four-power status, adds a general dismissive tone to the article. Later on, it reported: 'The parade included tactical missiles able to reach West Berlin, while goose-stepping soldiers from the East German training schools marched [...] to the music of communist songs and old Prussian Army marches.'<sup>319</sup> The complementary information regarding the missiles' ability to endanger the Western world is significant. It is not important for the article itself but strengthens the negative

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<sup>317</sup> Davy, 'East Germany, p. 12

<sup>318</sup> Michael Binyon, 'Honecker sidesteps differences with Moscow', *The Times*, 08/10/1984, p. 6.

<sup>319</sup> *Ibid.*

stance against such events and the GDR authorities overall. Moreover, Binyon particularly emphasised the connection between the state's communist ideology and Prussian tradition which still influenced the East German state. He establishes this connection through the reference to the goose step, which had been adopted by East German soldiers, and through music. The music is only played in the background; however, with its rhythm and volume, it determines the movements of the individuals. This could imply that communist ideology and Prussian values also determined life in the GDR as a kind of background music. As the journalist described the music in connection with young soldiers from the East German training schools, he indicated that both influences, communist and Prussian, affected the younger generation and determined the country's future.

On a different occasion, *The Times* even argued that uniforms and East Berlin, the political centre of the East German state, 'go together like gin and tonic'.<sup>320</sup> The comparison with the classical and highly popular cocktail emphasises the seemingly perfect combination of the military and the East German state. The article further noted that there was 'something about those wide Prussian boulevards in Berlin-Mitte that demands appropriate clothing, the nuance of rank, the clatter of weaponry and a disciplined approach to living.'<sup>321</sup> The author identified the main streets of East Berlin as visible external manifestations of the Prussian state and therefore seems to suggest that along with its streets, 'Prussian spirit' was still very much alive in the GDR. As in previous articles, Roger Boyes identified discipline, order and the significance of the army within the state as norms and values which represented Prussia. As this piece of information was presented at the very beginning of the article, the reader was able to identify them as important. Moreover, it established important parameters for the rest of the article. Later, the article portrayed the situation of the youth in Eastern Europe at the time and noted that even the critical share of the East German youth was relatively tame in comparison with, for example, their Polish neighbours. In consideration of the earlier explanation about the connection between the GDR and Prussia, the article showed how German, or more precisely Prussian, history still determined the contemporaneous East German society and limited it.

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<sup>320</sup> Roger Boyes, 'How the young are cracking a monolith', *The Times*, 16/10/1984, p. 14.

<sup>321</sup> *Ibid.*

As mentioned before, the British press frequently addressed the GDR's search for identity and its struggle to succeed in this endeavour. In this regard, the press critically noted how the East German leadership used German history to promote its legitimacy. *The Times*, for example, argued that the GDR 'should not be allowed to get away with a reconstructed version of German history and a claim to represent only the good in German traditions.'<sup>322</sup> Especially from the late 1970s onwards, newspapers recognised how the GDR was turning towards so far ignored parts and individual figures of German history as a means of formulating its identity.<sup>323</sup> As a response to the growing discontent amongst the population during the second half of the 1970s, the East German leadership attempted to strengthen its citizens' identification with their home country. One of the country's main historical reference points was the Prussian past.<sup>324</sup> Additionally, the press detected the exploitation of other historical figures and periods, including Martin Luther, Richard Wagner and the bourgeois resistance during the Second World War.<sup>325</sup> Overall, it concluded that the GDR had been unsuccessful in its efforts, assessing them instead as 'propaganda'.<sup>326</sup>

In 1980, *The Guardian* published the first article which mentioned how the GDR 'cautiously' rediscovered Prussian history.<sup>327</sup> Despite the press' overall critical assessment, the article initially recognised this new public discourse on Prussia as a positive sign that the GDR was now also willing to accept undesirable historical facts and that it would potentially now overcome its 'truncated view of the past'. The adjective 'truncated' highlights the newspaper's critical assessment of the GDR's earlier view on history. *The Guardian* further noted that 'any commendation of a figure [Carl von Clausewitz] so closely linked with the rise of the most militaristic state in German history would have been unthinkable a few years ago.'<sup>328</sup> Considering the military conflicts of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and the role of the German states in them, the

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<sup>322</sup> 'The two Germanies', p. 17.

<sup>323</sup> Patricia Clough, 'The Prussian revolution on both sides of the Wall', *The Times*, 15/08/1981, p. 10; Frank Johnson, 'Where all paths lead to the Brandenburg Gate', *The Times*, 31/08/1985, p. 10; Paul Oestreicher, 'How Marx adopted Martin Luther', *The Times*, 08/11/1983, p. 14; Stone, 'A Prussian blitz hits Berlin', p. 9.

<sup>324</sup> Mark Wood, 'East Germany seeks roots in Prussian past', *The Guardian*, 12/06/1980, p. 7.

<sup>325</sup> Hella Pick, 'East Germany seeks sense of identity', *The Guardian*, 10/11/1984, p. 6; Michael Simmons, 'A diet of Luther to East Germany's taste', *The Guardian*, 22/10/1983, p. 17; Anna Tomforde, 'Stauffenberg now a patriotic hero in E. Germany', *The Guardian*, 20/07/1984, p. 7.

<sup>326</sup> Clough, 'The Prussian revolution on both sides of the Wall', p. 10.

<sup>327</sup> Wood, 'East Germany seeks roots in Prussian past', p. 7.

<sup>328</sup> *Ibid.*

expression 'militaristic' and the addition of the superlative, show the article's critical attitude towards the Prussian state. Moreover, the statement stresses the discrepancy between the GDR's self-proclaimed image as *Friedenstaat* and its rediscovery of Prussian history. Addressing the then growing interest in the Prussian past in both German states, *The Times* also positively alluded to a 'dramatic change in the official attitude to the past.'<sup>329</sup> As in *The Guardian* article, the newspaper's positive assessment was achieved through a comparison with the country's earlier selective approach to history. In addition, *The Times* pointed out that in the GDR, those parts of history 'that suited the purpose – [were] used selectively by the regime for propaganda reasons and the rest was virtually ignored.'<sup>330</sup> The nouns 'regime' and 'propaganda' demonstrate that the newspaper clearly denounced the past East German politics due to the negative connotations associated with the terms. However, the use of the past tense in this sentence has to be noted, as it assigns this narrowed perspective on German history to the past. *The Times'* hopeful view that the official East German historiography was changing at the time can also be recognised when it noted: 'This is still seen through ideological spectacles [in the GDR] but the view is very much broader than before.'<sup>331</sup> Despite stressing the East Germans' continuing biased approach with the adverb 'still' and through the metaphor 'ideological spectacles', the second clause emphasises through the initial conjunction 'but' and the phrase 'very much' the ongoing changes. In the following years, the press continued to reflect upon the relationship between the GDR and the Prussian past. However, the content and language used in the articles soon revealed the press' increasing doubts about the ways in which the GDR exploited this particular historical period. In 1984, *The Guardian* journalist Hella Pick addressed the GDR's 'unresolved problem of establishing a sense of national identity'. The severity of the problem became clear as the article linked it with the increasing number of East Germans willing to leave their country.<sup>332</sup> Furthermore, it argued that Honecker's answer to the missing 'sense of nationhood' had been a, so far ineffective, turning to German history. The article's critical stance on the GDR's dealing with history became apparent when it described the 'twists and

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<sup>329</sup> Clough, 'The Prussian revolution on both sides of the Wall', p. 10.

<sup>330</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>331</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>332</sup> Pick, 'East Germany seeks sense of identity', p. 6.

turns of the official interpretation of German history'.<sup>333</sup> The phrase 'twists and turns' stresses the GDR's ongoing historical modification depending on political needs, in contrast to a thorough revisiting of the past. Pick even argued that many East Germans 'quizzically suspect' that the rediscovery of Prussian roots 'is all just part of the campaign to compensate them for the shortcomings of their own situation' such as their 'lack of freedom' or 'their enforced isolation'.<sup>334</sup> The article diminished the GDR's attempt of using German history even more by pointing to the neglect of these essential human rights. Moreover, the adverb 'just' rules out any other purposes of the increasing interest in Prussian history than political ones. The article further identifies the turning to Prussian history as part of the East German 'propaganda machine'. The nouns 'propaganda' and 'campaign', as in the quotation above, do not belong to the area of historiography and, therefore, they highlight the biased approach of the GDR. In contrast to the study of history the purpose of which is to gain a more accurate view on the past, propaganda pictures past events in a certain biased way in order to influence people. The two terms confirm once more, based on their negative connotations, the press' rejection of East German historiography. The term 'propaganda' can also be found in other articles. Richard Bassett, for example, confirmed the East German partial view on Prussian history when he described it as a 'distillation of what they see as the best in Prussian history' and later characterised this approach as 'propaganda'.<sup>335</sup> By comparing the East German historiography with the chemical process of distillation, the journalist highlights its selective approach as through distillation, only a small share of the substance which is particularly desired remains in comparison to the original ingredients. Overall, it can be established that the press noticed and indeed disapproved of the selective exploitation of Prussian history in particular. It can be assumed that this rejection of the GDR's historiography further hindered a positive use of the term 'Prussian'.

It has been demonstrated that the British press associated certain elements of the GDR with the Prussian past, namely the political authorities and the army as one of their instruments. More importantly, the press used these associations in a negative way. The disapproving assessment of the government's selective exploitation of

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<sup>333</sup> Pick, 'East Germany seeks sense of identity', p. 6.

<sup>334</sup> Ibid.

<sup>335</sup> Richard Bassett, 'East bloc thaw on history's old flames', *The Times*, 15/03/1985, p. 18.

history enhanced this impression. As a result of this evaluation, doubts about the GDR's antifascist image grew. Although foreign observers such as the British press often negatively viewed the East German government, they did not attribute the same characteristics to other parts of the GDR. The following section will continue to examine the press' differing representations of the GDR by focusing on its descriptions of the East German population.

### **2.2.2 The good Germans? – East Germans in the British press**

A closer examination of how the British press perceived the East German population is of particular significance for this study. It further illustrates the differing ways in which the British press presented certain elements of the GDR, such as the East German population, as distinctly different from their government. The East German population was identified first and foremost as German, and their 'German' characteristics were primarily assessed in a positive manner. In addition, the press drew comparisons between the East Germans and their West German neighbours, and detected that there were other Western influences which shaped them. Moreover, the East Germans were seen as being less influenced by the Prussian heritage or the state's ideology. This distinction between the East German citizens and their leadership additionally shows that the British press did not identify an 'East German identity' as aimed for by the East German government.

As its main references to describe the East German population, the British press used adjectives which it recognised as 'typically German'. These adjectives were often accompanied by the qualifier 'German' and, therefore, labelled even more clearly as unambiguously 'German'. These attributions were not restricted to individual newspapers and can be identified during almost the entire period being examined. Only during the final years of the GDR a transformation can be seen which will be expanded upon later in this section. *The Times*, for example, identified 'the old German virtue[s] of order and respect for education and authority'<sup>336</sup> amongst the East Germans. It marked these characteristics as positive qualities with the term 'virtue'. Moreover, the adjective 'old' indicates that these attributes had been developed over a long period of time and therefore could be regarded as deep-rooted and well

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<sup>336</sup> Richard Davy, 'East German dilemma in the wake of a tide from the West', *The Times*, 04/02/1974, p. 12.

established. *The Guardian* was convinced that ‘the Germans work hard under any regime.’<sup>337</sup> The expression ‘the Germans’ is a generalisation which means that it is speaking about ‘all’ Germans without exceptions which shows the newspapers strong belief in the statement. Moreover, the statement highlights the decisive character of the people. *The Guardian* journalist Jonathan Steele even claimed that the reason for the success of the country lay ‘regardless of ideology’ in the citizens’ ‘German character’, hard work and discipline.<sup>338</sup> Similar to the example above from the same newspaper, Steele emphasised the deeper impact of East German character in comparison to the state’s ideology. The nouns ‘ideology’ and ‘character’ stand in contrast to each other in this example. Character can be described as something naturally grown over time while ideology can be understood as political ideas which can be applied or even forced onto states and their citizens. Other characteristics of the East Germans which the press regarded as ‘German’ were their ‘Teutonic efficiency’<sup>339</sup> and the ‘old German tendency to set high goals as a technique for encouraging extra hard work.’<sup>340</sup> Both examples indicated the historical roots of the respective characteristics and qualities, therefore strengthening the validity of the statements. In the first statement, the journalist used the adjective ‘Teutonic’ which goes back to the Germanic tribe of the Teutons. The article itself discussed the new situation and the immediate consequences after Erich Honecker was forced to step back in October 1989. It argued, amongst others, that due to ‘subsidies from West Germany and Teutonic efficiency, East Germany has made central planning work as well as it is ever likely to be.’<sup>341</sup> Moreover, the article claimed that consequently a reordering of the East German economic system would be more difficult as the economy was not as ‘disintegrating’ as in other Eastern European countries. The statement above represents a persuasive argument for the significance of the East German national character and its influence on the state affairs. In the second example the adjective ‘old’ stresses that this behaviour has been an inherent part of the Germans for a long time. In particular, the gerund ‘encouraging’ shows this positive

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<sup>337</sup> Roger Pethybridge, ‘Letter from East Germany’, *The Guardian*, 13/09/1972, p. 4.

<sup>338</sup> Jonathan Steele, ‘East Germany taking off: Jonathan Steele on East German’s rapid strides towards throwing off’, *The Guardian*, 09/11/1972, p. 12.

<sup>339</sup> ‘Exit Herr Honecker’, *The Times*, 19/10/1989, p. 15.

<sup>340</sup> Jonathan Steele, ‘High economic hopes for East Germany’, *The Guardian*, 15/04/1981, p. 6.

<sup>341</sup> ‘Exit Herr Honecker’, p. 15.



understanding of the German quality. Noticeably, as several of the previous examples show, these positive characteristics were identified as a reason for the GDR's greater economic success in comparison with their communist neighbours. When the press described the East German leadership as 'more communist than German', the comparison further emphasised the differing perception of the country's leadership and its population.<sup>342</sup> Moreover, it raises the positive connotations of everything 'German' in relation to the GDR.

In addition to these positive 'German' qualities, the newspapers occasionally linked putatively negative 'German' characteristics to the East Germans, such as a 'German tendency toward inferiority complex',<sup>343</sup> or being dull<sup>344</sup> and provincialised.<sup>345</sup> These comments were not limited to East Germans, they were additionally aimed at West Germans and particularly at Berliners. The inclusion of all Germans, in East and West, strengthened the idea of a common German character, independent of the respective government, although the article focused on negative attributes. *The Guardian* recognised a lack of serenity and humour<sup>346</sup> in the East Germans and *The Times* referred to the image of the East Germans as 'dour and solid'.<sup>347</sup> Though both newspapers did not explicitly attribute these characteristics to being 'German', they can also be regarded as stereotypical characteristics which have often been associated with Germans in the past.<sup>348</sup> However, the press showed a noticeably stronger tendency to connect East Germans with positive 'German characteristics' than negative ones as the multitude of examples shows.

The impression given by the press that East Germans possessed many 'German' features is further enhanced by regular comments on similarities and connections between East and West Germans. This becomes particularly visible in references to their 'common identity'<sup>349</sup> or 'shared identity'.<sup>350</sup> Both adjectives leave no doubt on

<sup>342</sup> 'East Berlin bows to pressure', *The Independent*, 19/10/1989, p. 28.

<sup>343</sup> Dan van der Vat, 'The two Germanies: Watching each other in the UN', *The Times*, 17/09/1973, p. 16.

<sup>344</sup> After the conductor Kurt Sanderling returned from his work with the Leningrad Philharmonic Orchestra to the GDR, *The Guardian* reported: 'he came to seem an altogether duller conductor, very German and reliable.' In: Edward Greenfield, 'Beethoven cycle', *The Guardian*, 14/01/1980, p. 9.

<sup>345</sup> Neal Ascherson, 'Unhappy birthday in Berlin', *The Observer*, 09/08/1981, p. 20.

<sup>346</sup> Jonathan Steele, 'Culture comes in from the cold', *The Guardian*, 26/11/1973, p. 4.

<sup>347</sup> Richard Morrison, 'The conductor from over the Wall', *The Times*, 10/10/1988, p. 20.

<sup>348</sup> Anita M. Mallinckrodt, *Die Selbstdarstellung der beiden deutschen Staaten im Ausland. 'Image-Bildung' als Instrument der Außenpolitik* (Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1980); Ramsden, pp. 392ff.

<sup>349</sup> Paul Oestreicher, 'Comrade who went to the Wall for peace', *The Guardian*, 11/08/1986, p. 18.

the connection between the Germans in East and West. *The Guardian*, for example, remarked ironically: 'It is hard to convince yourself that you have an entirely different national identity, when almost every second citizen has a relative on the other side, and when you speak the same language, and can see the same television programmes.'<sup>351</sup> The newspaper motivated its critique on the GDR government's claim of a unique East German identity with three arguments: family ties, the German language and finally the ability to watch the same, primarily West German, TV programmes. The first argument provides the natural connection between members of the same family and their loyalties to each other. The journalist used this to place particular strength on the entire argument by putting the relation between family members first. In addition, *The Guardian* reminded its readers that the border between the two German states divided whole families which represents clear criticism of East German leadership. Secondly, the German language has united Germans for centuries, long before a united German state existed, therefore it represents another convincing argument for the strong connection between the Germans in East and West. The latter argument regarding the television programme seems less persuasive in comparison to the former two arguments, thus giving the entire statement an ironic tone. However, the role of television in this context should not be underestimated. Most East Germans regularly watched West German programmes and partly based their assumptions about the other country on them.

On Erich Honecker's journey to the Federal Republic in 1987, the East German politician also visited his home town in the Saarland. In this context, the press coverage continued to argue that 'emotional ties of language, geography and history cannot be underestimated [...]'<sup>352</sup> for the relation between the people of the two countries. As in the statement above, *The Times* highlighted how language and history, alongside with geography, kept the connection between the people in the two German states alive. The article particularly stressed its point by listing the three different reasons as climax. Moreover, it specifically focused on the inhabitants of the two countries with the phrase 'emotional ties' as only people in contrast to states or government can feel emotions. The wording 'cannot be underestimated' further

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<sup>350</sup> 'Birthday in Berlin', *The Times*, 23/06/88, p. 15.

<sup>351</sup> Hella Pick, 'High style for the men of marks', *The Guardian*, 24/01/1978, p. 7.

<sup>352</sup> Owen, 'Overtones of fatherland', p. 8.

emphasised the connections between the Germans in East and West as the phrase commonly means 'should not' or 'must not' be underestimated.

In addition, several newspapers presented the outer appearance of the East German population as an easily identifiable sign of common values and a comparable way of life between East and West Germans. In 1972, *The Guardian* enthusiastically reported on the first steps of rapprochement between the two German states, claiming that it could not be told 'from outward appearances which people were visitors from the West and which were residents of the capital of the German Democratic Republic.'<sup>353</sup> The use of the expression 'outward appearance' is of interest in this sentence. In contrast to the term 'clothes', it also refers to people's posture, their hairstyle and facial expression. This more comprehensive expression supported the idea of a strong connection and clear similarities between the two societies. *The Observer* generally confirmed *The Guardian's* assessment but focused on people's fashion, writing that West Germans 'are almost impossible to tell from East Berliners, at least by their clothes'.<sup>354</sup> Fashion is a significant part of culture and reflects attitudes, values and ongoing trends. Therefore, the observation that people in East and West wore similar clothes supported the argumentation that, despite the border between the two countries, they partly shared a common and interconnected German culture. The article also reflected upon the countries' different economical circumstances and the lack of, for example, western brands in the GDR, with the restriction 'almost impossible'. In this precise example, the observations served to demonstrate visible changes in the GDR and supported the idea that it was now time for the Federal Republic to officially recognise the other side as the differences between them had clearly been reduced. In addition, the press identified common attitudes in the GDR and the Federal Republic regarding material values. It suggested that prosperity is 'another important attribute shared by the two states'<sup>355</sup> and argued that the materialism in the GDR was partly 'inherited' from the Federal Republic.<sup>356</sup> The adjective 'another' in this sentence indicates the existence of several other attributes which the people in East and West had in common. The verb 'inherited' shows the ongoing exchange between them not only through, for example, still

<sup>353</sup> Norman Crossland, 'Berliners go east – slowly', *The Guardian*, 30/03/1972, p. 4.

<sup>354</sup> Neal Ascherson, 'Shopping bonanza beyond the Wall', *The Observer*, 02/04/1972, p. 2.

<sup>355</sup> Dan van der Vat, 'W Germany's population falling steadily', *The Times*, 09/08/1973, p. 4.

<sup>356</sup> Pethybridge, 'Letter from East Germany', p. 4.

existing family ties, but also indirectly through the consumption of West German television by large parts of the East German population. Of course, the press occasionally identified differences between the citizens of the two German states and their respective societies, for example in *The Times*' claim that human relations were 'in some ways warmer and closer than in West Germany.'<sup>357</sup> But even in this case, the Federal Republic remained the reference point, and so even the depiction of differences only served to highlight the lingering connection between the two societies. Moreover, by drawing attention to individual points of difference, there was an underlying assumption that most attitudes were similar, if not the same.

In addition to this, the British press described East German citizens with characteristics which had their origins outside of the purportedly 'German' frame of reference. Despite their 'non-German' origin and therefore superficial differentiation from the West German ones, these characteristics did not essentially contribute to an independent East German identity and instead tended to widen the gap between government and population. From the mid-1980s onwards, several articles suggested an increasing Americanisation and therefore Westernisation of East German society in comparison to previous years. These observations about the East German society coincided with the inauguration of Mikhail Gorbachev as the new General Secretary of the CPSU. Given his comparative youth and his new political attitude, the new Soviet leader promised to bring a modernised view to the political situation of the time and a new period of rapprochement between East and West. At that time, *The Times*, for example, noted how 'western styles [...] become tokens of the good life in the East', and it argued that 'traditional propaganda is ineffective on a generation attuned to western lifestyle.'<sup>358</sup> The use of the more general adjective 'western' instead of 'West German' should, of course, not be understood as a rejection of West German influence as the Federal Republic was part of this Western world and culture. The strong attraction of this 'western lifestyle' and its impact on East Germans becomes clear in the meaning of the adjective 'ineffective' which reveals how much the East German government had lost its influence on the younger part of the population, in the eyes of this journalist. The declining attraction of East German ideology and at the same time,

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<sup>357</sup> Davy, 'East Germany: View from both sides of the Wall', p. 12. However, the newspaper also found 'whether this is the result of compulsory levelling and the collective life or of solidarity under pressure is not certain [...].'

<sup>358</sup> Boyes, 'How the young are cracking a monolith', p. 14.

the strong appeal of western lifestyles, is further stressed through the use of the term 'generation'. It refers to a large group and not only individuals. Moreover, it suggests a long-term development as such an impact on an entire generation cannot be achieved through short-term influences. In 1985, *The Guardian* covered the 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the end of the Second World War, remarking, 'The children could be seen later in the centre of town chewing gum looking more like employees of an American Hamburger bar than the offspring of Hitler's Germany.'<sup>359</sup> The terms 'American Hamburger bar' and 'chewing gum' are symbols for the Western world, consumerism and modern lifestyle. In this quotation, they represented modern western life and disconnected the younger generation from the Third Reich and a National Socialist past. In addition, the statement identified a growing generation gap and, at the same time, an Americanisation of East German society. The process of Americanisation followed a similar development which had taken place in the Federal Republic during the 1950s and 60s, and therefore indicated a delay rather than a distinction between East and West. The article's observation of the younger East German generation who first fulfilled their obligation to attend the state parades, to continue afterwards with their 'real' interests and lives also stressed the discrepancy between state demands and reality, between government and population.

Noticeably, Soviet or Communist/Socialist influences were rarely mentioned in connection with the East German population. Therefore, it can be assumed that the press either did not regard the influences as important or that it consciously ignored them. Considering the GDR's objective to form an independent socialist identity, the East German leadership was unable to enforce this idea in Britain. Eventually, the lack of Soviet or Communist/Socialist influences further promoted the differentiation between the socialist government and its population. Despite the SED's most famous slogan, 'To learn from the Soviet Union means to learn victory!', *The Observer* refused to accept that the government was able to enforce this claim, as the newspaper stated that the attempt to 'awaken a love of the Russian language and culture – hasn't come off.'<sup>360</sup> The phrase 'awaken a love' is typically not associated with news language and rather belongs to the world of poetry and literature. This breach in register highlights the East German government's artificial and unsuccessful attempt to connect its

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<sup>359</sup> Roger Boyes, 'East Berlin's muted tribute', *The Times*, 09/05/1985, p. 3.

<sup>360</sup> Peter Freund, 'Russian with tears', *The Observer*, 10/08/1980, p. 8.

people with the Soviet state. Moreover, love is a strong human feeling which usually cannot be artificially created or forced onto someone. *The Independent* additionally argued that in the GDR that 'the people did not become communist but they adapted' to the political system.<sup>361</sup> The newspaper clearly denied the East Germans' communist character with the negation in the sentence. As the GDR had already existed for over 36 years by the time the article was published, the statement particularly highlights the perceived limited ideological influence of the East German government over its population. The following phrase, which is initiated by the conjunction 'but', does not change this impression. The reason for this is the verb 'adapt' which implies that the East Germans actively adjusted their lives and therefore places them, and not the government, in control of this process. The two statements in *The Observer* and *The Independent* suggest the government's incapability to fully implement its political line, along with the people's resentment towards adopting the state's imposed ideology and culture.

In addition to the incompatible ideology and culture of the Soviet Union and the East German state, regular comparisons with other Eastern European countries and their citizens stressed the differences between Eastern Europeans and East Germans. This indirectly emphasised the similarities between the citizens in the two German states. *The Times*, for example, argued: 'National characteristics also temper the operation of any political system, which is why the East Germans, communism notwithstanding, are the most prosperous state among the Soviet satellites.'<sup>362</sup> The statement clearly distinguishes between the East Germans and the other East European states through the superlative 'most prosperous'. Moreover, the reference to 'national characteristics' implies a connection with the Federal Republic which separates the GDR even more from the other Eastern European states. Noticeably, the newspaper emphasises the discrepancy between the characteristics of the East German population (subject of the sentence) and the political system of the GDR (part of the object). *The Sunday Telegraph* detected a similar causality and reported that 'East Germany has performed best of all [...] but this may be due primarily to their being German, and therefore more efficient in operating a Soviet-type model than the

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<sup>361</sup> Peter Bender, 'The world held up by a wall', *The Times*, 12/08/1986, p. 10.

<sup>362</sup> Ronald Butt, 'Nations in community', *The Times*, 08/12/1988, p. 16.

Russians.<sup>363</sup> As the previous statement, this article also attached great importance to the Germanness of the East German population and how it affected the economic performance of the GDR. The adverb 'primarily' draws attention to the 'German' character as a key reason for the success of the country. Clearly, the British press thought that their German characteristics provided the East German citizens with an essential advantage over other Eastern bloc countries.

In the final years of the GDR, the British press seemed to revise to some extent both its portrayal of the East Germans as 'German' and their former identification of similarities between East and West Germans. Instead, several articles stressed the differences between the citizens of the two German states. *The Observer* identified those in the East as 'quieter', and stated that it 'is as though they are waiting to become real Germans, much as their cities are waiting to become real German cities.'<sup>364</sup> Although the wording 'real Germans' indirectly implies that the newspaper recognised East Germans as some kind of Germans, it clearly places more emphasis on the ongoing process and the differences between East Germans and their Western neighbours. The example of the East German cities further supported the newspaper's argument. *The Times* referred to the same idea with the suggestion that 'they want to be German'.<sup>365</sup> Both newspapers mentioned the East Germans' desire to be German. This new representation of the East Germans indicated growing objections in Britain against the rapprochement between the two German states. This British fear of a potential future reunification at the end of the 1980s will be investigated in more detail in the next chapter. By placing the emphasis on differences between citizens of the GDR and the Federal Republic, the press seemed to discourage any idea of a common state or at least suggest that it was not yet a desirable objective.

In contrast to the positive characterisation of the East German population as 'Germans', West Germans were often less positively regarded. With its successful economic growth following the Second World War, the Federal Republic posed an economic threat to the declining power of the British Empire. A possible explanation for the ambivalent assessment of 'good (East) Germans' against 'bad (West) Germans' could be the often described 'underdog' image of the GDR which refers to an

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<sup>363</sup> 'Private enterprise in the Soviet bloc', *The Sunday Telegraph*, 23/07/1978, p. 22.

<sup>364</sup> Mark Frankland, 'Where glasnost hits a brick wall', *The Observer*, 19/06/1988, p. 21.

<sup>365</sup> Bernard Levin, 'The severed twain shall meet as one', *The Times*, 02/11/1989, p. 14.

unbalanced relationship between Britain and the GDR.<sup>366</sup> In this connection, Britain sympathetically looked down on the East German state and citizens, which did not present serious competition. Therefore, I would argue that the rejection of the Federal Republic and its citizens was much more determined by the prevailing negative feeling towards the Federal Republic as an economic and political power than by a deeper rejection of all things German. Several researchers have demonstrated that there have been ambivalent feelings towards Germans in the past, for example at the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century with the rise of the German Empire, or during the Weimar Republic.<sup>367</sup> Within this context, John Ramsden refers to the 'two Germanies' which often existed in British perceptions of the Germans.<sup>368</sup> During the 1930s, for example, the differentiation existed in Britain between 'Nazis' and 'decent Germans'. The occasional articles which can be found about the economic successes of the GDR also contained a similarly negative evaluation, and therefore support this theory.<sup>369</sup> A *Guardian* article, for example, dealing with the unfair business practices in the East German playing card industry, discussed the price 'dumping on the part of "comrades" in the Communist block' and how it was 'causing unemployment' in Britain.<sup>370</sup> The article accused the East Germans of unfairness and aggressive working practice. The term 'comrades' which was the official address for party members in the GDR in combination with the quotation marks gives the statement a sarcastic tone. This choice of words particularly highlights the negative assessment of the East German trade practices. Furthermore, as there was no other popular explanation for the GDR being the most economically successful country in Eastern Europe. If the success was not stimulated by German attributes, Soviet influence would have to be held responsible. This causality would certainly not have found support in the British press.

Overall, it can be stated that the British press clearly differentiated between the East German leadership and its population. The lack of support for journalists from the East German authorities, especially regarding common Western working practices such as regular press conferences and interview opportunities, as discussed in Chapter One,

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<sup>366</sup> Berger and LaPorte, *Friendly Enemy*, p. 312.

<sup>367</sup> Koch-Hillebrecht, pp. 185-216; Patrick Major, 'A Love-Hate Relationship?', *German History*, 26.4 (2008), pp. 457-468.

<sup>368</sup> Ramsden, pp. 99, 105, 171.

<sup>369</sup> John Carvel, 'Sharp dealing on the cards', *The Guardian*, 02/10/1976, p. 4.

<sup>370</sup> *Ibid.*



could also have promoted this differentiation. Moreover, the press did not identify a 'socialist East German identity', as several commentators have argued before. The constant references made to the population's German characteristics, distinctions between the inhabitants of other Eastern European states and the East Germans and the differentiation between the East German population and its leadership argue against this idea. However, despite several references to similarities with West German people, the press does not fully equate the citizens in both German states and instead regards their 'German' attributes as positive which stands in contrast to West Germans, as scholars have pointed out. This opposed perception of Germanness has so far not been discussed by scholars and can add a new facet to the on-going debate about the general perception of Germans in the UK.

### **2.2.3 The GDR – a country far, far away**

Another aspect of the GDR which became the subject of press attention was the country's landscape and architecture. It is a further example for the nuanced image of the GDR in the British press. In contrast to the generally critical representation by the press of the state authorities as Prussian and the state's exploitation of the Prussian heritage, as previously discussed, the discourse about the East German landscape and architecture shows more clearly the differing views on the GDR of individual British newspapers. Whereas all newspapers reported about the East German landscape and architecture during the first half of the 1970s, *The Guardian* contained articles which portrayed this side of the GDR to a much higher degree than other British newspapers in the following years. Moreover, the newspaper's later articles showed more often a positive, non-political and almost touristic representation of the country than other newspapers. In particular, during the early 1970s, several articles from different newspapers which reported on the East German landscape and architecture seemed to aim at introducing the GDR to its readers. These articles often reflected the journalists' positive attitude towards the rapprochement between both German countries. Researcher Jürgen Döschner refers in this context to an 'Entspannungseuphorie' amongst Western journalists in the GDR during the first few years after the Basic Treaty.<sup>371</sup> Noticeably, several articles that portrayed the GDR's landscape referred to the country's ability to preserve an older version of the modern Western state in parts

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<sup>371</sup> Döschner, p. 860.

of the country. In these early articles, the references to the past were meant as a positive feature. For example, the sub-heading of a *Times* article in 1972 titles: 'Gretel Spitzer drives across the border to look at a land where the clock seems to have stopped.'<sup>372</sup> The journalist's positive understanding of such a country from the past, as expressed in the time metaphor ('the clock seems to have stopped'), can be confirmed by the idyllic tone in other parts of the article. The journalist, for example, described 'birch-lined country roads' in the GDR, 'the flourishing green of the Spreewald' and 'the peaceful River Neisse'.<sup>373</sup> All three examples highlighted the still preserved nature of the country which formed positive contrast to the modern and often hectic life which is usually connected with cities. The journalist's conscious choice to present these example instead of less presentable parts of the country has to be considered. The adjective 'peaceful' particularly emphasises the positive view of the GDR. In addition to the positive connotation of the word 'peaceful' itself, its connection with the river Neisse which marked the border between Poland and the GDR, reminded readers of the well-established and seemingly friendly relations between both countries. Moreover, it symbolises the general mood of the time when international tensions were easing. When the journalist 'eventually' discovered 'new power stations' and 'city-like apartment houses, she perceived them 'as ugly' but added 'as everywhere in the world' and therefore clarified that this was not a GDR-specific feature. In addition, she remarked that they form 'a strange contrast to the old places'.<sup>374</sup> The last comment confirmed again Spitzer's positive assessment of the 'old' GDR which she had discovered. During the first half of the 1970s, *The Times* also positively highlighted the modernity of the GDR. The 'modern centre[s] of Karl-Marx-Stadt', Berlin and Dresden caught the newspaper's attention and it reported how East German city centres 'gleam with steel and concrete'.<sup>375</sup> The reference to both materials highlights the modern look of East German cities as it was their introduction to the construction industry that paved the way for the modern skylines of today's cities. The use of the verb 'gleam' stresses the positive meaning of the statement.

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<sup>372</sup> Gretel Spitzer, 'East Germany cashes in on visitors', *The Times*, 25/05/1972, p. 6.

<sup>373</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>374</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>375</sup> Richard Davy, 'Bridges over a troubled border', *The Times*, 03/05/1972, p. 16.

Even the often more critical *Observer* focussed on the country's beautiful landscape and other attractive places to visit in the GDR.<sup>376</sup> In a similar way to *The Times*, *The Observer* concluded that the GDR was 'a more relaxing country – for visitors' than the Federal Republic.<sup>377</sup> Moreover, it was 'filled with subtle attractions'. The verb 'to fill' stresses the large number of attractive places. The newspaper further argued that 'East Germany [...] has its share of "romantic" villages (minus heavy traffic), moated towns and medieval castles.'<sup>378</sup> The village is again symbol of the peaceful, slower and relaxing life in contrast to the hectic city with its 'heavy traffic'. The references to the Federal Republic which had already achieved a reputation as a country of historical and well-preserved old towns, aimed to introduce the little-known country to British readers. The references to 'moated towns' and 'medieval castles' created an image of the GDR as a country where the past was still visible, noticeably in a similar fashion to the statements by *The Times*. The journalist even claimed: 'Some of the best old German atmosphere is in the south of the country.'<sup>379</sup> The adjective 'old' as a positive term was further promoted by the qualifier 'best'. Even in the East German capital, the past seemed to dominate the journalists' perception as Harriet Kinsellam suggested in *The Guardian*. She wrote: 'Unter den Linden and the old heart of Berlin are still in the East along with most of the finest buildings which have been well restored and stand in splendid open spaces uncluttered by much traffic.'<sup>380</sup> The superlative 'finest' and the meaning of the adjective 'splendid' clearly highlight that the city and particularly its historical buildings were worth seeing and visiting. As in the previous example, the journalist stressed the lack of traffic as a positive attribute for a tourist attraction.

This image of the GDR as a country which managed to preserve the old and add attractive new sights gave the press an opportunity to present the country in a positive light. Moreover, the newspapers were able to arouse the interest of their readers without appearing to support directly the socialist East German leadership, and therefore they avoided the prospect of being accused of promoting a communist standpoint. Noticeably, this representation of the GDR was not a response to the East

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<sup>376</sup> Colitt, 'Time off', p. 25.

<sup>377</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>378</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>379</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>380</sup> Harriet Kinsellam, 'Hullo [sic] to Berlin', *The Guardian*, 28/10/1972, p. 14.

German state's efforts to establish its own tradition and history. It was not until the end of the 1970s and during the 1980s that the GDR increased its campaign to promote an independent identity based on selected parts of the German past. The aforementioned type of positive portrayal of the GDR can often be found in the early 1970s and rather decreased in the British press, with the exception of *The Guardian*, during the later years. The reasons for the difference in distribution within the individual newspapers will be discussed later.

There are a number of possible explanations for this positive and often even idyllic representation of the GDR, and indeed the greater quantity of articles of this kind during the first half of the 1970s. As mentioned above, many journalists supported the ongoing political détente. They welcomed the opening of the GDR and enthusiastically reported the rapprochement between both German states. In this context, the first positive articles can be regarded as a result of this general mood. However, during the following years, British journalists were able to obtain further information about the GDR and see behind the official curtain, despite the government's policy of restricting information. This could also offer an explanation for the decline in such romanticised articles, and with it a changing image of the GDR. This pronounced shift in image could further be interpreted as the press' counter-reaction to the official East German policy of attempting to exploit German history for its own purposes (a development which the British press assessed critically as discussed above). In addition, it is important to consider the working conditions of foreign journalists in the GDR. According to official regulations for foreign journalists, all foreign journalists who did not work permanently in the country, so-called *Reisejournalisten*, had to apply for a work permit to the East German Foreign Ministry.<sup>381</sup> This applied to a large number of journalists reporting for British newspapers, as very few British journalists were permanently accredited in the GDR.<sup>382</sup> The East German authorities keenly supported projects which concentrated, for example, on its history and culture; as such articles would often promote a positive

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<sup>381</sup> Verordnung über die Tätigkeit von Publikationsorganen anderer Staaten und deren Korrespondenten in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (21.2.1973), § 4.

<sup>382</sup> Furthermore, all foreign journalists had to inform the state authorities if they intended to work outside East Berlin and had to seek permission for any projects in state institutions, organisations, state holding companies, factories or cooperatives, and for interviews with leading figures. In: Erste Durchführungsbestimmung zur Verordnung über die Tätigkeit von Publikationsorganen anderer Staaten und deren Korrespondenten in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik vom 21. Februar 1973.

image of the country. More critical topics were often rejected.<sup>383</sup> These visits presented journalists with a very limited view of the country as the East German authorities controlled the places they could visit, where they would stay and even potential interview partners.<sup>384</sup> Furthermore, in the light of growing domestic problems in Britain, it is not surprising that there was a certain penchant for descriptions of a superficially older and more traditional society which evoked memories of a better past in contrast to Britain's purportedly problematic modern society.<sup>385</sup> Finally, in 1973, the GDR government started a housing programme, which over the following years led to profound changes in the appearance of numerous East German cities, before this they had been able to come across as old and quaint.<sup>386</sup> At the same time, the East German government abstained from making further substantial investments into the building structure of older houses which led to the decay of large parts of many East German cities and towns.

In particular from 1980 onwards, *The Times* became more critical towards the GDR and references to the country's landscape and architecture significantly decreased. Moreover, instead of presenting the country's older, more traditional appearance from a positive perspective, *The Times* assessed that the GDR looked 'anaemic and two-dimensional'.<sup>387</sup> The health metaphor of an 'anaemic' country indicated that the 'patient', in this case the GDR, was in a state of ill health in which this 'patient' was tired and lacking energy. This could figuratively highlight the declining economy of the country which was recognisable, amongst others, in the poor conditions of many East German houses and their often grey appearance. Another article noted: 'most of East Germany is shabby, backward and poor, reminding visitors from West Germany of pre-war landscapes.'<sup>388</sup> Although the article compared the GDR with Germany before the Second World War, as in previous examples, the three descriptive adjectives leave no doubt of the negative assessment of the GDR by this time. The use of three adjectives with similar meanings when used in reference to

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<sup>383</sup> Chmel, pp. 69-75. See also Jürgen Döschner for further information on the restricted working conditions for foreign journalists in the GDR: Döschner, p. 865.

<sup>384</sup> Simmons, *The Unloved Country*, p. 75.

<sup>385</sup> Brian Harrison, *Finding a Role? The United Kingdom, 1970-1990* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2011), p. 289; Koch-Hillebrecht, p. 222.

<sup>386</sup> For further information see: Stefan Wolle, *Die heile Welt der Diktatur: Alltag und Herrschaft in der DDR 1971-1989*, 2nd edn (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1999), pp. 182-188.

<sup>387</sup> Johnson, 'Where all paths lead to the Brandenburg Gate', p. 10.

<sup>388</sup> Richard Owen, 'Keeping faith with father', *The Times*, 03/09/1987, p. 10.

urban landscapes, increased the image of a run-down country. In addition to information about the look of the GDR, the adjectives also contained further information about the GDR. Along with its reference to the urban decay in the GDR, the adjective 'backward' also points to the unwillingness of East German politicians to open up the country for new political reforms comparable to those in the Soviet Union. Moreover, the term 'poor' could also stress the weak economy of the GDR.

In contrast, the often less GDR-critical *Guardian* continued to feature more articles which portrayed the GDR in a positive light.<sup>389</sup> Along with nostalgic references to the past, references to the GDR's classical German cultural heritage in fields such as literature, music and art painted a positive picture of the GDR. In 1976, *The Guardian*, for example, discovered the 'lost' cities of Dresden, Weimar and Leipzig. It described Weimar as 'almost as dusty, quiet and walkable as it was in Goethe's time' and Leipzig as 'the first choice for a musical pilgrimage [...] where you would need a tin ear and a stone heart not to be extraordinarily moved by Bach's music'.<sup>390</sup> The names of the literary and artistic icons from Germany's past such as Goethe and Bach and their achievements were linked to East German towns in a general promotion of the GDR's cultural heritage. They further promoted the positive understanding of the article. The attempt to create an image of the country where the past was still alive became particularly recognisable when *The Guardian* journalist Webb described a scene in the *Cafe am Brühl* in Dresden 'where a black-suited young Kafka burns silently across a little marble table at his most un-German Democratic-looking girl'.<sup>391</sup> The man's clothing, the material of the table and the comparison of the young man with the famous writer created an image of the GDR which had little to do with the realities of the 1970s where rather jeans and plastic would dominate the image. The choice of words (for example the verb 'burns') supports the impression that the situation occurred in the distant past. The reference to the 'most un-German Democratic-looking girl' is particularly noticeable as it seems that the journalist wanted to balance the scene and free it from any already existing GDR stereotypes regarding fashion and appearance.

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<sup>389</sup> Simmons, 'A diet of Luther to East Germany's taste', p. 17; Simmons, 'Stars to follow in the East', *The Guardian*, 23/02/1985, p. 11; Dan van der Vat, 'From Augustus the Strong to Voltaire and P. C. Wren', *The Guardian*, 17/01/1987, p. 11; W.L. Webb, 'East Germany', *The Guardian*, 24/01/1976, p. 7.

<sup>390</sup> W.L. Webb, 'East Germany', p. 7.

<sup>391</sup> *Ibid.*

In the following years other articles continued to advertise East German attractions to the readers of *The Guardian*. Weimar and its most famous sons remained a constant object of interest in this context. Michael Simmons described the town in 1983 as ‘beautiful’ and ‘full of memories of Goethe, Schiller, Bach and Liszt.’<sup>392</sup> The phrase ‘full of’ indicates the multitude of historical references within the town. The list of four names instead of naming only a single writer or composer supports this impression. Two years later the journalist enthusiastically reported on the ‘hills and the sea, history and hospitality’ in the GDR and again stressed ‘the gentle charm’ of Weimar and claimed that ‘Goethe’s house is a joy.’<sup>393</sup> Simmons also romanticised locations such as Meissen where ‘the castle and the cathedral rear up in medieval splendour high above the river, giving even the tiredest Instamatic owner a worthwhile shot.’<sup>394</sup> He similarly described Dresden which ‘in parts [had been] rebuilt and restored [...] to recapture some of the old renaissance and baroque splendours.’<sup>395</sup> The use of the noun ‘splendour’ for both places aimed to emphasise the high quality of the East German sights. Both examples also refer to the historical origin of the buildings (medieval, renaissance and baroque) and connected the East German places of the 1980s with the glory of former times. The mentioning of castles and cathedrals supports this connection due to their historical origin. In particular, the unusual superlative ‘tiredest’ further labelled Dresden and Meissen as places very worth to visit for every ‘Instamatic owner’, a paraphrase for the modern tourist.

In 1987, Dan van der Vat revisited the country. A similar strategy as in previous articles can already be identified in the headline of van der Vat’s article (‘From August the Strong to Voltaire and P.C. Wren’) which connected the GDR with historical figures.<sup>396</sup> In addition to the German elector, the headline also mentioned the French writer and philosopher Voltaire and the British writer Wren. The latter two were most likely more familiar to the newspaper’s readers than some of the German icons which had been mentioned in previous articles. Therefore, these familiar figures were even further able to promote the reader’s interest in the article and, as a result, in the GDR. The journalist summarised that ‘from the sightseeing point of view, the East [of Berlin]

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<sup>392</sup> Simmons, ‘A diet of Luther to East Germany’s taste’, p. 17.

<sup>393</sup> Simmons, ‘Stars to follow in the East’, p. 11.

<sup>394</sup> Ibid.

<sup>395</sup> Ibid.

<sup>396</sup> van der Vat, Dan, ‘From August the Strong to Voltaire and P.C. Wren’, p. 11.

has the edge.<sup>397</sup> The colloquial expression 'to have the edge' in combination with the indirect comparison of both sides of the divided city strongly advertised East Berlin as a place worth visiting. With the limitation 'from the sightseeing point of view' the sentence also indirectly pointed out that the western part of the city was superior to the eastern half regarding other topics, such as food or leisure. As this type of articles focused entirely on the tourist side of the GDR, the sentence gave the opportunity of a positive assessment of East Berlin as it exclusively commented on a non-political side of the country. The articles by van der Vat also referred to other famous Germans such as Luther, Bach, Goethe, Schiller and Frederick the Great, always connecting them to East German places.

A *Times* article by Anne McElvoy, however, demonstrates that a reference to Schiller and Goethe did not automatically promote the GDR. The journalist wrote: 'Here [in Weimar] the wise mien of an absurdly youthful Erich Honecker peers out incongruously from shop windows full of passionless ladies lingerie, and in the central square, Goethe and Schiller scowl upon the gaggles of Soviet soldiers wielding Praktica cameras in the vague direction of German culture on their day off.'<sup>398</sup> The ironic sound of the statement surely avoided a positive impression of Weimar. The journalist achieved this impression through the combination of different observations (an underwear shop and the portrayal of the East German political leader) which did not stand in any connection with each other. The adverb 'absurdly' and the mentioning that the 'youthful' portrait was surrounded by women's lingerie emphasises the comical character of the situation and lets Honecker look ridiculous (the East German leader was by that time 76 years old). The disrespectful description could also mirror the politician's growing decline of power in 1989. Moreover, the reference to the presence of a large number of Soviet soldiers on the central square instead of comments about the writers or the square itself guaranteed a lack of appeal of such a place to tourists. McElvoy's article is another example that *The Times* did not feature the East German landscape and architecture in a positive light during the 1980s.

It has been demonstrated that the East German landscape and architecture represent another topic that the British press regularly reported on. The change in the presented topic over time and its different representation in individual newspapers

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<sup>397</sup> van der Vat, Dan, 'From August the Strong to Voltaire and P.C. Wren', p. 11.

<sup>398</sup> McElvoy, Anne, 'All ghosts and Goethe', p. 53.



offer another refutation of the idea that the British press' portrayal of the GDR was simply one-sided.<sup>399</sup> Whereas all newspapers reported on the topic from a positive perspective during the first years after the Basic Treaty, aiming to introduce the country to British readers, their views became more varied during the following years. The newspapers primarily achieved a positive representation of the GDR through descriptions of an older and more traditional German country in contrast to modern western societies such as the Federal Republic and Great Britain. Furthermore, the country was depicted as having a rich historical and cultural heritage, recalling the image of Germany as a nation of poets and philosophers. The preceding analysis has provided a further argument that British newspapers contained clear distinctions between the GDR's appearance, population and political representatives. After this overview of common images in connection with the GDR, another not quite so important aspect, the country's reputation as antifascist, will be discussed.

#### **2.2.4 Myths: antifascism**

The GDR's claim to be an antifascist state that had freed itself from a National Socialist past had attracted many foreign observers.<sup>400</sup> However, this antifascist myth played only a minor role in the British press's coverage of the country during the 1970s and 80s, thus confirming Arnd Bauerkämper's general observation that antifascism eventually lost much of its attraction for foreign observers.<sup>401</sup> The overall number of articles that made specific reference to the antifascist character of the GDR was limited. Nevertheless, this sentiment could still occasionally be found, particularly in reports about individual East German politicians and investigations of their motives. In this context, the antifascist description worked to uphold a positive image of the politician in question. Not surprisingly, it was the left-leaning *Guardian* which tended to emphasise this particular aspect of the GDR more strongly and from a more positive perspective than other newspapers. This therefore confirmed that the GDR's 'antifascist tradition' particularly attracted the British left as several scholars have

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<sup>399</sup> See for example: Dennis, 'GDR Studies in the UK', p. 284; Golz, *Verordnete Völkerfreundschaft*, p. 159; McCauley, 'British-GDR Relations', p. 50; Wallace, *East Germany*, p. XV.

<sup>400</sup> Berger and LaPorte, 'In Search of Antifascism', p. 536; David Childs demonstrates how positively the GDR was seen in contrast to the Federal Republic particularly in the first two decades as the GDR apparently distanced itself more clearly from the past. In: Childs, 'The Changing British Perception of the GDR', pp. 377ff.

<sup>401</sup> Bauerkämper, 'It Took Three to Tango', p. 57; Bauerkämper, 'Sympathie mit dem Gegner', p. 331. See also: Berger and LaPorte, 'In Search of Antifascism', pp. 547ff.

pointed out.<sup>402</sup> However, the GDR had generally lost much of its image as an antifascist state by the early 1970s as the press also reported on other events which devalued this image. In the following section, the remaining traces of the GDR's antifascist image and its consequences will be discussed. Subsequently, their limited influence during the 1970s and 80s for the overall image of the country will be demonstrated.

Articles published during Honecker's state visit to the Federal Republic in 1987 drew particular attention to the antifascist stance of the GDR through their references to the background of the country's political leader. Press coverage during these periods contained several references to Honecker's earlier life and his time in prison under the National Socialists which had come about as a result of his political beliefs. *The Guardian* particularly drew attention to Honecker's antifascist attitude. The newspaper introduced Erich Honecker with: 'aged 75, whose fight against the Nazis resulted in him spending 10 years of his early Communist career in Nazi prisons and concentration camps'.<sup>403</sup> *The Guardian* stressed the importance of Honecker's years in prison during the Third Reich by directly listing it after his age and therefore presenting it as a substantial fact about the politician. Moreover, the newspaper further enhances the positive understanding of his fight by adding two highly negative terms, 'Nazis' and 'concentration camps'. This part of his past was further emphasised as the newspaper contrasted it with Helmut Kohl's behaviour who had 'tried to tell the world that his generation cannot be held responsible for the dark Nazi past [...]'.<sup>404</sup> The newspaper's rejection of Kohl's claim can be clearly identified in the use of the verb 'try' which in its past form indicates the failure of the attempt. As both leaders were recognised as being symbolic of their respective countries, this example also suggests that the GDR was more capable of understanding and handling the German past. This impression was further strengthened in *The Guardian's* coverage of Honecker's visit to the former concentration camp, Dachau, just a few days later. The article reported: 'Mr Erich Honecker, the East German leader who spent 10 years of his early Communist career in Nazi prisons, [...] rounded off his remarkable five-day visit to West Germany with a

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<sup>402</sup> Bauerkämper, 'It Took Three to Tango', p. 50; Berger and LaPorte, 'In Search of Antifascism', pp. 536ff.

<sup>403</sup> Anna Tomforde, 'Bonn rolls out the red carpet for Honecker', *The Guardian*, 05/09/1987, p. 6.

<sup>404</sup> Ibid.

tribute to antifascist and Nazi victims [...].<sup>405</sup> As the earlier example, the sentence portrays Honecker as an active opponent of National Socialism during the Third Reich and as someone who had suffered as a consequence. The adverbial of time, '10 years', further stresses his commitment. The information suggests a deeper understanding for the victims which had been imprisoned in Dachau. Noticeable in this sentence is the use of the term 'antifascist' which can be regarded as part of a rather left-wing vocabulary and which was an elementary term in the GDR's official language. Therefore, it can be suggested that the phrasing had been taken from an official East German press release. As a result, the statement supported a positive image of the East German politician which was also intended by the GDR. The general assessment of the visit as 'remarkable' without any further qualifications, whether this referred to the fact that the visit had taken place at all or to its course, also enhances the positive perception of Honecker himself. *The Guardian's* representation of Erich Honecker demonstrates the generally more positive attitude of the British press towards the GDR during the visit. In contrast, *The Times* only briefly mentioned the visit to Dachau and concentrated instead, as can be seen in the article's headline, on the 'friendlier border rules' which it speculated could potentially be agreed upon as a result of the state visit.<sup>406</sup> In making reference to the border between the two countries, the newspaper reminded its readers of the political realities of the situation and demonstrated its more negative attitude towards the GDR government. However, with this information, *The Times* also participated in the positive news coverage of the GDR during the visit as it focused on the possibility of future changes.

During the summer and autumn of 1989, the East German state faced a substantial crisis as large parts of the East German population lost faith in their government, which resulted in growing resistance and thousands of mostly young East Germans fleeing their country (amongst other events). At this point, *The Guardian* once again referred to the GDR leadership's antifascist roots. It described Honecker's time in prison during the Third Reich and his increasing seniority to explain and, in part, excuse the leader's political inflexibility. Several times, the newspaper pointed

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<sup>405</sup> Anna Tomforde, 'Honecker pays tribute to victims of "model" Nazi concentration camp', *The Guardian*, 12/09/1987, p. 7.

<sup>406</sup> Richard Owen, 'Honecker in "friendlier border rules" suggestion', *The Times*, 12/09/1987, p. 9.

out that Honecker was an ‘old Communist’<sup>407</sup> and ‘soldier’.<sup>408</sup> Both terms highlight Honecker’s inability to adapt to the new political situation as neither soldiers, who primarily follow orders without questioning them, nor old people are known for their flexibility. At the same time, both expressions are not entirely negative, as the information about Honecker’s age also functions as an apology for his behaviour while the term ‘soldier’ also has positive connotations as it describes a person who is serving his country. The newspaper also regularly stressed his ‘opposition to the Nazis’<sup>409</sup> and his fight ‘before and during that war for Communism and [that he] suffered (in prison) as a result.’<sup>410</sup> Under the headline ‘Honecker refuses to designate heir’, this pattern became particularly noticeable.<sup>411</sup> In this article, *The Guardian* journalist Michael Simmons argued that Honecker was ‘old school’; a euphemism for Honecker’s refusal of any internal changes. The colloquial expression simplified Honecker’s political hard-line. Furthermore, he wrote that the East German leader ‘cut his teeth as a Communist in opposition to the Nazis and served 10 years in prison as a result.’<sup>412</sup> The characterisation as a communist who fought against the Nazis, the ultimate evil, resulted in a positive recognition of Honecker and his struggle. With these explanations, the newspaper seems to be offering a simple solution for the country’s problems. As the leadership’s ‘understandable’ adherence to the old system was caused by their long struggle with National Socialism, a younger generation would surely be able to solve the problems and respond to the demands for reform which would lead the country out of its crisis. Honecker’s successor Egon Krenz seemed to symbolise this younger generation, albeit superficially. However, his short time in office demonstrated that any actual solution to the GDR’s problems would be far more complex than the newspaper had suggested. Being middle-aged, the 52-year-old Krenz had also been a party official for decades and could not win the population’s trust.

Another of the very few instances which triggered an antifascist portrayal of the GDR was the broadcast of the American TV miniseries *Holocaust* on a West

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<sup>407</sup> Michael Simmons, ‘Little response as Honecker makes wreath-laying round: Eyewitness’, *The Guardian*, 06/10/1989, p. 24.

<sup>408</sup> Michael Simmons, ‘An old soldier out of step’, *The Guardian*, 19/10/1989, p. 19.

<sup>409</sup> Michael Simmons, ‘Honecker refuses to designate heir’, *The Guardian*, 08/09/1989, p. 14; Simmons, ‘Little response as Honecker makes wreath-laying round’, p. 24; Michael Simmons, ‘Birthday toast ignores refugees’, *The Guardian*, 06/10/1989, p. 10.

<sup>410</sup> Simmons, ‘An old soldier out of step’, p. 19.

<sup>411</sup> Simmons, ‘Honecker refuses to designate heir’, p. 14.

<sup>412</sup> *Ibid.*

German TV channel in 1979. In particular, *The Guardian* showed the belief that the 'better' antifascist Germans still existed in the GDR. However, it will be demonstrated that the positive portrayal of the GDR primarily functioned to show the Federal Republic in a negative manner. Before discussing the press coverage in this specific context, it is essential to consider the significance of the series for the Federal Republic. The broadcast of *Holocaust* in January 1979 on West German television became an historic media event with more than 20 million viewers in the Federal Republic. More importantly, it can be seen as a watershed moment for the country's discourse on coming to terms with its National Socialist past.<sup>413</sup> Before the broadcast, West German attitudes towards the Holocaust had generally been rather vague. As a direct consequence of its screening, however, the crimes committed against millions of Jews were transformed into something much more specific and personal.<sup>414</sup> Although it was by no means the first television programme to deal with the topic, it 'pricked the conscience of many Germans and catalysed a public debate on an unprecedented scale.'<sup>415</sup> In addition to this newfound willingness to engage with the debate about the German past, which was felt by a large part of West German society, the broadcast affected West German legislation and the German language. Only a couple of months after the programme, the West German parliament abolished the statute of limitation for war crimes which had been an on-going debate since the 1960s. Additionally, the expression *Holocaust* became a fixed term in the German language, and referred specifically to the genocide committed against European Jews during the Third Reich and replaced the more euphemistic Nazi-invented term, *Endlösung*.

Although the GDR did not broadcast the miniseries, most East Germans were able to receive West German TV channels and could therefore also watch *Holocaust*. Considering the West German TV channels broadcasted the programme primarily to a West German audience and the subsequent debate in the Federal Republic, *The Guardian's* focus on the reaction in the GDR after the broadcasting is surprising. All of

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<sup>413</sup> Jürgen Wilke, 'Die Fernsehserie "Holocaust" als Medienereignis', *Historical Social Research*, 30.4 (2005), p. 14.

<sup>414</sup> Werner Sollors, "'Holocaust' on West German Television: The (In)Ability to Mourn?', *The Massachusetts Review*, 20.2 (1979), p. 381.

<sup>415</sup> David S. Wyman and Charles H. Rosenzweig, *The World Reacts to the Holocaust* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), p. 428; see also: Frank Bösch, 'Film, NS-Vergangenheit und Geschichtswissenschaft: Von "Holocaust" zu "Der Untergang"', *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 55.1 (2007), p. 2.

the articles which covered the TV series functioned to emphasise the newspaper's positive attitude of the East German population and at the same time revealed the newspaper's critical position towards the Federal Republic. Although *The Observer* reported on the broadcasting of *Holocaust* in the Federal Republic, the newspaper did not provide any information about the GDR in this context.<sup>416</sup> Unfortunately a direct comparison with *The Times'* coverage is not possible as the newspaper was not published during the time of the broadcasting because of an industrial dispute. *The Guardian* promoted the GDR by comparing the apparently contrasting reactions of East and West German TV audiences to the programme: 'In East Berlin reactions were somewhat different. A young couple said [...] the horrors of Nazism had been much more widely and seriously documented than in the West.'<sup>417</sup> The indirect quotation increases the credibility of the claim that the East Germans had dealt more thoroughly with the past than their West German neighbours as a quotation always provides a sense of authenticity. The phrase 'more widely and seriously documented' stresses two aspects of the documentation, 'widely' emphasises the quantity and 'seriously' the quality. Moreover, the description of the couple as 'young' has to be noted in this context. They, the younger generation, had not experienced the war themselves, however, due to the apparently more comprehensive education of the East German society, they were also well aware of the German history. The article lacks any additional criticism of the GDR's approach to its National Socialist past and instead again draws attention to the failures in the Federal Republic: 'The past was widely discussed 10 years ago [...]. But the discussion never went as deep as it has in the past week.'<sup>418</sup> The article recognised that the social liberal government and the student movement at the end of the 1960s, '10 years ago', had stimulated a discussion about the German past. However, it denied that this critical engagement within the Federal Republic had been profound enough or that it had continued over a longer period of time. Two additional articles strengthened the idea that the GDR had dealt more thoroughly with the National Socialist past and also contributed to the critique of the Federal Republic. The first one only used the miniseries as an opportunity to address the 'latest revelation of snooping practices by the police and the counter-intelligence

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<sup>416</sup> James Hutchinson, 'Holocaust shocks the new Germans', *The Observer*, 04/02/1979, p. 7.

<sup>417</sup> James Fenton, 'Holocaust film draws 13M audience in Germany', *The Guardian*, 27/01/1979, p. 4.

<sup>418</sup> *Ibid.*

service' in the Federal Republic.<sup>419</sup> The colloquial expression 'snooping' in the sentence clearly contains a negative judgement and rejects the idea that both organisations, police and counter-intelligence service, only pursue their duty within a clearly defined democratic framework. As police and counter-intelligence service are empowered by the state, the sentence represents a negative judgement on the West German state itself. The negative perception of both organisations is further enhanced through the additional remark 'latest revelation' as this indicates a repeating pattern of such misconduct. Only three days later, the last article in this context focused nearly exclusively on the East German population who watched the series and 'expressed horror, surprise and indignation at the apparent widespread ignorance of the Nazi period among their West German neighbours'.<sup>420</sup> The sentence particularly highlights the 'outrage' of the East Germans by using a listing of three terms. A direct quotation from an East German viewer additionally confirms the journalist's argument: 'We've seen all this before, it's nothing new – but it's horrifying that so many West Germans obviously don't know what happened under the Nazis [...]'.<sup>421</sup> The article uses the higher credibility of original sources by directly quoting East Germans. Similar to the previous statement, the sentence contains a repetition of the same information with different words ('seen all this before, it's nothing new') to emphasise their meaning and significance. Considering the choice of words, the use of the verb 'horrify' can be noted. As its noun 'horror' in the previous quote, 'horrify' expresses a very strong feeling and therefore represents a particularly negative judgement about the lack of awareness in the Federal Republic. Both examples show how the negative portrayal of the West German population helped to promote a positive image of the East German population. *The Guardian's* coverage of the broadcast and reaction to *Holocaust* in the Federal Republic is a striking example of the biased reporting found in individual newspapers, and shows how they could represent a particular view of events while other information was blanked out. Moreover, this diversity of the press denies the notion of a homogeneous assessment of the GDR in the British press.

Despite these occasional references to antifascist character which was detected in the East German population and even sometimes in individual politicians, other

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<sup>419</sup> Siegfried Buschschlüter, 'Germans take new look at snoopers', *The Guardian*, 29/01/1979, p. 6.

<sup>420</sup> 'Holocaust "old news" in East Berlin', *The Guardian*, 01/02/1979, p. 7.

<sup>421</sup> *Ibid.*

topics served to undermine the image of the GDR as antifascist state. Several British newspapers, partly even *The Guardian*, criticised the GDR's political relationship with the State of Israel and its refusal to pay compensation to Jewish victims of National Socialism. *The Times* reported that 'West Germans (unlike the East Germans) have at least tried to make amends [...]'.<sup>422</sup> Moreover, it noted that 'East Germany certainly appeared at first to make a sharper break with Nazism, [...]. But it has retained a mixed bag of elements from the German past, including military parades with goose-stepping soldiers [...]'.<sup>423</sup> The first sentence reflects the older view on the GDR from abroad, however, the use of past tense reveals how obsolete such assessments have become. The conjunction 'but' in the following sentence further rejects the established image. Moreover, the reference to the 'military parades with [its] goose-stepping soldiers', a term which has already been analysed earlier in this chapter, negates the notion that the GDR had profoundly dealt with its National Socialist past. This impression is supported by the ambiguous expression 'mixed bag of elements' as it suggests that the GDR had kept a multitude of different elements, positive and also negative, from the past. Hence, the newspaper questioned the prevailing policy of the GDR government. It also stressed that the East German government had largely refused to pay compensation to Jews. *The Guardian* once again presented a more positive attitude towards the GDR in this context. Instead of simply reporting on the GDR's refusal to compensate victims, the newspaper focused more on the government's argumentation for this decision, and explained that 'Under the Potsdam Agreement East Germany was responsible for making all of Germany's reparation payments to Russia and Poland'.<sup>424</sup> The reference to the legal contract, the Potsdam Agreement, which had also been signed by Great Britain gave the statement particular validity. At the same time, *The Guardian* also acknowledged that 'East Germany's record in removing former Nazis from power is superior to West Germany's'.<sup>425</sup> In the same manner as the previous sentence, the statement distracts from the original question about reparations and instead focuses on a different aspect regarding the GDR's

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<sup>422</sup> 'An intemperate attack', *The Times*, 06/05/1981, p. 17.

<sup>423</sup> 'The two Germanies', p. 17.

<sup>424</sup> Jonathan Steele, 'Jews step-up drive for compensation from East Germany', *The Guardian*, 07/02/1973, p. 4.

<sup>425</sup> *Ibid.*



dealing with the past. In addition to a positive assessment of the East German policy, the comparison once more served to criticise the West German state.

In summary, the British press marginalised the GDR's antifascist image during the 1970s and 80s, restricting it to articles covering East German politicians and the public discourse on the TV miniseries *Holocaust*. The press additionally reported on topics which disputed the image of an antifascist state. Therefore, the press analysis overall confirms Bauerkämper's research results that the GDR's antifascist image faded during the 1970s and 80s. In addition, this section has shown once more the different press representation of individual parts of the country. Antifascist facets were primarily presented by the more left-leaning portions of the press which often aimed to show a negative image of the West German state. Despite the generally decreasing importance of the GDR's image as an antifascist state, it could be suggested that it still partially influenced the positive 'German' image of the East German population in comparison with their West German neighbours. The East Germans were rarely associated with the Second World War and the characterisation 'German' could be more easily used in a positive sense.<sup>426</sup>

In this chapter, it has been demonstrated that the image of the GDR, as described by the British press, was very structured and more nuanced than many commentators both before and after the *Wende* have suggested. It distinguished between its appearance, its population and its political representatives, and the newspapers presented conflicting images between themselves. These distinctions contrast with contemporaneous research findings which tend to focus solely on the overall image of the GDR. The British press identified a German identity amongst the East German population. In this context, it is also interesting to note that, contrary to the commonly perceived image of Germans and Germany regarding the Federal Republic in the UK, German attributes were represented as positive when cited in connection with the GDR, more precisely the East German population. Therefore, the result can also deepen our knowledge of how the press, an important representation of British society, reflected on the Germans as it highlights other considerations for the negative portray of the West Germans and the Federal Republic than long-term

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<sup>426</sup> Grix and Lacroix, p. 379.

national animosities. The press did not identify a distinct East German identity as it clearly rooted their character in a form of 'Germanness' comparable to their West German neighbours. It has been further established that in contrast to the East German population the press regularly compared the East German authorities and their representatives with the historical state of Prussia and so-called Prussian characteristics. In this context the label 'Prussian' was used in a negative manner as it evoked notions of military power, aggression and wars. A reason for the press' distinction between Prussian and German characteristics can partly be found in the GDR's own selective approach to history and the lack of acceptance thereof in Britain. The British press' reaction to this strategy was primarily very negative and dismissed it as propaganda, even if in this context *The Guardian's* coverage was less critical in comparison to other newspapers. By aiming to distance itself from the East German authorities, the press could have consciously or unconsciously promoted the division between state authorities and their population by different characterisations. Moreover, it should also be important to consider if the press' working procedures and the working conditions which journalists experienced in the GDR potentially influenced the portrayal of the country and its individual elements. As earlier in this chapter noted, the restricted support from the East German authorities could have reinforced the split perception between government and population and at the same time a more critical view of the authorities. In addition, the GDR's media policy which aimed to control Western journalists most likely contributed to the increasing number of articles which featured the East German landscape positively, especially in the early 1970s. Finally, the chapter has also shown on a small number of examples, how unfiltered East German information, for example from the East German news agency or from official statements, led to a positive portrayal of the GDR. It has to be noted, that examples for the use of official East German sources could rarely be identified. In Section 1.6 of this thesis it has been shown how the East German authorities tried to make Western media reproduce their official policy. However, journalists' awareness of these attempts and their critical stance towards them have also been demonstrated in the interviews. As a result of the information examined within this chapter, the following aspects will be considered in the overall thesis. Firstly, it has been established that the British press covered the GDR in depth and presented a great

variety of aspects. Secondly, newspapers displayed neither a uniformly positive nor negative attitude to everything East German; they differentiated instead between individual parts of the country and its society. Finally, British newspapers did not demonstrate a homogeneous image of the GDR. These findings will be further examined in the following chapters.

### Chapter 3

#### **Between the Federal Republic and the Soviet Union – The GDR on the international stage**

This chapter will investigate the ways in which the British press presented the GDR's international status, especially in relation to the Federal Republic and the Soviet Union. An autonomous international policy is a significant attribute for any independent state, and was therefore of particular importance for the GDR's overall image in the British press. Contemporary researchers point out the tension between reality and perception with regards to the GDR's status as an independent international player between 1972 and 1989. In light of important political changes during this time, political scientist Benno-Eide Siebs describes the discrepancy with reference to the GDR's ability to enact an independent foreign policy.<sup>427</sup> He notes that during the 1980s, the GDR's foreign policy was seen externally as an 'Erfolgsgeschichte' as a result of its increasing participation in international organisations, its ability to establish international relations particularly during the 1970s, and its status as an equal partner in the international community.<sup>428</sup> However, Siebs also stresses that room for manoeuvre was very much determined by others and therefore highlights the Soviet Union's continued influence on GDR policy.<sup>429</sup> Other researchers also highlight this dichotomy. Elfie Rembold, for example, observes that after 1973 the GDR was rather overrated in Britain with regards to the country's international status.<sup>430</sup> Mary Fulbrook notes that the perception of the East German state prior to 1989 was stable and successful, particularly after overcoming the lack of international legitimacy.<sup>431</sup> In contrast to this, the analysis in this chapter will demonstrate that the British press consistently discussed the GDR and its foreign policy, and was therefore able to provide its readers with a comprehensive representation of the GDR's foreign relations. Despite this

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<sup>427</sup> Benno-Eide Siebs, *Die Außenpolitik der DDR 1976-1989: Strategien und Grenzen* (Paderborn: Schöningh, 1999).

<sup>428</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>429</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 10, 42.

<sup>430</sup> Elfie Rembold, 'Großbritannien und die DDR', *Deutschland Archiv*, 34.2 (2001), p. 300.

<sup>431</sup> Fulbrook, *Anatomy of a Dictatorship*, p. 4.

interest, the British press did not overestimate the country's international role as described above. Newspapers did not offer a one-dimensional picture to the country's international position and were rather able to identify developments throughout different periods regarding the GDR's ability to influence foreign policy. In particular, the press' ability to depict political events as they happened, following them on a daily basis if necessary, and to adapt to political change facilitated a more detailed image of the GDR and moreover, a representation of the GDR that challenged stereotypical images of the state to a far greater extent than many commentators now often suggest. This chapter will also show the differing perspectives of individual newspapers when covering newsworthy events. The range of perspectives offered by the press illustrates newspapers' significance when assessing the British perception of the GDR. The following short overview will show the decisive changes that took place during the 1970s with regards to the GDR's international position, as well as showing why a renewed evaluation of the country's role was necessary after 1972.

During the first two decades following the Second World War, the GDR was unable to gain international acceptance. Corey Ross notes that foreign observers at the time perceived the GDR to be an illiberal SED regime and thus denied it any legitimacy.<sup>432</sup> The Soviet Union's influence and the GDR's dependence on the superpower were substantial parts of this image as, for example, the official and unofficial terms *Ostzone* and *Sowjetzone* demonstrate. Both terms were in common usage in the Federal Republic after the foundation of the country in 1949. As a result of the Basic Treaty in 1972, the situation began to change; the GDR was finally able to enter into international relations with other countries and participate in international organisations as an independent member. Whereas in 1971, the GDR was internationally recognised only by a small number of primarily communist countries, by 1978, the GDR was able to take up diplomatic relations with 123 foreign states world-wide.<sup>433</sup> During the same period the East German state also became a member of several international organisations; most importantly, the country joined the United Nations together with the Federal Republic in September 1973. The GDR's participation in the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and the

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<sup>432</sup> Corey Ross, *The East German Dictatorship: Problems and Perspectives in the Interpretation of the GDR* (London, New York: Arnold, 2002), p. 8.

<sup>433</sup> Hermann Weber, *Die DDR 1945-1990*, 5th edn (Munich: Oldenbourg Wissenschaftsverlag, 2012), p. 88.

signing of the Helsinki Accords in August 1975 represented other important steps to establish the country's new foreign policy. As part of the GDR's international agenda, the country also attempted to establish its own identity, in order to be seen as independent from the other German state.

Given the significant role played by both the Soviet Union and the Federal Republic, the press' perception of their respective relations with the East German state can provide important insights into the extent to which the country's status was accepted internationally. It can also offer an indication of how far the GDR was able to succeed in its search for acceptance and independence. Considering the importance of both countries for the GDR in an international context, the press coverage of Soviet-East German relations and the German Question will be investigated in further detail in this chapter.

### **3.1 The press' view on relations between the Soviet Union and the GDR**

Despite the GDR's greater international independence after the Basic Treaty in 1972, the GDR's bilateral relations with the Soviet Union remained of the utmost importance, as evidenced by the amendments to the East German constitution in 1974. As a result, the relationship between the two states was regularly covered in the British press during the 1970s and 80s. The press described relations in a variety of ways, suggesting a dynamic, non-static relationship. They provided readers with a large amount of information concerning the respective power balance between the two sides, and consequently on the level of independence the GDR was able to obtain from the Soviet superpower. It will be demonstrated that the press' perception of relations between the two states changed over time, and that the press was able to quickly adapt to political developments. It is also important to note that individual newspapers tended to represent relations differently, thus providing a diverse, detailed and most importantly, up-to-date picture of the relations between the Soviet Union and the GDR. Its short production times clearly distinguished the press from other discourses which were also covering Soviet-East German relations, such as academic writing. In the following section, a closer textual analysis of the terminology used by the press, and a more detailed investigation into the GDR's final years will be presented. It will be

shown that the press was particularly perceptive in terms of the political development, and as a result, newspapers realised early of the danger of Honecker's isolation policy for the country in the second half of the 1980s.

### 3.1.1 Ally or colony? – A more complex view

The press regularly used short phrases or one-word expressions to describe relations between the Soviet Union and the GDR. Due to their brevity, they quickly provided the reader with a multitude of information about the bilateral relationship. Moreover, they were often easier to understand than long explanations and proved more memorable. The following section will include a closer analysis of these expressions. It will be demonstrated that, despite their informative value, the wider context of the individual assessment and article cannot be ignored. The terms can only be fully understood in context, and with this it will be possible to gain a comprehensive image of the relationship between the two countries as it was presented in the newspapers. The analysis will reveal the respective focus and perspective of the press and show if the article concentrates its attention more on one country or if they are both equally represented.

The individual terms can be distinguished depending on the way they assess the power balance between the GDR and the USSR, identifying one as more dominant or regarding both countries as equal. Overall, expressions which suggested an equal relationship between the Soviet Union and the GDR represented the largest share of the news coverage. In particular, the term 'ally' or 'allies' was used by *The Times* and *The Guardian* to a much higher extent than any other expression. Between 1972 and 1989, *The Guardian* referred directly to the GDR as an 'ally' more than 38 times, and it appeared 40 times in *The Times*. The term 'satellite' had the second highest usage; it could be found 14 times in *The Guardian* and 9 times in *The Times*. In accordance with the *Oxford English Dictionary*, the expression 'ally' can be defined as a state which is 'united or associated with another by league or formal treaty, especially for political or military purposes' or as someone 'who helps or cooperates with another; a supporter, an associate; a friend.'<sup>434</sup> It can be noticed that the definition does not refer to any hierarchies between the individual parties. Many British readers would have

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<sup>434</sup> 'ally, n.1', in *OED Online* <<http://0-www.oed.com.wam.leeds.ac.uk/viewdictionaryentry/Entry/5541>> [accessed December 29, 2015].

associated the term with the expression 'the Allies' and therefore, understood them in a positive light due to its connection with the anti-Hitler coalition during the Second World War. In contrast, other expressions which focused on the Soviet Union's clear superior role in the relationship such as 'protector', 'policeman', 'master' and 'big brother' can rarely be found in the press coverage. An excessive use of these terms would point to the dependent and subordinate position of the GDR and show an early Cold War approach. Moreover, it would contrast British foreign policy which supported détente during the early 1970s and officially recognised the GDR. At first sight, one could conclude that the press regarded the relationship between the two countries as balanced. However, a closer investigation of the usage and distribution over the entire period clearly shows that such a statement would be a generalisation and therefore not accurate.

The following chronological overview shows the development of the relationship as identified by the British press. Moreover, it reveals how newspapers as a result of political changes adapted their terminology. Indeed, press coverage in *The Guardian* in 1972/73 exemplified the press' ability to promptly respond to political changes. After the international recognition of the GDR, the newspaper re-evaluated the status of the country and consequently rephrased its relationships with other states, including the Soviet Union. In 1972, *The Guardian* regularly reported on the following ongoing development which would change and enhance the GDR's international status. *The Guardian* journalist, Jonathan Steele, noted a greater openness within East German cultural policy, reforms within the economic sector and the rapprochement between the two German states.<sup>435</sup> The article's headline 'East Germany taking off' positively reflected these new developments. The expression 'taking off' describes in a figurative sense the sudden increase in success of the GDR. The article also discussed a new development regarding the countries international status. It reported: 'With diplomatic recognition, East Germany will also soon be liberated from the need to ask its allies always to fight its political battles [...].'<sup>436</sup> An re-valuation of the changing international position can be recognised through the use of the term 'allies' to describe the GDR's relation with other East European countries. However, the sentence emphasised through the use of future tense in combination

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<sup>435</sup> Jonathan Steele, 'East Germany taking off', p. 12.

<sup>436</sup> *Ibid.*



with the adverb of time 'soon' that this characterisation as 'allies' cannot be unconditionally applied at that time but most likely in the near future. At the same time, several *Guardian* articles still referred to the GDR as a 'satellite' of the USSR, a term which highlighted the country's dependence on the superpower.<sup>437</sup> With it, the newspaper stressed that the GDR's international recognition had not yet been realised. Articles reporting on several international conferences where the GDR had been denied full participation due to its lack of international recognition, especially contained the term. To enable the GDR's involvement, the Soviet Union exerted considerable political pressure on the international community and threatened to withdraw its own participation and that of the other Warsaw Pact states. *The Guardian*, for example, reported that 'Russia and her satellites boycotted the earlier gatherings in protest against the Western refusal to invite East Germany as a full member rather than an observer.'<sup>438</sup> The sentence clearly shows the division during the Cold War between two global camps, as it places the Soviet Union and the Eastern European states against the West. Moreover, it demonstrates a hierarchy between the superpower 'Russia' and the other Eastern European states including the GDR, as only the former was named, while the other countries were only summarised under the term 'satellites'.

In the following year, terminology changed and the expression 'satellite' was dropped. Instead the term 'ally'/ 'allies' was now used to a much greater extent to describe relation between the Soviet Union and the GDR. In 1973, *The Guardian*, for example, reported: 'Mr Brezhnev has also taken care to keep his Eastern European allies informed. His visits a week ago to Poland and East Germany were an obvious precaution [...].'<sup>439</sup> Since the meaning of the term 'allies' suggests a more equal relation, particularly in comparison with the earlier term 'satellite', the two sentences indicate a new and more equal balance of power between the Soviet Union and the GDR. Moreover, the statement argues that the Soviet leader was no longer taking decisions without considering the other Eastern European states. As the article explicitly referred to Poland and 'East Germany' in this context, their prominent and

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<sup>437</sup> Patrick Keatley, 'The peace and the poison', *The Guardian*, 10/04/1972, p. 11; Malcolm Stuart, 'Hopes low of Soviet block joining environment talks', *The Guardian*, 05/06/1972, p. 4; Malcolm Stuart, 'Waiting for the Russians', *The Guardian*, 01/06/1972, p. 2.

<sup>438</sup> Hella Pick, 'Threat to pollution talks', *The Guardian*, 16/08/1972, p. 2.

<sup>439</sup> Jonathan Steele, 'Brezhnev spreads his Westpolitik', *The Guardian*, 23/05/1973, p. 4.

more significant position within the Eastern bloc is stressed. The naming of Brezhnev, the Soviet leader, emphasises the importance of the issue and therefore the growing political significance of the GDR. However, when considering the grammatical structure of the first sentence, the continuing imbalance between the two countries remains obvious. Leonid Brezhnev, as subject of the first sentence, holds an information monopoly, while the East Germans were still depending on him to gain information. The overall article primarily focuses on Brezhnev's new foreign politics towards the Federal Republic as the headline already indicates: 'Brezhnev spreads his Westpolitik'. It reported that 'a great change is going through Soviet foreign policy towards the West'. Therefore, the changing relationship with the GDR was only part of Brezhnev's new political approach. Moscow initiated this policy and the GDR was now benefiting from it. Despite the fact that these changes had been initiated and were controlled by Moscow, a new stage within relations between the Soviet Union and the GDR can be identified in the article as the above analysis has shown. However, an equal relationship as the term 'ally' might suggest cannot be identified at this stage.

The idea that the GDR had gained a stronger position in relation with the Soviet Union did not last long. In particular, the GDR's amendment of its constitution in 1974, as part of the country's demarcation policy from the Federal Republic, which stressed the solidarity and friendship with the Soviet Union, limited the impression of a more balanced relationship. The press reflected this change and both *The Guardian* and *The Times* only occasionally identified the GDR as an 'ally' of the Soviet Union in the following years. During the remainder of the 1970s, the term 'ally' was rarely used. That being said, the press also mostly refrained from using terms which would have indicated a very high level of dependency during the first half of the 1970s, and with it reflecting the results of the Basic Treaty and the growing international acceptance of the GDR. *The Guardian*, for example, only once referred to the Soviet-East German relations using the term 'master' when reporting on right-wing parties in the Federal Republic, and aimed to discredit the parties political views.<sup>440</sup> The article described the head of the West German National Democratic Party (NPD) in the federal state of Hesse as 'a master of the vague but menacing phrase' which were delivered 'staccato with much arm-waving'. The similarities between the portrayal of the NPD politician

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<sup>440</sup> Jonathan Schreiber, 'Kampf followers', *The Guardian*, 29/10/1974, p. 15.

and speeches delivered by Adolf Hitler cannot be ignored. This comparison did not only discredit him but also his claims. Therefore, the following statement can be understood as rejection rather than agreement by the newspaper. The article ironically stated one of his claims: 'It is the Communists who are behind the devilish treaties Willie [sic] Brandt negotiated with the East Germans and their Russian masters.' The lexical choices in the sentence highlights the newspaper's dismissal of the NPD's view. The characterisation of the treaties with several Eastern European countries as 'devilish' stands in sharp contrast to the newspaper's political outlook and its previous coverage of Brandt's *Ostpolitik*. Moreover, the term 'the Communists' is a generalisation and rather unusual in a political article of a quality newspaper. Therefore, it reflects in fact the simplicity of the NPD's arguments. As a result, the term 'master' can also be understood as an exaggeration to support the ironic tone of the statement. Similarly, whenever the press used the term 'protector', further information would modify its meaning. This was certainly the case in 1973 when *The Times* published an editorial dealing with the British government's decision to open diplomatic relations with the GDR. The article advocated for the final recognition of the East German state as it regarded it as: 'a welcome step towards more realistic relations with Eastern Europe.'<sup>441</sup> The article further argued that 'East Germany must be accepted as a German state with interests and problems that are not always identical with those of its neighbours and its protector.'<sup>442</sup> Although the relative clause contains the term 'protector', the main clause and its content have to be considered first. The expression 'German state' draws parallels to the Federal Republic, the other German state, which the British government had accepted long ago. Moreover, the sentence highlights the individual character of the state by referring to the country's interests and problems. Both pieces of information strengthened the notion of the GDR as a rather independent state and therefore attenuate the understanding of the term 'protector'. Furthermore, the article contained multiple references which contributed to the idea that the GDR had achieved a new international status with a higher degree of independence. It, for example, rejected the 'old claim that the East German government is a dependent territory' can still be applied and at the same time

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<sup>441</sup> 'The case for recognizing East Germany', p. 17.

<sup>442</sup> *Ibid.*

argued that the GDR had now ‘developed into a recognizable state [...]’.<sup>443</sup> The adjective ‘old’ clearly marks the argument as obsolete. It can also be noted that the sentence refers to the GDR as territory instead of a ‘state’ as in the second example. This qualitative difference between the two terms again emphasises the GDR’s new international position. Although the newspaper was addressing the GDR’s changing international status and consequently its, to some extent, shifting relation with the Soviet Union, it did not underestimate the importance of the superpower for the GDR. *The Times* noted that ‘even if it [the GDR] is ultimately beholden to, and limited by the Soviet Union. These things are matters of degree not of absolutes.’<sup>444</sup> The phrase ‘even if’ argues that the fundamental relationship between the two countries will most likely not change in the future independently of respective political developments. The Soviet Union will still be able to exert significant influence on the GDR. The term ‘ultimately’ pays attention to the international changes at the time and the growing international recognition of the GDR. But it additionally highlights that these changes are limited and the Soviet Union will nonetheless prevail in influence. That being said, the second sentence noticeably modifies the understanding of the above statement. It argues through the distinction between ‘degree’ and ‘absolutes’ that the relationship had moved away from total dependency and control as it could be observed during the 1950s and 60s. Instead a more complex relationship between the GDR and the Soviet Union had developed in which the smaller country had reached a higher level of independence. Considering the argumentation of the entire article regarding the GDR’s new international influence, the term ‘protector’ could be misleading when considered without context. Overall, the article represents a strong example how British newspapers reflected the ongoing international changes and the growing independence of the GDR without underestimating the still existing political influence of the Soviet Union on the East German state.

Other terms which also suggest an equal relationship, such as ‘partner’, ‘brothers’ and ‘friends’, could also to a lesser extent be found in the press coverage. The three nouns describe a similarly positive relation. The latter two have additionally been part of East German propaganda. However, it has to be noted that they primarily appeared in direct and indirect quotations from Soviet and East German authorities

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<sup>443</sup> ‘The case for recognizing East Germany’, p. 17.

<sup>444</sup> *Ibid.*

and often accompanied by an ironic tone or presented along a Western perspective. In 1979, Hella Pick presented a press review of West and East German newspapers dealing with, among other things, the withdrawal of Soviet troops from the GDR.<sup>445</sup> In this context, the *Guardian* journalist pointed out that the official party newspaper of the SED, *Neues Deutschland* described the situation of the leaving soldiers as ‘an enthusiastic friendship rally’. The East German *Berliner Zeitung* noted: ‘schoolchildren as well as adults wished their Russian brothers farewell and assured them “that we shall remain enduring friends.”’<sup>446</sup> Noticeably, the terms ‘friends’ and ‘brothers’ only appear in the article as part of direct quotations from East German newspapers. *The Guardian’s* contrasting view on the event became clear when it argued that the ‘West German press, however, had no illusions about the event [...]’. By indirectly highlighting the West Germans’ realistic view, as they ‘had no illusions’, *The Guardian* assesses the East German news coverage as restricted and politically biased. Consequently, it does not support the labels ‘brothers’ and ‘friends’ and rather identifies them as part of the official East German vocabulary. The term ‘partner’ was almost exclusively used in articles focussing on economic questions, for example trade, fishing and the Comecon (the economic organisation of the Eastern bloc). Such references to an economic partnership can mostly be found before 1978. This change over time reflects the declining British interest in the East German economy after initial hopes of trade expansion in the early 1970s.<sup>447</sup> Therefore, the use of the expression ‘partner’ provides another example of how the press was able to offer an immediate picture of the GDR. In 1974, *The Guardian*, for example, reported in a long article on the Leipzig Trade Fair.<sup>448</sup> It was the first fair which had been attended by a member of the British Government. The article mirrors the positive attitude towards the GDR, demonstrates British appreciation of the GDR’s economic success and the hopeful view on country’s economic potential at the time. It pointed out: ‘Substantial though Britain’s participation in the Leipzig Fair was, it should be seen and valued in the huge context of an event attended by more than 6,000 exhibitors from 48 states,

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<sup>445</sup> Hella Pick, ‘Split views in Germanys’, *The Guardian*, 07/12/1979, p. 8.

<sup>446</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>447</sup> Stefan Berger and Norman LaPorte, ‘Ein zweiter Kalter Krieg? Die Beziehungen zwischen der DDR und Großbritannien, 1979-1989’, in *Views from Abroad: Die DDR aus britischer Perspektive*, ed. by Peter Barker, Marc-Dietrich Ohse and Dennis Tate (Bielefeld: W. Bertelsmann, 2007), p. 165; Rembold, p. 300.

<sup>448</sup> Rene Elvin, ‘Trade with E Germany booms’, *The Guardian*, 11/09/1974, p. 19.

which together occupied [...] 270,000 square metres.<sup>449</sup> The first part of the sentence already expresses praise of the fair and therefore the economic performance of the GDR through the reference of British attendance. This view is even further promoted through the second part of the sentence. In particular, the three figures connected to the attendance figures serve as an example for the importance of the East German fair. While the main emphasis of the article was the economic relation between Britain and the GDR, it also noted that 'the Soviet Union was of course the largest exhibitor, as it is also East Germany's chief trading partner by a very wide margin [...].'<sup>450</sup> The term 'partner' is specified through the adjective 'trading' which therefore means it is restricted to the business world and does not necessarily apply to other areas, such as the countries' political relations. The positive understanding of the term 'partner' in this context becomes evident as the article is commenting that Britain was currently developing such a trade partnership with the GDR and also that the GDR itself is represented in a positive manner in the article. This positive representation of the GDR also promoted the understanding of the word 'partners' as a relationship between two equal sides. After 1978, the term nearly disappeared entirely from the news coverage on the GDR. As suggested above, this can be interpreted as a reaction to the declining economic relations between Britain and the East German side and also the GDR's growing economic decline since the second oil crisis in 1979.

The term 'ally' and its plural form 'allies' were also determined by historical circumstances. A closer analysis can show how these circumstances changed the given understanding of individual representations of the term. In 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan and fought on the side of the pro-Soviet Afghan government against the Afghan Mujahedeen. The invasion was immediately condemned by the Western world. The United States together with Britain and other Western countries even actively supported the fight of the Mujahedeen. Against the backdrop of the Soviet invasion in Afghanistan and the generally growing international tension between the two blocs, *The Times* reported how this situation affected the two German states. Surprisingly, instead of detecting a stronger connection with the Soviet Union, it portrays the GDR as more politically independent and in a more equal relation with the Soviet superpower. The article observed that the two German states

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<sup>449</sup> Elvin, 'Trade with E Germany booms', p. 19.

<sup>450</sup> Ibid.

were 'united in one heartfelt desire; to prevent international tension upsetting the stability and détente achieved in Europe.'<sup>451</sup> The adjective 'united' in combination with the emphasis on 'one' desire highlights the link between both states due to their common objective. The entire article, as the quotation itself, further stresses parallels between the two countries and their existing connection. It argued for example that 'Both East and West Germans know they cannot act as mediators [regarding the international tension]. Each is too tightly bound to its respective big power, the closest and most faithful ally.' The Federal Republic and the GDR are portrayed as similarly limited in their actions as the statement only refers to both as a unit with to the personal pronoun 'they'. The second sentence contains the term 'ally' and widens the perspective towards the respective superpower and their respective relation to one German state. In addition, the adjectives 'closest' and 'faithful', the latter one in the superlative form, stresses the close connection between the Soviet Union and the GDR. How far this relation was dominated by one side remains open in the statement. Considering the above analysis and that the sentence does not distinguish between the German states, it suggests that their relationship with the United States or the Soviet Union respectively is of similar quality. This points to a more balanced and equal relationship between the Soviet Union and the GDR, comparable with the two Western states, and to the possibility of greater freedom of action for the GDR. This interpretation was partly reinforced by the additional comment: 'But they can, and Herr Schmidt certainly does, exercise influence.' A clear distinction between both German heads of state can be recognised through the naming of the West German chancellor Schmidt. He is portrayed as the one who has already taken the initiative while Honecker theoretically has the opportunity but has not yet executed it. However, the article does not rule out that Honecker will follow Schmidt's example in the future and exert certain influence as he seemed to, in the same way as Schmidt, have the political freedom and power to do so.

In 1981, the term 'ally' was increasingly used in connection with the crisis in Poland and the development of the trade union *Solidarity*. In this context, the term was employed to stress the commonly held attitude of rejecting Polish demands for democracy by the Soviet Union and the GDR. Thus, instead of emphasising an equal

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<sup>451</sup> Patricia Clough, 'Afghanistan invasion brings the two Germanies closer together', *The Times*, 26/05/1980, p. 4.

relationship, and with it a certain level of independence for the GDR, the term contributed to a negative image of the GDR as it expressed a sense of dutifulness and unquestioning loyalty towards the Soviet Union. The articles also reflected the British support for the reform efforts in Poland and as a result, further negatively changed the meaning of the term. The close connection between the Soviet Union and the GDR was already visible through the use of related qualifiers such as 'faithful'<sup>452</sup> and 'closest'.<sup>453</sup> However, only closer analysis of the respective articles reveals the full meaning of the term. In 1981, *The Times* reported on the growing tension between the Soviet Union and the Federal Republic as a result of the 'unrest in Poland' and Chancellor Schmidt's support for the stationing of American nuclear missiles in his country.<sup>454</sup> The article was published on the front page of the newspaper which demonstrates the significance of the subject at the time. The article referred to the GDR along with Czechoslovakia as the Soviet Union's 'hardline allies' when it reported: 'Significantly the Soviet Union's hardline allies, East Germany and Czechoslovakia, have now openly attacked the Polish leadership.'<sup>455</sup> The meaning of the adjective 'hardline' is commonly understood as being uncompromising and inflexible and therefore can be regarded as negative. This understanding was supported by the overall context as the Soviet Union rejected any Polish demands for reforms which had been favourably noted by the Western world. Below the article, *The Times* readers found a reference to a related article with the headline 'Honecker warning'. Here, the newspaper reported in more detail the East German stand against Polish reforms and its support for the Soviet Union.<sup>456</sup> It noted that Erich Honecker had asserted 'that the Eastern European nations would close ranks with the Soviet Union to resolve any problem in Poland.'<sup>457</sup> The expression 'close ranks' comes from the military and means in this context to move closer together in a military formation. In a figurative sense, it shows that the Eastern European countries stand side by side with the Soviet Union and support the country. Even *The Guardian's* usually GDR-friendly coverage became more negative when reporting the GDR's position on the events in Poland. The newspaper noticed: 'Once

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<sup>452</sup> 'Wolf, with a lot of teeth', *The Guardian*, 05/06/1981, p. 12;

<sup>453</sup> 'Pro-Soviet Forum close down', *The Guardian*, 06/06/1981, p. 4.

<sup>454</sup> Michael Binyon, 'Russians rage at Schmidt for toeing US line on arms', *The Times*, 28/05/1981, p. 1.

<sup>455</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>456</sup> Peter Hazelhurst, 'Warsaw Pact "would act over threat to Poland"', *The Times*, 28/05/1981, p. 5.

<sup>457</sup> *Ibid.*



again the Soviet Union and its faithful allies are howling “Wolf” at Poland. Investigative journalists from *Pravda* and *Tass* (and their counterparts in the captive press of Czechoslovakia and East Germany) have discovered “honest Communists” horrified at *Solidarity* plots to remove the red flag from public buildings and to rename streets labelled in honour of the Soviet Union.<sup>458</sup> The reader could hardly miss the article’s ironic tone. The use of quotation marks for the expression ‘honest Communist’, for example, marks the stylistic device of irony. Irony is used to express the opposite of a statement and therefore, it implies dishonesty either explicitly of the ‘Communists’ or rather relates to the entire statement. The evaluation of the East German press as ‘captive’ contradicts two significant British and also Western values, the freedom of the press and the freedom of opinion. Both claims enhance the negative image of the Soviet Union and also of ‘its faithful’ ally the GDR. The expression ‘howling “Wolf”’ reminds us of the classical fable ‘The boy who cried wolf’ by Aesop. Figuratively speaking, the newspaper accuses the Soviet Union and its allies of making false claims to Poland and causing Poland to perceive a danger, symbolised by the wolf, which does not exist. The temporal adverbial ‘again’ demonstrates that this was seen to be a regular behaviour and not an exception. As the previous examples have shown, the term ‘ally’ was now less used to describe a relation on equal terms or to emphasise a growing independence of the East German government from the superpower. Instead the word emphasised, through the respective context, the absolute support from the East German side for the Soviet Union and its actions.

The coverage of Erich Honecker’s potential state visit to the Federal Republic in September 1984 represents another significant example regarding the press’ perception of Soviet-East German relations. The subject featured prominently in the press over a couple of weeks. At the beginning of September, Honecker submitted to Soviet pressure and cancelled the visit. Both before the cancellation and afterwards, articles contained the term ‘ally’. The analysis will show on the basis of *Times* and *Guardian* articles, how the meaning of the term changed in the context of the visit, and also in contrast to the earlier use, for example during the Poland crisis. The press’ presentation of Soviet-East German relations in comparison with the actual state visit in 1987 will be further discussed in a later section.

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<sup>458</sup> ‘Wolf, with a lot of teeth’, p. 12.

In July 1984, *The Times* reported on the upcoming visit under the headline 'Whipping an ally back in line'. Considering the understanding of 'ally' as an equal partner in a balanced relationship, the headline with its metaphor of using violence to enforce one's objectives on the other side clearly contradicts this idea. Moreover, the article argued that 'it has always been [...] Moscow's ability to get East Germany to obey its policies without question.'<sup>459</sup> The verb 'obey', similar to the headline, shows a hierarchy between the two countries and, therefore, their asymmetrical relationship. It recalls thoughts of pressure and again enforcement. However, the article did not consistently portray Soviet-East German relations in this manner. It highlighted at the same time the GDR's significance for the superpower and as a country 'they [the Soviet Union] need as never before'.<sup>460</sup> It further argued that 'Moscow depends heavily on East Germany.'<sup>461</sup> The East German political leader, Erich Honecker 'appears to be at the height of his power at home [...]'.<sup>462</sup> Despite the verb 'appear' which weakens the statement to an extent, the remark generally reinforces Honecker's position as a strong political leader and therefore balances earlier statements about the weak position of the GDR within the Soviet-East German relationship. It can be concluded that the newspaper regarded the relationship between the two countries at critical point where the Soviet Union was exerting pressure on the East German government to enforce its will. At the same time, the newspaper reflected the GDR's growing desire to pursue its interests vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. The latter facet of the relationship contrasts with the coverage of the Soviet-East German relationship during the crisis in Poland. At that time, the GDR is described as much more dependent when pursuing its own interests. Moreover, in 1981 the relation seems more harmonic due to the GDR's loyalty. Overall, the article also reflects the press' uncertainty about the development in the near future, if the GDR would be able to continue its dialogue with the Federal Republic and gain even higher independence from the Soviet Union or if the superpower will be able to prevent an even closer connection between the two German states. *The Guardian* also observed the Soviet Union's growing anxiety and worries regarding German-German relations and the increasing self-confidence of the GDR in the summer of 1984. It noted that 'The Kremlin never liked its allies to conduct

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<sup>459</sup> Michael Binyon, 'Whipping an ally back in line', *The Times*, 31/07/1984, p. 12.

<sup>460</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>461</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>462</sup> *Ibid.*

an independent foreign policy.<sup>463</sup> The statement indirectly implies that in the past Eastern European countries have tried to pursue their own foreign political interests and that the subject was again on the political agenda. The choice of the verb 'like' in its negation only expresses a mild form of rejection and therefore suggests that the 'allies' had currently more room to manoeuvre. That being said, the article strongly focused on the Soviet Union and its interests despite discussing German-German relations as the statement demonstrates. In contrast to *The Times* article, *The Guardian* generally portrayed the Soviet Union's policy as less aggressive and ruthless towards the GDR and that the GDR was consequently more able to promote its interests towards the superpower. A reference to the East German official newspaper *Neues Deutschland* 'which explicitly said that the GDR was "independent in its internal and external affairs"'<sup>464</sup> strengthens the country's position. *The Guardian* compared the GDR's relation to the Soviet Union with that of the Federal Republic and the USA. Regarding a possible withdrawal from their respective military alliance, the newspaper argued that 'their partners in Moscow and Washington [would not] permit it.'<sup>465</sup> The apparent equation of both relationships in East and West in combination with the lexical choice of the term 'partner' suggests a relationship between the Soviet Union and the GDR comparable to West German-American relations. However, the verb 'permit' partly contradicts an equal relationship comparable to the that between the western countries as requiring permission should not be necessary between equal sides. Considering the overall representation of the relationship between the Soviet Union and the GDR during the article, the term 'allies' has to be understood in this context as representatives in a not always harmonic relationship where one side is dominating the other. In addition, the article shows that both sides do not always have the same objectives and try to pursue their own interests. At the beginning of September, the East German government finally cancelled the state visit under constantly growing Soviet pressure. *The Times* took this decision as confirmation that 'the Soviet Union will not allow any real show of independence by its most important Warsaw pact ally [referring to the GDR].'<sup>466</sup> The ability to 'allow' something to another person or party highlights the asymmetrical relationship between the two sides. This is

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<sup>463</sup> Jonathan Steele, 'German thaw that leaves Moscow cold', *The Guardian*, 07/08/1984, p. 15.

<sup>464</sup> Ibid.

<sup>465</sup> Ibid.

<sup>466</sup> Michael Binyon, 'Bonn grasps Berlin's straws to keep hopes of trip alive', *The Times*, 05/09/1984, p. 6.

emphasised by the fact that one partner is granting permissions for the other. The future tense in the sentence additionally stresses the Soviet Union's current and future position of power. The phrasing 'any real show of independence' is also noticeable as it related to the GDR's foreign policy during the previous weeks. With it, the article argues that the GDR's apparent freedom regarding its foreign policy in general and its relations with the Federal Republic in particular was not 'real' but rather always only possible within the limits imposed by the Soviet Union. Considering the image of the Soviet-East German relationship as discuss above, the newspaper again modified the meaning of the term 'ally' in comparison to earlier articles. With reference to the GDR, the term had to be now understood as that of a restricted partner in a hierarchical relationship where a supreme side is able to limit and control the other(s). At the beginning of October, *The Times* published an editorial which discussed the Soviet leader's latest visit to the United States. In this context, it reflected once again on Erich Honecker's aborted visit to the Federal Republic. The article confirms the newspaper's re-established image of the Soviet-East German relationship as strongly hierarchical. It argued that with reference to the Soviet-East German relationship that 'What is permitted to Jove is not permitted to an ally.'<sup>467</sup> Noticeably, the GDR is identified as an ally while the Soviet represents 'Jove' and not another ally. The different terms already highlight that the two countries are not perceived as equal. Jove is another name for the Roman god Jupiter. He is the highest god in Roman mythology and therefore stands above all others. This exaggeration emphasises the Soviet Union's position as standing above all other Eastern European countries and with it the GDR. Therefore, the term 'ally' only contains the meaning of a connection between the GDR and the Soviet Union and that this relation is hierarchical. Moreover, the article argued that the GDR was unable to pursue its interests due to the Soviet Union's influence. In summary, during the first half of the 1980s, the term 'ally' became again more frequently used by the British press. However, newspapers often modified its common understanding through further explanations and therefore reflected the political development.

Relations between the two countries deteriorated after the appointment of Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985 and the press' language mirrored this accordingly.

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<sup>467</sup> 'Poor relations for poor relations', *The Times*, 02/10/1984, p. 15.

Gorbachev introduced several political and economic reforms, commonly known as *glasnost* and *perestroika*. While some of the Eastern European countries followed his reform path, East German politicians vehemently denied any need for changes in the GDR. During the second half of the 1980s, *The Times* increasingly refrained from using the term 'ally'. In 1989, it even concluded that the GDR could no longer be seen as the USSR's ally.<sup>468</sup> The article, which more closely investigated the Soviet disarmament policy, recognised a division within the Warsaw Pact. It argued that the Eastern bloc 'was now composed of reformist and hardline states which could no longer be called allies.'<sup>469</sup> The article identified the GDR as one of these hardline states in contrast to the reformist Soviet Union. The negative meaning of the adjective 'hardline' has been previously discussed. Based on *The Times'* claim that the term 'ally' could no longer be applied to the Eastern bloc countries, it can be concluded that the term was understood as a participant of a bigger group or organisation. The participation was further characterised by a certain level of cooperation and its individual members shared common interests and goals. This definition could no longer be applied to Soviet-East German relations as the article stated. The low point in Soviet-East German relations was referenced by *The Times* in 1989, which stated that 'President Gorbachov is seen almost as an enemy.'<sup>470</sup> The article was published shortly before the East German local elections in May 1989. It discussed the growing discontent amongst the East German population and their potential voting behaviour in the upcoming election. In addition, it reported the East Germans' opposition to Gorbachev's *perestroika* and as result the continuously widening gap between the East German and Soviet government. The political situation is also reflected in the article's language as the above quotation demonstrates. The term 'enemy' contradicts any concept of partnership or alliance. Instead, one side actively opposes or even harms the other. The article further documented the new quality of Soviet-East German relations when it argued that the GDR's 'elderly rulers' were the 'firmest opponent of *perestroika* in the Soviet bloc' and that Erich Honecker had 'firmly gone on record as being opposed to *perestroika*.'<sup>471</sup> Both quotations contain similar phrasings to express the division

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<sup>468</sup> Michael Evans, 'Soviet arms cuts make surprise attack "virtually impossible"', *The Times*, 06/10/1989, p. 8.

<sup>469</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>470</sup> Ian Murray, 'East Germans are warned off voting for change', *The Times*, 06/05/1989, p. 7.

<sup>471</sup> *Ibid.*

between the Soviet Union, symbolised by its political leader's reform policy, and the GDR, represented by Erich Honecker. The adjective 'firmest' in its superlative and the related adverb highlight Honecker's relentlessness against any reform efforts.

Generally, terms which portrayed the GDR as the dominant party in relation to the Soviet Union hardly existed. The few examples which demonstrate this usually used longer explanations, rather than the short and memorable expressions which have been previously examined. They can primarily be found at the end of the 1980s as a reflection of the growing divergence between the Soviet Union and the GDR. *The Observer* covered in an extensive article the ongoing mass exodus by East German citizens.<sup>472</sup> In this context, the newspaper also commented on Soviet-East German relations. It stated with reference to the former Soviet ambassador Valentin Falin that 'relations between East Berlin and Moscow are "estranged". Moscow had "only restricted possibilities" of influencing the East German leadership.'<sup>473</sup> It can be recognised that a general and single term for this very new quality in Soviet-East German relations is missing in the statement. In previous decades, newspapers were always able to apply one of the previously described terms in this thesis to the relationship between the Soviet Union and the GDR despite reflecting changing political developments. This indicates that the relation had reached a new, so far unknown stage, where both countries were drifting apart from each other. On the eve of the GDR's 40<sup>th</sup> anniversary, *The Guardian* focused on the divergence between the still continuing refugee exodus of East German citizens and the beginning of the official celebrations in the GDR.<sup>474</sup> In light of Gorbachev's attendance as guest of honour at the celebrations, the article commented on the changing Soviet-East German relationship. In this context, it reported on the GDR's economy as being one 'on which the Soviet Union relies heavily.'<sup>475</sup> Despite expressing through the verb 'rely' a form of dependence, the newspaper did not use any short term to summarise this quality of the relation. One reason for the longer explanation could be the restriction of this dependency to economic matters. Another explanation can be found in the remaining article which portrayed the GDR and its leadership, in contrast to the Soviet Union, in a highly negative manner. It disrespectfully remarked that the GDR was 'run by old

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<sup>472</sup> Catherine Field and others, 'The great escape', *The Observer*, 17/09/1989, p. 17.

<sup>473</sup> Ibid.

<sup>474</sup> Simmons, 'Birthday toast ignores refugees', p. 10.

<sup>475</sup> Ibid.

men'.<sup>476</sup> This phrase commonly refers to a group of people entrenched in power and resistant to change. In contrast, the Soviet leader represented a new generation with new ideas and was therefore, evidently able to implement radical reforms. Consequently, such changes could not be expected from the current East German leadership.

In addition to the terms examined above, the GDR's position in relation to the Soviet Union was also referred to as 'satrapy' and 'colony'. However, it should be pointed out that only a very small number of *The Times* articles contained either of the two words. In his often anti-communist columns, the journalist Bernard Levin was the only one who made direct use of them in reference to the GDR.<sup>477</sup> In 1973, for example, the long-term *Times* columnist discussed Brandt's *Ostpolitik* and Britain's imminent official recognition of the GDR. In contrast to the majority of articles at the time, it passionately argued against the international recognition of 'a dependent territory' which was part of 'the Soviet empire'.<sup>478</sup> Levin's lexical choice leaves no room for interpretation regarding his political beliefs. The article did not perceive the GDR as equal political entity, as state, but downgraded it to a 'territory'. This understanding is further strengthened through the adjective 'dependent'. Levin's articles show that the British press was able to provide a platform for a very wide range of views on the GDR, in which the journalist surely represented an extreme.

Overall, it is evident that the press provided varying images of Soviet-East German relations. Despite the use of individual terms over times, it has been demonstrated that their meaning had been adapted to constant political changes. This shows that the short phrases or one-word expressions which had been of interests in this sections could be isolated from their individual background only provide an apparent understanding of the situation.

### **3.1.2 The GDR's risky fight against reforms in the light of the press**

The British press continuously covered the changing relationship between the Soviet Union and the GDR from 1985/86 onwards and consequently displayed a shift in

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<sup>476</sup> Simmons, 'Birthday toast ignores refugees', p. 10.

<sup>477</sup> Bernard Levin, 'Butter and guns for East Germany's reluctant comrades', *The Times*, 17/0/1972, p. 14; 'It's easy (and illegal) as mugging a masochistic philanthropist', *The Times*, 06/02/1973, p. 14; 'The benign bacillus that plagues the Soviet despots', *The Times*, 04/05/1977, p. 16.

<sup>478</sup> Levin, 'It's easy (and illegal) as mugging a masochistic philanthropist', p. 14.

perception of the GDR during the following years. As part of the developments in the relationship, the press reported the longing of the East German population for Soviet-style reforms and considered potential consequences of rejecting them by the East German leadership. In particular, conservative newspapers critically observed this political development and distanced themselves from both the GDR and its political leader.

After the new Secretary General of the CPSU, Mikhail Gorbachev, introduced his reform policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika* in February 1986, Soviet-East German relations entered into a new stage. In the years that followed, Gorbachev became highly popular in the West, with the British government broadly supporting his reforms.<sup>479</sup> Moreover, *glasnost* and *perestroika* became key words for changes in the Soviet Union and raised hopes that the Cold War could come to an end in the not too distant future. At the same time, the GDR isolated itself increasingly from the USSR and rejected any Soviet-style policy reforms. In news coverage of the SED's 11<sup>th</sup> Party Congress (1986) in East Berlin, the British press already started to acknowledge the obvious differences between Gorbachev's new political approach and political realities in the GDR. Moreover, a positive portrayal of the Soviet leader could be seen and his innovative political agenda. *The Times* noted the 'clash of leadership style'<sup>480</sup> between Honecker and his Soviet counterpart. It reported: 'Mr Gorbachev made the Soviet party congress last February into a radical reassessment of economic policies and party shortcomings. However, Herr Honecker yesterday indulged in only mild doses of self-criticism.'<sup>481</sup> A type of parallel sentence structure can be recognised in both sentences which particularly stresses the differences between the Soviet and the East German leader. The verbs in the two statements, for example, draw attention to the different approaches by the two politicians. The verb 'made' portrays Gorbachev as active, he is involved in change. The adjective 'radical' further emphasises his active role. In contrast, Honecker is portrayed as rather passive by the verb 'indulge'. The adjective 'mild' forms the opposition to 'radical' and further underlines Honecker's different approach. *The Guardian* similarly characterised Gorbachev as 'an established advocate of self-criticism', but reported that Erich Honecker's 'tone, far from being self-critical,

<sup>479</sup> McCauley, 'British-GDR Relations', p. 54.

<sup>480</sup> Roger Boyes, 'Gorbachov looks for substance beyond the Berlin ritual', *The Times*, 22/04/1986, p. 6.

<sup>481</sup> Roger Boyes, 'Gorbachov dazzled as Honecker preaches microchip revolution', *The Times*, 18/04/1986, p. 11.



was one of almost undiluted self-congratulation.<sup>482</sup> As the example above, the structure of both statements should be noted whereby the nouns 'self-criticism' and 'self-congratulation' form opposites. The description 'established advocate' argues that although Gorbachev has only been in office for 13 months, he had already gained a very positive reputation in the Western world. Furthermore, the article also urges the East German government to a more critical assessment regarding its political decisions. The newspaper especially highlights the government's lack of understanding of what 'ordinary' people wanted. Noticeably, both *The Times* and *The Guardian* refrained from stronger criticism of Honecker, and rather indicated that a younger generation would most likely implement similar reforms in the near future.

In the following years, several articles continued to critically report on the East German anti-reform agenda and the country's increasing isolation. *The Times* declared in April 1987 that 'Honecker dashes any ideas of Soviet-style reforms'<sup>483</sup> In contrast to earlier articles, the newspaper now described Honecker as a politician who not just passively refuses any changes in the GDR, but rather actively 'dashes' them. Later in the same year the newspaper printed a caricature of Honecker which emphasised Honecker's anti-reformist image. It shows Honecker holding a bucket of paint and a paint brush and standing in front of the Wall, which bore the freshly painted slogan 'Glasnost Nein'. By using this image, the newspaper links the question of reforms with the separation of the two German states, along with Honecker's decisive role in this context and his clear rejection of any changes. *The Observer* assessed East German policy especially critically. It strongly rejected Honecker's 'unyielding and unresponsive orthodox Communist government' which 'resisted calls from Moscow to implement *glasnost* and *perestroika* restructuring.'<sup>484</sup> The cluster of negatively connoted adjectives strongly stresses the newspaper's rejection of the East German government. It went on to compare the new East German policy towards the Soviet Union with a vaccination 'against the Gorbachev freedom bug'.<sup>485</sup> Although the policy would allow more personal contact between the GDR and the Federal Republic, this description emphasises the East German government's fear of the reforms. At the same time, the analogy underlines the impact of Gorbachev's ideas; they are spreading and cannot be

<sup>482</sup> Michael Simmons, 'Honecker awards himself top marks', *The Guardian*, 18/04/1986, p. 8.

<sup>483</sup> 'Honecker dashes hopes of reform', *The Times*, 24/04/1987, p. 7.

<sup>484</sup> Catherine Field, 'East Germans plan "glasnost" welcome', *The Observer*, 24/05/1987, p. 12.

<sup>485</sup> Mark Frankland, 'Honecker's ticket to voyage of discovery', *The Observer*, 19/07/1987, p. 13.

easily stopped. In contrast to other newspapers, *The Guardian* continued to present a more positive image of the East German party leader. It repeatedly reminded readers that reforms had already been, or certainly would be, introduced in the future. In connection with speculations about a potential suspension of the East German shoot-to-kill order, the newspaper suspected a 'new form of *glasnost* practised by East Berlin.'<sup>486</sup> The newspaper presented the East German leadership in a positive light through the connection between the East German political decision and Gorbachev's highly positive regarded reforms. In this context, the newspaper added: 'Honecker has so far resisted *glasnost*'.<sup>487</sup> The addition of 'so far' distracts the reader from the lack of reform and instead points to a realisation of this in the future.

Overall, the British press reflected the diverging developments in the GDR in contrast, first to the Soviet Union and later to other Eastern European countries. Moreover, it recognised potential implications of the GDR's isolation policy. From 1986 onwards, the press highlighted the discrepancy between the GDR's official party policy and the population's expectations and demands as a consequence of Gorbachev's reforms. *The Times*, for example reported that 'young East Germans encouraged by Moscow's *glasnost* want the Wall to tumble and the GDR Honecker has built to be liberalized.'<sup>488</sup> As the East Germans only had to be 'encouraged', the newspaper highlighted the already existing dissatisfaction amongst the East German population with its government. In addition to the existing split between government and population, the newspaper's growing rejection of the East German leadership, particularly of Erich Honecker, becomes visible in this statement. The newspaper indirectly stresses the unfree nature of the GDR, as only an 'unfree' society has to be 'liberalized'. Moreover, it can be seen that the newspaper holds Honecker himself responsible for this situation as he 'has built' the country despite the fact that he was not the leading politician before 1973. In February 1988, the newspaper commented on the growing fears within the East German leadership that their own youth were 'slowly moving out of the state's control.'<sup>489</sup> It claimed that the changing mood was caused by growing disappointment over the lack of reform and argued that 'Until fairly

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<sup>486</sup> Anna Tomforde, 'E Berlin holds its fire', *The Guardian*, 13/08/1987, p. 7.

<sup>487</sup> 'A tale of two parties', *The Guardian*, 27/05/1987, p. 12.

<sup>488</sup> Owen, 'Keeping faith with father', p. 10.

<sup>489</sup> Richard Bassett, 'Regime's distrust of the young prompts Berlin clampdown', *The Times*, 02/02/1988, p. 8.

recently, young East Germans had been optimistic because of *glasnost* [...] but the ageing leadership in the *Politbüro* here offers little hope for the young that *glasnost* will sweep their country swiftly.<sup>490</sup> Most commonly advanced age is not associated with changes and the newspaper clearly identifies ‘the ageing leadership’ as the central issue which prevents reforms. The fact that Gorbachev belongs to a younger generation than Honecker and other Eastern bloc politicians has always been perceived as a decisive factor for his progressive leadership style. Moreover, *The Times* places the East German politicians in opposition to the ‘young East Germans’ who demand reforms with the conjunction ‘but’. The East German population’s growing dissatisfaction was also reported in other British newspapers. Initially *The Observer* and *The Guardian* only recognised a growing dissatisfaction within certain parts of East German society, but *The Guardian* later established the view that the lack of reform was a general concern for all East Germans not just young ones as reported in earlier articles. By the end of 1988, *The Guardian* had finally detected that the ‘biggest trouble for the conservatively inclined and aging leadership is that most East Germans like Gorbachev and his policies.’<sup>491</sup> The superlative of ‘big’ shows the attraction of *glasnost* and *perestroika* and its impact on the East German society. Similar to *The Times*, the newspaper connects the leaders’ progressing age with his unwillingness to allow reforms in the GDR. In comparison, *The Observer* focused on a group which was often in conflict with the state system, reporting that ‘The East Germans have been cracking down on dissidents who have repeatedly called on East Berlin to adopt Moscow’s reforms’.<sup>492</sup> The sentence indirectly notes that in contrast to the GDR’s long-term policy to regard the Soviet Union as role model, the country was now persistently refusing to follow Moscow. The article also indicated the potential danger of Honecker’s decisions about reforms by warning that ‘Any chance of dissidents from East Germany mingling with Czechs now experiencing a hint of *glasnost* presents a danger to East German stability.’<sup>493</sup> The phrase ‘any chance’ argues that every contact, even if it is only indirect or brief, with the reform policy can already endanger the state. Moreover, the sentence stresses the growing isolation of the GDR as other Eastern European countries already ‘experiencing’ *glasnost* and as even this ‘hint of

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<sup>490</sup> Richard Bassett, ‘Regime’s distrust of the young prompts Berlin clampdown’, p. 8.

<sup>491</sup> Michael Simmons, ‘Little Erich and rumours of perestroika’, *The Guardian*, 22/12/1988, p. 19.

<sup>492</sup> Field, ‘East Germans plan “glasnost” welcome’, p. 12.

<sup>493</sup> *Ibid.*

*glasnost*' represents a contrast to the situation in the GDR. Other newspapers also reported the danger of the GDR's anti-reform policy and of the growing gap between the Soviet Union and the GDR for the future of the East German state. In 1987, *The Guardian* had already established a connection between the 'survival' of the GDR and its resistance of *glasnost*. The newspaper argued that the Wall was as 'necessary today for the survival of the East German state as ever.'<sup>494</sup> The statement refers to the critical situation in the late 1950s and early 1960s when hundreds of thousands of East German citizens left their country through the still permeable border between the two German states. As a result the country was close to collapse due to the lack of skilled workers. The adverb of time 'today' and the phrase 'as ever' point out that the situation in the GDR has not changed and indirectly that the country has not gained any stronger support amongst its population within the last 26 years. The article continued to argue that 'This is why Mr. Honecker has so far resisted Mr. Gorbachev's *glasnost*.' The demonstrative pronoun 'this' links back to the previously analysed sentence. Therefore, it connects the East German anti-reform policy with the survival of the country as reform measures would potentially include an opening up of the country towards the West and the freedom to travel for ordinary East German citizens. *The Times* also agreed that 'the changes being drafted in Moscow threaten the security of the East German communist establishment.'<sup>495</sup> The newspaper's rejection of the East German government becomes once more visible in the phrasing 'communist establishment'. The noun 'establishment' refers to a controlling elite but is not necessarily connected with a democratically elected government which hold the support of its citizens. It additionally holds the meaning of an established group and therefore forms a contrast to the 'changes' which have been initiated by 'Moscow'. Moreover, the adjective 'communist' stresses the significance of ideology for this elite and how much it is still determined by it. This focus on ideology again contrasts with the generally pragmatic Soviet reform. At the end of 1988, the newspaper even forecasted that 'Romania and East Germany, resisting the Gorbachov revolution, will have leadership crises this year. East Germany is particularly sensitive since there is real pressure for change from below on Herr Erich Honecker, aged 75.'<sup>496</sup> *The Times*

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<sup>494</sup> 'A tale of two parties', p. 12.

<sup>495</sup> 'The heretic of Moscow', *The Times*, 23/11/1988, p. 17.

<sup>496</sup> Roger Boyes, 'Eastern Europe: What 1989 holds for the world's leader', *The Times*, 31/12/1988, p. 9.

seemed fully convinced of the country's future as its prediction does not contain any doubts recognisable through adverbs as 'probably' or 'most likely'. Moreover, a new quality in the newspaper's characterisation of Gorbachev's politics can be recognised. Earlier articles referred to *glasnost* and *perestroika* as reforms but the newspaper now used the term 'revolution' which has a much stronger and more global effect on societies. The second sentence focuses again on the contrast between the East German population and the ageing leadership of the state. Honecker's age, an unimportant information in this context, stresses his inability to initiate 'change' as demanded by the population.

Relations between the Soviet Union and the GDR form an essential part of the overall GDR coverage in the British press. Despite being superficially represented as equal participants through the regular use of the term as *ally/allies*, closer analysis has uncovered a variety of nuances within press coverage which demonstrate the press ability to represent the GDR in detail. Moreover, the analysis has also shown the varying political stances of individual newspapers and how they always contributed to their representations of the GDR. The press coverage of Soviet-East German relations mirrored the respective political changes, as the press quickly responded to the latest events. This is particularly obvious during the second half of the 1980s. The press, and particularly the more conservative newspapers, were able to highlight the deteriorating relations between the Soviet Union and the GDR. Moreover, it showed the potential consequences for the East German state in a way that was not reflected elsewhere in the discussion of the GDR at the time. In addition to Soviet-East German relations, British newspapers also regularly reported on inter-German developments. The next section will shed further light on the representation of the GDR in the British press by investigating the relationship between the two German states.

### **3.2 The German Question - between pretence and reality**

The events surrounding the fall of the Wall in 1989 aroused great interest in the future of the two German states and revitalised the German Question, the ongoing debate about a final and stable settlement of German borders and with it the possibility of a future unification of both German states. The British Prime Minister at the time, Margaret Thatcher, voiced the anxiety felt by many British citizens over a united

Germany which would change the political balance in Europe, bringing up memories of the Third Reich. These negative reactions aroused substantial interest amongst scholars during the following years. In this context, Ines Lehmann (1996) and Christoph Peters (1999) concluded that British society and politics had left behind reunification for decades and observed that a continuous and well-informed discussion about it was missing in the past.<sup>497</sup> In 1986, Barbara Rowe had already suggested that it was passé in Britain to think about a future unified Germany and that few British people did so, and only on rare occasions.<sup>498</sup> However, a closer look into the press coverage in the two decades before the unification clearly shows that the topic was not at all forgotten in Great Britain. Moreover, the conclusion shows that the press has so far been underestimated as an important historical source to trace attitudes and interests in Britain. During the 1970s and 80s, there was public discourse on the German Question in Britain, as both academic researchers and the press fuelled the discussion. The press represented the subject in detail and in connection with immediate political developments. Moreover, it will be shown that the press represented the East German perspective on the topic along with reflections of the East German populace and their position.

In addition, this section will also highlight the influence of British interests in shaping the news coverage of the GDR. Lehmann and Peters observed that the negative British attitude towards a possible reunification had not developed over time, but that it had evolved as a response to the immediate situation. However, this section will demonstrate that subconscious concern regarding a future unification always existed and that the British press participated in the suppression of such concerns.

### **3.2.1 Academic discourse on the German Question during the 1970s and 80s**

To understand the academic discourse and its focus, the main positions on the German Question during the 1970s and 80s will be briefly outlined in the following section. Rare occasions when individual researchers concluded that the German Question was now finally settled did not end the debate and certainly did not reflect a lack of interest. As the press coverage discussed later, individual researchers delivered

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<sup>497</sup> Lehmann, p. 270; Peters, p. 75.

<sup>498</sup> Peter Joachim Lapp, 'Das Ausland und die deutsche Frage: Wissenschaftliche Arbeitstagung der Gesellschaft für Deutschlandforschung', *Deutschland Archiv*, 24.5 (1986), p. 520.

arguments for and against a future unification of the German states and also the openness of the question. However, the topic generally represented a minor discussion in scholarly literature. In particular, the position of the GDR on unification was less discussed.

In 1975, three years after the signing of the Basic Treaty, researcher Roger Tilford came to the conclusion that *Ostpolitik* had put an end to the Federal Republic's questioning of the status quo in Central Europe and heralded an end to claims of German unity.<sup>499</sup> He identified *Ostpolitik* as the reason for the settlement and also stressed the importance of the 'practical results of the Second World War'.<sup>500</sup> In contrast, Geoffrey K. Roberts (1975) viewed the German Question as far less resolved. In his opinion, two potentially fraught issues remained unresolved as a consequence of *Ostpolitik* and, more particularly, the Basic Treaty: a possible reunification and the status of Berlin.<sup>501</sup> Overall, Roberts judged the probability of an eventual reunification as negligible.<sup>502</sup> David Childs (1975) also argued against a final settlement and based this on the theoretical possibility of a 'deal' between the Soviet Union and the Federal Republic, although he tended to regard such a development as unlikely.<sup>503</sup> None of the three previously mentioned scholars discussed the position of the GDR in this context. British researchers and journalists Jonathan Steele (1977) and Timothy Garton Ash (1981) also examined the issue but only marginally.<sup>504</sup> In his 1983 book *Moscow's German Ally*, David Childs reiterated his earlier opinion regarding the unlikelihood of future unity. In this context he discussed, amongst other things, the Friendship Treaty signed in 1974 by the Soviet Union and the GDR, stressing that the treaty did not mention German reunification. However, Childs also added that the old treaty was never formally renounced, indicating that the treaty had not ultimately ruled out reunification.<sup>505</sup> Martin McCauley (1985) particularly focused on the Soviet Union's

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<sup>499</sup> Roger Tilford, ed, *The Ostpolitik and Political Change in Germany* (Westmead, Franborough, Hants: Saxon House, 1975), p. 3.

<sup>500</sup> Ibid.

<sup>501</sup> Roberts, p. 91.

<sup>502</sup> Ibid.

<sup>503</sup> David Childs, 'The Ostpolitik and Domestic Politics in East Germany', in *The Ostpolitik and Political Change in Germany*, ed. by Roger Tilford (Westmead, Franborough, Hants: Saxon House, 1975), pp. 70f.

<sup>504</sup> Garton Ash also indirectly rejects the idea of a reunification but does not discuss the topic in more depth. In: Garton Ash, 'Und willst du nicht mein Bruder sein ...', p. 49; Steele, *Socialism with a German Face*, pp. 4, 7.

<sup>505</sup> Childs, *The GDR: Moscow's German Ally*, p. 308.

attitude to a possible reunification and its power to determine this process.<sup>506</sup> He considered that an 'all-German state' might be a future option as the 'relationship between both German states may change to such an extent over the next decade as to lead to a Soviet decision to play its all-German card.'<sup>507</sup> Edwina Moreton published an essay collection with the title 'Germany between East and West' (1987).<sup>508</sup> Moreton and Michael Stürmer stressed that the German Question had not lost its importance.<sup>509</sup> Stürmer even identified the topic as 'one of the most perennial problems with almost a life of their own, never solved, only changed.'<sup>510</sup> Moreton additionally noted that the topic had not only a German dimension, but also an international one and described the discrepancy between the 'Western powers' moral public support' in contrast to the actual lack of enthusiasm for German reunification.<sup>511</sup> Furthermore, she emphasised the reservations held by international powers (in particular France and Great Britain) towards the day, 'when a reunited Germany would again constitute an economic and political weight at the heart of Europe.' Two years before the actual reunification, John Ardagh (1988) published one of the strongest views against a change in the current status. He recalled the reality of détente and characterised a future reunification as a 'mirage'<sup>512</sup> which was only a 'kind of official myth in the Federal Republic.'<sup>513</sup> Despite considering the perspective of West Germans, views held by the East German population were not covered. Mike Dennis (1988) mentioned the topic in connection with the GDR's struggle to establish an East German identity, and argued that the German Question still burdened this process.<sup>514</sup>

To summarise, even only a small number of researchers discussed the topic, the German Question was present in the British research literature during the 1970s and 80s. However, it was of minor importance overall and academic discourse did not include considerations of the GDR in this context. Additionally, the discrepancy between East German policy and the views of the East German population was little

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<sup>506</sup> Martin McCauley, 'The German Democratic Republic and the Soviet Union', in *Honecker's Germany*, ed. by David Childs (London: Allen & Unwin, 1985), pp. 147-165.

<sup>507</sup> *Ibid*, pp. 148, 164.

<sup>508</sup> Edwina Moreton, ed, *Germany between East and West* (Cambridge: University Press, 1987).

<sup>509</sup> Moreton, 'The German Question in the 1980s', p. 3.

<sup>510</sup> Michael Stürmer, 'The Evolution of the Contemporary German Question', in *Germany between East and West*, ed. by Edwina Moreton (Cambridge: University Press, 1987), p. 21

<sup>511</sup> Moreton, 'The German Question in the 1980s', pp. 6, 10.

<sup>512</sup> John Ardagh, *Germany and the Germans* (London: Penguin, 1988), p. 378.

<sup>513</sup> *Ibid*, p. 383.

<sup>514</sup> Dennis, *German Democratic Republic*, p. XIII.



investigated. In light of the quick succession of events between November 1989 and final reunification only 11 months later, this discrepancy between the official line and population is an especially important factor in the *Wende*-context. In the next section, it will be shown that the press also discussed the German Question, but to a larger extent than academics and furthermore its focus on the East German perspective will be analysed.

### 3.2.2 The press discourse on the German Question and the role of the GDR

Between 1972 and 1989, the German Question featured constantly in the British press. Certain years can be identified which featured a more intense debate on the topic than others. In particular, the signing of the Basic Treaty in 1972 promoted speculations as to whether discussion about the separation of the two German states could now be settled. In 1973, *The Times* identified an end to the German Question. It saw the treaties between the Federal Republic and the Eastern European countries as a solution, especially with regards to the Soviet Union and the GDR. The newspaper's regular use of the phrase 'the two Germanies' supports this impression and demonstrates an understanding of the GDR as being equivalent to the Federal Republic.<sup>515</sup> This is an excellent example of how the press' verbal recognition of the country mirrored political developments. However, *The Times* also articulated doubts concerning a final settlement between the two German states as the following excerpt shows: 'Herr Brandt has brought the West German government to formal acceptance of the division [...] There are still differences of aim and interpretation, in that Herr Brandt does not regard the German Question as finally settled.'<sup>516</sup> The adjective 'formal' seems to indicate that this acceptance is restricted to official policy. A similar tendency can be seen in *The Guardian*. Opinions which ruled out a future reunification of the two German states were also dominant, although less nuanced. For example, the newspaper referred to Erich Honecker, who stressed that there could be no unity between East and West Germany.<sup>517</sup> Overall, the press coverage during the period around the signing of the treaty was characterised by a positive representation of a

<sup>515</sup> 'Two Germanies give approval to text of historic treaty', *The Times*, 08/11/1972, p. 5; Richard Davy, 'Seekers after the impossible', *The Times*, 30/03/1972, p. 13; Gretel Spitzer, 'Two Germanies reach agreement', *The Times*, 27/04/1972, p. 6.

<sup>516</sup> Roger Berthoud and Henry Stanhope, 'Bonn urges Nato partners to move cautiously over relations with East Germany', *The Times*, 08/12/1972, p. 6.

<sup>517</sup> 'Honecker spurns Brandt', *The Guardian*, 07/01/1972, p. 2.

strong East German state. The Basic Treaty between ‘the two German States’ determined, amongst others, that the GDR and the Federal Republic ‘shall develop normal, good-neighbourly relations with each other’ and that ‘neither of the two states can represent the other in the international sphere or act on its behalf.’<sup>518</sup> The apparent settlement of the German Question with the treaty supported the image of a strong East German state.

During the rest of the 1970s, the subject was not discussed to the same extent. Growing international acceptance of the GDR and Erich Honecker’s policy of demarcation from the West German state supported this decreasing interest. It was not until 1976 that the press reflected on the German Question again. At this time there were reports on political developments in both German states, the 9<sup>th</sup> Party Congress of the SED in the GDR and the campaign for the upcoming federal election in the West. In particular, statements given during the build up to the federal election by the CDU candidate and future chancellor, Helmut Kohl, attracted the interest of the British press. *The Guardian*, for example, reported: ‘Herr Helmut Kohl [...] is constantly reminding his audiences that the reunification is far from dead.’<sup>519</sup> The phrase ‘far from dead’ is commonly used to express that the real situation is the opposite of what is said. Therefore, the article highlights that the leading West German politicians still consider the question as highly relevant. In the second half of the 1970s, the topic was regularly part of *The Guardian*’s coverage, albeit to a lesser extent than in earlier years. In contrast, *The Times* did not deal with the German Question.

From the late 1970s onwards, it can be noticed that the press also emphasised the East German population’s desire to achieve reunification. The additional focus on the East Germans themselves enhanced the image of a divide between the authorities and their citizens, as discussed in the previous chapter. At the time of the publication of the so-called *Spiegel Manifesto* in 1977,<sup>520</sup> *The Guardian* reported on the dissident group’s call for reunification.<sup>521</sup> Later articles formulated this wish even more

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<sup>518</sup> The Basic Treaty, in *German History in Documents and Images* <[http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/print\\_document.cfm?document\\_id=172](http://germanhistorydocs.ghi-dc.org/print_document.cfm?document_id=172)> [accessed 24/06/2013]

<sup>519</sup> Hella Pick, ‘Tempers rise in two Germanys’, *The Guardian*, 25/08/1976, p. 2.

<sup>520</sup> The *Spiegel Manifesto* was published in December 1977 in the West German magazine *Spiegel*. The writers remained anonymous and claimed to be a group of East German state personnel and highly criticised the East German leadership.

<sup>521</sup> Siegfried Buschschröter, ‘East German dissidents pledge themselves to reuniting their country’, *The Guardian*, 31/12/1977, p. 4.

pronouncedly, with the press pointing out that ‘the only people who still seek German reunification are to be found amongst the East Germans.’<sup>522</sup> It can be noted that the article generally referred to the ‘East Germans’ without highlighting any particular part of the population. Therefore, the reader could assume that this was a widespread desire held by very different groups of society. In conjunction with Erich Honecker’s call for reunification in 1981, which will be more closely examined later in this chapter, *The Guardian* noted that Honecker’s restrictions on contact between the GDR and the Federal Republic were never popular amongst the East German population, and that most East German citizens ‘still hold to the view that East and West Germans belong to one country.’<sup>523</sup> *The Times* agreed that the GDR government had ‘not wholly persuaded the people of East Germany that theirs is the more truly German Germany and that their future can be divorced from that of the artificial American creation across the wall.’<sup>524</sup> The comment highlights the discrepancy between the intention of the East German government and its population’s feeling towards the Federal Republic. The lexical choice in this statement (‘artificial American creation across the wall’) which also reflects the official East German language, emphasises the newspaper’s critique on the East German government and their actions. Furthermore, the newspaper was convinced that the GDR ‘would face serious internal opposition if it tried abruptly to cut links’ with the Federal Republic.<sup>525</sup> In 1987, *The Observer* even provided statistics illustrating the views of East and West Germans on the question of reunification. The newspaper reported that almost 80% of West Germans thought reunification was desirable and that 70% of the East German population wanted the countries to be reunited.<sup>526</sup> Overall, the press’ interest remained high regarding the German Question during the two decades.

### 3.2.2.1 Honecker predicts reunification under socialism

Towards the end of the 1970s and during the early 1980s, the German Question was back on the press’ agenda, reaching its highpoint in 1984. While the conflict between

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<sup>522</sup> ‘Hole in the Wall’, *The Guardian*, 25/05/1978, p. 13; see also: Christopher Mayhew, ‘A plan for Central Europe’, *The Guardian*, 17/09/1984, p. 9; Hella Pick, ‘East Germany cheers its prison wall’, *The Guardian*, 13/08/1981, p. 5.

<sup>523</sup> ‘Honecker relents’, *The Guardian*, 16/02/1981, p. 6.

<sup>524</sup> ‘Talking of German unity’, *The Times*, 18/02/1981, p. 15.

<sup>525</sup> Michael Binyon, ‘A German dream foundering on the rock of Realpolitik’, *The Times*, 06/09/1984, p.

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<sup>526</sup> ‘Turning the tide of German history’, *The Observer*, 13/09/1987, p. 10.

the Soviet Union and the United States worsened during this period, the two German states were able to continue their dialogue. In particular, the coverage of Erich Honecker's potential visit to the Federal Republic provoked questions about a closer relationship and the chance of a future reunification. Honecker's unexpected speech in 1981 about the future of Germany had already begun to spark press speculation. In February of that year, Erich Honecker stated during a party conference that if the capitalist West German society were to undergo a socialist transformation, a future reunification would need to be reconsidered. After years of demarcation from the West German state, this came as a big surprise to most observers. It should be added that the probability of such a transformation as per Honecker's 'conditions' could, of course, be regarded as highly unlikely. The press coverage of Honecker's announcement provides a good example of the importance of the media in the representation of the GDR in Britain. In addition to the coverage of minor events, the press promptly covered ongoing events and therefore reflected the respective attitudes in Britain. Moreover, the press coverage shows how the individual newspapers presented different perspectives on the same event. *The Guardian* and *The Times* covered the announcement and showed certain similarities in their representations of the GDR and its leadership in this context.<sup>527</sup> The extensive use of direct and indirect quotations from the speech, coupled with the lack of any expression of criticism or doubt, suggests that they both saw the announcement as significant and regarded it as credible. Moreover, both newspapers also acknowledged the ability of Honecker and the GDR to assert their own interests on an international level. The headlines clearly illustrate their agreement: 'Herr Honecker favourable to reunification of Germany' (*The Times*) and 'Honecker relents' (*The Guardian*). These two examples represent Honecker as the active and responsible agent. In characterising Honecker's 'assessment of the scope of action of both German states' as 'realistic', *The Times* further promoted Honecker's credibility.<sup>528</sup> By making reference to the GDR's policy on world peace and disarmament, the newspaper further enhanced the country's positive image. *The Guardian* noted that Honecker's speech 'confirmed signs of a gradual move away from the insistence that there were no

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<sup>527</sup> 'Honecker relents', p. 6; Gretel Spitzer, 'Herr Honecker favourable to reunification of Germany', *The Times*, 17/02/1981, p. 5.

<sup>528</sup> Spitzer, 'Herr Honecker favourable to reunification of Germany', p. 5.

common links between East and West Germany.<sup>529</sup> The connection with current political developments in inter-German relations also signals the credibility of the statement. The portrayal of Honecker as an important and decisive politician in inter-German relations was further supported through a lack of negative comments about the GDR, and an absence of suggestions of the state's dependency on the Soviet Union or the Federal Republic.

Despite these similarities, distinctions can also be detected between *The Times* and *The Guardian*. *The Guardian* responded more enthusiastically to the statement and attached an even higher significance to it than *The Times*. *The Guardian's* additional emphasis on the East German population's support of such a move upgraded the meaning of Honecker's statement. The newspaper reported: 'The policy [of demarcation from the Federal Republic] was never popular among ordinary people, most of whom still hold to the view that East and West Germans belong to one country.'<sup>530</sup> Moreover, it argued that a broader political consensus in the country supported Honecker's idea: 'Mr Honecker was interrupted by thunderous applause from communist delegates when he made the statement on unification.' *The Guardian's* coverage should not be regarded as support for a future reunification as such a development was rather unlikely under the conditions outlined by the East German leader. This statement can rather be seen to represent yet another positive representation of Honecker and confirmation of the country's significance. The final remarks in both articles underline the fact that the newspapers did not have a homogeneous understanding of the implications of Honecker's announcement. *The Guardian* drew attention to Honecker's predecessor Walter Ulbricht, who had pursued the policy of a united German state. In making this reference, the newspaper constructed a historical context which served as substantiation for the current announcement. In contrast, at the end of its article *The Times* referred to the West Germans' cool response to the announcement and thus, placed its own reservations in line with the Western German policy.

Unlike *The Guardian* and *The Times*, *The Observer* did not consider Honecker's statement as believable and rather regarded it as an attempt to influence West

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<sup>529</sup> 'Honecker relents', p. 6.

<sup>530</sup> *Ibid.*

German internal policy.<sup>531</sup> *The Observer's* headline "'One Germany" talk is ruse', suggests that the newspaper had clear reservations. The noun 'ruse' particularly shows that Honecker's statement is not believable and rather aims to fool the public. This argumentation continues throughout the entire article, for example, in its explanation of Honecker's sudden change of mind as 'an attempt to exploit the dispute among West German Social Democrats.' The use of the verb 'to exploit' particularly emphasises the article's negative portrayal of the East German leader. The article's concluding statement: 'No East German leader seriously believes that West Germany can be neutralised', dismisses any notion of this being a realistic offer. However, already the publication indicates that the newspaper perceived the GDR and its leadership to be an important international player, capable of influencing West German policy. This impression is further enhanced since it makes no comment about Honecker not acting independently in this context.

In complete contrast to the aforementioned publications, *The Daily Telegraph* completely ignored Honecker's speech and instead published an article on the East German State Security Service in light of the rising freedom movement in Poland.<sup>532</sup> The article was in line with the newspaper's generally negative portrayal of the GDR. This stance is further illustrated by the description of the brutal and militaristic character of the country in contrast to the events in Poland. The newspaper reported on the 'importance of paramilitary camps where children are drilled and indoctrinated in a fashion reminiscent of the Hitler Youth', and thus, equates the militaristic youth policy of the Third Reich with the current situation in the GDR. The use of the verb 'to indoctrinate', especially when applied to children, underlines the newspaper's negative representation of the East German state.

The presence of the German Question in British news coverage has been demonstrated and in particular its ability to reflect on the subject from the perspective of the GDR itself. As a result of a wide variety of political perspectives amongst the British broadsheet newspapers, the press was able to provide different representations of an individual event, as illustrated above. The next section will analyse the press' portrayal of the general fear surrounding a German unification, and

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<sup>531</sup> Werner Kastor, "'One Germany" talk is ruse', *The Observer*, 01/03/1981, p. 10.

<sup>532</sup> Robert Moss, 'The intelligence war: East Germany's anxious regime', *The Daily Telegraph*, 16/02/1981, p. 6.

will go on to suggest potential consequences of the exclusion of negative feelings in Britain from the press.

### 3.2.3 No British angst

Britain always officially supported the objective of a future unification of the two German states. However, when suddenly in 1989, this old 'dream'<sup>533</sup> could become a reality, Britain and its political leadership did not welcome this possibility at all. They seemed to reject this prospect more strongly than other countries such as the United States.<sup>534</sup> Mike Dennis notes that the British reaction can be characterised as 'a combination of angst and admiration, resentment and respect'.<sup>535</sup> A closer examination of the British press coverage of the German Question can help to understand the negative reaction to a potential unification in the month before and after the fall of the Wall. This will further support the importance of the British press as a historical source which has so far been ignored in tracing attitudes and interests in Britain. It will be shown that before 1989, the British press acknowledged the existence of fears and concerns regarding any future reunification, although it nearly always suggested that these fears were more pronounced in other countries. British anxieties were often blanked out entirely. Additionally, it will be shown that any fear that was reported was negatively perceived, and often regarded as irrational and excessive. The negative discourse surrounding fear could explain the strength of Britain's reaction in 1989/90 when the possibility of reunification finally became more realistic.

Between 1972 and 1989, the British press consistently alluded to the idea of German reunification as not being in the interest of other states in either the East or the West. Moreover, newspapers pointed out that a potential unification was viewed with fear. In 1973, *The Times* stated: 'the Western powers have no real interest now in pressing for reunification of Germany. Their interests will be much better served if the German people come to accept the division.'<sup>536</sup> Two months later, politician Richard Crossman confirmed this attitude towards unification in Britain. He noted that the British government's recognition of the East German state was the obvious way to

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<sup>533</sup> Binyon, 'Aftermath of Andreotti row', p. 6; Binyon, 'A German dream foundering on the rock of Realpolitik', p. 12; Pick, 'Voting to preserve the pax economica', p. 15.

<sup>534</sup> Lehmann, p. 270.

<sup>535</sup> Mike Dennis, 'Looking Anxiously: British Reaction to German Unification', in *Re-Assessing the GDR: Papers from a Nottingham Conference*, ed. by J.H. Reid (Amsterdam, Atlanta: Rodopi, 1994), p. 84.

<sup>536</sup> 'The case for recognizing East Germany', p. 17.

serve British interests and prevent the reunification of Germany.<sup>537</sup> The same idea persisted in the following years. In 1979, *The Guardian* reported the allies being 'more or less openly happy with the [current] status quo.'<sup>538</sup> It reiterated this standpoint a year later, stating that the 'political world may prefer to see Germany divided.'<sup>539</sup> Many articles went a step further and identified a feeling of fear towards the prospect of a unification of the two German states in other countries, for example in Czechoslovakia, France, Poland, the Soviet Union and the United States. Occasionally, the press also commented on British concerns regarding a united German state. However, it primarily reported British attitudes in conjunction with those held by other countries, and then often portrayed British fear as less established when compared with those of others and when identified portrayed as understandable. In 1979, *The Guardian* suggested that the Poles and the Czechs were 'as leery as the French and the English of the political and economic weight of a united Germany.'<sup>540</sup> Noticeably, the English aversion against a unification is stated in connection with other Eastern and Western European countries. As several countries were holding the same position, it appeared particularly comprehensible. A similar argumentation was visible in the coverage of Erich Honecker's visit to the Federal Republic in 1987. On this occasion, *The Times* reported: 'The five-day [...] trip arouses fears elsewhere in Europe (perhaps more in France than in Britain) [...].'<sup>541</sup> As in the example above, British fear is represented as a general attitude shared by several countries. In addition, the article diminishes British fears through the comparison with France. At the beginning of the 1980s, inter-German relations continued to progress without problems, despite the growing tension between the superpowers, and so the possibility of a reunified but neutral Germany was discussed once again. In this context, *The Times* argued that a lot of people 'mostly in Washington and Paris, but some are to be found in London' were worried that West Germany was drifting towards neutralism.<sup>542</sup> The naming of the three capitals as political centres of their respective countries pointed out that these were not just common citizens but rather leading politicians which were responsible

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<sup>537</sup> Crossman, 'Blueprint for a Mark II Wilson government', p. 18.

<sup>538</sup> Steele, 'Can the two Germanys ever be reconciled?', p. 9.

<sup>539</sup> Pick, 'Curtain calls', p. 13.

<sup>540</sup> Steele, 'Can the two Germanys ever be reconciled?', p. 9.

<sup>541</sup> Owen, 'Overtones of fatherland', p. 8.

<sup>542</sup> Davy, 'No, Kohl will not decamp', p. 12.



for the political future of their country. As in the example above, British fear is depicted as smaller in comparison with other countries through the pronoun 'some'. Furthermore, the article stressed that 'obviously it would be wrong to be too comfortable about a country with the special problems and erratic history of Germany.'<sup>543</sup> This remark appears as an explanation, but also in defence of the Western powers' attitude. In comparison with the understated British feelings, French fears were conveyed much more strongly. For example, *The Guardian* commented that 'fears have been voiced from time to time in the West, especially in France that the West Germans might be tempted to accept neutrality in exchange for reunification [...].'<sup>544</sup> This can also be seen through noting that there was a 'widespread feeling in France [...] that behind the Social Democrat rejection of deployment [of new American missiles] lie thoughts of German reunification [...].'<sup>545</sup>

It is important to note that the Soviet Union was portrayed as being the most concerned by a possible unification of the two German states. The press recognised a 'deep-seated fear' in the USSR.<sup>546</sup> However, while the fears of the Western states were represented as understandable and reasonable,<sup>547</sup> those of the Soviet Union were deemed to be less so. Statements such as 'with its almost pathological fear of a reunited, strong Germany'<sup>548</sup> and 'the Russian's primitive fears about German reunification begun to surface'<sup>549</sup> illustrate this negative assessment. In particular, the two adjectives 'pathological' and 'primitive' reinforce the impression that this fear is irrational and excessive. This representation of Soviet fear strengthened a general negative outlook regarding such attitudes. Occasionally, the press seemed to explain the lack of British fear by suggesting that British people and politicians had a more pragmatic approach to the subject. In 1986, the newspaper again acknowledged worries about the idea of a single German nation and expressed understanding for these feelings. However, it also pointed out that 'there is nothing [...] to justify either

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<sup>543</sup> Davy, 'No, Kohl will not decamp', p. 12.

<sup>544</sup> 'The spectre and the Wall', p. 12.

<sup>545</sup> 'A fateful German decision', *The Guardian*, 21/11/1983, p. 12.

<sup>546</sup> Owen, 'Overtones of fatherland', p. 8.

<sup>547</sup> Johnson, 'The people's president', p. 28.

<sup>548</sup> Gedye, '12 E. Germans mar Bonn hope of détente', p. 5.

<sup>549</sup> Binyon, 'Whipping an ally back in line', p. 12.

the Soviet charge that talk of German unity amounts to “revanchism” or the more unofficially expressed Anglo-American charge that it amounts to “neutralism”.<sup>550</sup>

Reflections on negative attitudes towards a unified Germany were part of the general discourse surrounding the German Question during the 1970s and 80s. It has been shown that the British press primarily attributed such feelings to other countries, while Britain was portrayed as being more rational and beyond such fears. However, based on the following case study concerning the perception of the GDR in 1984 and 1987 in the context of a common German future, it will be argued that an unconscious fear did in fact exist in Britain and was reflected in the press. It will also be demonstrated how this fear affected the perception of the GDR.

### **3.2.4 State visits in the eyes of the British press – 1984 and 1987**

The following section will examine the press’ coverage of Erich Honecker and Helmut Kohl’s planned state visit in 1984, compared with the coverage of when it finally took place in 1987. The contrasting representations of the GDR during these two events show how the perception of the GDR changed over time and in the process, further reflecting the way the press could shift its position quickly. In 1984, several articles portrayed the GDR as a bystander or minor participant, especially after the final cancellation of the visit, whereas in 1987 it was seen to be in a more equal partnership with the Federal Republic.

In 1984, articles concerning the German Question formed an important part of the press discourse surrounding the GDR. Honecker’s planned journey to the Federal Republic represented a prime cause of this focus. Under Soviet pressure, the trip was finally cancelled contrary to East German wishes. All newspapers observed the Soviet Union’s strong influence in connection to relations between the two German states and emphasised this in their coverage. Several *Guardian* articles reported the forthcoming visit and its final cancellation in 1984. As demonstrated in connection with the term ‘ally’, a development between the newspaper’s representation of the relationship before and after the cancellation can be recognised. Without concealing the significant influence of the Soviet Union on the GDR and its foreign policy, in August and earlier September 1984, *The Guardian* indicated the East German desire and pursuit of a more independent policy from the superpower. After the cancellation

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<sup>550</sup> Johnson, ‘The people’s president’, p. 28.

it became evident that the newspaper's coverage was determined now by information about the West German and Soviet positions in connection to the visit. The newspaper, for example reported that 'Moscow uses its veto'.<sup>551</sup> As it credits the Soviet state as possessing a 'veto', it identifies the state as a decisive power in inter-German relations. Moreover, *The Guardian* notes that the Soviet leadership is using this power to manipulate the relations between the GDR and the Federal Republic. The final remark of the article underlines Soviet influence in even stronger terms, stating that 'in inter-German relations Moscow rules after all'.<sup>552</sup> The choice of verb stresses Moscow's political influence over the GDR. The last complement 'after all' represents an interesting aspect, as it refers to the previous weeks' news coverage which had consistently speculated as to whether the visit would take place at all.

*The Times'* news coverage bore resemblances to that of *The Guardian*. Despite containing a lot of information about recent events and developments relating to the GDR, the events were often presented from a West German or Soviet perspective, as the following examples show: 'The Russians [...] threatening the GDR in terms harsher and more intimidating than at any time since it was founded'<sup>553</sup>, and 'Soviet officials acknowledge there is no question that Honecker will go to West Germany [...]'.<sup>554</sup> The GDR's passive role can be noticed in both sentences where the Soviet Union and their representatives are the subjects and the GDR is only named as part of the objects. The lexical choice with the verb 'threatening' in the first example additionally supports the Soviet Union's position of power. Only after the cancellation of the visit was announced, did *The Times* finally present the GDR's perspective on the event, however in light of the articles' content and language, the GDR's image did not change. *The Times* journalist Michael Binyon wrote: 'Erich Honecker's proposed visit to West Germany crashed on the rocks of Soviet opposition. [...] but it is plain to him and to all the world that he was never fully master of his own ship'.<sup>555</sup> The journalist uses the nautical metaphors ('crashed on the rocks' and 'master of his own ship') in both examples to describe the limited political power of the East German leader and the

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<sup>551</sup> 'Moscow uses its veto', *The Guardian*, 05/09/1984, p. 10.

<sup>552</sup> Ibid.

<sup>553</sup> Binyon, 'Whipping an ally back in line', p. 12.

<sup>554</sup> Richard Owen, 'Richard Owen on the present sterility of Soviet foreign policy', *The Times*, 14/08/1984, p. 12.

<sup>555</sup> Binyon, 'A German dream foundering on the rock of Realpolitik', p. 12.

Soviet influence on him and his decisions. The adverb of time 'never' draws attention to the previous weeks and the GDR's apparent political freedom to pursue further relations with the Federal Republic. Nevertheless, in the course of the article, the journalist also reflected that the GDR had its own political objectives separate from those of the Soviet Union, and that it would try to pursue them: 'Despite its obvious reluctance to bow to Soviet pressure, many try to guard its long-term aims by joining more enthusiastically in the Moscow orchestrated campaign against revanchism.'

All of *The Daily Telegraph's* articles, before and after the cancellation, focused strongly on the Soviet Union and its view on the developments between the two German states. The GDR was rarely mentioned and the few existing comments emphasised its dependency on the Soviet Union. The newspaper reported, for example, on Moscow's claims that Bonn was 'using economic levers and political contacts to force its patronage on East Germany, to kindle nationalistic sentiments and to seek concessions on fundamental issues concerning East German sovereignty.'<sup>556</sup> As the example shows, the newspaper focused on Soviet-West German relations without considering the East German perspective. Thus, it suggested that the state was unable to speak for itself and had to be protected by the Soviet Union, otherwise it would glide into dependency. Other articles even gave the impression that this issue was a matter of concern for Bonn and for Moscow, with one article stating that 'Moscow has reminded Bonn that its 1970 treaty with the Soviet Union prohibits any attempt to reunite Germany [...].'<sup>557</sup> The minor importance of the GDR is reflected in the sentence through the omission of the country. These examples reflect *The Daily Telegraph's* lack of interest in the GDR and that it was unwilling to recognise the country as equal and independent.

A similar attitude can also be identified in *The Observer*. It primarily presented the Soviet perspective of events surrounding the debate around a potential meeting between Honecker and Kohl: 'Russia frowns on smiling Germans'.<sup>558</sup> The first paragraph confirmed what was already indicated in the headline; that relations between the GDR and the Federal Republic were of little concern for the newspaper. Instead it emphasised 'Moscow's warning against rapprochement between East and

<sup>556</sup> Nigel Wade, 'Links between two Germanys upset Moscow', *The Daily Telegraph*, 28/07/1984, p. 4.

<sup>557</sup> Nigel Wade, 'Borders warning for Bonn', *The Daily Telegraph*, 13/08/1984, p. 4. See also: Michael Farr, 'W. Berlin mission reopens', *The Daily Telegraph*, 01/08/1984, p. 4.

<sup>558</sup> Mark Frankland, 'Russia frowns on smiling Germans', *The Observer*, 05/08/1984, p. 11.

West Germany.<sup>559</sup> The Soviet Union's significance is evident through the grammatical structure of the two statements. Moscow is presented as subject of the sentence and therefore, the Soviet perspective is presented. Moreover, the term 'warning' emphasises the state's political power. That being said, as the Soviet Union is trying to prevent the 'rapprochement', the sentence indirectly emphasises the ongoing development of relations between the two German states. *The Observer's* assessment of the asymmetrical relationship between the USSR and the GDR, along with the former's influence on inter-German relations is additionally stressed by the following statement: 'There is evidence that President Chernenko [...] pressed home the point that the NATO missiles were encouraging "revanchism" in West Germany or that the East Germans should watch their Western brothers carefully.' The relationship is characterised through pressure and warnings from Moscow which is evident in the verb 'pressed' and the indirect command to the GDR. Furthermore, the article suggests that the political authorities in Bonn and Moscow are the key players with regards to the German Question and not the two German states. This became particularly obvious when the newspaper cited a Soviet specialist on Germany: 'Bonn was overplaying its hand with East Germany and had exploited Russian patience because it knew Moscow wanted détente.'<sup>560</sup> In *The Observer* and *The Daily Telegraph* (and to a lesser extent in the other previously examined newspapers), the unbalanced relationship is also conveyed linguistically. Along with portrayal of the 'GDR' as predominantly the passive object of a sentence, articles often exclude the GDR entirely and refer instead to a 'reunited Germany'. Overall, all of the newspapers responded to Moscow's final cancellation of the meeting between both German political leaders, and accordingly represented the GDR as being of lesser importance.

Three years later, on 7 September 1987, Erich Honecker was finally able to begin his long desired official visit to the Federal Republic. With it, the East German leader made the greatest accomplishment in the GDR's struggle for international recognition. Naturally, the British press reported on the entire visit. The visit generally represented a strong signal for the existence of two German states. However, against the background of the general elections in the Federal Republic, and more particularly, the 750<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Berlin (including Ronald Reagan's famous call to tear down the

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<sup>559</sup> Frankland, 'Russia frowns on smiling Germans', p. 11.

<sup>560</sup> *Ibid.*

Wall) the press once again speculated on the possibility of a common German future.<sup>561</sup> The press' interest refuted Roger Morgan's claims made during the same year, in that he stressed how little attention the press was paying to the topic and noted an absence of a continuous and well informed discussion about developments in Germany.<sup>562</sup>

When compared to the coverage in 1984, parts of the press appeared to almost entirely reverse their views on the GDR and its representation in relation to the German Question. In 1987, all of the newspapers focused to a much greater extent on the two German states, while the Soviet Union was mentioned as a minor participant. The most noticeable change can be found in the conservative *Daily Telegraph*. The role the newspaper allocated to the East German state shifted remarkably. While in articles concerned with the planned visit in 1984 it had often ignored the country, in 1987 it focused on the GDR to a comparable extent as other states. *The Daily Telegraph* similarly reported on Erich Honecker and his demands to Helmut Kohl to a comparable degree, as this headline showed: 'Kohl and Honecker agree to improve links in Berlin.'<sup>563</sup> It shows both politicians as responsible for the political decisions and no other country, for example the Soviet Union three years ago, is important.<sup>564</sup> In addition, the newspaper's choice of words stresses the revised view on the GDR. The newspaper reported on the leaders' opening speeches of the visit, with the article's headline acting as a clear indication of the newspaper's new approach: 'Kohl is rebuffed on unity'. Despite still focusing on the West German chancellor, it outlines the limits of Kohl's political power. The article's leader confirms this impression and more importantly, specifies Erich Honecker's responsibility for this move. The newspaper reported: 'East Germany's leader, Herr Honecker who is on a historic visit to West Germany rebuffed a move towards reunification of Germany by Kohl. [...] his reply to Kohl dashed hopes of progress on reunification.'<sup>565</sup> As a result of its choice of

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<sup>561</sup> For example: 'Mayor visit', *The Guardian*, 07/05/1987, p. 5; Richard Davy, 'Berlin's birthday but the package as before', *The Times*, 30/04/1987, p. 18; John England, 'Open this gate, Reagan appeals to Gorbachov', *The Times*, 13/06/1987, p. 6; Simon Tisdall, 'The Berlin Wall: A flashpoint dimmed', *The Guardian*, 20/01/1987, p. 8.

<sup>562</sup> Roger Morgan, 'The British View', in *Germany between East and West*, ed. by Edwina Moreton (Cambridge: University Press, 1987), p. 85.

<sup>563</sup> Daniel Johnson, 'Kohl and Honecker agree to improve links in Berlin', *The Daily Telegraph*, 09/09/1987, p. 6.

<sup>564</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>565</sup> Daniel Johnson, 'Kohl is rebuffed on unity', *The Daily Telegraph*, 08/09/1987, p. 1.

verbs ('rebuffed' and 'dashes') and with the East German leader as subject of the sentence, the statement demonstrates Honecker's ability to actively influence the development of the German-German relationship. The newspaper only then cited Helmut Kohl's speech, which suggests a lesser importance of the West German chancellor. Having said that, the newspaper presented the GDR in a less positive light than other newspapers, by adding that Honecker was personally responsible for the construction of the Wall<sup>566</sup> and making reference to the shooting of refugees.<sup>567</sup> Overall, the newspaper did not fully change its negative portrayal of the East German state; however, a new presentation of the GDR was visible.

During the summit, *The Observer* also speculated about the future development of the German states. In line with other newspapers, the GDR and its attitude were portrayed more strongly than in earlier accounts, while the Soviet Union played only a marginal role in the articles. The only remark which referred to the Soviet state promoted the strength of the GDR rather than diminishing it: 'East Germany is the Soviet Union's weightiest economic and military ally, just as West Germany is America's.'<sup>568</sup> The GDR's prominent position is stressed through description of the Soviet-East German relationship, in particular through the use of the adjective 'weighty' in its superlative form. The growing acceptance of the GDR was recognisable as the article mainly reported the two German states simultaneously. Phrases, such as 'the leaders of the two parts of Germany', 'two Germanies', 'their relations' and 'German history', demonstrated this lack of hierarchy and therefore, showed a more equal perception of the Federal Republic and the GDR.

*The Guardian's* coverage of the events around the state visit affirms the newspaper's general anti-reunification stance in favour of a strong East German state. As with *The Observer* and *The Daily Telegraph*, the newspaper also portrayed in parallel the Federal Republic and the GDR with their approaches to the German Question and their relations to each other. It noted: 'Dr Kohl and Mr Honecker traded blunt exchanges on human rights [...] The East German leader repeated his view that socialism and capitalism were as difficult to mix as fire and water [...].'<sup>569</sup> The detailed

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<sup>566</sup> Johnson, 'Kohl is rebuffed on unity', p. 1.

<sup>567</sup> Johnson, 'Kohl and Honecker agree to improve links in Berlin', p. 6.

<sup>568</sup> 'Turning the tide of German history', p. 10.

<sup>569</sup> Anna Tomforde, 'Kohl to visit East Germany despite summit differences', *The Guardian*, 09/09/1987, p. 1.

indirect quotation of Honecker emphasised that he has to be considered as a decisive politician in this context. Due to the newspaper's left-wing stance, the support for a strong GDR and rejection of reunification is unsurprising. Later in the same article, the newspaper linked the demands for a 'united German Fatherland' with right-wing groups in the Federal Republic. Therefore, it labelled such demands as negative, belonging exclusively to the right of the political spectrum and not supported by the majority. An article dealing with the Polish fear about 'any suggestions of a move towards German reunification' a few days later, further stressed their belief in the potential danger of reunification.<sup>570</sup>

Two months before the actual meeting, *The Times'* headline 'Herr Honecker's *Westpolitik*' demonstrates the newspaper's focus and its attitude towards the East German leader.<sup>571</sup> A similar standpoint can be found in the articles published during the final visit. The newspaper acknowledged the importance of the meeting 'to crown Honecker's campaign to have the GDR acknowledged by West Germany as a legitimate state [...]'.<sup>572</sup> Both examples focus on Honecker's actions and strategies by reporting on his '*Westpolitik*' and his 'campaign'. The East German leader is, therefore, portrayed as a political actor who is pursuing an independent policy. Furthermore, it depicted the GDR and its leadership as active, key players by noting that 'East Germany has opened a few chinks in the Wall'<sup>573</sup> and that Honecker said that 'The two countries were sovereign nations, with West Germany as firmly "anchored in the Western Alliance" as East Germany was in the Warsaw Pact.'<sup>574</sup> Despite also focusing more strongly on the GDR like other newspapers, *The Times* also reminded its readers of the importance of the superpowers in inter-German relations, particularly the Soviet Union. The following statement offers evidence of *The Times'* perspective: 'East Germany's party leader will be empowered to do nothing that has not been agreed in advance by his masters in Moscow and the diplomats in his foreign ministry.'<sup>575</sup> Later the author added: '[...] it remains a police state under Soviet control.'<sup>576</sup> The term 'police state' depicts the GDR as an undemocratic state which restrains its population

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<sup>570</sup> Jackson Diehl, 'Honecker's dream a Polish nightmare', *The Guardian*, 14/09/1987, p. 8.

<sup>571</sup> 'Herr Honecker's *Westpolitik*', p. 15.

<sup>572</sup> Owen, 'Keeping faith with father', p. 10.

<sup>573</sup> Owen, 'Overtones of fatherland', p. 8.

<sup>574</sup> Richard Owen, 'Germans agree to forge better East-West links', *The Times*, 09/09/1987, p. 1.

<sup>575</sup> 'East meets West', *The Times*, 07/09/1987, p. 15.

<sup>576</sup> *Ibid.*



through the arbitrary exercise of power by the authorities. At the same time, the article highlights that the East German government is not free in its decision but rather depends on the Soviet Union. The newspaper also claimed: 'In an improved East-West climate, the significance of the intra-German relationship has diminished. [...] Herr Honecker's long postponed visit can take place as a quiet encounter between estranged members of one family. Its role on the wider stage has been reclaimed by the main players.'<sup>577</sup> Therefore, without denying the East German government a decisive role in its relation with the Federal Republic, the newspaper nevertheless stressed external factors for the development. *The Times'* coverage of the opening day of the visit contains similarities to *The Daily Telegraph*. Helmut Kohl's significant statement about the future unity of Germany is only mentioned in the middle of the article, and the article instead focuses on Honecker's speech, citing that 'War must not start again on German soil'. This subordination of Kohl's demands in the press coverage, a key European politician, is surprising. With it *The Times* seems to diminish thoughts of unification in a way similar to other conservative newspapers.

Overall, the GDR was very differently represented in the news coverage in 1984 and 1987. The comparison has demonstrated how the press reflected the political changes that took place during these years. In 1984, the country was much more perceived to be of minor importance, both before and after the cancellation of the visit. In particular, *The Observer's* and *The Daily Telegraph's* coverage of the events emphasises the newspapers' approach towards the GDR as insignificant in foreign policy issues. Only three years later, a very different representation of the country can be recognised in the British press. All of the newspapers showed the GDR as a genuinely international player and a force to be reckoned with in German relations. Moreover, the analysis shows that the press represents an important source for tracing British attitudes before 1989 and can, for example, add further explanation for the highly negative British reaction in 1989/90 to a possible future unification which, some academics suggest had so far not been considered in any detail. As outlined in the previous section, the British press did not identify any particularly strong feelings in Britain towards a possible reunification. However, considering the press coverage of the GDR in 1987 in the context of Honecker's visit, it can be speculated that such

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<sup>577</sup> 'East meets West', p. 15.

feelings indeed existed. As indicated earlier in this section, it is questionable whether the final realisation of the visit can fully explain the transformation of the press, especially in the case of the predominantly anti-GDR coverage found in *The Daily Telegraph*. I therefore suggest that the focus on the GDR along with its representation as an important international player was partly a reaction to the increasing speculations about a common German future. Only three months earlier, the American president had demanded: 'Mr Gorbachev tear down this Wall!' Despite addressing the Soviet leader and not Honecker directly, it raised again the subject of German unification. The relevance of the subject was then further confirmed in Helmut Kohl's opening address of Honecker's visit in September 1987: 'Das Bewußtsein für die Einheit der Nation ist wach wie eh und je, und ungebrochen ist der Wille, sie zu bewahren.'<sup>578</sup> A strong, important and also stable GDR would possibly prevent unification.

In a similar way to its representation of an East German character in the previous chapter, the British press described the country and its foreign policy in a detailed and diverse manner. Due to its daily coverage, the press was able to focus on minor events such as Erich Honecker's statement from 1981 about a possible common German future, and was able to present events as they developed rather than simply the final outcomes. For example, the on-going press speculations in advance of the 1984 state visit illustrate the importance of the press as a comprehensive source of information about the GDR. The regular press interest in the country and events connected to it, supported a diverse image beyond its rather insignificant role in global affairs, and more importantly, beyond one-dimensional representations of a 'Soviet puppet' or 'better Germany'. The linguistic analysis of individual terms, such as ally/allies, which the press often used to describe the relation between the Soviet Union and the GDR, exemplify an evolving perception of the GDR. It additionally underlines the danger of superficial newspaper consumption by contemporaneous and contemporary observers, as the overall context and further attributes were of the utmost importance for the characterisation of the relationship. The press' ability to incorporate political changes more immediately, contributed further to a more up-to-

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<sup>578</sup> 'Rede aus Anlass des offiziellen Besuchs von Generalsekretär Erich Honecker in Bonn', in *Konrad Adenauer Stiftung* <<http://helmut-kohl.kas.de/index.php?msg=537>> [accessed 24/06/2013].

date impression of the country in a constantly changing environment. Especially during the early 1970s, the press was able to represent the country's new international status. The different interpretations made by individual newspapers were also explored in this chapter. The range of views presented with regards to a single topic or event, which to an extent reflects British society, makes it so valuable as an historical source. In regard to the German Question, the different motivations for the press' representation have been highlighted. The next chapter will focus on the GDR's internal affairs, and more particularly the press' representation of different forms of anti-state views.

## Chapter 4

### Opposition as a factor for a changing image of the GDR

This chapter will analyse British newspapers' representations of opposition in the GDR during the 1970s and 80s. During this time, the press focused regularly on the subject. It will be shown that particularly during the 1980s, the British press somewhat surprisingly started to depict the GDR as a kind of civil society within the context of reports about the opposition, a misconception as scholars have shown after the *Wende*. This was possible because newspapers concentrated increasingly on the opposition activities of ordinary East Germans. As a result, the subject enabled a stronger representation of the East German population which was often missing in connection with other GDR related events and therefore added an important facet to the image of the GDR. Noticeably, the press' representation of the opposition in the GDR differed substantially from that provided by academic researchers both before and after the *Wende*. Before 1989, British newspapers and academics emphasised different aspects of the subject. For example, academic publications, often concentrated on well known dissidents such as Stefan Heym, Rudolf Bahro and Robert Havemann and the writers' protest after Biermann had been prevented from returning to the GDR.<sup>579</sup> In 1986, Roger Woods published the first detailed account in Britain of the opposition.<sup>580</sup> Additionally, the differing representations found within individual newspapers can be seen to further contradict any notion of a uniform image of the GDR in the British press, as outlined in the introduction to this thesis. By comparing the press coverage of opposition activities in the GDR between the mid-1970s and their development into the early 1980s, a multifaceted and evolving image of the GDR can be identified.

That being said, despite regularly reporting on East German opposition, as we know from subsequent studies after 1990, journalists' representations of opposition

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<sup>579</sup> Wilfried van der Will, 'The Nature of Dissidence in the GDR', in *The GDR in the 1980s*, ed. by Ian Wallace (= *German Monitor Special 4*) (Dundee: Dundee University, 1984), pp. 31-43. Steele, *Socialism with a German Face*, p. 91; 165ff.

<sup>580</sup> Woods.

only showed an incomplete view on the opposition. During the 1970s, the press tended to not cover opposition activities which were carried out by unknown East German citizens GDR-wide, while during the later decade, the press focused in particular on the 'unofficial peace movement' in the GDR and presented it as a far-reaching and relatively strong movement, a misconception as past and contemporary research have noted. Fulbrook, for example, points out that the very expression, 'an unofficial peace movement', is misleading as there was no single movement, but rather a number of different initiatives<sup>581</sup> and that the 'rumblings of discontent from below' remained for the most part isolated and uncoordinated.<sup>582</sup> Despite identifying a growing opposition and a closer relation between individual peace groups during this times, Bill Niven and J. K. A. Thomanek also do not observe the development of a united movement.<sup>583</sup> Moreover, the scholars note that 'many GDR citizens became passive *refuseniks*'.<sup>584</sup> Anneke de Rudder even labels the GDR opposition as a '*Widerstand ohne Volk*', one which only changed in 1989/90 when large parts of the East German population began to take part in and show solidarity with opposition groups.<sup>585</sup> The press' portrayal of a united oppositional force led to an exaggerated image of the GDR as a society of firm peace activists in opposition to the government. Within this context, the press additionally presented the East German Church as part and protector of the movement, which further strengthened the impression of a far-reaching opposition movement in the GDR. In particular, Ehrhart Neubert criticised this 'simplistic' representation of the Church.<sup>586</sup> Despite this somewhat misleading image, it is important to take note of the press' perspective as a similar view can be observed in several publications during the first years following the *Wende*. This view contributed to the emergence of a black-and-white representation of the GDR during the 1990s which has since been critically assessed. With reference to these early publications, Mary Fulbrook, amongst others, notes that the history of the GDR

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<sup>581</sup> Fulbrook, *Anatomy of a Dictatorship*, p. 208.

<sup>582</sup> *Ibid*, p. 200.

<sup>583</sup> Bill Niven and J. K. A. Thomanek, *Dividing and Uniting Germany* (London, New York: Routledge, 2001), p. 49.

<sup>584</sup> *Ibid*, p. 46.

<sup>585</sup> Anneke de Rudder, 'Zusammenfassung der Podiumsdiskussion am 12.06.1999: Die Wahrheit von Widerstand und Opposition in der deutschen Öffentlichkeit', in *Widerstand und Opposition in der DDR*, ed. by Klaus-Dietmar Henke, Peter Steinbach, Johannes Tuchel (Cologne: Böhlau 1999), p. 87.

<sup>586</sup> Ehrhart Neubert, *Geschichte der Opposition in der DDR 1949-1989* (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1997), p. 483.

seemed to be made up of ‘Helden, Mitläufern und Bösen’.<sup>587</sup> In confirming Fulbrook’s assessment, Katherine Pence and Paul Betts also reject the ‘simplistic identification of heroes, victims and villains’.<sup>588</sup> A closer press analysis will show that this perspective did not simply develop after 1989, but rather that it had already existed in earlier years. Moreover, this chapter will also pay attention to the question how far the working conditions for British journalists influenced the specific representation of the East German opposition in British newspapers.

The following outline will highlight key opposition activities in the GDR during the 1970s and 80s. It contains significant background information which is necessary in order to fully understand the subsequent press analysis and the specific perspective of the British press. Opposition activities had been part of the GDR since its founding; between 1949 and 1989, the East German leadership had to face many varying forms of opposition from their population. During the 1950s and 60s, people close to and even within the government, young Christians, cultural elites and common workers along with many other groups participated at some point in anti-state activities. The initial workers’ uprising in June 1953 which eventually inspired countrywide demands for free elections and more democracy became the most well-known event of this time. However, systematic suppression, internal purges and draconian punishments destroyed these opposition initiatives. The early 1970s were marked by decisive political changes in the GDR. In 1971, Erich Honecker became the new general secretary of the SED and successor to Walter Ulbricht. The comparatively youthful Honecker, who was almost 20 years Ulbricht’s junior, raised hopes of change towards more freedom and openness in the GDR. His announcement later that year, that there could be no ‘taboos’ in art and literature seemed proof of Honecker’s new approach. Along with the international recognition of the state, these hopeful expectations limited opposition activities for a short time. Despite the apparently stable situation in the GDR, Neubert notes that between 1972 and 1978 church-based initiatives already developed as grassroots initiatives.<sup>589</sup> Eckert also points out that the first

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<sup>587</sup> Mary Fulbrook, ‘Historiografische Kontroversen seit 1990’, in *Views from Abroad: Die DDR aus britischer Perspektive*, ed. by Peter Barker, Marc-Dietrich Ohse and Dennis Tate (Bielefeld: W. Bertelsmann, 2007), p. 43.

<sup>588</sup> Katherine Pence and Paul Betts, eds, *Socialist Modern: East German Everyday Culture and Politics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008), p. 4.

<sup>589</sup> Neubert, pp. 201f.

organisational roots for the revolution in 1989 were already developed in the early 1970s.<sup>590</sup> In contrast to earlier decades, the various opposition tactics did not generally attempt to overthrow the East German system, instead they aimed to reform it.<sup>591</sup> During the early 1970s cultural dissidence slowly developed and reached its high in 1976 with the expulsion of the East German critical singer-songwriter Wolf Biermann. Biermann had been banned from performing for over 10 years before the GDR authorities finally allowed him to take up a concert tour in the Federal Republic. After the first concert, the GDR publically declared that the singer had lost his right to be a citizen of the GDR due to his unacceptable behaviour towards the state. This decision led to protests by many leading artists such as Christa Wolf, Jurek Becker, Stefan Heym, Günter Kunert and Heiner Müller. The East German leadership did not accept the revolt by some of its most prominent citizens and eventually forced many artists to leave the GDR. The subsequent exodus of important artists virtually ended any cultural opposition as the remaining critical artists were unable to form a similar force to that which was assembled in earlier years.<sup>592</sup> Despite the focus on Biermann's prominent supporters, people from very different backgrounds throughout the GDR protested against the government's decision.<sup>593</sup> The historians Ehrhart Neubert and Thomas Auerbach stress how Biermann's lyrics and those of other oppositional writers influenced youth and opposition groups.<sup>594</sup> Like Biermann, many critics of the GDR-government often argued from a Marxist perspective, such as Rudolf Bahro. Robert Havemann, who had already become the most important dissident in the GDR during the 1960s, regularly and publically voiced his criticism of the East German leadership.<sup>595</sup> In order to silence him, he was subjected to constant surveillance and was even put under house arrest between 1976 and 1979. Until his death in 1982, the

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<sup>590</sup> Rainer Eckert, 'Widerstand und Opposition in der DDR: Siebzehn Thesen', *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, 44.1 (1996), pp. 59ff.

<sup>591</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 52.

<sup>592</sup> Neubert, p. 244.

<sup>593</sup> Karl Wilhelm Fricke, *Opposition und Widerstand in der DDR: Ein politischer Report* (Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1984), p. 180; Martin Jander, 'Der Protest gegen die Biermann-Ausbürgerung', in *Widerstand und Opposition in der DDR*, ed. by Klaus-Dietmar Henke, Peter Steinbach and Johannes Tuchel (Cologne: Böhlau, 1999), p. 292; Neubert, p. 294; Ehrhart Neubert and Thomas Auerbach, 'Es kann anders werden': *Opposition und Widerstand in Thüringen 1945-1989* (Cologne: Böhlau, 2005), pp. 120, 126.

<sup>594</sup> Neubert, p. 225; Neubert and Auerbach, pp. 106ff.

<sup>595</sup> Jürgen Thomanek, 'Rudolf Bahro: Dissident in East and West: From Apparatchik to Environmentalist', in *The GDR under Honecker: 1971-1981*, ed. by Ian Wallace (=GDR Monitor Special Series No. 1) (Dundee: Dundee University, 1981), p. 63.

former professor of the Humboldt University (Berlin) remained the most important opponent of the East German leadership, and was a valuable supporter and inspiration for a younger generation of non-conformist East Germans.<sup>596</sup> Another dissident who emerged in 1977 was the previously unknown party member Rudolf Bahro. His book *Die Alternative* attracted public attention in both German states and abroad. Therein, he critically analysed 'actually existing socialism'. Just one day after the publication, Bahro was arrested and was detained in prison until 1979 when he was released to the Federal Republic. Although the book and transcriptions of it were secretly read and discussed amongst opposition groups in the GDR, Bahro himself had no long-term impact on the groups. In 1978, the so-called Spiegel Manifesto<sup>597</sup>, which consisted of two highly critical articles apparently written by SED party officials, was published in the West German magazine *Spiegel* but it also did only marginally influence the development of opposition in the GDR. Given its unclear origin along with its limited reflection of the current problems and developments in the GDR, it was of minor importance for the East German opposition despite the furore its initial publication caused.<sup>598</sup>

Along with these notable figures and publications, young East Germans during the 1970s often met under the roof of Protestant churches to express their ideas away from their often conformist life in socialist society. This led to the development of numerous youth groups, with Neubert noting a diverse opposition scene inside, but also outside of churches in 1977.<sup>599</sup> During the course of increasing world-wide rearmament at the end of the 1970s, particularly within the context of the NATO Dual-Track Decision, peace groups were formed in the GDR and in many Western European countries. In the GDR, a new school subject called *Wehrkundeunterricht* was introduced in 1978 which aimed to introduce 15-16-year old students to basic military knowledge and to prepare male students for subsequent military service. This provides an example of the growing militarisation of East German society. It led to stronger

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<sup>596</sup> Neubert, p. 220.

<sup>597</sup> A group which called itself *Bund Demokratischer Kommunisten Deutschlands* published in the Hamburg magazine *Spiegel* their manifesto. The article claimed that SED-party members even from within higher political circles of the East German government were responsible for the critique. After the reunification it became clear that Herrmann von Berg, who worked for the international liaison division of the GDR press office, was responsible for the articles.

<sup>598</sup> Neubert, p. 235.

<sup>599</sup> *Ibid.*



resistance within the East German population and triggered the development of peace groups. At the same time, in light of growing environmental pollution in the GDR and the government's denial of its existence, environmental groups also began to form. This development culminated in 1981/82 with several initiatives and activities which were often later summarised under the motto *Schwerter zu Flugscharen - Swords to Ploughshares*. The biblical sign itself had originally been chosen to represent the Decade of Peace in 1980. It was only when the sign was printed on cloth patches in 1981 that the symbol's popularity saw a massive increase, and many young East Germans began to wear it in public.<sup>600</sup> The East German authorities reacted against the growing activities brutally with arrests and deportations. Thus, they were able to substantially weaken the existing structures. These actions represented long-standing tactics against any form of dissent aiming to smother any activities critical to the state as early as possible and avoid any public attention to their cause. In addition, the Stasi used 'perfidious psychological intimidation' and an excessive deployment of unofficial informers to break down any opposition groups.<sup>601</sup> However, Jens Giesecke stresses that the latitude of the State Security to fight against opposition was narrowed by the coverage of the Western media.

Overall, the State Security was unable to completely destroy the opposition and shortly after, in 1984, some groups reformed in several East German towns. In contrast to the earlier focus on peace, the new groups had more diverse goals such as human rights, environmental issues and feminist concerns. In particular, the events in the Soviet nuclear power plant in Chernobyl in 1986 and the government's subsequent denial of danger led to increasing environmental awareness, which promoted the existing environmental groups. One year prior to the Chernobyl disaster, the election of Mikhail Gorbachev as Soviet leader in 1985 also served to stimulate the opposition scene in the GDR. Overall, during the final years of the GDR (1986-1989) there was a renewed increase in opposition activities which amongst others was reflected by a growing samizdat literature scene. However, only a limited number of activists participated in such publications and the authorities continued to harass and persecute them. As a sign of growing self-confidence, it can be seen that more groups

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<sup>600</sup> Neubert, p. 399.

<sup>601</sup> Jens Giesecke, *The GDR State Security: Shield and Sword of the Party* (Berlin: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 2004), p. 89.

went public with their objectives. Public protests such as the Olof-Palme Peace Walk, the independent participation in the official Rosa Luxemburg/Karl Liebknecht-demonstration in 1988 and the public protests against the elections in May 1989 showed a stronger public voice. Despite tension between the opposition groups who aimed to reform the GDR and the growing number of East Germans who had applied to leave the country, the combined efforts of both groups more often than not achieved greater public awareness for the opposition. Not until the autumn of 1989 were the opposition groups finally able to reach out and involve a larger part of the East German population in the protest against the government. However, it was still only a fairly limited number of long-term activists who developed and organised the main form of protests. They became a decisive factor in the events in autumn 1989 which led to the collapse of the East German government and eventually of the GDR.

The textual analysis of the press coverage on opposition in the GDR will focus on two different time periods: 1976-78, and 1982/83. Both periods contained decisive events in connection with East German opposition which will be later discussed. The inclusion of these two different periods offers further advantages as it also allows us to observe changes in the press' coverage over time. It will be possible to identify how the coverage of opposition activities during the early 1980s influenced the overall image of the GDR. To demonstrate the changing press coverage, the analysis will focus on three different aspects: the perception of the participants in opposition activities, the temporal perspective from which the events were presented and finally the perception of the GDR as a geographic space.

#### **4.1 1976-1978: Dissidents in the GDR**

The second half of the 1970s saw an increase in British press articles about various forms of dissent in the GDR. In contrast, during the first years following the international recognition of the GDR, the press focused to a greater extent on the country's foreign affairs and its new political leader Erich Honecker, whereas reports about opposition activities were of minor importance. From 1976 onwards, especially after the expulsion of the East German singer-songwriter Wolf Biermann, the press' coverage changed and displayed a much stronger interest in opposition. However, the press primarily identified certain types of dissent or people connected with dissident

activity while others remained excluded. In the following section the main features of press coverage from 1976 to 1978 will be presented, along with their impact on the image of the GDR. The first step in this investigation will be to examine the ways in which the press represented those involved in any form of opposition or dissent.

#### **4.1.1 The perception of East Germans in opposition, 1976-1978**

The focus on individuals or a limited number of groups was one of the main features of the press' coverage during the mid- to late-1970s. The most commonly cited figure of East German opposition found in the British press tended to be a well-known citizen acting alone, without the support of or the connection to any bigger network. The most prominent examples offered in the British press include the protest by writers and artists after Biermann's expulsion, the dissident Robert Havemann, the potential opposition inside the East German party itself (which was regarded as responsible for the so-called *Spiegel-Manifesto*) or the dissident Rudolf Bahro. As a result, a marginalisation of broader parts of opposition took place which stood in contrast to the actual situation in the GDR where ordinary East Germans also opposed their government as Neubert and Eckert point out.<sup>602</sup> The following section will closely examine the press' coverage of two events during this period in order to demonstrate the press' portrayal of opposition as an individual act. Its impression developed firstly through the press' choice of newsworthy examples and also through their individual representation.

##### **4.1.1.1 The case of Oskar Brüsewitz**

East German Pastor Oskar Brüsewitz's self-immolation can be seen as exemplary of the coverage of oppositional behaviour in the GDR in the mid-1970s. It was featured as an isolated action by a single person against a powerful and dominant state. The perception as a hopeless undertaking can also be described as characteristic for the representation of earlier oppositional activities. On 23 August 1976, Brüsewitz set himself on fire as a protest against the state's youth policy. This action can be seen as an ultimate act of desperation, as Brüsewitz had ruled out any hope of changing the East German state and so chose to commit suicide.

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<sup>602</sup> Eckert, pp. 59ff; Neubert, p. 201.

*The Guardian* characterised Brüsewitz' protest as the 'first open demonstration against the regime by an East German since the worker's uprising in East Berlin.'<sup>603</sup> In presenting his suicide in this way, the newspaper clearly stressed the uniqueness of any open articulation of dissent against the state, but also underlined the fact that Brüsewitz acted alone. The reference to a lack of any uprising since 1953 ('first') gave the impression that there had been either no reason or opportunity for protest since then. At the same time, this sentence does not entirely rule out the potential existence of hidden forms of protest. Later the newspaper continued, 'Herr Brüsewitz had become particularly frustrated with the regime's stepped-up campaign to influence youth to turn its back on religion', which supports the impression of an entirely personal motivation for Brüsewitz' action. *The Times*, however, did not focus on this as being a potential source of motivation. Both newspapers identified the 'communist oppression' as the reason behind his decision and therefore linked the cause of Brüsewitz's protest to the ideological basis of the state and suggested it was system immanent.<sup>604</sup> While *The Guardian* described the increasing restrictions imposed upon to the church in the GDR in recent years and indicated a worsening of their relationship with the state, *The Times* focused on other inhuman sides of the East German state to show a pattern in the system. It pointed out that, 'His [Brüsewitz's] wife has not yet been permitted to visit him' and that she was 'interrogated by East German security officials afterwards for five hours.'<sup>605</sup> None of the newspapers mentioned a broader feeling of discontent or criticism amongst other representatives of the church, or sympathy for Brüsewitz's concerns, and therefore gave the impression of it being an isolated case. In particular, a short article in *The Daily Telegraph* demonstrated the danger of misinterpretation as its shortness and the quotation of an East German source could easily mislead the readers. At the end of the article, it reported that the East German news agency *ADN* confirmed Brüsewitz self-immolation and declaring that 'he "suffered from crazy notions."' The article neither objected to this argument nor did it provide its readers with further information to reject the claim and therefore, *The Daily Telegraph* seemed to support the East

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<sup>603</sup> Franklin Jordan, 'Death of pastor who set fire to himself', *The Guardian*, 24/08/1976, p. 2.

<sup>604</sup> 'E German pastor dies after fire protest', *The Times*, 24/08/1976, p. 3; Jordan, 'Death of pastor who set fire to himself', p. 2.

<sup>605</sup> Gretel Spitzer, 'Pastor sets himself on fire in East Germany', *The Times*, 23/08/1976, p. 3.

German state's official arguments of the act as that of a single mad person and his unjustified actions.

#### 4.1.1.2 The case of Wolf Biermann

With the expulsion of the singer-songwriter and poet Wolf Biermann from the GDR, the press entered a new stage in the press coverage of East German opposition. It was the starting point for a growth in the press' interest in various forms of dissent in the GDR. That being said, the press' coverage of the Biermann case demonstrated the limited impact the press attached to him and the events which followed, and its general underrepresentation of opposition at that time. Instead, newspapers reduced the protest which followed to a personal fight by a small number of East German artists.

One day after the GDR's decision to deprive Biermann of his citizenship, *The Times* initially published an article about 'controversial East German artists'.<sup>606</sup> The article presented an ambivalent picture of Biermann and the potential danger he posed for the East German authorities. The newspaper characterised Biermann as 'a convinced but critical Communist' and continued to report on his concert in Cologne: 'He spoke and sang about East Germany's shortcomings and failures, but he also expressed approval for the existence of the first socialist German state.' *The Guardian* took up the case only when leading East German writers protested against the decision of the East German government, which clearly showed that the newspaper did not attach any great importance to the expulsion or Biermann himself. However, in line with the coverage of Oskar Brüsewitz, it stressed the 'unprecedented public protest'.<sup>607</sup> Furthermore, the author explained the 'unusual protest' with 'a new hardening of the cultural line'. Thus, the newspaper justified the protest as a personal reaction to short-term problems exclusively affecting writers and did not place their objections in a wider context. When *The Guardian* reported on the arrest of the young East German writer Jürgen Fuchs, the additional information that he was a 'writer friend of Herr Biermann' indicated a private motive for his support, as the article did not present any alternative explanation. Jürgen Fuchs, who had studied in the town of Jena, was expelled from the university due to his engagement in cultural opposition in

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<sup>606</sup> 'East German poet loses citizenship', *The Times*, 17/11/1976, p. 9.

<sup>607</sup> W. L. Webb, 'GDR artists protest over Biermann', *The Guardian*, 19/11/1976, p. 2.

1975. He represented an important contact between the opposition scenes in Jena and Berlin. Fuchs was later arrested following protests against Biermann's expulsion and eventually deported to the Federal Republic.<sup>608</sup> Due to the lack of further information, readers most likely perceived Fuchs as one of the writers who initiated the protest, and it was therefore impossible to see any broader dimension attached to problems in the GDR.

Whilst the initial Biermann case itself did not provoke a great deal of interest, the events which followed were reported on with greater vigour. These included the arrest of the prominent figure Robert Havemann, a protest letter by well-known East German artists and the closing of the office of the West German television channel in the GDR for showing Biermann's concert.<sup>609</sup> *The Guardian* published a detailed report about the arrest of the 'East German regime's most outspoken critics' (Havemann) and the connection between the arrest and Havemann's effort to help Biermann.<sup>610</sup> The newspaper attached a personal affiliation ('to help his friend') to Havemann's motive in the same way as in the previous article about Jürgen Fuchs. Interestingly, the term 'dissidents' is introduced here, which reflects these individuals' clear opposition to the state authorities, but it also marks them out as belonging to an elite. Along with references to the 'dissident author' Jürgen Fuchs and 'a petition circulated among East Germany's intellectual dissidents', *The Guardian* reported that 'a dozen of East Germany's vocal dissidents rallied around Wolf Biermann'.<sup>611</sup> The involvement of ordinary East German citizens as pointed out in the historical overview above remained unmentioned. In December, *The Guardian* and *The Times* reflected further on the events initiated by the expulsion of Biermann and the current situation in the GDR. *The Times* came to the conclusion that before his expulsion, Biermann 'did not seem much of a threat and his brand of communism probably had limited appeal in the bourgeois materialist state which East Germany has become,'<sup>612</sup> but that the 'regime managed to lift him into the limelight'.<sup>613</sup> With this statement, the newspaper diminished Biermann's critical stance to a fight restricted to him as an individual.

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<sup>608</sup> Neubert and Auerbach, p. 110.

<sup>609</sup> 'Berlin arrest criticised', *The Guardian*, 29/11/1976, p. 3; 'E Berlin acts over singer', *The Guardian*, 22/11/1976, p. 2; Franklin Jordan, 'Berlin arrest criticised', *The Guardian*, 27/11/1976, p. 2.

<sup>610</sup> Jordan, 'Berlin arrest criticised', p. 2.

<sup>611</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>612</sup> Richard Davy, 'The East German regime sways as "normality" sets in', *The Times*, 13/12/1976, p. 14.

<sup>613</sup> *Ibid.*

However, it identified certain 'unsteadiness' in the country which was caused not by Biermann himself, but by unease about the future economic situation and the society's new openness as a result of growing Western influences (media, growing numbers of visitors). East German citizens 'are becoming less afraid of their government' and 'the system is less well supported than the regime likes to claim'.<sup>614</sup> With this conclusion, *The Times* hinted at an existing dissatisfaction and oppositional potential but still remained extremely vague. *The Guardian* also identified an 'array of problems' in the East German state and detected 'a restiveness that is probably greater than at any time since 1961'.<sup>615</sup> Despite naming the 'dissident intellectuals' as one of these problems, the article did not generally give the impression of them as being a serious problem to report on. Indication for this view can be found in the specific language used in the article and in the arguments presented. At the beginning, the writers' protests were described as 'complaints', a term which clearly reduces their potency. Furthermore, the article suggested that 'some of the dissent has been allowed to happen to set the stage for a return to a tougher policy', suggesting that any protest was only possible because the state allowed it and even wanted it. In comparison to *The Times'* summary of the current situation, *The Guardian* focused more explicitly on Biermann's objections.<sup>616</sup> In a similar fashion to the earlier article, the newspaper suggested a positive initial situation in the GDR which had worsened but could be resolved. The most obvious difference to *The Times* article was that it did not detect any oppositional potential. It suggested that the biggest current threat facing the GDR was the number of people applying to leave the country, and explained the writer's protest as being personally motivated, as Biermann's expulsion 'represented a threat' to them. Towards the end, the article hinted at arrests in Jena and therefore slightly expanded the view of the situation in the GDR. However, the article again remained vague and instead emphasised the lack of workers' support of the protest. The restricted view on opposition in the GDR was further enhanced by the apparent limitation to prominent citizens while common East Germans were seldom part of the press coverage.

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<sup>614</sup> Richard Davy, 'The East German regime sways as "normality" sets in', *The Times*, 13/12/1976, p. 14.

<sup>615</sup> Michael Getler, 'Hard times for Kojak communists', *The Guardian*, 29/12/1975, p. 3.

<sup>616</sup> *Ibid.*

The focus on prominent figures or elite groups is another main feature of the press coverage during the discussed time period. The case of Pastor Oskar Brüsewitz is one of the few examples in which the story of a common GDR citizen was covered. The limited articles about these unknown East Germans predominantly covered isolated events and did not follow them over a longer period. Moreover, all of them were portrayed as having failed in their attempts to act against the state which will be discussed more closely in the next section.<sup>617</sup> In August 1977, the destiny of a small number of common East German citizens briefly caught the attention of the press.<sup>618</sup> *The Times* reported that 'East Germany has allowed five dissidents to emigrate to the West, but has increased the house arrest restrictions on its Marxist critic, Professor Robert Havemann, in East Berlin.'<sup>619</sup> Despite being an exception from the aforementioned lack of focus on ordinary East German citizens, the article only mentions them in contrast to the living conditions of the prominent Robert Havemann, and therefore redirects most of the attention to him. *The Guardian*, which only reported on the group once, also referred to the increasing number of dissidents and their 'export' out of the GDR.<sup>620</sup> *The Times* published two further articles on the subject. Under the headline 'E Germany expels eight more dissidents', it reported the novelty that 'for the first time workers and students were included in a group of civil right activists expelled by East Germany.'<sup>621</sup> Due to the lack of further information, this statement could be taken to suggest that there had been no previous reason, such as dissent from their side, to expel any common citizens. This would be a misinterpretation. Furthermore, it also highlighted the reaction of the state and not the undertaking of the 'dissidents'. The articles were published at the same time as Rudolf Bahro was arrested, and so Bahro's story soon caught all of the press' attention. However, it should not be forgotten that in the absence of other sources on the situation in the GDR, the press played an important role in providing information. In this case, it raised awareness of the fact that at least a small number of common East

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<sup>617</sup> 'Dissident faces new trial for prison conduct', *The Times*, 03/01/1978, p. 4; 'Dissident says his work destroyed', *The Times*, 09/09/1977, p. 5; Gretel Spitzer, 'Dissident is jailed for another five years', *The Times*, 07/01/1978, p. 4; Gretel Spitzer, 'E Germany expels eight more dissidents', *The Times*, 05/09/1977, p. 3; Spitzer, 'Five E German dissidents emigrate to West', p. 4; Webb, 'Dissident outflow increases', p. 6.

<sup>618</sup> Spitzer, 'Five E German dissidents emigrate to West', p. 4.

<sup>619</sup> Ibid.

<sup>620</sup> W. L. Webb, 'Dissident outflow increases', *The Guardian*, 08/09/1977, p. 6.

<sup>621</sup> Spitzer, 'E Germany expels eight more dissidents', p. 3.



Germans disagreed with official state politics and had therefore been in conflict with the East German authorities.<sup>622</sup> As the press did not revisit their cases or report on other East Germans in a similar situation, the reader could only understand these events as exceptions and could not draw any conclusion about further dissent amongst the wider East German population. In this context the journalists limited access to common East Germans, in particular if they came into conflict with the state authorities or even had already been arrested has to be highlighted. These limitations contributed to the fact that a more detailed coverage of these East Germans was hardly possible.

Before the publication of his book *Die Alternative*, Rudolf Bahro had been unknown to the public in Britain and in either German state. In a very short time, however, the press raised his profile to such a point that he became 'one of the most prominent dissidents'<sup>623</sup> in the GDR. From his first appearance in the British press, the reader was provided with several facts about Bahro. *The Times* described him as 'the 41-old East German Marxist critic'. With the use of the definite article 'the' in contrast to the initial *Guardian* article which referred to 'a Marxist', the author was suggesting that Bahro had already a certain degree of popularity. *The Guardian* described him in a headline as a 'dissident' and thus, determined his status from the beginning.<sup>624</sup> The article summarised that the 'East German regime has chosen to deal with most of its critics among the intelligentsia by driving them into exile'<sup>625</sup> or, as in the case of Robert Havemann, putting them under house arrest. By placing Bahro next to Havemann and the 'intelligentsia', he received the same status as the physicist. *The Guardian's* characterisation of Bahro as being 'one of the most prominent figures [...] to fall victim to the crackdown on critical intellectuals in recent years' only served to promote his status even further.<sup>626</sup>

The impression of individuals or small groups as being responsible for any opposition activities was further supported by the lack of any reference to a bigger network. Only two exceptions are traceable in the press coverage. It will be shown,

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<sup>622</sup> 'Dissident says his work destroyed', p. 5.

<sup>623</sup> "'Russian kidnap' fear for canoeist', *The Guardian*, 12/10/1979, p. 7.

<sup>624</sup> Hella Pick, 'E. Germany brands dissidents as agents', *The Guardian*, 13/09/1977, p. 7.

<sup>625</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>626</sup> 'East Germans gaol critic for 8 years', *The Guardian*, 03/07/1978, p. 5; 'Soviet police crush dissidents' protest', *The Guardian*, 02/06/1978, p. 6.

however that neither of them was able to influence the prevailing view concerning opposition in the GDR. For example, articles that were published in connection with the publication of the *Charta 77*<sup>627</sup> in Czechoslovakia differed from the pattern outlined above. *The Times* and *The Guardian* connected the developments in Czechoslovakia with similar events in other Eastern European states such as the GDR and therefore gave the impression of a common and inter-connected force.<sup>628</sup> However, this presentation of an interlinked force in Eastern Europe could only be detected over a very limited period between January and February 1977 and therefore had no substantial impact on the perception of the GDR in the British press. For example, *The Guardian* noted that ‘the Soviet Union seems to sense that the greatest danger from the dissidents is their impact on opinion in the West. Because of what the *Charter 77* Group (sic) are saying in Czechoslovakia, East German intellectuals like Professor Havemann, the Roman Catholic Church and the *Workers’ Defence Committee* in Poland [...] the human rights factor now looks like becoming much more important in East-West relations.’<sup>629</sup> The listing of these different groups and individuals from several Eastern European countries in one sentence suggested that they were connected not only in their course but also in actions. *The Times* columnist Bernard Levin also described how the ‘Polish ferment has taken a dozen different forms in the past few years [...] just as the “Charter 77” movement in Czechoslovakia’ and he also describes ‘similar signs [...] in East Germany’.<sup>630</sup>

The East Germans who wanted to leave the GDR formed the only other unit that was recognised as a group in opposition to the state by the British press. Due to the constant shortage of workers, the GDR could not allow its citizens to freely choose to leave the country. This was clearly demonstrated in the years prior to the building of the Wall. Perhaps even more importantly, in leaving the GDR with the aim to settle in the capitalist Federal Republic, the GDR suffered a moral defeat. Additionally, there

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<sup>627</sup> In January 1977, 242 citizens published a petition under the name *Charta 77* in Czechoslovakia. They criticised the lack of human rights in the country. It also marked the beginning of a civil rights movement in the country of the same name.

<sup>628</sup> ‘Charter 77 protests may spread further’, *The Times*, 27/01/1977, p. 7; ‘Cold War games’, *The Guardian*, 28/01/1977, p. 13; ‘The Kremlin caught by a war of dissent’, *The Guardian*, 14/01/1977, p. 11; ‘The pressure For freedom’, *The Times*, 05/02/1977, p. 15; Bernard Levin, ‘A revolution in the territory of the mind that even Soviet might cannot stop’, *The Times*, 02/08/1977, p. 10; Hella Pick, ‘Prague blames trouble on West guardian’, *The Guardian*, 21/01/1977, p. 3.

<sup>629</sup> ‘The Kremlin caught by a war of dissent’, p. 11.

<sup>630</sup> Levin, ‘A revolution in the territory of the mind that even Soviet might cannot stop’, p. 10.

was the potential danger that those willing to leave would ally to some form of group. *The Times* described the 'increasing pressure on would-be emigrants and on intellectual dissidents' as the main concern for the East German government, which confirmed the limited perception to only these two groups during the time.<sup>631</sup> Despite consisting of a much bigger number of people, the would-be emigrants were not connected or organised, only the prominent ones were mentioned after they had left the country, while the majority of them remained anonymous.

The East German Protestant Church, which later became an essential part of the press coverage and was recognised as an umbrella for various forms of opposition, had not yet been identified by the press in this context. Instead, the press almost ignored the East German Church entirely in connection with any anti-state ideas. *The Guardian*, for example, focused on the growing rapprochement between the church leadership and the state. Reporting from a church festival in Leipzig, the newspaper recognised 'a radical turn round in once frosty relations between Church and atheist State.'<sup>632</sup> In contrast, the relationship between the state and grassroots church representatives was less harmonious. However, the press did not differentiate. Together with *The Times*, when *The Guardian* reported the first case of opposition against military education, instead of showing a broader picture of the growing discontent in several congregations, the press pictured criticism being demonstrated by 'East Germany's Protestant Church leaders'.<sup>633</sup>

#### **4.1.2 Reporting Perspective: Presenting the failure of dissent**

A further aspect important for the perception of opposition in the GDR is the question of how and when readers were made aware of a reported event. In 1976-78, newspaper readers usually learned about actions and events after they had taken place and the participating individuals were already in jail or had left the GDR. Therefore, their actions were regarded as a failure as the article placed the state in an active position while the individual appeared passive and unable to continue further activities. The consequences of this way of reporting could be seen in the news coverage of *The Times* and *The Guardian* in August and September 1977. This was one

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<sup>631</sup> 'The pressure for freedom', p. 15.

<sup>632</sup> 'Party aid for church gathering', *The Guardian*, 29/05/1978, p. 6.

<sup>633</sup> 'Bishops discuss discrimination in E Germany', *The Times*, 18/05/1977, p. 18; 'Military teaching protest', *The Guardian*, 26/06/1978, p. 5.

of the rare accounts when the two newspapers reported on a small number of non-prominent East Germans who came into conflict with the East German authorities.<sup>634</sup> Readers learned about them only after the East German state had 'allowed' them to 'emigrate to the West' and all of them had previously spent time in jail.<sup>635</sup> All of their opposition activities were described in the past tense as their arrests and expulsions had ultimately brought them to an end. For example, *The Times* reported that one person was arrested 'after writing to President Carter to draw his attention to the violation of human rights.'<sup>636</sup> *The Guardian* reported on the 'new expulsion of people involved in the protest last November against the exiling of [...] Wolf Biermann'.<sup>637</sup> Other examples also seemed to suggest that any form of opposition was hopeless and would finally be suppressed and punished by the authorities. In January 1978 *The Times* wrote an article about Rolf Mainz, who had been 'sentenced to four and a half years imprisonment by an East German court last October', and stated that he 'is to stand trial again.' The newspaper added that Mainz's 'crime' had been publishing a report in the West German magazine *Die Zeit*.<sup>638</sup> Mainz was only displayed as a victim who had been punished by the state. As the article was announcing a second trial, it gave the state the decisive role in determining his future.

When the story of Rudolf Bahro caught the attention of the British press on 25 August 1977 he had already been arrested by the East German authorities.<sup>639</sup> As the articles reported the publication of his book *Die Alternative*, they gave the impression that despite being in prison, Bahro was still partly able to influence the situation and could put a certain amount of pressure on the East German state. However, this perception soon changed as Bahro was in jail for the majority of the time his story was in the press, and was therefore unable to continue his critique of the East German authorities.

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<sup>634</sup> 'Dissident says his work destroyed', p. 5; Spitzer, 'E Germany expels eight more dissidents', p. 3; Spitzer, 'Five E German dissidents emigrate to West', p. 4; Webb, 'Dissident outflow increases', p. 6.

<sup>635</sup> Spitzer, 'Five E German dissidents emigrate to West', p. 4.

<sup>636</sup> Ibid.

<sup>637</sup> Webb, 'Dissident outflow increases', p. 6.

<sup>638</sup> 'Dissident faces new trial for prison conduct', p. 4.

<sup>639</sup> 'Dissident arrested', *The Guardian*, 25/08/1977, p. 6; 'E Germans hold Marxist who asked questions', *The Times*, 25/08/1977, p. 4.

### 4.1.3 The GDR = Berlin

The restricted view on opposition and with it the GDR itself was also reflected in the press' presentation of geographical space. Chapter 1.4.1 has already discussed the journalists' high interest in the city of East Berlin. This strong focus was also reflected in the coverage of opposition in the GDR, while almost no other places in the GDR were mentioned in the respective articles. For example, *The Guardian* reported that '10 leading writers and artists in East Berlin have issued [...] protest against their government's action in depriving [...] Biermann of his citizenship.'<sup>640</sup> As the press offered no further information about protests in other places in the GDR (which took place as demonstrated above), the focus remained entirely on East Berlin. Only in 1977, a year after the actual expulsion, did *The Guardian* report on 'two young writers [...] from Jena' who 'were arrested after signing a resolution protesting against the exiling' of Biermann.<sup>641</sup> When summarising the events around Biermann and Havemann in 1976, *The Times* again restricted the events to the capital, explaining that 'there are probably additional reasons for the unsteadiness in East Berlin.'<sup>642</sup> Overall, geographical knowledge of the GDR in Britain was often not relevant for the articles as many reported on events via the Federal Republic, for example in the case of book publications or announcements of the arrival of emigrants. The entire coverage of the Wolf Biermann case was reported from the Federal Republic, as Biermann was 'refused permission to return from his present trip to West Germany.'<sup>643</sup> The wave of artists leaving the GDR after the protests was also reported after their arrival in the West. Under the headline 'Dissenters leave E Germany', *The Times* noted that 'Herr Thomas Brasch, a writer, and Frau Katharina Thalbach, an actress arrived in West Berlin.'<sup>644</sup> In this context, it becomes evident how the possibility to interview East Germans after they had left their country influenced and even limited the image of the GDR in the British press. Other articles provided more specific locations such as Havemann's house (as he was under house arrest), Bahro's prison cell or even the centre of the East German government. However, these spaces did not of course widen readers' geographical knowledge of the GDR, but rather due to their highly

<sup>640</sup> W. L. Webb, 'GDR artists protest over Biermann', p. 2.

<sup>641</sup> W. L. Webb, 'Dissident outflow increases', p. 6.

<sup>642</sup> Richard Davy, 'The East German regime sways "normality" sets in', *The Times*, 13/12/1976, p. 14.

<sup>643</sup> 'East German poet loses citizenship', p. 9.

<sup>644</sup> Gretel Spitzer, 'Dissenters leave E Germany', *The Times*, 13/12/1976, p. 5.

negative connotations contributed to a negative perception of the GDR in the press and seemed, instead, to highlight the state's claustrophobic qualities. When reporting that 'the East German regime has chosen to deal with most of its critics among the intelligentsia by driving them into exile' it also pointed out that 'Haveman (sic) remains under house arrest in East Berlin, and the authorities recently arrested Rudolf Bahro [...].'<sup>645</sup> Given Havemann's inability to articulate his views in the GDR, his publications, interviews or other statements were also reported via the Federal Republic as the following sentence from a *Times* article shows: 'The voice of Professor Robert Havemann, the East German held under a form of house arrest for the past two years, is being heard in a series of broadcasts in West Germany.'<sup>646</sup> As the name of Rudolf Bahro only became known in the UK after he had been arrested, articles concerning him were always negatively associated with his imprisonment. This is exemplified perfectly in the following *Guardian* headline: 'Utopia viewed behind bars - Rudolf Bahro must be freed from prison.'<sup>647</sup> Later articles always reminded the readers of Bahro's location, such as in *The Times* report on a letter written by 37 Labour MPs, which was sent to the East German Prime Minister to protest against Bahro's sentence.<sup>648</sup> As a result of coverage which was either restricted to a small part of the GDR (its capital) or only showed places with negative connotations, a more global perception and understanding of the whole country and any opposition that took place remained impossible.

The above analysis has demonstrated that the press' representation of opposition activities during the mid-1970s was defined by certain characteristic features: Participants were reported as acting independently, and focus was often directed at prominent figures. This impression was further supported by the lack of connection between the individuals or the existence of any type of network. The representation of primarily isolated fights against the East German authorities implied that there were only small chances of changing East German policies and additionally suggested the lack of potential for opposition within the wider East German population. The perceived limitation of opposition in the GDR was strengthened

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<sup>645</sup> Hella Pick, 'E. Germany brands dissidents as agents', p. 7. See also: 'No action on "MP's letters"', *The Guardian*, 27/11/1976, p. 1; Gretel Spitzer, 'Five E German dissidents emigrate to West', p. 4.

<sup>646</sup> Gretel Spitzer, 'Professor smuggles out attack on regime', *The Times*, 12/10/1978, p. 9.

<sup>647</sup> E. P. Thompson, 'Utopia viewed behind bars', *The Guardian*, 14/12/1978, p. 10.

<sup>648</sup> 'News in brief', *The Times*, 26/07/1978, p. 7.

through the reporting of campaigns or actions after they had already failed and the participants were suffering under the authorities' will. A final aspect which has been identified as typical of the news coverage of opposition is its geographical restriction. As a result, the reader was unable to gain a broader impression of the GDR as a whole, and particularly its society. Despite these limitations of the press coverage by the time, it still presented an important source for information in Britain about opposition in the GDR. The following section will analyse press coverage in 1982/83 under the same criteria as the earlier period. It will be shown that in this short time, the press coverage on opposition underwent decisive changes which also affected the overall image of the GDR.

#### **4.2 1982/83 – The appearance of a movement**

At the beginning of the 1980s, the British press coverage of Eastern Europe dealt almost exclusively with the Polish trade union *Solidarity*. The unexpected ongoing events in Poland attracted the attention of nearly the entire press and overshadowed any minor events in connection with opposition in the GDR. Instead, the press primarily discussed the East German government's rejection of *Solidarity's* claims. *The Guardian* reported that 'East Germany was the toughest, most consistent, critic of *Solidarity's* activities in Poland.'<sup>649</sup> Consequently, the image of the GDR was determined by state activities during this time. However, the events in Poland also led to a stronger interest in Eastern Europeans who rebelled against state authorities. The dwindling interest in developments in Poland after the introduction of martial law along with the arrest of many union supporters and the prohibition of *Solidarity*, allowed for more attention to be directed to the situation in the GDR. The press coverage slowly changed and from 1982, the press reported regularly on peace groups in East Germany. By analysing the same categories as in the previous section (participants, temporal and geographical perspective), it will be possible to see the decisive changes between the first time frame (1976-1978) and the early 1980s. It will be shown that this altered perception of opposition activities in the GDR supported a broader shift in the image of the country.

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<sup>649</sup> Hella Pick, 'Gromyko back on the offensive', *The Guardian*, 29/01/1982, p. 5.

#### 4.2.1 The perception of East Germans in opposition, 1982/83

The press presentation of the individuals who participated in oppositional activities marked a decisive difference in the press coverage between the 1970s and the early 1980s. The general press coverage on the subject is marked by the recognition of a broad peace movement. The idea of a broad movement was supported by associations with other international groups and movements, the lack of leading figures in this context and the acceptance of, and association with, the *Swords to Ploughshares* sign as a label for the movement. As mentioned above, the development of the opposition during the late 1970s on a grassroots level was not part of the press coverage. Unmentioned examples include workshops, youth groups located in churches and 'Eppelmanns Bluesmessen', a series of Blues concerts with church service character organised by the Protestant pastor Rainer Eppelmann in the Samaritan parish in East Berlin.<sup>650</sup> It was only in the early 1980s that the press started to report more consistently on the growing grassroots opposition in the GDR. From 1982 onwards, newspapers regularly referred to those responsible for these groups as part of an 'East German peace movement', whereas in previous years, it had instead focused on isolated individuals. The term 'movement' describes an organised or coordinated effort by a group of people with a common goal. The features are of special importance as they constituted the most important differences to the earlier coverage which lacked the group element at any time. Other characteristics of the 'peace movement' which strengthened the impression of a single strong movement will be returned to later. It is important to notice that despite growing numbers of participants and the often more public forms of protest during the early 1980s, researchers, such as Mary Fulbrook, rightly point out that no single movement existed.<sup>651</sup> The press clearly overestimated the significance of the existing peace groups and their strength. However, as a result of the press' greater attention to grassroots opposition, British newspapers were able to offer a much broader picture of East German society. Moreover, during the early 1980s the press was the only source that provided significant information in Britain about grassroots opposition.

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<sup>650</sup> Neubert and Auerbach, pp. 117ff.

<sup>651</sup> Fulbrook, *Anatomy of a Dictatorship*, p. 208.



*The Guardian* did not generally use the term ‘movement’ in connection with the East German peace groups before 1982, and *The Times* referred to a ‘pacifist movement in East Germany’s Lutheran Church’ for the first time in December 1981.<sup>652</sup> Until then, the term was amongst others already used in connection with the West German peace movement and also the trade union movement in Poland in 1980. After introducing the term ‘movement’ in 1981, British newspapers consistently referred to the ‘peace movement’ in the GDR when they covered the opposition activities in the country for the next two years. The term became a label and its meaning and correctness were no longer questioned. Only once, *The Times* expressed the opinion that ‘the peace groups which inhabit the churches (but which are still too uncoordinated to be described as a movement)’, however, this conflicting view remained an exception and therefore had little influence on the overall image of the opposition.<sup>653</sup> The term ‘movement’ was often specified by the adjectives ‘unofficial’ or ‘independent’, which underlined its autonomy from the official state peace movement and the state in general. In comparison with the official state policy, the ‘unofficial movement’ protested ‘not only against American nuclear missiles – as the authorities would have wanted – but also against all weapons in East and West’.<sup>654</sup> The distinction between the two sides, official and unofficial, promoted the impression of a division between the East German population and the government, as has been shown in previous chapters. Whilst *The Guardian* and *The Times* used the word ‘unofficial’ to a comparable degree, *The Guardian* showed a stronger tendency to use the term ‘independent’. The term ‘independent’ seems to suggest a greater freedom of action for the participants and places less emphasis on the growing antagonism between the state and its population. In contrast, the term ‘unofficial’ places more emphasis on the separation from the state. This varying terminology again illustrates the often differing representation of the GDR found in the two newspapers. While *The Times* stressed the growing problems between state and society, *The Guardian* avoided speaking too critically of the East German government.

A further feature of the press coverage which strengthened the impression of the East German activists as a homogenous and broad group was the association with

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<sup>652</sup> David Blow, ‘Peace protest echoed in the Soviet block’, *The Times*, 12/12/1981, p. 6.

<sup>653</sup> Jonathan Dimpleby, ‘Why a message of peace is filling East Germany’s churches’, *The Guardian*, 15/11/1982, p. 9.

<sup>654</sup> Patricia Clough, ‘East German pastors back young pacifists’, *The Times*, 27/03/1982, p. 4.

the *Swords to Ploughshares* sign as the official symbol of the movement. The association of a group with a common symbol is important for its outreach and acceptance. As noted above, the sign was created for the church Peace Decade in 1980 and only a year later it developed into a popular symbol which was worn as a patch by a large number of predominantly young people. Although it could be suggested that these young East Germans shared a common desire for a more peaceful world and more specifically a less militaristic GDR, they did not constitute a connected group which could be described as a movement.

At first, *The Guardian* still felt obliged to explain the symbol and its meaning. It reported that it was viewed by the East German government 'as "a symbol of anti-state views," while those wearing it were considered as "taking part in an illegal political movement"'.<sup>655</sup> In a similar way to *The Times*,<sup>656</sup> *The Guardian* shortly afterwards abandoned further explanations and just referred to it 'as the motto of the East German peace movement'.<sup>657</sup> This can be seen in reports on 'clashes between police and youths wearing badges with the peace slogan "Sword to Ploughshares"'.<sup>658</sup> The newspaper no longer explained that wearing the symbol represented a provocative act in the GDR and its connection with the East German peace movement. Even when used in a different context, this symbol still bore a connection to the East German peace movement. In its coverage of an anti-nuclear demonstration in the Federal Republic, *The Times* reported that the demonstrators 'also strung a banner with the peace movement's slogan "Swords to ploughshares" on the wire near the main gate'.<sup>659</sup> Its popularity was further raised through its adoption by West German peace and anti-nuclear activists.<sup>660</sup> Additionally, as no East German movement such as *Solidarity* or the *Charta 77* existed, the motto was an important sign to help the readership to remember and categorise the East Germans.

Considering the strong press interest in the Polish and Czech opposition movements, as outlined above, the connection between such activities abroad and the

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<sup>655</sup> 'East Germany combats peace movement in the churches', *The Guardian*, 14/04/1982, p. 7; Peter Millar, 'Clamp on young peace protesters rouses wrath of Protestants', *The Guardian*, 12/04/1982, p. 4.

<sup>656</sup> It identified 'Swords to Ploughshares' as 'the motto of the burgeoning unofficial peace movement in East Germany.' In: Michael Binyon, 'E Berlin arrest of Petra Kelly', *The Times*, 13/05/1983, p. 28.

<sup>657</sup> 'News in brief', *The Guardian*, 17/05/1982, p. 6, see also: 'East German peace group grows', *The Guardian*, 10/02/1982, p. 8; Clough, 'East German pastors back young pacifists', p. 4.

<sup>658</sup> 'News in brief', *The Guardian*, 29/09/1982, p. 5.

<sup>659</sup> Michael Binyon, 'West German protesters blockade American base', *The Times*, 02/09/1983, p. 4.

<sup>660</sup> *Ibid.*

events in the GDR further promoted the perception of a strong movement in the GDR. In the course of the *Charta 77* press coverage in 1977, the British press had presented opposition events in individual Eastern European countries next to each other within the same article, which provided the impression of there being a connection between them, and therefore, increased their individual popularity and their apparent impact. The growing national peace movements throughout Europe (including Britain) at the beginning of the 1980s and increasing international contacts between individual peace groups helped to promote the East German movement in the British press. Several articles about the British or international peace movements also contained information about the situation in the GDR.<sup>661</sup> In addition, the connection to other groups also provided the East Germans with a higher degree of legitimacy as they appeared to operate in a similar fashion to their Western counterparts. For example, *The Guardian* reported *END's (European Nuclear Disarmament)* 'extensive contacts with the peace campaigners in East Germany'<sup>662</sup> and that the 'peace campaigners of Greenham Common have sent a telegram to the East German authorities protesting at the arrest of two East German women'.<sup>663</sup> As part of the second *European Nuclear Disarmament Convention* in 1983, *The Times* stated that West German delegates went to East Berlin and 'brought back a message from their East German colleagues.'<sup>664</sup> The the noun 'colleague' emphasises the common ground between East and West Germans and their collaboration towards a joint goal. The growing British peace movement and with it the growing awareness of the topic amongst the British population also resulted in an increased publication of letters to the editor dealing with the general subject of peace.<sup>665</sup> These often contained information about East German groups. Along with reports on West German protesters who blockaded an American base, *The Times* also reported that '50 members of the unofficial East German peace movement who began a vigil outside the Soviet and American

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<sup>661</sup> John Palmer, 'Peace movement refuses to cut dissident links', *The Guardian*, 02/12/1982, p. 6; Jean Stead, 'Nuclear crusaders fall out', *The Guardian*, 12/01/1983, p. 15.

<sup>662</sup> 'Solidarity link to peace campaigners', *The Guardian*, 03/08/1982, p. 7.

<sup>663</sup> 'Writers urge youth to refuse service', *The Guardian*, 19/12/1983, p. 6.

<sup>664</sup> Michael Binyon, 'Peace activists get together at East Berlin secret meeting', *The Times*, 13/05/1983, p. 7.

<sup>665</sup> 'Letters to the editor', *The Guardian*, 21/10/1982, p. 14; 'Letters to the editor', *The Guardian*, 16/03/1983, p. 12; 'Letters to the editor', *The Guardian*, 06/07/1983, p. 12; 'Letters to the editor', *The Guardian*, 12/01/1984, p. 12; E. P. Thompson, 'Poland and the West', *The Times*, 22/01/1982, p. 9.

embassies in East Berlin were removed by police, and several were arrested'.<sup>666</sup> By presenting these two events next to each other, the newspaper was able to stress the legitimacy of the East German movement as they had the same goals and used similar methods as the Western groups. Moreover, it also emphasised the differing consequences of similar actions in East and West Germany and therefore, emphasised the restricted human rights in the GDR. This stressing of shortcomings in connection with human rights in the GDR again reflects *The Times'* more critical view of the country when compared to that of *The Guardian*.

Another decisive change in the press coverage of participants was the stronger association of them as part of a group. In the 1980s, the British press continued to report the fate of individuals who suffered under the state's authority just as in earlier years, yet the individual was no longer described as a lone fighter, but rather as part of a bigger group. The news coverage of the arrest and later sentencing of the Protestant Pastor Lothar Rochau is an example of this changing press coverage. *The Guardian* stated that he was arrested as a result of 'his activities in the East German peace movement'.<sup>667</sup> This information is significant as it shows that even when Rochau could not continue his work due to his arrest, there were still others 'in the East German peace movement' fighting for the same cause. Rochau was depicted as being one part of a whole and as continuing his work.

The British press published several reports on the oppositional movement in Jena and the peace activist Roland Jahn.<sup>668</sup> The press coverage of Jahn's activities offers another illustration of individual people as being regularly described as part of bigger groups rather than acting alone. Jena had been a stronghold for the opposition since the 1970s and Jahn had long been part of this scene. He protested with others against the expulsion of Biermann and consequently lost his university place.<sup>669</sup> Through high-publicity events, Roland Jahn drew attention to the lack of human rights in the GDR, which resulting in him being forced to leave the GDR against his will. When *The Guardian* reported on Jahn for the first time and his potential arrest for publicly

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<sup>666</sup> Binyon, 'West German protesters blockade American base', p. 4.

<sup>667</sup> 'Honecker to free detainee', *The Guardian*, 01/11/1983, p. 7.

<sup>668</sup> Roger Boyes, 'Polish priests jailed after protests', *The Times*, 11/01/1983, p. 4; 'Peace rally in East Germany draws 100,000', *The Times*, 11/07/1983, p. 4; 'Press in permit appeal to minister', *The Guardian*, 11/01/1983, p. 6; Hella Pick, 'Church demands amnesty', *The Guardian*, 26/02/1983, p. 5; 'News in brief', *The Guardian*, 11/06/1983, p. 9.

<sup>669</sup> Neubert and Auerbach, p. 127.

supporting the Polish independent trade union *Solidarity*, it seemed that Jahn had acted on his own.<sup>670</sup> The next two reports, however, showed a different view. When the newspaper announced that Jahn had been forced to leave the country, it referred to him as 'a member of an unofficial peace movement'.<sup>671</sup> A *Times* article about the 'biggest Lutheran rally' in the GDR also mentioned this connection. It reported on a rally, where young East Germans had questioned Church leaders on a variety of topics, one of which was 'the independent peace movement at Jena and Herr Roland Jahn'.<sup>672</sup> Despite his initial spectacular individual action, the press later identified Jahn as part of the bigger movement. Jahn had, of course, not acted on his own and was an active member of the opposition scene in Jena which existed already since the 1970s. The press coverage of events in Jena demonstrated the press' ability to reflect the situation in the GDR in detail despite its overestimation of the opposition scene.

Despite the stronger association of individual people with larger groups or a movement, overall, the press coverage of the oppositional groups in 1982/83 lacked well-known names and was instead presented as a faceless movement. The earlier focus on a small number of well-known East German figures shifted noticeably from the beginning of the 1980s onwards. Many of these people had left the GDR or, once given long-term visas, spent most of their time living and working in the Federal Republic. Robert Havemann died in April 1982 and although in his final month he had started to collaborate with the protestant pastor Rainer Eppelmann, an active supporter of the peace groups, his influence had been limited. Therefore, the press coverage reflected also the situation in the GDR during the early 1980s. As part of the GDR's strategy to control and if possible destroy any form of opposition in the country, it attempted to prevent the establishment of leadership personalities by amongst others arresting or deporting leading figures if they seemed to achieve a certain level of popularity. In addition, the lack of easily recognisable key figures led to the participants being viewed as a united movement by the press with the Protestant Church as only continuously recognisable participant. This also strengthened the focus on the Church. Moreover, without the distraction of well-known names, British readers were more able to notice the broader East German population. At the same time this

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<sup>670</sup> 'Press in permit appeal to minister', p. 6. See also in *The Times*: Boyes, 'Polish priests jailed after protests', p. 4.

<sup>671</sup> 'News in brief', 11/06/1983, p. 9.

<sup>672</sup> 'Peace rally in East Germany draws 100,000', p. 4.

idea of a broad movement supported the impression that the East German society only contained of 'heroes, victims and villains' and with it prefigured research opinions as discussed in the early 1990s.<sup>673</sup>

In the early 1980s, the press coverage of opposition in the GDR contained only a few more regularly reoccurring names such as the Pastor Rainer Eppelmann, the peace activist Roland Jahn and members of the 'Women for peace'-group Bärbel Bohley and Ulrike Poppe. However, none of them were perceived as important enough to be covered over a longer period and therefore never gained international recognition comparable to that of Rudolf Bahro. Therefore, despite these few exceptions, the campaign remained faceless. Instead, the Church represented the strongest constant in the press coverage. The articles regularly reported on the leadership of the Protestant Church, the East German protestant pastors and in general 'the Church' without further differentiation. Moreover, the press did not reflect the conflicts which arose between activist groups and the Church, or even within the institution itself, as often pointed out by contemporary scholars. Neubert particularly criticised that the official Church leadership was generally seen as a protector of the grassroots movement.<sup>674</sup> As a result of the simplified press representation of the Church in the GDR, the image of a strong opposition against the state from inside the Church emerged. Moreover, it positively regarded the Church as influential, and therefore added another facet to the GDR's image without strong focus on the state authorities.

*The Times'* coverage of the East German Protestant Church in 1983 can be characterised as considerable and positive in comparison to other newspapers.<sup>675</sup> Amongst others, it quoted the British Canon Paul Oestreicher who stated after a visit to the GDR, 'he found a church "with great courage [...]".'<sup>676</sup> It further reported on the positive assessment of the well-know US-pastor Billy Graham who was convinced: 'The Church in East Germany [...] is probably spiritually stronger than they've been in years

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<sup>673</sup> Pence and Betts, p. 4.

<sup>674</sup> Neubert, p. 483.

<sup>675</sup> 'How Marx adopted Martin Luther', p. 14; 'World church leaders pay tribute to Luther', *The Times*, 11/11/1983, p. 6; Michael Binyon, 'American priest denounces Reagan's policies', *The Times*, 12/11/1983, p. 5; Michael Binyon, 'World longs for peace says Runcie', *The Times*, 14/11/1983, p. 1; Michael Hamlyn, 'The everlasting plain man's guide to god', *The Times*, 07/03/1983, p. 7; Colin Webb, 'The church, the Kremlin, the anti-Christ', *The Times*, 21/02/1983, p. 12.

<sup>676</sup> Webb, 'The church, the Kremlin, the anti-Christ', p. 12.

because they've had so many confrontations with the Government [...]. When a person does take a stand for Christianity or Christ it makes him a stronger Christian.'<sup>677</sup> Along with this positive representation of the East German Church, it promoted the peace movement which was often connected to the Church. In particular, when *The Times* reported on the 500<sup>th</sup> anniversary of Luther's death in November 1983, it emphasised the gap between state and Church, and clearly supported the latter.<sup>678</sup> The newspaper focused on the Archbishop of Canterbury, Dr Robert Runcie who had given 'strong support to the peace efforts of the Lutheran Church in East Germany.'<sup>679</sup> The newspaper stated that Archbishop Runcie told the East German congregation 'that easy talk about peace from those who did not see themselves as God's children was shallow and promoted cynicism.'<sup>680</sup> With this statement, the archbishop dismissed the official peace policy by the atheist East German government and also indirectly suggested that religious people are better able to promote peace. By publishing this article on the front page and quoting the Head of the Church of England, this additionally emphasised the importance of the Church within this context. In another article, *The Times* reported Archbishop Runcie's suggestion that the East German Church could function as a role model for other Christians, as they 'had given Christians the world over new strength and courage' and 'had been an inspiration to him.'<sup>681</sup> The positive perception of the East German Church was particularly strengthened through the information that they affected humans beyond the East German borders and through Runcie's personal statement that they also inspired himself.

This section illustrated the changing representation of East Germans who participated in opposition activities between the mid-1970s and 1982/83. The representation of a strong movement which was depicted alongside other European movements in Eastern and Western Europe, regular references to the East German Church and the absence of well-known names contributed to a perception of the opposition as being integrated within East German society. The following section will

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<sup>677</sup> Hamlyn, 'The everlasting plain man's guide to god', p. 7.

<sup>678</sup> Binyon, 'American priest denounces Reagan's policies', p. 5; Binyon, 'World longs for peace says Runcie', p. 1.

<sup>679</sup> Binyon, 'World longs for peace says Runcie', p. 1.

<sup>680</sup> Ibid.

<sup>681</sup> Binyon, 'American priest denounces Reagan's policies', p. 5.

show another significant factor which distinguished the representation of opposition in the British press in 1982/83.

#### 4.2.2 Changing perspective

This section will focus on the changing representation of active participants with reference to the temporal perspective of the articles. In the past, readers had often learned about opposition activities in the GDR after the participants had been arrested or expelled by the East German authorities. As a result of this, readers could easily gain the impression that any opposition had little chance of success as the state authorities were fully in control of the respective situations. In 1982/83, British newspaper readers still learned about individuals who lost out against the state. For example, *The Times* reported that ‘the East German authorities deported six more unofficial peace campaigners from Jena to West Germany’.<sup>682</sup> However, the readers were now given much more information about actions which were planned and would take place in the future, and these articles often contained the hope that people in opposition would be able to criticise the authorities or highlight problems in the GDR without being arrested or threatened. As a result, the relationship between the East German government and the opposition was represented as more balanced than in previous years. This presentation led, as did other features of the press’ coverage, to a stronger perception of other parts of the GDR such as the population and did not primarily focus on the government.

Reports of future events could be seen in *The Times*. The newspaper described, for example, that the participants of an international peace conference ‘expected women in East Germany to demonstrate for peace while the convention was on’<sup>683</sup> or that the ‘East German Protestant pastors will speak from their pulpits in defence of young pacifist tomorrow’.<sup>684</sup> This view into the future was achieved through the use of the future tense and also the choice of verbs, for example ‘expect’ with its meaning that something is supposed to happen. In many cases after an event had already taken place, no negative consequences were mentioned within the same article and the protest could therefore be regarded as successful: ‘Two hundred East Germans [...]

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<sup>682</sup> Michael Binyon, ‘Vogel-Honecker meeting signals rapprochement between German states’, *The Times*, 31/05/1983, p. 5.

<sup>683</sup> ‘Mgr Kent alleges Churchill has links with CND “smear”’, *The Times*, 29/04/1983, p. 3.

<sup>684</sup> Clough, ‘East German pastors back young pacifists’, p. 4.



have signed a call for disarmament amid signs that an unofficial peace movement is gaining impetus'.<sup>685</sup> In May 1983, *The Times* provided information about 'a secret rendezvous' between a dozen Western delegates of the conference and '35 unofficial East German peace campaigners who had been denied exit visas to attend'.<sup>686</sup> Later the West Germans brought back a message from the GDR saying: 'peace in Europe was indivisible from human rights, freedom and self-determination'.<sup>687</sup> The reader learned about the meeting after it had been successfully finished and the message had been delivered back to the conference. Moreover, the choice of words, particularly verbs, used in the press coverage was another element which strengthened the impression of increasing power. Phrases such as 'the church attacked the government'<sup>688</sup>, 'church demands alternative for military service'<sup>689</sup>, 'East Germany's Protestant Church accused Communist authorities'<sup>690</sup>, the peace groups 'putting the regime under pressure'<sup>691</sup> and the East Germans 'demanded an end to injustices inside each country'<sup>692</sup> clearly demonstrate this. The use of these verbs gave the impression of a relationship on equal terms. One side can only 'demand' or 'attack' if it is not afraid of the other side and the potential consequences of doing so.

Two main reasons can be offered for the change in coverage. Firstly, after a decade of reporting from and about the GDR, foreign journalists were much more capable of investigating stories and contacting important sources despite the existing restrictions than they had been in the previous decade. In contrast, during the mid-1970s, journalists had regularly to rely on sources that had left the GDR and could therefore no longer influence the situation in the country, which supported the reporting of already finalised events. Alternatively, journalists occasionally used official East German sources (*ADN* or *Neues Deutschland*) which obviously would not focus on any successful anti-state activities. This change could be described as a learning process by the journalists as described in section 1.5.2. Secondly, opposition groups started to actively seek contact with foreign journalists in order to use the public

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<sup>685</sup> 'East German peace group grows', p. 8.

<sup>686</sup> Binyon, 'Peace activists get together at East Berlin secret meeting', p. 7.

<sup>687</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>688</sup> Patricia Clough, 'Thousands shiver for peace in Germany', *The Times*, 12/04/1982, p. 3.

<sup>689</sup> 'East German peace group grows', p. 8.

<sup>690</sup> Millar, 'Clamp on young peace protesters rouses wrath of Protestants', p. 4.

<sup>691</sup> Dimbleby, 'Why a message of peace is filling East Germany's churches', p. 9.

<sup>692</sup> Binyon, 'Peace activists get together at East Berlin secret meeting', p. 7.

awareness as protection. Robert Havemann and others had already regularly made use of the Western media for their purposes. Roland Jahn,<sup>693</sup> active peace activist from Jena, stressed this for the opposition groups in the GDR: 'Die Westmedien waren natürlich ganz, ganz wichtig. [...] Wir haben in Jena fast alles dokumentiert und haben diese Informationen dann an die Westmedien gegeben.'<sup>694</sup> As result, the press often gained detailed first hand information about events in the GDR und therefore, represented a valuable source about the country. The example shows how both sides, press and opposition groups, benefitted from a closer relationship between them. However, this greater cooperation also contributed to overestimation of the East German opposition. In contrast, during the mid-1970s opposition circles wanted to be perceived as independent and not manipulated by Western influences as the government regularly claimed. Therefore, members actively avoided too close contact with the media in contrast to individuals such as Havemann and Bahro.<sup>695</sup> Both men had early recognised the advantage of the Western press.

#### **4.2.3 Geography: The discovery of a country beyond East-Berlin**

A final criterion which marked the differences in the representation of opposition between the 1970s and 80s investigates the representation of spaces in the GDR within these articles. Whilst the earlier press coverage was often limited to the capital, East Berlin, or to negatively connoted places, readers were now able to break through the imaginary border around East Berlin and gain a wider view of the country. The press coverage of the GDR during the early 1980s was marked by a widening perspective regarding the country and with it a more realistic impression of the country. Together with simply broadening the knowledge of the country's geography, this new press interest contributed to a changing representation of the GDR. It went beyond the state authorities and a limited group of people towards a stronger focus on broader society.

In addition to articles about events in East Berlin, newspapers began to report on people and events related to forms of opposition in several other East German towns including Cottbus, Karl-Marx-Stadt, Dresden and Weimar. In 1982 and 1983, the

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<sup>693</sup> Roland Jahn is now the Federal Commissioner for the Stasi Archives in Berlin.

<sup>694</sup> 'Westmedien in der DDR', in *Unsere Geschichte: Das Gedächtnis der Nation e.V.* <http://www.gedaechtnis-der-nation.de/erleben> [accessed 04/08/2013].

<sup>695</sup> Neubert, p. 324.

British press reported several times from Dresden.<sup>696</sup> In February 1982, *The Guardian* described how ‘Thousands of young East Germans took part in an unprecedented peace demonstration.’<sup>697</sup> Under the headline: ‘East Germany combats peace movement in the Churches’, the newspaper reminded its readers of approximately ‘5,000 mostly young people [who] flocked to a Church peace forum in Dresden.’<sup>698</sup> When reporting from Dresden where ‘more than 100,000 people gathered in the biggest Lutheran rally in this country’, *The Times* also pointed out that the East German church ‘would continue supporting young Germans who refused induction into armed service.’<sup>699</sup> Moreover, the article referred to young people in Eisleben and Roland Jahn in Jena. In particular, the town of Jena moved to the centre of attention, when the British press focused on the local groups. *The Guardian* reported on the young campaigner, Jahn, for the first time when he was cycling through the town of Jena with a Polish flag carrying demands to support the Polish people in their opposition activities.<sup>700</sup> Only a few weeks later, the newspaper again reported: ‘Seven young peace campaigners detained in the southern East German city of Jena were freed this week.’<sup>701</sup> Along with Jahn, *The Times* also reported on the ‘Women for Peace group’ and the ‘several small peace groups in East Germany’ with ‘the most notable’ in Jena.<sup>702</sup> Neubert and Auerbach even called the Thuringian town ‘the secret capital’ of the peace movement in the GDR.<sup>703</sup> The information policy of the local group which involved contacts with Western journalists surely promoted its high profile in the British press, and the broader interest in events outside of Berlin disproves Neubert’s criticism. The historian noted that Berlin was generally much more strongly represented in the press coverage of the Western media while information about other East German regions had only a minor news value.<sup>704</sup> Neubert’s assessment has to be regarded as a generalisation regarding the British press’ representation of the

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<sup>696</sup> ‘Church rally’, *The Times*, 11/07/1983, p. 6; ‘East block attacks on peace activists’, *The Times*, 17/12/1983, p. 5; ‘News in brief’, *The Guardian*, 19/02/1983, p. 4; ‘News in brief’, *The Guardian*, 23/05/1983, p. 7; ‘News in brief’, 11/06/1983, p. 9; ‘Press in permit appeal to minister’, p. 6; Boyes, ‘Polish priests jailed after protests’, p. 4; Pick, ‘Church demands amnesty’, p. 5.

<sup>697</sup> ‘Peace rally in East Germany’, *The Guardian*, 15/02/1982, p. 5.

<sup>698</sup> ‘East Germany combats peace movement in the churches’, p. 7.

<sup>699</sup> ‘Peace rally in East Germany draws 100,000’, p. 4.

<sup>700</sup> ‘Press in permit appeal to minister’, p. 6.

<sup>701</sup> Pick, ‘Church demands amnesty’, p. 5.

<sup>702</sup> ‘East block attacks on peace activists’, p. 5.

<sup>703</sup> Neubert and Auerbach, p. 155.

<sup>704</sup> Neubert, p. 483.

GDR in particular during the 1980s, as it has been shown above. This demonstrates the on-going misconceptions of the press, and highlights the necessity of a more detailed analysis of the British press.

With increasing numbers of articles covering East German churches in connection with the opposition activities in the country, churches as locations which were positively perceived determined the press coverage of the 1980s. East German churches were described as 'shelters'<sup>705</sup> and 'spaces' of protest.<sup>706</sup> Churches are not limited to individual countries and are generally held in a high regard, making it easy for British readers to relate to them. Despite the fact that some articles mentioned specific churches, such as the Marienkirche in East Berlin,<sup>707</sup> the articles were not generally limited to a specific place but instead referred to the word in a broader sense, thus implying all churches in the country. This impression was strengthened through information such as: 'a letter read out from pulpits throughout the country.'<sup>708</sup> This stood in contrast to earlier articles which often reported from negatively connoted spaces such as prisons or the locked house of Robert Havemann. Overall, due to the changes in the press coverage on opposition in the GDR British readers were able to gain a much broader picture of life in the GDR beyond East Berlin. Furthermore, with the shift from depicting highly negative locations in the GDR to more positively associated ones which were not related to the East German government, a positive aspect was added to the overall image of the GDR. In addition, it also gave the impression of a growing opposition movement and thus pointing to the roots of the *Wende* that would come, in a way that was not seen at the time and was also not really acknowledged afterwards.

This chapter has demonstrated that articles about various kinds of opposition were an integral part of the British press coverage of the GDR. However, it is recognisable that the representation of opposition changed over time and with it the overall image of the GDR. By comparing two time periods (1976-78 and 1982-83), changes have been established on three different levels: the representation of those

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<sup>705</sup> 'East block attacks on peace activists', p. 5.

<sup>706</sup> Walter Schwarz, 'Pushing the wheel of history', *The Guardian*, 15/02/1985, p. 21.

<sup>707</sup> Walter Schwarz, 'Peace movement to besiege Bundestag during cruise vote', *The Guardian*, 07/11/1983, p. 5.

<sup>708</sup> Clough, 'Thousands shiver for peace in Germany', p. 3.

involved, a temporal question of when readers learned about events, and finally a changing perception of the GDR in terms of its geographical space. Moreover, the press coverage showed once more how differently individual newspapers represented events in the GDR, and how individual newspaper's political bias influenced the presented image. *The Guardian* in contrast to *The Times* included a stronger critique of Western societies within critical articles about the GDR, which sometimes led to a relativisation of the East German government's actions. On the other hand, *The Times* presented a more critical view of the East German government which can be detected in its stronger focus on human rights abuses. It has once again become obvious that *The Daily Telegraph* showed the least interest in any topic connected to the GDR. The newspaper reported only occasionally on the events in the discussed periods and tended to focus on a negative portrayal of the GDR.

The chapter has presented several examples how the working environment and the restrictions journalists had experienced in the GDR potentially influenced the news coverage. During the 1970s, the press had only limited access to adequate sources as described in Chapter One. In particular, closer contacts with common East German citizens were limited. Instead, journalists focus on prominent East German citizens and people who had left the country. As a result, the newspapers showed a restricted image of the opposition in the GDR and therefore inhibited the perception of a broader sense of dissatisfaction or even opposition at the time. The comparison between the two time periods reflects a kind of learning process by the press how to deal with and bypass East German authorities to gain information. Despite the overall restricted possibilities for foreign journalists to work in the GDR, the British press presented a more comprehensive picture of any form of opposition in the GDR than other discourses in Britain at that time. Having said that, it was only in 1989 after the fall of the Wall, that it became clear that only fragments of the actual developments in the GDR were known in the West. Consequently, the British press also presented a partial view of events. In particular, the press' representation of a strong and broad peace movement which was apparently fully supported by the Protestant Church in the GDR has to be highlighted in this context. As previously outlined, contemporary researchers have shown that such a movement did not exist and that the East German church was also much more divided in respect to the opposition activities. However,

this particular press representation of opposition in early 1980s led to a stronger focus on East German society. Despite picturing with opposition a form of rejection of the state, the positive association with the peace movement and the East German Protestant Church added new facets to the overall image of the GDR which enabled British readers to recognise a kind of civil society in the GDR. Moreover, a stronger recognition of the East German population was possible without reference to the often negative concentration on the East German government as seen for example in Chapter Two. The broadening perception of the GDR also took place on a very different level. In the course of the changing representation of opposition, British readers were also able to see a country beyond the capital East Berlin. With the presentation of widening opposition within the country, the press also reported from different cities and towns in the GDR and thus, overcame the earlier restricted and artificial view of the GDR.

## Chapter 5

### When the Berlin Wall reached Great Britain - The image of the Wall in the British press

After the *Wende*, the Berlin Wall formed a key part of the GDR's Cold War image within British publications covering the country's relations with the East German state. Several scholars have emphasised the considerable impact of the divisive Wall on the overall image of the GDR. Stefan Berger and Norman LaPorte characterise the Wall as the 'dominant image of the GDR, symbolising the regime's lack of freedom and human rights'.<sup>709</sup> In his assessment of the GDR's image, Hans-Georg Golz notes that barbed wire, the Wall and the shoot-to-kill policy determined the image of the GDR in Britain until its end.<sup>710</sup> Elfie Rembold argues that particularly during the 1970s and 80s, the Wall and the GDR's shoot-to-kill policy shaped the country's negative image.<sup>711</sup>

Given these assessments, the representation of the Wall found in the British quality press is surprising. For the greater part of the 1970s and 80s, the Berlin Wall was just one of several topics mentioned by the press in connection with the GDR. Whilst the press described the division, the coverage could neither be characterised as particularly extensive nor particularly negative. It was only after the Wall affected British citizens for the first time that the press began to show a greater interest in the topic and that the number of critical articles about the Wall increased. In contrast to the early 1970s, the press covered how the division affected the East German people and how the state controlled its citizens, which encouraged more negative feelings towards the GDR. However, the press coverage seemed to be more interested to sell a good story than to reveal the inhumane character of the East German border. Articles from the late 1970s onwards show this tendency in particular. In addition, a comparison of two cases in 1974 which involved British citizens (Susan Ballantine and Alan Watson) will show how the specific interests of the press and the particular

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<sup>709</sup> Berger and LaPorte, *Friendly Enemy*, p. 231.

<sup>710</sup> Hans-Georg Golz, 'Die britische Mauer', *Deutschland Archiv*, 40.4 (2007), p. 746.

<sup>711</sup> Rembold, p. 301.

circumstances of the events affected their representation. Both were arrested in the GDR for supporting the attempted escapes of East German citizens but the coverage of their cases was very different. In this context, the current chapter will show how the problems regarding the gathering of information, as described in Chapter One, influenced the news coverage about the Wall.

After 1990, only a small number of academic publications discussed the involvement of British citizens in the smuggling of East Germans. Such incidents were primarily used as a general indication of worsening relations between the two countries during the mid-1970s.<sup>712</sup> Neither a detailed analysis of individual cases nor of the potential links between them and the representation of the Wall has been carried out so far. Instead Golz, Berger and LaPorte argue that the arrests of Susan Ballantine and Alan Watson merely represented another step in the deterioration of the GDR's already negative image in Britain.<sup>713</sup> Thus, the scholars frame the events as part of a continuing process. In contrast, a detailed analysis of British newspaper coverage will show that this was not the case at all for the press. During the first years after the official recognition of the GDR the Wall was of minor importance, while other topics, such as the country's new international status, its rapprochement with the Federal Republic and political changes within the country, dominated the press coverage about the GDR. Only in 1974 the newspaper coverage about the Wall changed and the press, in particular in articles connected to Susan Ballantine, began to focus to a greater extent on the GDR's undemocratic style and the impact of the Wall on individuals. However, in the years after this incident, overall levels of interest in the Wall receded once again. Despite the occasional publication of escape stories during the second half of the 1970s, the British press tended to focus less on the personal cost to individuals living in the GDR and a process of acceptance and permanence began to emerge.

The analysis will show that if, as Berger and LaPorte suggest, the Wall represented a highly negative and decisive part of the GDR's image in Britain, the press, as an important source of public discourse, did not further this view. It will be seen that in connection with the representation of the Wall during the 1970s and 80s,

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<sup>712</sup> Berger and LaPorte, *Friendly Enemy*, pp. 176-177; Golz, *Verordnete Völkerfreundschaft*, pp. 120-121; Marianne Howarth, 'Vom Kalten Krieg zum "Kalten Frieden": Diplomatische Beziehungen zwischen Großbritannien und der DDR 1972/73-75', in *Views from Abroad: Die DDR aus britischer Perspektive*, ed. by Peter Barker, Marc-Dietrich Ohse and Dennis Tate (Bielefeld: W. Bertelsmann, 2007), pp. 159-160.

<sup>713</sup> Berger and LaPorte, *Friendly Enemy*, p. 177; Golz, *Verordnete Völkerfreundschaft*, p. 121.



the press in fact contributed to a process of normalisation as detected by researchers such as Klaus-Dietmar Hertle, Konrad H. Jarausch and Christoph Kleßmann. These scholars describe a process of habituation to the Wall as Western states and the citizens of East and West Germany came to terms with the fact of division.<sup>714</sup> The German scholar Ina Merkel also notices this development within the GDR itself. She notes that, for the younger generation of East Germans in particular, the Wall was 'simply [...] there'.<sup>715</sup> West Germans often experienced it instead as a tourist attraction.<sup>716</sup> Hermann Wentker argues that with détente the Wall lost much of its horror for the population of West Berlin.<sup>717</sup> Moreover, he observes that by the mid-1980s, the terminology used to describe the Wall showed an on-going belittlement.<sup>718</sup> In line with this normalisation, the Wall which had so long divided Germans and which was still a site where people died became something rather abstract and symbolic. Scholars have noted how the general image of the Wall moved from something that represented the division of a country and the suppression of the East Germans towards a symbol for the entire Cold War.<sup>719</sup> Patrick Major, for example, describes the iconic image of the Wall and how it became the 'Wall of the Walls', whilst Mary Fulbrook emphasises its highly symbolic value.<sup>720</sup> Berger and LaPorte note that the Wall became the symbol for the overall division of Europe.<sup>721</sup> This development meant that the symbolic imagery of the Wall overshadowed its physical reality, therefore it no longer reflected the on-going danger and restriction it posed for East Germans. This process also suggests that together with the East German government, the entire bipolar world that was jointly responsible for this division between East and West had to be blamed for the division of Germany.<sup>722</sup>

In the following section, the press' coverage during the 1970s will be examined in more detail, as this decade marked decisive changes in relations between the GDR

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<sup>714</sup> *Mauerbau und Mauerfall: Ursachen – Verlauf – Auswirkung*, ed. by Klaus-Dietmar Hertle, Konrad H. Jarausch, Christoph Kleßmann, (Berlin: Chr. Links Verlag, 2002), p. 15.

<sup>715</sup> Ina Merkel, 'The GDR - A Normal Country in the Centre of Europe', in *Power and Society in the GDR 1961-1979: The 'Normalisation of Rule'?*, ed. by Mary Fulbrook (Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2009), p. 198.

<sup>716</sup> Hermann Wentker, 'Der Westen und die Mauer', in *Die Mauer: Errichtung, Überwindung, Erinnerung*, ed. by Klaus-Dietmar Henke (Munich: dtv, 2011), p. 202.

<sup>717</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 204ff.

<sup>718</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 204.

<sup>719</sup> Marion Detjen, 'Die Mauer als politische Metapher', in *Die Mauer: Errichtung, Überwindung, Erinnerung*, ed. by Klaus-Dietmar Henke (Munich: dtv, 2011), p. 434.

<sup>720</sup> Fulbrook, *Anatomy of a Dictatorship*, p. 1.

<sup>721</sup> Berger and LaPorte, *Friendly Enemy*, p. 231.

<sup>722</sup> Detjen, 'Die Mauer als politische Metapher', p. 434.

and Britain. Moreover, the period shows the ambivalent coverage of the British press to the Wall. As a first step, the generally optimistic presentation of the GDR in the press at the beginning of the 1970s will be shown and the influence this had on the press coverage of the Wall at the time. A closer look at how the press covered stories of escapes during these years will be added to show the limitations of the press' coverage in depicting the negative implications of the Wall. These results will help to establish the changes in the press coverage in 1974 following the arrest of two British citizens. The coverage of the arrest and prosecution of Susan Ballantine will then be investigated more closely. It will be shown that the British press' portrayal of the Wall and the system behind it changed for a time as a response to this story; it transformed from a vague and abstract object into a tangible barrier which obstructed the life of common people, and not only those in East Germany. These events transformed a complex international issue into a clear and easily understandable case related to the British reader. Finally, the representation of the Wall during the second half of the 1970s will be presented to illustrate that the events of 1974 did not have a lasting effect on the East German image, and that afterwards one can find something of an acceptance of the Wall. Indeed, there was relatively little interest in the subject. Furthermore, the textual analysis of this chapter will add further evidence of how the political orientation of individual newspapers influenced their respective representations of the GDR.

To place the press coverage within its historical setting, the development of the division between the two German states and the border between the states should first be briefly outlined. During the night of 12 August 1961, the East German authorities constructed a border fortification in and around Berlin, but this was merely the final step in a longer attempt to lock their citizens within their own country. The erection of border fortifications had in fact begun nine years earlier in 1952, when the authorities placed barbed wire fences along the inner German border. At the time, the East Germans were still able to cross easily into the West via the open border in Berlin. In light of the higher living standard in the Federal Republic, the illegitimacy of the East German political system and its leadership and the growing restrictions placed on its citizens (such as the increasingly forced collectivisation of agriculture), thousands of East Germans left the GDR every year. Between 1949 and 1961, more than 3 million

people left the country.<sup>723</sup> In 1961, the on-going mass exodus of East German citizens to the West finally brought the GDR close to economic collapse. Within the first eight months of 1961, 207,026 people left the country.<sup>724</sup> Overnight, East German policemen closed off the border to West Berlin. Although West German and Allied politicians protested against the Wall, no actions followed and the Wall simply became a fact of life in Berlin. The East German authorities claimed that the Wall represented an *Antifaschistischen Schutzwall* which would protect East German citizens and that the now stable border would guarantee peace in Europe and world-wide. Only the shifting relationship between the Federal Republic and the GDR during the late 1960s and early 1970s eventually led to changes with regard to the separation between East and West Germans. The two states signed the *Transitabkommen* (1971) which simplified travel between the countries. However, this agreement was primarily concerned with citizens of West Germany and West Berlin who wished to travel to the GDR. This development was reflected in the increasing numbers of visitors to the GDR. In 1971, 2.7 million West German visitors were registered in the GDR. Only four years later, in 1975, more than 7.7 million West Germans and West Berliners visited the country.<sup>725</sup> For the East Germans, however, there was no significant change. It was predominantly East German pensioners who were allowed to visit the West. It is important to note that the new travel facilitations led to a new generation of professional border crossing assistants as the transit routes between West Berlin and the Federal Republic seemed to offer safer passage for the people wishing to flee.<sup>726</sup> During the early 1970s, the GDR began to deploy spring-guns and antipersonnel mines at the inner-German border with the intention of making the border even more impenetrable. As there were still thousands of East Germans wishing to leave the country, the numbers of escapes via other Eastern European countries and attempts to smuggle East German citizens via the transit routes increased significantly. In 1972, 308 East Germans were successfully smuggled out of the GDR while the authorities were able to prevent 73 attempts. Only one year later the numbers had more than

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<sup>723</sup> Maria Nooke, 'Geglückte und gescheiterte Fluchten nach dem Mauerbau', in *Die Mauer: Errichtung, Überwachung, Erinnerung*, ed. by Klaus-Dietmar Henke, (Munich: dtv, 2011), p. 163.

<sup>724</sup> *Mauerbau und Mauerfall*, p. 312.

<sup>725</sup> Roman Gräfe, *Die Grenze durch Deutschland: Eine Chronik von 1945-1990* (Munich: Pantheon, 2008), p. 298.

<sup>726</sup> Marion Detjen, *Ein Loch in der Mauer: Die Geschichte der Fluchthilfe im geteilten Deutschland 1961-1989* (Berlin: Siedler, 2005), p. 17.

tripled: 953 East Germans were smuggled out while the authorities caught 237 citizens.<sup>727</sup> In the following years, East German citizens continued to flee the country illegally right up until 1989. In 1977, the GDR began to construct the final modern border: *Grenzmauer 75*.<sup>728</sup> The new version was designed with the aim to prevent particularly escapes with heavy vehicles. During the 1980s, the numbers of successful and unsuccessful escapes declined. However, with the growing number of exit visas granted by the state and the increasing number of East Germans visiting the Federal Republic for a few days because of so-called 'urgent family matters', the border between East and West became seemingly more penetrable. In 1985, the GDR allowed 139,000 East Germans to visit their families in the West. Two years later, this figure increased to 1,297,000.<sup>729</sup> Another aspect also contributed to the fact that the negative effects of the border became more easily forgotten. In 1983, in return for a substantial loan from the Federal Republic, the GDR government removed spring-guns and antipersonnel mines from their border. Despite all of this, the majority of East Germans were unable to leave their country and therefore dissatisfaction increased. The Wall finally fell on 9 November 1989 and shortly afterwards the fortifications along the inner-German border and in Berlin began to be dismantled.

## 5.1 Representation of the GDR and the Wall during the early 1970s

Immediately after the signing of the Basic Treaty in 1972, the British government opened official relations with the East German state, intending to expand its trade with the GDR and promote European security.<sup>730</sup> Naturally, this important development also attracted the attention of the British press, which followed the events closely and speculated about their consequences. At the beginning of the 1970s, a growing optimism with regards to the East German state dominated press coverage, while negative aspects were of minor importance. The idea that the GDR was 'coming in from the cold', as expressed by *The Guardian* journalist Jonathan Steele (an echo of

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<sup>727</sup> Detjen, *Ein Loch in der Mauer*, p. 269.

<sup>728</sup> Gerhard Sätter, 'Die Sperranlagen, oder: Der unendliche Mauerbau', in *Die Mauer, Errichtung, Überwachung, Erinnerung*, ed. by Klaus-Dietmar Henke (Munich: dtv, 2011), p. 122.

<sup>729</sup> Gräfe, p. 301.

<sup>730</sup> Gottfried Niedhart, 'Auf dem Weg zur Anerkennung: Die DDR in der britischen Politik', in *Britain and the GDR: Relations and Perceptions in a Divided World*, ed. by Arnd Bauerkämper (Vienna: Philo, 2002), pp. 161-162.

John le Carré's famous novel), was reflected in all of the British quality newspapers to a varying extent. In particular, the new East German political leader Erich Honecker was seen to raise hopes for a new beginning with his revised economic approach, combined with a rethinking of old strategies and greater openness.<sup>731</sup>

Several articles concerning the first opening of the Wall to Western visitors were featured during the months before the signing of the Basic Treaty between the two German states. Most sectors of the press presented a positive picture of the GDR in this regard. In the article entitled, 'Berliners go east – slowly', *The Guardian*, for example, documented the first Easter opening for West Berliners after six years.<sup>732</sup> The article was accompanied by a picture of an emotional family reunion after they had crossed the checkpoint. This article, which was typical of many at the time, underlined the improving material standards of East Germans, and even suggested that 'it was often hard to tell from outward appearances which people were visitors from the West.'<sup>733</sup> These visible results of rapprochement were perceived by the newspaper as a sign of goodwill by the East German government and 'a portent of better relations between the two German states'.<sup>734</sup> Despite its less enthusiastic approach to the events when compared with *The Guardian*, *The Times* also featured several portrayals of the GDR. They often contained positive remarks about the ongoing changes which balanced more critical comments. For example, the newspaper pointed out that concessions were not easy for the East German leadership and were indeed limited to West Germans, although it did regard them as 'a sign of progress and confidence'.<sup>735</sup> When East Germans under retirement age were permitted to visit their families in the West for the first time, *The Times* described the event as marking 'a new chapter in the history of this divided land.'<sup>736</sup> In the following months this less critical trend continued, whilst any remaining doubts increasingly took a backseat. Even articles dealing with the German division, the border between the two states and the Berlin Wall focused predominantly on current developments rather than the negative implications of the division itself. *The Guardian's* coverage especially shows this

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<sup>731</sup> Richard Davy, 'East Germany: A skilled workshop for the USSR', *The Times*, 13/01/1972, p. 17.

<sup>732</sup> Crossland, 'Berliners go East – slowly', p. 4.

<sup>733</sup> Ibid.

<sup>734</sup> Ibid.

<sup>735</sup> 'An Easter opening in Berlin', *The Times*, 30/03/1972, p. 17.

<sup>736</sup> 'First East German crosses to West as travelling is eased', *The Times*, 19/10/1972, p. 5.

tendency. In particular through its headline, the article 'A crack in the Wall' promoted cautious optimism with regards to the division of the German countries.<sup>737</sup> This optimism continues during the article. It detects 'hints [...] for canny liberalisation', a 'new mood' and 'hope for a more humane and rational future in inter-German relationship.'<sup>738</sup> All three examples are positive connoted and point towards an improving situation and The Wall was only mentioned in connection with the East opening. Occasionally, *The Guardian* highlighted the implications of the Wall for the ones who wanted to leave their country. However, these critical remarks were often weakened by additional information and presented as of minor importance, as the following example shows. Under the headline 'Thousands go East', *The Guardian* reported that 'many thousands of West Berliners are taking advantage [...] to visit East Berlin and East Germany this Easter.'<sup>739</sup> As this information was presented in the headline and at the very beginning of the article, the main focus of the article was stressed. Only in the fourth paragraph, the article mentions the 'shooting at East Germans trying to escape'. In this context it cited the Deputy Mayor of West Berlin, Klaus Schütz, as saying that 'it was hardly imaginable that this would be resumed, at least in the period between Easter and Whitsun.'<sup>740</sup> The statement of a leading and also local politician is of particular significance as it enhanced the credibility of the sentence. Moreover, the newspaper admitted that 'the Wall is still monstrous and incredible and a very real piece of *politik* [...]', but added that 'no one has been shot there for years; people are being shot elsewhere in Europe now.'<sup>741</sup> The additional information softens the first statements about the Wall as it depicts the GDR in comparison to earlier times and other European countries as more humane. Additionally it celebrated, rather than questioned, new measures, such as the release of political prisoners or the unification of hitherto separated families, as 'human improvements'.<sup>742</sup> *The Times* also granted the GDR more room in its articles. One article stated that 'Erich Honecker [...] denied today that the regime had planted "death machines" along the border with West Germany for use against refugees.'<sup>743</sup>

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<sup>737</sup> W. L. Webb, 'A crack in the Wall', *The Guardian*, 09/05/1972, p. 14.

<sup>738</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>739</sup> Norman Crossland, 'Thousands go East', *The Guardian*, 03/04/1972, p. 2.

<sup>740</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>741</sup> W.L. Webb, 'The trek to the East', *The Guardian*, 28/03/1972, p. 20.

<sup>742</sup> 'The ice begins to melt', *The Guardian*, 06/11/1972, p. 14.

<sup>743</sup> Dan van der Vat, 'Exit permits given to 43 East Germans', *The Times*, 21/10/1972, p. 6.

Despite not ignoring the situation on the border between East and West, by citing the East German leader it also gave the East Germans a voice with which to explain the country's position. Overall, there were certainly more critical voices as well, although these were predominantly found in *The Times*. Towards the end of 1972, for example, the newspaper reflected that 'East Germany has introduced measures to reduce to a minimum contacts [sic] between its citizens and West Germany.'<sup>744</sup> But these articles only represented a minority opinion and did not undermine the overall positive portrayal of the GDR.

During the following year, the press' initial enthusiasm weakened. However, claims made by contemporary scholars which suggest that the Wall played a dominant role in negatively impacting upon the GDR's overall image cannot be substantiated by the press coverage of the time. The increasing number of attempts by professional organisations to smuggle East Germans out of the country became the new focus of many articles written in connection with the division between the two countries. Although the travel and migratory restrictions faced by East German citizens were discussed, the focus of these articles was mainly directed at the professional smuggling organisations. This focus on West German groups somewhat masked the on-going human rights violations which continued to be committed in the GDR. Moreover, smuggling seemed to make 'escaping slightly easier' and directed attention away from the continuing danger of the Wall and the inter-German border.<sup>745</sup> At the beginning of January 1973, *The Guardian* published an article about the West German smuggling of East German refugees. The article focused almost exclusively on the West Germans, who 'raced towards the East-West Berlin border [...] broke through the barrier [...] and finally came to a halt on hitting a concrete pillar.'<sup>746</sup> The East German refugees seemed to be of minor importance. From midway through the year, the number of similar articles increased. Instead of focusing on the individuals involved and perhaps questioning their motives, articles were more often determined by relations between the GDR and the Federal Republic in which the latter wanted to protect rather than endanger the newly formed traffic agreement.<sup>747</sup> This became clear in references by

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<sup>744</sup> Gretel Spitzer, 'East Germans launch drive to cut down contacts with West', *The Times*, 07/12/1972, p. 7.

<sup>745</sup> 'More East Germans choose freedom', *The Times*, 06/11/1973, p. 21.

<sup>746</sup> 'Berlin attempts to smuggle refugees', *The Guardian*, 03/01/1973, p. 4.

<sup>747</sup> Norman Crossland, 'Families crawl to West', *The Guardian*, 09/08/1973, p. 2.

*The Times* to warnings made by the West German Government that ‘in the future they [smuggling organisations] will face prosecution.’<sup>748</sup> The article further added that the West German government was ‘not prepared to hazard its improved relations with East Germany by tolerating it [people smuggling].’<sup>749</sup> Another *Times* article even included a warning made by the West Berlin senate to its citizens which stated that they were ‘not to violate the terms of the transit agreement with East Germany.’<sup>750</sup> Moreover, the newspaper reported that the Federal Republic announced its intention ‘to help to prevent East Germans to escape along the transit routes.’<sup>751</sup> The examples show how the use of official political statements without further comments, even from West German sources, has to be critically examined. Both statements have to be considered as a reflection of the ongoing West German *Ostpolitik* and therefore as a rhetorical compromise to prevent endangering the Federal Republic’s newly established relations with the GDR. Considering the West German Basic Law that recognised all Germans including all East Germans as citizens of the Federal Republic, a policy which prevented them from entering the West German state has to be regarded as unlikely. However, any reference to clarify these statements is missing. Despite high sentences of up to 10 years imprisonment for ‘human trafficking’ and *The Times*’ critical comments about the East German judicial system, in light of smugglers’ commercial considerations it seemed a calculated risk which the professional helpers took of their own choice.<sup>752</sup> Potential empathy for East Germans wishing to leave their country (and thereby a negative image of the Wall) was inhibited through suggestions that these individuals were not motivated by ethical concerns. Several articles suggested that doctors and other highly qualified people in particular ‘who will earn much more in West Germany’<sup>753</sup> had attempted to leave the country for financial rather than personal motives.

Reports about East German escape attempts that had the potential to remind readers of the state-imposed limitations for the East German population were sporadic. The majority of individual incidents supplied the reader with only basic

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<sup>748</sup> ‘Bonn warns “Scarlet Pimpernel” refugee smugglers’, *The Times*, 07/08/1973, p. 4.

<sup>749</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>750</sup> ‘Berliners warned to observe pact with E Germany’, *The Times* 30/10/1973, p. 6.

<sup>751</sup> ‘Blocking escape to West’, *The Guardian*, 30/07/1973, p. 4.

<sup>752</sup> Gretel Spitzer, ‘Three jailed for helping E Germans to escape’, *The Times*, 06/11/1973, p. 8.

<sup>753</sup> *Ibid.*



information, as this example from *The Times* demonstrates: 'Two young East German men, an electrician and a cook, slipped through the mined zone unnoticed and fled across the border into West Germany before dawn today.'<sup>754</sup> This short text formed the entirety of the article. No details were given about the identities or motives of the escapees. Despite the reference to the mines at the border, this report gives the impression of a fairly unproblematic escape without reflecting upon the realities of the border and the potential consequences of the action. None of these stories were revisited in future issues. As a result of this, it was difficult for readers to develop a deeper understanding of the East German people, their motivations and individual situations. This impersonal representation of the incidents also prevented a more critical perception of the GDR. Even articles which referred to the 'automatic guns, fences and minefields'<sup>755</sup> remained vague when describing the consequences for an individual. *The Times*, for example, stated that automatic guns 'injured a man last night preventing [him] from escaping' but did not cover the horror of the border fortifications due to the shortness and vagueness of the article.<sup>756</sup> Along with reports on escape attempts via the Wall and the inter-German-border, the press also covered stories from the Czech border which diverted the focus from the responsibility of the East German government.<sup>757</sup> The quantity of articles about escapes, both successful and unsuccessful, increased in 1973 in comparison to the previous year. In 1972 *The Times* only published four articles covering escape attempts, while *The Guardian* contained seven, showing a generally limited interest in the subject. One year later, each newspaper published 12 articles related to escape attempts. This does not necessarily imply, however, that interest had increased as the increase in articles may merely reflect the increase in the number of escape attempts. Another significant aspect distinguished press coverage and reality: If the press coverage of the early 1970s was to be believed, a successful escape across the inter-German border seemed to be a realistic option. In 1972, the majority of attempts which were reported on were successful, and in 1973 half of them were so. Comparing these numbers with the reality, a different picture develops. In 1972, 1245 people were able to flee via the

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<sup>754</sup> 'Dawn border escape', *The Times*, 07/01/1972, p. 4.

<sup>755</sup> Gretel Spitzer, 'E German automatic guns anger Bonn', *The Times*, 16/11/1972, p. 7.

<sup>756</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>757</sup> 'Escaper's youth foils flight', *The Guardian*, 31/08/1972, p. 4; 'Foiled by dog', *The Guardian*, 25/05/1972, p. 2; 'Guards fire on youth', *The Guardian*, 23/08/1972, p. 2.

border, while the East German border troops arrested 2200. A year later, the relationship between the numbers is similar: 2700 East Germans were arrested and 1842 escaped.<sup>758</sup> The possibility for journalists to gain knowledge, possibly even firsthand information, about East Germans who had left the GDR in contrast to the ones who were caught during their attempt to leave the GDR can be identified as one reason for the imbalance between the coverage and reality of successful and unsuccessful escapes. In particular, the journalists' inability to travel freely and spontaneously in and also within the GDR due to official East German regulations for foreign journalists restricted their work. The journalists Siegfried Buschschrüter and Dan van der Vat describe that they were unable to act immediately in case of an event.<sup>759</sup> Moreover, after an unsuccessful escape attempt the East German authorities arrested the fleeing person and therefore prevented any contact with journalists. Overall, the press' minor reporting of the events at the German border has been demonstrated. The press' coverage reflected a positive attitude towards political changes in the GDR and between the two German states in the early 1970s. Despite occasionally critical comments about the GDR, a highly negative portrayal of the Wall and the border cannot be seen and did not strongly influence the overall image of the GDR during this time.

### **5.1.1 1974 – British readers discover the Wall through a British woman**

For the British press, the existence of the Wall and German division were generally considered an unpleasant but distant and fairly uninteresting situation, until it affected British citizens during 1974. These events were closely followed by the press and altered perceptions of the GDR and the Wall. Overall, it can be observed that the 'GDR's golden age' during the early 1970s,<sup>760</sup> which comprised the GDR's growing international success along with high British expectations of a new partner in the Eastern bloc, was soon over, and an increasing number of articles featured a more critical tone.

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<sup>758</sup> For numbers of escaped East Germans see: Jürgen Ritter and Peter Joachim Lapp, 'Die Grenze: Ein deutsches Bauwerk' (Berlin: Chr. Links Verlag, 1997), p. 167, in *Chronik der Mauer*, <<http://www.chronik-der-mauer.de/index.php/de/Start/Detail/id/593791/page/9>> [accessed 24/06/2013]. Roman Gräfe provides numbers of arrests: Gräfe, pp. 204, 224.

<sup>759</sup> Interview with Dan van der Vat, 03/12/2010; Interview with Siegfried Buschschrüter, 29/11/2010. See Chapter One, p. 51.

<sup>760</sup> Fulbrook, *Anatomy of a Dictatorship*, p. 172.

Events have to fulfil particular conditions to arouse the interest of the media and become newsworthy, and all newspapers have to maintain these conditions if they wish to attract new readers whilst still holding on to their regular customers. In general, foreign news is of less interest to readers than home news.<sup>761</sup> It has been demonstrated that previous cases of East Germans attempting to leave the GDR, whether successfully or unsuccessfully, failed to arouse much interest from the press. Through the involvement of a British citizen, the events of 1974 featured a cultural proximity despite happening in a foreign country and therefore became relevant for readers. The process by which events become relevant due to the involvement of countrymen is not specific to British readers but can be recognised for news media worldwide. In addition, the press contributed to this relevance by actively shaping the coverage. In June 1974, the East German authorities arrested a British citizen, Susan Ballantine, for supporting the escape attempt of an East German citizen, Volker Benes. At the time of her arrest, Ballantine was 22 years old and had worked in East Berlin as a translator before moving to West Berlin. Ballantine had a relationship with the East German she had allegedly helped. Her arrest was the first case that the British press picked up of a British citizen arrested on such charges. The press followed the story between June and December 1974. In contrast to the people featured in previous articles, the newspaper coverage provided a considerable amount of information about Susan Ballantine as a person. Therefore, British readers were more able to develop an interest in and an understanding of events taking place in the GDR.

On 7 June 1974, *The Guardian* and *The Times* both published initial brief reports on the arrest of 'a young British woman', which were similar to the short articles mentioned in the previous section of this chapter.<sup>762</sup> These reports contained only limited information and were written in a neutral style. This significantly changed the next day when *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Guardian* and *The Times* all covered the arrest of Susan Ballantine extensively.<sup>763</sup> The articles only differed slightly from one other, with each one containing similar information about the reason for her arrest, her

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<sup>761</sup> See for further information: Galtung and Holmboe Ruge, pp. 64-91; Winfried Schulz, *Die Konstruktion von Realität in den Nachrichtenmedien: Analyse der aktuellen Berichterstattung* (Freiburg, Munich: Alber, 1977), pp. 40-45.

<sup>762</sup> 'Arrested', *The Guardian*, 07/06/1974, p. 1; 'British woman held', *The Times*, 07/06/1974, p. 10.

<sup>763</sup> 'British girl arrested as "human trafficker"', *The Times*, 08/06/1974, p. 4; Philip Jordan, 'British fight for girl held at border', *The Guardian*, 08/06/1974, p. 3; Frank Robertson, 'East Germans hold woman on "love smuggling" charge', *The Daily Telegraph*, 08/06/1974, p. 15.

motivation and her personal background. The level of personal information included is notable, with one article stating that Susan Ballantine was “very much in love” with Benes [...]’<sup>764</sup> and statements from Ballantine’s father Cecil about his daughter’s physical condition.

Ballantine’s family background constituted an essential part of the news coverage during the entire period. Several articles stressed her educated, middle class background. *The Daily Telegraph* seemed to attach particular importance to the issue and quoted her father, Cecil Ballantine, as saying: ‘I am employed by a Church of England College of education as a lecturer.’<sup>765</sup> The information itself is not necessary to understand the incident in the GDR. However, the press regularly quoted Ballantine’s father, therefore, it had to assure that he was perceived as trustworthy. Lecturer is a highly regarded position and the additional information of his employer strengthened his credibility. Moreover, with it the newspaper also stressed Susan Ballantine’s education and higher social status, which was in line with the newspaper’s readership. The article also emphasised that ‘she was spending a year in East Germany to perfect her German.’<sup>766</sup> Such information was intended to remove any question of why she was in the GDR in the first place, and whether she had somehow deserved the treatment she had received due to a potential communist background. Instead, she was portrayed as a hard-working student who became a victim of the GDR system through no fault of her own.

After outlining the situation, each of the initial extensive articles featured a critical assessment of the East German state and its handling of the case. This represented another difference to the earlier coverage. *The Guardian* already stressed at the beginning of its article that ‘the British embassy officials were still pressing (...) to be allowed to see’ Susan Ballantine.<sup>767</sup> The meaning of the verb ‘pressing’ points out that the GDR authorities were unwilling to allow voluntarily any contact with Ballantine. In combination with the adverb of time, ‘still’, the statement immediately gives an impression of a lack of cooperation from the East German side. Whilst *The Guardian* and *The Times* mentioned the case only briefly in the following days, *The*

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<sup>764</sup> David Shears, ‘Iron Curtain “pimpernel” girl gets 5 years’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 19/09/1974, p. 1.

<sup>765</sup> Robertson, ‘East Germans hold woman on “love smuggling” charge’, p. 15.

<sup>766</sup> Walter Farr, ‘East Germans held British girl in solitary cell’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 29/06/1974, p. 15; Shears, ‘Iron Curtain “pimpernel” girl gets 5 years’, p. 1.

<sup>767</sup> Jordan, ‘British fight for girl held at border’, p. 3.

*Daily Telegraph* published a more extensive and emotive article covering the conditions Ballantine was facing in prison.<sup>768</sup> The headline ‘East Germans held British girl in solitary cell’ immediately reveals the article’s focus on the undemocratic character of the GDR and its criticism of the handling of prisoners, and particularly of a ‘British girl’. Statements such as her ‘food was bread and potatoes and she was repeatedly interrogated’ simplified the situation but this reduction also forced readers to imagine the conditions in the East German jail. Later the reporter indicated that based ‘on the circumstances of the arrest [...] the transit agreements for traffic to Berlin had been violated.’<sup>769</sup> Although this statement was merely an assumption made by Ballantine’s father, it was presented within the report as fact. Instead of giving the readers only the factual information, the press used quotations from close family members to add an emotional and personal side.<sup>770</sup> *The Guardian*, for example, quoted from Ballantine’s personal letters to her family saying that ‘she had been moved to “a turreted gothic fortress” [...]’.<sup>771</sup> And if this description was not explicit enough, the newspaper added that she was being held in ‘a top-security prison in a fifteenth century castle’.

The case was not discussed any further in the media until the actual trial in September 1974. The newspapers were shocked by the short duration of the trial and the unexpected five-year sentence. Following this they published longer, front-page articles about the unfair trial and the unjustified sentence, clearly demonstrating the case’s importance.<sup>772</sup> For the first time, events in the GDR connected to the Wall and the state’s juridical system were questioned explicitly. *The Guardian* in particular expressed its doubts about the legitimacy of the ‘secret trial’ and a lack of understanding of the behaviour of the East German authorities.<sup>773</sup> The adjective ‘secret’ clearly expresses the newspaper’s critique as the principle that the court sits in public is an essential presumption for a fair trial. *The Times* also critically remarked that the ‘one-day session [was] closed to the public’ and that the ‘trial took less than

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<sup>768</sup> Farr, ‘East Germans held British girl in solitary cell’, p. 15.

<sup>769</sup> Ibid.

<sup>770</sup> Ibid; see also: Jordan, ‘British fight for girl held at border’, p. 3.

<sup>771</sup> Peter Niesewand, ‘Hardline urged to free girl’, *The Guardian*, 12/11/1974, p. 2.

<sup>772</sup> Peter Niesewand, ‘Gaol for helping fiancé’, *The Guardian*, 19/09/1974, p. 1; Shears, ‘Iron Curtain “pimpernel” girl gets 5 years’, p. 1; ‘East Germans jail British woman for five years’, *The Times*, 19/09/1974, p. 1.

<sup>773</sup> Niesewand, ‘Gaol for helping fiancé’, p. 1.

eight hours.<sup>774</sup> The adverbials of time in both examples stress the disproportion of such a short time frame with regard to Ballantine's harsh sentence. The information politics and the violation of diplomatic conduct by refusing to allow British embassy officials to attend the trial were regarded by *The Guardian* as unusual for the GDR, as 'there had been no difficulty in attending the trial, last May, of Alan Watson', the other British citizen who experienced a similar situation as Ballantine in 1974.<sup>775</sup> His case will be discussed in more detail below. *The Guardian's* comment indicates a breach of expectation of how a state, how the GDR, is supposed to react. The newspaper's reaction has to be considered in relation to the newspaper's earlier positive attitude towards the GDR. The newspaper's disappointed expectations of a changing, more open GDR added to the reaction. Both *The Guardian* and *The Times* closely followed the case's development in several articles over the next couple of weeks. Ballantine's sudden and surprising release at the end of 1974 once again made the front pages of the leading quality newspapers. This development, just a few days before Christmas, was a suitably happy end and offered a fitting and newsworthy story for the press.

The final articles covering the Ballantine story demonstrate another example of individual newspapers' differing views of the GDR. These differences represent another significant contrast to previous reports about the Wall before the Ballantine case and were therefore more able to show a more comprehensive image of the GDR. The articles now allowed the readers to understand the events and empathise with the individuals involved. *The Guardian* ended its coverage with a glint of hope 'that public opinion matters to them [the East German authorities]' and, therefore, a better stage in relations between both countries seemed to be approaching.<sup>776</sup> In contrast, *The Daily Telegraph* presented the events, in line with the newspaper's conservative stance, from a more critical perspective. The newspaper dismissed the idea of the release as a humanitarian act by the GDR and suspected instead 'that there had been some sort of deal'.<sup>777</sup> The phrasing 'some sort of deal' could in this context be interpreted as an indication for the newspaper's lack of knowledge about the precise circumstances of her release. However, it is more likely that the article once more took the opportunity to stress the undemocratic situation of the GDR's untransparent

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<sup>774</sup> 'East Germans jail British woman for five years', p. 1.

<sup>775</sup> Niesewand, 'Gaol for helping fiancé', p. 1.

<sup>776</sup> 'East Germans free Susan', *The Guardian*, 18/12/1974, p. 1.

<sup>777</sup> Kenneth Clarke, 'East Germans free girl "love smuggler"', *The Daily Telegraph*, 18/12/1974, p. 1.

judicial system. Even Ballantine's positive statement about her treatment contained the suspicion that other prisoners' experiences were worse.

The press used different strategies in order to arouse and later sustain readers' interest in the story of Susan Ballantine. In addition to the extensive amount of information, the presentation and emphasis of this information contributed to the new quality of the press coverage about the border in the GDR. Ballantine's young age and the fact that a woman had been arrested played a decisive role in the news coverage. Moreover, the press emphasised Ballantine's nationality and appealed to a sense of a common identity as 'British citizens' to construct a connection between Ballantine and their readers. As noted at the beginning of the chapter, this strategy to establish a connection between Ballantine and the newspaper readers is neither limited to the British press nor to a particular type of news stories. Instead readers generally relate stronger to a story when it concerns, for example, a person who speaks the same language or has the same nationality.<sup>778</sup> As a result, the reader is more capable to identify with the person concerned, will be more interested to follow this person's story and therefore to buy a newspaper. This approach was of course impossible in the overwhelming majority of escape attempts which did not involve British citizens. Ballantine's story clearly appealed to the idea that 'one of us' had been affected, as the articles usually referred to 'the British woman' or the 'British girl'.<sup>779</sup> A closer look at the headlines of these articles demonstrates the significance of this method. *The Guardian*, for example, featured the headlines 'Plea for gaoled Britons'<sup>780</sup> and "'No" to plea to free Britons'.<sup>781</sup> Moreover, the newspaper proclaimed the struggle for her release as the 'British fight for the girl held at the border'.<sup>782</sup> By adding the adjective 'British' in this example, *The Guardian* declared the fight to be a national challenge which went beyond the concern of individual diplomats and politicians. Therefore, it could be interpreted as an address to all its readers. *The Daily Telegraph's* coverage contained an article entitled, 'Father to see British girl in E. Berlin jail'.<sup>783</sup> *The Times* emphasised Ballantine's nationality even more than other newspapers and showed itself once

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<sup>778</sup> Galtung and Holmboe Ruge, p. 66ff.

<sup>779</sup> Jordan, 'British fight for girl held at border', p. 3.

<sup>780</sup> Patrick Keatley, 'Plea for gaoled Britons', *The Guardian*, 05/10/1974, p. 2.

<sup>781</sup> Patrick Keatley, "'No" to plea to free Britons', *The Guardian*, 12/10/1974, p. 2.

<sup>782</sup> Jordan, 'British fight for girl held at border', p. 3.

<sup>783</sup> 'Father to see British girl in E. Berlin jail', *The Daily Telegraph*, 21/06/1974, p. 5.

more as a 'British' newspaper writing for the British population as has already been demonstrated in previous chapters.<sup>784</sup> The newspaper contained, for example, the following titles: 'British woman held',<sup>785</sup> 'British girl arrested as "human trafficker"',<sup>786</sup> 'First visit to British girl in East Berlin'.<sup>787</sup> In portraying Ballantine's situation as a fight of 'one against the others' the press also emphasised a British and to a certain degree Western self-image. At a time of a growing awareness of human rights issues in Britain and also other European countries, a woman had taken a high risk to enforce another person's right to free movement and self-determination and had subsequently accepted the consequences. Readers were able to identify qualities which formed and still form part of the British national mythology, such as freedom, pragmatism and voluntarism, qualities which united in this story in its main protagonist.<sup>788</sup> As a result, the opposing GDR which represented the 'others' was depicted in a generally negative manner. This represented a changing perception after the earlier coverage of the country which featured little criticism.

While due to the brevity of headlines most of the ones in this context entirely focus on Ballantine herself, some also included the East German side such as 'East Germans held British girl in solitary cell'<sup>789</sup> and 'East Germans jail British woman for five years'.<sup>790</sup> Both headlines refer to the 'East Germans' without any further specification and therefore give the impression that an undefined mass, possibly the whole East German political system or even the entire population, are responsible for Ballantine's situation. Moreover, by setting both sides, the person Susan Ballantine, one single 'girl' or 'woman', and the undefined group of East Germans, against each other, the impression of an unfair situation clearly emerges. This impression is further enhanced in *The Daily Telegraph* headline through the additional information 'solitary cell' which represents a more severe form of imprisonment.

As already indicated above, in addition to Ballantine's nationality, her age and gender served as important attributes for the newspapers to trigger sympathy for her fate and generally to attract readers' interest in her story. Several of the above

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<sup>784</sup> Eldridge, Kitzinger and Williams, p. 34.

<sup>785</sup> 'British woman held', p. 10.

<sup>786</sup> 'British girl arrested as "human trafficker"', p. 4.

<sup>787</sup> 'First visit to British girl in East Berlin', *The Times*, 12/06/1974, p. 8.

<sup>788</sup> Tunstall, p. 3.

<sup>789</sup> Farr, 'East Germans held British girl in solitary cell', p. 15.

<sup>790</sup> 'East Germans jail British woman for five years', p. 1.



presented headlines show this focus. Overall, the vast majority of the press articles about Ballantine contain references to her age and gender. Although Ballantine was already 22 years old and had worked abroad as a translator, *The Daily Telegraph*, for example, consistently referred to her as a 'girl', for example in the headline 'East Germans held British girl in solitary cell'.<sup>791</sup> With the noun 'girl' instead of 'woman' the impression of Ballantine as a defenceless victim is more strongly emphasised as the term 'girl' usually refers to a female child which due to its age and limited physical strength is more vulnerable than any adult. The negative connotation of the place adverbial 'solitary cell' in the headline is further enhanced as a 'girl' has to experience it. *The Times'* headline 'British girl arrested as "human trafficker"' also identifies Ballantine as a 'girl'. In this example the associations connected to the term 'girl', as 'young' and 'innocent', contradict the idea of being 'criminal' and therefore serve to question the East German characterisation as 'human trafficker'. The quotation marks indicate the direct transfer from the East German official vocabulary and with it underline that the journalist clearly distances her-/himself from such a description.

References to Ballantine's family and particular her father, as in *The Daily Telegraph* headline 'Father to see British girl in E. Berlin jail',<sup>792</sup> form another feature of the press coverage which strengthened the impression of a very young person involved. The headline not only presented the young woman as a 'girl', moreover it identified her as a daughter with the reference to her father. By regularly mentioning this asymmetrical relationship between father and daughter, Ballantine is presented to a certain degree as dependent and in need of protection. Frequent quotations in all newspapers by Cecil Ballantine, the father of Susan Ballantine, present him further in the role of the caring and protective patriarch. Direct quotations by Cecil Ballantine such as 'my daughter'<sup>793</sup> or the familiar address 'Susan'<sup>794</sup> additionally hinder a recognition of Susan Ballantine as a, possibly responsible, adult. The usage of only her first name can also be found outside of direct quotations. *The Guardian*, for example, reported 'East German's free Susan'<sup>795</sup> and 'Susan: no appeal'.<sup>796</sup> In addition to the

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<sup>791</sup> Farr, 'East Germans held British girl in solitary cell', p. 15.

<sup>792</sup> 'Father to see British girl in E. Berlin jail', p. 5.

<sup>793</sup> Farr, 'East Germans held British girl in solitary cell', p. 15.

<sup>794</sup> 'Susan felt that an appeal would serve no useful purpose.' In: 'British woman not to appeal against sentence', *The Times*, 23/09/1974, p. 5.

<sup>795</sup> 'East Germans free Susan', p. 1.

<sup>796</sup> 'Susan: No appeal', *The Observer*, 22/09/1974, p. A3.

impression of a young person, this choice of words also gave the reader the impression of familiarity and presented Susan Ballantine as a person he or she knows and can relate to. Alternatively to the noun 'girl', the press regularly mentioned Ballantine's age or referred to her as a 'student' as in the following example: 'British student Susan Ballantine, aged 22, was goaled [...].'<sup>797</sup> On the contrary, the press coverage does not contain any reference to Alan Watson or Volker Benes only by their first names.

The press also repeatedly foregrounded the fact that a female person had been arrested in the GDR. The headlines 'British woman held'<sup>798</sup> and 'First visit to British girl in East Berlin'<sup>799</sup> give an indication of this emphasis. It could be argued that the regular usage of the words 'woman' and 'girl' instead of Ballantine's name in this important part of an article was primarily intended to help readers to remember the story. However, other features also show the tendency to emphasise her gender. It can be recognised that the press regularly used the gender marker 'Miss' as the articles primarily referred to 'Miss Ballantine' or 'Miss Susan Ballantine'. *The Guardian*, for example, reported, 'when Benes was arrested Miss Ballantine was detained'<sup>800</sup> and another article mentions 'Allan [sic] Watson' but begins the following paragraph with 'Miss Ballantine was convicted [...]'.<sup>801</sup> Whereas the newspaper added in both articles the title 'Miss' to Susan Ballantine's name and therefore stressed her gender both men's names stand alone. This contrast how men and women were differently referred to cannot be observed in every article; however, there is a clear tendency in the coverage of *The Guardian* and *The Daily Telegraph*. Moreover, no example can be found where the press named Susan Ballantine only by her surname, a version which lacks any gender specification while several examples for Volker Benes and Alan Watson can be identified. *The Daily Telegraph*, for example, reported that 'Miss Ballantine, who was described as "very much in love" with Benes, was spending a year in East Germany [...].'<sup>802</sup> This sentence also points towards another feature of the coverage: Susan Ballantine was portrayed with her feelings and emotions, stressing her soft female side. Despite the relationship between Ballantine and Benes, *The Daily*

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<sup>797</sup> Niesewand, 'Gaol for helping fiancé', p. 1.

<sup>798</sup> 'British woman held', p. 10.

<sup>799</sup> 'First visit to British girl in East Berlin', p. 8.

<sup>800</sup> Jordan, 'British fight for girl held at border', p. 3; Robertson, 'East Germans hold woman on "love smuggling" charge', p. 15.

<sup>801</sup> Niesewand, 'Gaol for helping fiancé', p. 1.

<sup>802</sup> Shears, 'Iron Curtain "pimpernel" girl gets 5 years', p. 1.

*Telegraph's* focuses entirely on her in this sentence whereas Volker Benes' feelings remain unmentioned, therefore unimportant.

Overall it has been demonstrated how the press coverage of Susan Ballantine regularly highlighted her age and gender aiming to portray her as a victim of the East German state and in particular its legal system. Both features together with the press' focus on her nationality were significant parts of the first extended coverage of the border system and its consequences. This went far beyond the earlier short reports about East German victims and helped to establish a connection for the newspaper readers. The case of Susan Ballantine in addition to the contemporaneous historical events, such as the Guillaume affair, aided to open up room in the media for more critical voices of the GDR. This stood in contrast to the generally positive attitude dominated by the ideas of détente which had existed until this point.

### **5.1.2 Guilty? – An unimportant question**

As Susan Ballantine's arrest and her later trial attracted so much interest from the British press, one might assume that the question of her responsibility for the offence would have been a key issue in the press coverage. However, none of the quality newspapers ever directly confronted its readers with this question. The analysis of the question of guilt will reveal how the attempted positive representation of Susan Ballantine contributed to the construction of a negative image of the GDR. Within the coverage, two stages can be recognised; early articles were characterised by denials of her participation, and later ones replaced these with indirect acknowledgements. Along with this shift came a challenge to the legitimacy of the accusation by the East German justice system and the trial itself. As a result, the discussion of Ballantine's responsibility was blanked out as her actions could not be regarded as a crime. This side of the events contributed negatively to the image of the GDR and its governmental institutions, in particular the East German judicial system, as the press clearly regarded the GDR's decisions as wrong and morally unacceptable.

The first short reports in *The Guardian* and *The Times* noted that Ballantine 'has been arrested in East Germany, apparently for trying to smuggle her East German boyfriend out of the country.'<sup>803</sup> The word 'apparently' does not refer to the offence itself, but rather shows the lack of information about the case at that stage. The press

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<sup>803</sup> 'Arrested', p. 1; 'British Woman held', p. 10.

coverage over the following days only referred to ‘the charge of trying to smuggle her East German boyfriend out’ and avoided directly or indirectly posing the question of whether Ballantine actually committed the crime.<sup>804</sup> *The Daily Telegraph* went further and raised doubts about her responsibility in writing that she was ‘detained for allegedly helping’ Volker Benes. *The Times* adopted a similar approach by using the same choice of words.<sup>805</sup> The term ‘allegedly’ refers directly to the action (helping) and expands on its meaning. In addition, the positively associated term ‘helping’ further distracts from any criminal act. All of the major quality newspapers additionally highlighted a statement given by Ballantine’s father and in this way stressed their disbelief in Ballantine’s involvement in the escape. He stated that ‘neither [Volker Benes] nor my daughter spoke about him leaving the country.’<sup>806</sup> Furthermore, Cecil Ballantine expressed his incomprehension of the accusation as ‘she had free access to him’.<sup>807</sup> In the following weeks, *The Daily Telegraph* initiated a shift from denying the offence towards a challenge of the offence’s very illegality and with it also the jurisdiction of the GDR. Whereas the article itself mainly focused on the conditions in prison, it also included Ballantine’s father’s assessment that ‘his daughter is imprisoned for something that is not a crime anywhere in the free world.’<sup>808</sup> Through this comment, he pushed the question of his daughter’s responsibility aside by stating that from the Western point of view, the offence committed was not regarded as a crime. By referring to the ‘free world’ in this manner, the article reminds its readers of the bipolar world and implies that the GDR did not belong to the ‘free world’. In addition, it emphasises the country’s undemocratic and restrictive character. To prove Ballantine’s innocence, *The Daily Telegraph* constructed a negative image of the GDR for its readers, which denied the state the ability to legitimately pronounce a judgment of any kind. Generally, the focus moved away from the question of whether Ballantine had actually participated in Benes’ escape attempt. None of the newspapers discussed the issue and instead only reported that ‘she was found guilty’,<sup>809</sup> ‘convicted’,<sup>810</sup> and

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<sup>804</sup> Jordan, ‘British fight for girl held at border’, p. 3; ‘British girl arrested as “human trafficker”’, p. 4.

<sup>805</sup> ‘First visit to British girl in East Berlin’, p. 8; ‘Arrested woman seen by consul’, *The Times*, 13/06/1974, p. 7.

<sup>806</sup> ‘British girl arrested as “human trafficker”’, p. 4.

<sup>807</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>808</sup> Farr, ‘East Germans held British girl in solitary cell’, p. 15.

<sup>809</sup> ‘East Germans jail British woman for five years’, p. 1.

<sup>810</sup> Niesewand, ‘Goal for helping fiancé’, p. 1.

finally 'jailed [...] for attempting to smuggle'<sup>811</sup> Benes out of the country. The question of guilt had lost its importance and the general focus of the press moved towards the nature of the crime, the trial and the connected sentence. *The Daily Telegraph* pointed out that 'East Germany has tried hundreds of alleged "escape helpers" in recent months' as part of a campaign by the Communist government.<sup>812</sup> The noun 'hundreds' which refers to an imprecise quantity of people and the adjective 'recent' which is similarly vague strengthened the impression that Ballantine's sentence was not a unique case, but rather reflected a pattern of behaviour by an undemocratic regime. *The Guardian's* and *The Times'* articles about the different governmental and non-governmental authorities involved in the campaign to release the British woman further disputed the legality of the East German judicial system and the sentence Ballantine received. *The Times* quoted MP Douglas Dodds-Parker as regarding the five-year prison sentence as 'a scandal [...] imposed at a secret court in East Germany'.<sup>813</sup> Dodds-Parker in his position as a member of parliament represented an authority; therefore, his statement carried particular strength. Moreover, the combination of the verb 'impose' and the adjective 'secret' clearly demonstrate Dodds-Parker's and through this the newspaper's disapproval. Despite, the sentence being absolutely in line with the East German legislation, it was rejected by the British press. The original offence was now treated and also approved of as 'help' for a friend, a term regularly used in several articles. The implicit conclusion advocated by the newspapers seemed to be that as such an action could not be regarded as a crime from a British, and generally a 'free-world' perspective, and because of the highly questionable nature of some of the legal proceedings, the question of Ballantine's actual guilt was secondary. *The Times* was the only newspaper that finally addressed the issue of Ballantine's responsibility in reporting that 'she [Ballantine] would not comment when asked whether she regretted her actions.'<sup>814</sup> As the young woman refused to answer, the readers could only speculate about the answer and the newspaper itself remained silent about it.

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<sup>811</sup> Shears, 'Iron Curtain "pimpernel" girl gets 5 years', p. 1.

<sup>812</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>813</sup> 'MP condemns jailing of British woman', *The Times*, 20/09/1974, p. 5.

<sup>814</sup> Tim Jones, 'Freed British girl arrives home', *The Times*, 18/12/1974, p. 1.

### 5.1.3 Alan Watson – similar case but a different story

The next section will demonstrate that the arrest of a British citizen in connection with the smuggling of an East German was not sufficient to spark the interest of the British press. Only the combination of several aspects was able to lead to extensive coverage in the quality press, very different from previous articles about escapes and the smuggling from East to West in 1972/73. This second example took place in March 1974, when Alan Watson was arrested for the attempt to take his East German girlfriend out of the GDR. The press coverage of his arrest and sentence demonstrates, particularly in contrast to the story of Susan Ballantine, that the press does not reflect reality, but also shapes events and our perception of them. Little is known about the first British citizen who was finally sentenced by the East German authorities to four and a half years in prison. Alan Watson was born in Yorkshire and lived in the Netherlands prior to his arrest. While *The Guardian* stated that his first profession was as an engineer,<sup>815</sup> all other articles about his release referred to him as a professional racing motorcyclist. The press' interest in Watson's story was much more limited in comparison to that surrounding the Ballantine case. This was due to his personal background, the lack of information available about him and also wider historical developments during the time of his arrest and trial. Being both young and female made it easier to see Ballantine as a victim, especially in comparison to an older adult man such as Watson who would typically be held responsible for the consequences of his actions. Additionally, it seems Watson did not have any close relatives in Britain who could supply information to the press and act as advocate for his case at home.

Despite Alan Watson's arrest two months before Ballantine's, there was no report about his situation until the arrest of the British woman. At the beginning of June 1974, *The Times* was the first newspaper to briefly mention a second British citizen in jail, but without giving any further information.<sup>816</sup> His name eventually appeared in the press on 21 September 1974, when both *The Guardian* and *The Times* reported that Prime Minister Harold Wilson's personal letter to the East German government in support of Susan Ballantine also mentioned Alan Watson.<sup>817</sup> In the

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<sup>815</sup> Keatley, 'Plea for gaoled Britons', p. 2.

<sup>816</sup> 'British girl arrested as "human trafficker"', p. 4.

<sup>817</sup> 'Wilson clemency plea for student', *The Guardian*, 21/09/1974, p. 2; 'Wilson protest to E Germany on jailed Britons', *The Times*, 21/09/1974, p. 5.

following month, his case was mentioned several times but each time only in connection with the Ballantine story and was not investigated in depth at any point. *The Daily Telegraph* almost did not cover the case at all in 1974.<sup>818</sup> Its readers did not learn about Watson until his release the following year. In March 1975, short reports in *The Guardian* and *The Times* announced his release, which represent the only reports which exclusively focused on his case.<sup>819</sup>

In addition to these differences, another possible explanation for the comparative lack of coverage of Watson's case could be the extensive worldwide focus on the Guillaume affair and Chancellor Brandt's resignation in May 1974. These events diverted attention away from many other subjects in connection with the GDR such as Watson's arrest. In the short period between the discovery of the East German spy Günter Guillaume and the end of May 1974, *The Times* published over 100 articles relating to the affair and its consequences. On the other hand, the affair also helped to raise awareness for other topics in connection with the GDR which had so far been neglected. From the beginning, both stories directly competed for reader interest and consequently the newspaper's attention. By including Watson's story within the Ballantine coverage, it strengthened her case without distracting from it.

Noticeably, none of the newspapers followed the fate of either of the East German partners, which again highlights the importance of British involvement for arousing interest. While the newspapers mentioned Volker Benes several times, he was clearly of secondary importance in comparison to Ballantine. Even less is known about Alan Watson's girlfriend. Whilst the comparatively lower interest of British readers in non-British citizens partly explains this, the lack of information is again also related to the practical difficulties for journalists in gathering further information about these individuals in the GDR. While the British press had the opportunity to gain information about its own citizens from the British authorities and potentially the families in the UK, it was almost always prohibited from sources in the GDR. Even if journalists would have found a way to further investigate these cases, they would have most likely endangered the people they might have talked to such as relatives or friends of the East German partners and potentially themselves. After the release of

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<sup>818</sup> Clarke, 'East Germans free girl "love smuggler"', p. 1.

<sup>819</sup> 'Germans release Briton who tried to smuggle girl', *The Times*, 19/03/1975, p. 8; 'Released', *The Guardian*, 19/03/1975, p. 2.

the British citizens concerned, the news stories were completed and the fate of their East German partners remained unimportant.

It has been demonstrated how the press coverage of the Wall, of its consequences for individuals and of the GDR deteriorated as a result of the coverage of the Ballantine case. The content and scale of press coverage was no longer comparable with the earlier reports on people escaping or trying to escape the GDR, which were short and contained little information. In addition, the detailed analysis of the press coverage of Ballantine's story in comparison to that of Watson has shown that the arrest of a British citizen was not enough to secure extensive, in-depth coverage. A range of external factors also had their role to play. In the following section, the implications of Ballantine's and Watson's press coverage for the following years and the presentation of the Wall will be investigated more closely.

## **5.2 The border during the second half of the 1970s**

Following the generally more negative press coverage of the GDR in 1974, and with it a deterioration of the state's image in Britain, a downward continuation of this trend could be expected. During the second half of the 1970s, the Wall and its fortifications were covered by the British press in much greater detail than in previous years. This being said, the increased number of articles was not accompanied by a more negative representation of the Wall, and the subject still represented one out of several in connection with the GDR. Instead, other events such as Biermann's expatriation and its consequences, the arrest of Rudolf Bahro, the general German-German relationship and finally the 1980 crisis in Poland dominated the press coverage. Despite the press' generally negative attitude towards the GDR following the Ballantine case in 1974, this trend did not continue and instead another focus can be identified during the mid-/late 1970s. As several scholars have suggested regarding the representation of the Wall and as outlined previously, British newspapers also reflected a growing acceptance of the Wall, the division of Germany and also the consequences thereof for individuals. This acceptance was also connected to a notion of permanency of the current situation. This section will show that overall interest in the topic was low and that escapes were represented as being fairly easy undertakings. Another aspect of the press coverage focused on the Wall itself. Very specific and often technical articles



about new border fortifications led to the impression that the Wall was an independent object which was somehow disconnected from the state authorities. As a result, negative features such as automatic guns and new mines were perceived as dangerous but any direct connection between them and the GDR was blurred.

'Even the Wall has lost some of its dramas and become merely a feature of the landscape.'<sup>820</sup> This sentence from the beginning of 1977, published in *The Guardian*, illustrates the beginnings of the acceptance of the Wall. When the same author later compared an East German border guard to an Auschwitz guard from 35 years earlier, readers reacted strongly against this and expressed amazement about the reporter's 'hostile reaction' in letters to the editor.<sup>821</sup> These reactions were another indicator of the attitude towards the Wall and the GDR in general. Overall, the press coverage during the second half of the 1970s contains several examples for this image of the border which was more determined by acceptance than fear or rejection. A portrayal of West Berlin's mayor, Dietrich Stobbe, in *The Times* confirmed this attitude. Under the headline 'Living with the Wall', the politician was cited as saying that 'we have to live with the Wall.'<sup>822</sup> Moreover, the press assessed that the Wall had become 'a tourist attraction'<sup>823</sup> and an art object through the 'wall painting season'<sup>824</sup> which started in March 1977, whereas the 'bitterness of its division has drained away.'<sup>825</sup> The statement 'how open East Germany is for western influences' made it easy to ignore the fact that the border isolated the East Germans.<sup>826</sup> In this atmosphere, small changes such as the hope that the blocked savings of pensioners who had moved to the West would be released became 'small cracks [...] in [the] solid wall'.<sup>827</sup> Despite the declining interest and a growing acceptance of the Wall, British newspapers still included more critical articles surrounding this subject. In particular, *The Times'* columnist, Bernard Levin, wrote several highly negative articles in which he identified

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<sup>820</sup> Eva Figes, 'The night they cried wolf', *The Guardian*, 10/01/1977, p. 9.

<sup>821</sup> 'Letters to the editor', *The Guardian*, 14/01/1977, p. 10.

<sup>822</sup> 'Living with the Wall', *The Times*, 27/06/1978, p. X.

<sup>823</sup> Dennis Hackett, 'Television checkpoint Berlin, BBC 1: Wall of death', *The Times*, 05/08/1981, p. 9.

<sup>824</sup> John Palmer, 'New-style writing on the Wall: Letter from Berlin', *The Guardian*, 15/03/1977, p. 2.

<sup>825</sup> Steele, 'Can the two Germanys ever be reconciled?', p. 9.

<sup>826</sup> 'English crosses the Wall', *The Times*, 10/08/1977, p. 15.

<sup>827</sup> 'Small cracks appear in solid wall', *The Guardian*, 10/10/1978, p. 7.

the Wall as proof of a system of injustice.<sup>828</sup> However, such statements remained an exception in the British press.

After a period of rapprochement between the two German states and an internal liberalisation, the GDR soon returned to a policy of demarcation. This process also became visible at the border in the form of new automatic guns and antipersonnel mines. The press closely followed these installations and the resulting growing impenetrability. *The Daily Telegraph*, for example, noted: 'When the Allies took no action against the first barbed wire barricade the Wall was subsequently made into a formidable obstacle of concrete, "death strips", machinegun posts, searchlights and detection devices.'<sup>829</sup> Noticeably, with further perfections of border installations, the press increasingly portrayed the Wall as an independent object which almost led a life of its own. *The Guardian*, for example, described a new wave of work on the Wall as 'putting [a] new face on'<sup>830</sup> and characterised the Wall itself as an 'ugly and aggressive worm'.<sup>831</sup> *The Times* portrayed it as a 'grisly and tragic border'.<sup>832</sup> Occasionally, the press seems to have run out of appropriate terms for 'one of the weirdest frontiers known to man'<sup>833</sup> and referred to it as a 'weird' and 'barbaric thing'.<sup>834</sup> The term 'death strip' or 'death zone' became a more regular term in articles about the Wall. As a result of the focus on the Wall itself and the increasing automation, the politicians and the soldiers directly involved at the Wall became almost invisible. At the same time, the victims of the border became increasingly unimportant.

The final section of this chapter will closely investigate the coverage of escapes from East to West during the latter half of the 1970s. While the number of escapes declined,<sup>835</sup> the number of articles on the topic increased. However, the content changed little in comparison to the earlier coverage. A stronger identification with the individuals involved or a more critical portrayal of the GDR in the articles, as would be expected after the involvement of British citizens in 1974 and the negative press

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<sup>828</sup> Levin, 'The benign bacillus that plagues the Soviet despots', p. 16.

<sup>829</sup> David Shears, 'E. Germans bar buses for Wall demo', *The Daily Telegraph*, 14/08/1978, p. 4.

<sup>830</sup> Siegfried Buschschlüter, 'Putting new face on Berlin Wall', *The Guardian*, 13/08/76, p. 3.

<sup>831</sup> Dennis Barker, 'One of the weirdest frontiers known to man – fences and automatic guns and trenches', *The Guardian*, 27/05/1978, p. 15.

<sup>832</sup> Patricia Clough, 'Germans agree legal definition of border between East and West', *The Times*, 30/11/1978, p. 5.

<sup>833</sup> Barker, 'One of the weirdest frontiers known to man', p. 15.

<sup>834</sup> Stanley Reynolds, 'Checkpoint Berlin', *The Guardian*, 05/08/1981, p. 8.

<sup>835</sup> Between 1973 and 1980, the numbers of refugees were constantly falling: 1973: 1842; 1974: 969; 1978: 461; 1980: 424. In: Ritter and Lapp, p. 167.

coverage of this topic, did not materialise. However, when the journalist Neal Ascherson noted that the 'days of great escapes wheezes seems to be over'<sup>836</sup>, the press coverage in the second half of the 1970s seemed to suggest rather the opposite. In particular, the involvement of families and spectacular ways of leaving the country caught the attention of the press. Their stories could be dramatic, sad or even funny but the great majority of them ended successfully, just like in a good Hollywood movie. The reality looked very different. In 1980, 400 East Germans were able to flee their country but around 1300 citizens were caught, an even higher percentage than during the early 1970s.<sup>837</sup>

The most popular example, which was later even turned into a Disney movie, was the story of the escape of two East German families in a homemade hot-air balloon. The press covered this story with *The Guardian*, for example, writing on its front page about the 'daring escape' that 'has brought freedom to two East German couples and their four children.'<sup>838</sup> Other articles included the story of three medical students who 'bluffed their way across the Berlin Wall to West Berlin wearing homemade uniforms.'<sup>839</sup> Further imaginative methods such as the use of single-engine crop-spraying aircrafts,<sup>840</sup> inflatable boats,<sup>841</sup> grappling hooks<sup>842</sup> and hi-jacked airplanes also caught the attention of the press.<sup>843</sup> Less spectacular escapes, if they were even reported, seldom contained more information than the following example: 'Border flight: A 21-year-old East German crossed to the West before day break yesterday by swimming the river Elbe 30 miles south-east of Hamburg.'<sup>844</sup> Therefore, there was no great difference during this period when compared to reports published in 1972/73. As a result of the light-hearted tone and focus of the articles, flights to the West were presented with only a minimal risk attached. Moreover, the Wall and border fortifications were not addressed in these articles. These articles also created the impression that people were regularly able to overcome them with apparent ease.

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<sup>836</sup> Ascherson, 'Unhappy birthday in Berlin', p. 20.

<sup>837</sup> Gräfe, p. 269.

<sup>838</sup> Siegfried Buschschlüter, 'Escape to West by balloon', *The Guardian*, 17/09/1979, p. 1.

<sup>839</sup> 'Students scale Berlin Wall in false uniforms', *The Times*, 25/07/1978, p. 6; see also: 'Disguised students flee East Berlin', *The Guardian*, 25/07/1978, p. 5.

<sup>840</sup> 'East Germans in tree-top flight to West', *The Times*, 07/02/1978, p. 5.

<sup>841</sup> 'Photo', *The Guardian*, 26/09/1979, p. 6.

<sup>842</sup> 'Printers use grapple hooks in Berlin Wall escape', *The Times*, 19/02/1980, p. 6; 'Two scale Berlin Wall', *The Guardian*, 19/02/1980, p. 19.

<sup>843</sup> 'Polish plane hijacked to US airfield in Berlin', *The Times*, 31/08/1978, p. 4.

<sup>844</sup> 'Coggan's crusade moves to Hungary', *The Guardian*, 26/05/1979, p. 5.

Overall it can be concluded that the image of the Wall as dominant and highly negative cannot be detected in press articles which covered stories about escapes and escape attempts made by East German citizens.

The regular coverage of well-known East German citizens leaving the country after Biermann's expatriation in 1976 also distracted from the Wall and its consequences for East Germans, and even softened the Wall's image somewhat. The departure, for example, of the writers Sarah Kirsch<sup>845</sup> and Jurek Becker,<sup>846</sup> the singer Nina Hagen<sup>847</sup> and the actor Manfred Krug<sup>848</sup> seemed to suggest that a move to the West was no longer anything unusual and was certainly neither complicated nor dangerous. This impression was enhanced by the brevity of the articles, which often left little room to explain the circumstances of each case. Several of these artists experienced months of unsuccessful attempts to find publishers for new books, saw concerts boycotted and some were even intimidated by the authorities all as consequence of their support for Wolf Biermann.

Alongside short reports on escapees, *The Guardian* in particular regularly ran similarly short articles about the arrests and sentences of West Germans who had arranged the escapes of East German citizens on a professional basis. The East Germans implicated in these cases and their fates were very rarely mentioned. In March 1978, *The Guardian* published a very critical article about organisations of professional smugglers.<sup>849</sup> The article portrayed the operation as a 'profitable business with little prospect of being caught', one which was run 'by shady businessmen' and executed by people 'with criminal records', something which even caused the West German government to take action. While focusing nearly exclusively on irresponsible businessmen who exploited East Germans, the responsibility of the East German government for the division remained blanked out. Moreover, the article did not mention that the only alternative would have been to attempt an escape via the border, which bore much higher risks.

After Susan Ballantine and Alan Watson, a third British citizen, Colin Semple, came into conflict with the East German state after an attempt to smuggle an East

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<sup>845</sup> 'News in brief', *The Times*, 04/08/1977, p. 4.

<sup>846</sup> 'East German author allowed to live in West', *The Times*, 20/12/1977, p. 3.

<sup>847</sup> 'Singer leaves', *The Guardian*, 11/12/1976, p. 2.

<sup>848</sup> 'Jazz singer comes West', *The Guardian*, 04/06/1977, p. 4.

<sup>849</sup> Siegfried Buschschröter, 'Going over the Wall', *The Guardian*, 01/03/1978, p. 13.

German out of the country. The 25-year-old from Bournemouth was arrested in May 1978. Despite similarities to the press coverage in 1974, the story was presented very differently to the earlier ones. The press coverage of the Semple case offers further proof that the Wall and its implications were noticed but of no particular interest and that it was not especially negatively portrayed. While the press had intensively covered the Ballantine case four years earlier and had, at the time, regularly assured its readers of the undemocratic character of the GDR, this attitude was barely present in 1978. *The Daily Telegraph's* coverage contained some exceptions as the newspaper's more critical view of the GDR was occasionally traceable. However, negative remarks and critique represented a much smaller share in the Semple case than in connection with Ballantine. In addition, the lower quantity of the press coverage in 1978 also reflects the decreasing interest.<sup>850</sup>

The changing content of news articles in 1978 in comparison to 1974 is particularly evident in the absence of emotive information in the Semple case. Nearly all of the articles lacked a moral component, an element that was central to the story in 1974. In 1978 the press simply covered the facts, rather than wishing to join a larger campaign, to connect the readers to the young man or to mobilise them against the GDR. *The Guardian's* first article about Colin Semple shows this clearly, in which it primarily stressed facts such as the possibility of regular visits from the British authorities and a reference to the exact paragraph Semple had contravened. This information gave the impression of a legitimate legal trial as might have taken place in the UK.<sup>851</sup> *The Times* published a similar article strengthening this impression of normality.<sup>852</sup> When the newspaper printed parts of the House of Commons debate from 24 May 1978, which amongst others discussed the situation of Colin Semple, it confirmed the rational approach towards the case and contained the assuring notion that it would be taken care of by the responsible authorities.<sup>853</sup>

The presentation of Colin Semple himself, his family background and his motive also differed notably from the press coverage of the earlier case and therefore

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<sup>850</sup> The following numbers show the decrease of articles covering the respective case: in 1974 (S. Ballantine): *The Daily Telegraph* 6 articles, *The Guardian* 13, *The Times* 10 articles; in 1978 (C. Semple): *The Daily Telegraph* 3 articles, *The Guardian* 6, *The Times* 5 articles.

<sup>851</sup> 'Mother will not aid held son', *The Guardian*, 24/05/1978, p. 5.

<sup>852</sup> 'E Germans arrest Briton at border', *The Times*, 23/05/1978, p. 6.

<sup>853</sup> 'Arrested Briton well', *The Times*, 24/05/1978, p. 6.

provided fewer opportunities for the reader to empathise with him. Regular statements from Susan Ballantine's father combined with the family's engagement in the press campaign were components that the press used to support the image of Ballantine as a victim. In contrast, Colin Semple's mother was only briefly portrayed by *The Guardian*, pointing out that she denied any direct support for her son.<sup>854</sup> The article's headline 'Mother will not aid held son' shifted the focus of the story from the political sphere to the personal, a subject which no longer had very much to do with the GDR at all. Having said that, the press coverage in connection with Colin Semple also demonstrates that a range of opinions existed within the British press, within which *The Daily Telegraph* presented the most anti-GDR standpoint at the time. This became obvious through differing interpretations and the specific selection of information used to present the story. More than any of the other quality newspapers, *The Daily Telegraph* attempted to use private information about Semple, as in the Ballantine story, to engage the readers and influence them negatively towards the GDR. It reported, for example, that Semple's mother 'wept at home' after the sentence was announced, and how she had refused to visit her son in order to protect him.<sup>855</sup> Earlier in the article, the reporter had already discussed the restricted information policy of the East German authorities. In this context, personal aspects were used to emphasise a negative image of the GDR. Overall, the proportion of critical commentary remained minor even in *The Daily Telegraph*. The eventual release of Colin Semple in 1979 once again reflected the comparably low level of interest in the case as it was only announced in a very brief report by *The Guardian*.<sup>856</sup>

Western victims generally, together with British, received more attention from the British press than East Germans despite being clearly a minority. As pointed out above, the easy access to information through foreign governments and the free Western press was one reason for this imbalance. In particular the deaths of a West German citizen and the Italian Benito Corghi at the border, were widely covered and condemned by the press in 1976. However, their cases remained exceptions and after a short period of interest, the press quickly returned to its daily coverage.

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<sup>854</sup> 'Mother will not aid held son', p. 5.

<sup>855</sup> David Shears, 'E. Germans send Briton to jail', *The Daily Telegraph*, 25/07/1978, p. 15.

<sup>856</sup> 'News in brief', *The Guardian*, 19/03/1975, p. 2; *The Times* was not published during this time because of an industrial dispute.

Having examined the press coverage of the 1970s which dealt with the Wall and the border between the two German countries, it is not possible to identify either subject as having had a dominant impact on the GDR's long-term image in Britain. The subject was certainly part of the quality press' coverage of the GDR during these years, but it was not discussed with overwhelming interest as post-*Wende* researchers dealing with the relationship between the GDR and Britain have suggested. Therefore, this press analysis can contribute new insights into the perception of the Wall in Britain and its contribution to the overall image of the GDR. In particular, articles from the early 1970s focus only to a minor extent on the subject. Instead the press coverage was strongly influenced by the *Zeitgeist* of détente and a positive assessment of the rapprochement between the GDR and the Federal Republic. This situation changed in 1974. The story of Susan Ballantine reintroduced the Berlin Wall, the division of Germany and its consequences to individuals to the readers on a very personal level, which resulted in the construction of a negative image of the GDR in these articles. The comparison of this case with the press coverage of two other British citizens, Alan Watson and Colin Semple, has particularly demonstrated that it was not the arrest of a British citizen alone but a multitude of elements connected to political circumstances, the individuals themselves and the press' dependence on attracting readers and selling newspapers that were responsible for the nature and scale of the coverage. Despite this critical portrayal, the events of 1974 did not lead to a stronger focus on the Wall in the following years. During the second half of the 1970s, the number of articles dealing with escapes from the GDR increased but the amount of information did not differ greatly from the earlier coverage. Overall, only a small number of predominantly successful escapes became known to the public. Instead, the press coverage showed a general acceptance of the current situation of a wall separating the two countries, but without the necessity of emphasising this fact regularly. Additionally, a large number of the articles dealing with the Wall focused on the technical aspects of the border fortifications and its on-going improvements. As a result, these articles did not connect the Wall with the GDR government, which was responsible for the border, and therefore a burden of the GDR image with the events at the death strip seldom happened.

Articles about events connected to the Wall show the differences between the individual British newspapers. Noticeably, the press coverage in *The Daily Telegraph* featured more critical articles of the GDR than *The Guardian* or *The Times*. In contrast, *The Guardian* had a more ambivalent attitude towards the GDR. On the one hand it represented the newspaper's left-wing tendencies and featured a generally more optimistic approach than other quality newspapers during the 1970s. On the other hand, it was also *The Guardian* that reacted most strongly against the behaviour of the East German authorities and offered the greatest criticism of decisions within the context of the Ballantine arrest. Articles in *The Times* were often very information-oriented and less emotional than those of other newspapers. In this respect, the coverage of the Wall confirms earlier findings regarding the differing representation of the GDR in individual British newspapers.

The chapter also contains some examples how the working conditions for British journalists in the GDR potentially influenced the coverage about the Wall. Considering this aspect, the difficulties regarding the gathering of information have been shown. Journalists were unable to gain access to East Germans which had been caught when trying to cross the border into the Federal Republic. Instead, the press focused more strongly on other available sources, such as successful escapees and foreign citizens. These circumstances resulted in an imbalanced coverage about escapes from the GDR and the Wall in general as escapes from the GDR, for example, appeared easier and more successful than they actually were.



## Chapter 6

### **Sport as an important aspect of the East German image in the British press**

The biggest East German success stories covered in the British press were those that took place in the sporting world. The press' recognition and even admiration for East German sport and its successes will be discussed in this chapter. Apart from political affairs, no other aspect of the East German state or its society generated such a high level of interest from British newspapers. The substantial coverage of East German sport allowed newspaper readers to experience a more personal and successful side of the GDR and its citizens, something which was not communicated in other topics. However, to fully understand this positive representation, it is important to remember that only a very small proportion of East German sport was covered by the media. In general, the press focused almost exclusively on elite sport, while other areas such as leisure or mass participation in sport were omitted. Even within the already limited sphere of 'elite sport', only winning performances were considered newsworthy.

Articles which demonstrated East German athletes' participation in a large variety of sporting events notably contributed to a positive image of the GDR. It will be shown that the particular focus on successful East German sportswomen presented the 'human face' of the country. In contrast to other subjects which also tended to focus on the more personal facets of the GDR (such as opposition, see Chapter Four), positive sports coverage was not restricted to isolated incidents. This attitude can in fact be identified throughout the entire period of examination. Although they now form an integral part of the debate surrounding the sporting 'wonderland' of the GDR, accusations of the use of performance enhancing drugs were, in fact, not pervasive in the British press before 1989. This subject did not therefore damage the press' generally positive image of East German sport. In comparison to the British press' considerable and detailed coverage of East German sport, scholarly publications covered the subject to a minor extent. Scholar Gary Whannel, who investigated the relationship between media and sport generally as well as in the GDR specifically,

confirmed that sport had a low status in research.<sup>857</sup> However, while the press nearly exclusively focused on elite athletes and their successes, academic publications tended to present a more general overview of East German sport and discussed, for example, questions of mass participation and the role of leisure in the GDR. It can therefore be seen that sport played differing roles in determining the GDR's image within the two aforementioned discourses.

In this chapter I will examine the ways in which the world of sport presented in the press often seemed to exist outside of political realities. Within British sports coverage, the GDR was not held as the second German state or a small, unimportant country in a world dominated by two superpowers; it was instead depicted as being able to compete on the same level as the 'mighty' United States or the Soviet Union. It will be shown that due to the press' non-political comprehension of East German sporting participation, the political relationship between Britain and the GDR of the time was of no importance to the sports coverage. This particular representation can be regarded as unusual, and is in stark contrast to the emphasis placed on the political side of sport in contemporary literature about the GDR. Finally, I will pay attention to the differences between the presentations of the GDR found in individual newspapers. It will be shown that these differences were much less pronounced than in reference to other subjects discussed in the thesis such as the opposition or the Wall. This will further demonstrate the apolitical character of sports coverage of the GDR at the time, which is very different to the way it is examined today.

To understand the importance of sports coverage to the overall image of the GDR, the significance of sport in Britain and the British press will be briefly outlined. As is surely the case in many other countries, sport in Britain has never been seen purely as a pastime, but rather as a national institution that is beneficial for the country.<sup>858</sup> Therefore, it is hardly surprising that sports coverage plays an important role in the daily press even today. Between 1947 and 1975, in contrast to the general decline in foreign news, an increase in sporting stories can be identified in the British press. This reflects the growing importance of sport.<sup>859</sup> A closer look at *The Times* in 1975 confirms this trend: during this year, 23% of stories were sports-related, foreign news

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<sup>857</sup> Gary Whannel, *Culture, Politics and Sport: Blowing the Whistle, Revisited* (London, New York: Routledge, 2008), p. 10.

<sup>858</sup> Richard Holt, *Sport and the British: A Modern History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), p. 6.

<sup>859</sup> Seymour-Ure, p. 149.

represented only 8% and an additional 11% was filled with international news including international sport.<sup>860</sup> Historian Richard Holt even points out that the habit of reading the newspapers backwards, starting with the sport section, now spread to quality newspapers, and thus, confirms the status the topic held in the newspapers.<sup>861</sup> Furthermore, it is important to acknowledge that Britain does not have a tradition of specialised sports newspapers, but all of the national newspapers except the *Financial Times* devote many pages to sport on a daily basis. It should also be noted that sports coverage may have been able to attract readers with little or no interest in politics, and it could therefore have brought the GDR to the attention of readers who would not normally have shown an interest in the country.

East German sport was intensively and continuously written about by the British press. The quantitative significance of sport related articles in the overall press coverage of the GDR in British newspapers can be identified in the following statistics taken from *The Times* in 1977<sup>862</sup>: 402 articles were published containing the terms: “East Germany”, “GDR” OR “East German.” Of these 402 articles, 134 were related to politics and were published predominantly in the current affairs section of the newspaper. 130 of the 402 articles (32%) dealt with the topic of sport. These 130 articles can be further divided into two different types of articles. The first group only mentioned the GDR very briefly and provided no further background information. These would include, for example, publication of medal tables. The second group (96 of the 130 sport articles) contained more detailed information about particular East German athletes or a sport where the GDR was particularly successful.<sup>863</sup>

Along with the different representation of East German sport in academic publications during the 1970s and 80s, the press discourse also varies markedly from post-Wende academic discussions. Whether concentrating on the success of the GDR in international competitions, describing the systematic usage of performance enhancing drugs or highlighting the state’s attempts to systematically select talented youngsters to become future medal hopes, a constant association between sport and

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<sup>860</sup> Seymour-Ure, p. 152.

<sup>861</sup> Holt, p. 309.

<sup>862</sup> The year 1977 has been selected as it represents an ‘average’ sport year without Olympic Games, which at that time were still organised with Winter and Summer Games during the same year and therefore, would have substantially increased the number of sport articles.

<sup>863</sup> The remaining third of the articles (130) reported about East German society in general and other economic, cultural or religious topics.

politics in the respective academic publications can be seen after 1989. Therefore, whereas post-1989 academic publications about East German sport primarily display the strong politicisation of sport in the country and focus on the 'well-oiled and harmonious'<sup>864</sup> state sport system, the British press reported the success of the GDR and additionally strongly concentrated on successful sporting personalities. Moreover, the press did not tend to identify a strong direct link between the individuals and the state. In contrast to the contemporary academic discourse, the East German athletes are presented either as just part of the statistics or they are portrayed as victims of the East German doping programme. There are two often-cited images which have been presented by scholars in connection with East German sport: firstly, the GDR as a 'miracle'<sup>865</sup> or a 'wonderland of sport'<sup>866</sup>, and secondly, the portrayal of East German athletes as 'diplomats in tracksuits'. These two images perfectly demonstrate the equation of sport and state, whilst the individual athletes are either fully excluded or reduced to the status of servile state representatives.

On a superficial level, the oft cited description of East German athletes as 'diplomats in tracksuits' found in academic publications since the 1970s and still referred to in contemporary publications seems to focus on the individuals. In contrast to other expressions such as 'wonderland of sport' it places the individual in charge. However, a closer look reveals the expression recognises the athletes as a unit which solely performed as subjects of the state. The image is mainly used to stress the athletes' role in overcoming the international isolation of the GDR and later to foster a positive image of the country. The German historian Gunter Holzweißig stated that the expression was coined by Walter Ulbricht himself and therefore demonstrates the significance of sport for the first East German political leader who realised early the

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<sup>864</sup> Mike Dennis and Jonathan Grix, *Sport under Communism: Behind the East German 'Miracle'* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), p. 3.

<sup>865</sup> Dennis and Grix, p. 2; Gunter Holzweißig, 'Die Funktion des Sports für das Herrschaftssystem der DDR: Zielsetzung, Strukturen, politischer Stellenwert', in *Materialien der Enquete-Kommission 'Aufarbeitung von Geschichte und Folgen der SED-Diktatur in Deutschland'*, vol. III/1, ed. by Deutscher Bundestag (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft 1995), p. 642.

<sup>866</sup> Hans Joachim Teichler, 'Die Kehrseite der Medaillen: Sport und Sportpolitik in der SBZ/DDR', in *Bilanz und Perspektiven der DDR-Forschung*, ed. by Rainer Eppelmann, Bernd Faulenbach and Ulrich Mählert (Paderborn: Ferdinand Schöningh Verlag, 2003), p. 286. This perception of the East German sport was completely new and also be found in earlier publications. See for example: Gerald Carr, 'The Use of the Sport in the German Democratic Republic for the Promotion of National Consciousness and International Prestige', *Journal of Sport History*, 1.2 (1974), p. 135; Gunter Holzweißig, *Diplomatie im Trainingsanzug: Sport als politisches Instrument der DDR in den innerdeutschen und internationalen Beziehungen* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg Verlag, 1981), p. 115.

value of sport within the country and for the GDR's external profile.<sup>867</sup> In 1974, Canadian scholar Gerald Carr suggested that the expression showed the GDR's specific use of the East German athletes, specifically suggesting the independence of the GDR from the Soviet Union.<sup>868</sup> The same image was later established by other researchers such as Andrew Strenk.<sup>869</sup> In addition, Holzweißig identified the East German athletes as the most important 'Aktivposten' in the GDR's international image through their impressive sporting successes.<sup>870</sup> In Britain, Martin McCauley and Mike Dennis also referred to the term when arguing over the ways in which sportsmen and women contributed to breaking the diplomatic isolation of the country.<sup>871</sup> In contemporary accounts of East German sport, the terminology can still be regularly found.<sup>872</sup> Berger and LaPorte's publication regarding British-East German relations points out that the world-class achievements of 'diplomats in training suits'<sup>873</sup> brought widespread support for the GDR's participation at a national as well as international level.<sup>874</sup> Similarly, Dennis and Grix refer to the athletes who contributed to break the 'diplomatic deadlock' of the country.<sup>875</sup> As much as it is reasonable to focus on the state system behind the success of the East German sportsmen and sportswomen and to investigate the severe misuse of doping, this does leave certain questions open. Considering the connection between the athletes, the international recognition of the country and its prestige, it can be questioned if the East Germans' sporting success can sufficiently explain this degree of acceptance as described by researchers. For this reason, a closer investigation of the British press may be able to reveal further explanations, including the positive and personal representation of East German sportswomen which I identify as an important contribution to this acceptance.

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<sup>867</sup> Although he does point out that conclusive evidence is missing. In: Holzweißig, *Diplomatie im Trainingsanzug*, p. 3.

<sup>868</sup> Carr, p. 128.

<sup>869</sup> Holzweißig, *Diplomatie im Trainingsanzug*; Andrew Strenk, 'Diplomats in Tracksuits: The Role of Sport in the Foreign Policy of the German Democratic Republic', *Journal of Sport and Social Issues*, Spring/Summer 4.1 (1980).

<sup>870</sup> Holzweißig, *Diplomatie im Trainingsanzug*, p. 113.

<sup>871</sup> Dennis, *German Democratic Republic*, p. 71; McCauley, *The German Democratic Republic since 1945*, p. 71.

<sup>872</sup> Nils Abraham, *Die politische Auslandsarbeit der DDR in Schweden: Zur Public Diplomacy der DDR gegenüber Schweden nach der diplomatischen Anerkennung (1972-1989)* (Münster: LIT Verlag, 2007), p. 183; Holzweißig, 'Die Funktion des Sports für das Herrschaftssystem der DDR', p. 650.

<sup>873</sup> Berger and LaPorte use the term 'training suits' while most researchers refer to 'tracksuits'.

<sup>874</sup> Berger and LaPorte, *Friendly Enemy*, p. 129.

<sup>875</sup> Dennis and Grix, p. 20.

The topic of sport must be considered an essential part of any comprehensive portrait of the image of the GDR as it was strongly associated with the country abroad and the topic was of paramount importance for the East German state itself. In stark contrast to its struggle to gain international political recognition as a state, the GDR quickly achieved international recognition in the albeit restricted world of elite sport. Before its wide-reaching international recognition in 1972/73, the East German state had already found a way to draw significant international attention to itself with the help of its successful athletes. As Hans Joachim Teichler notes the international recognition of the GDR first took place in the world of sport.<sup>876</sup> To achieve this recognition, the East German government focused very early on elite sport.<sup>877</sup> Even before the founding of the GDR, the *Deutsche Sportausschuss* was founded in 1948. The successor organisation, *Deutscher Turn- und Sportbund (DTSB)*, was established in 1957 and by 1989 it officially had 3.6 million members.<sup>878</sup> During the 1950s, the GDR continued to establish a well-organised sports system which included the foundation of the first specialist sports schools for children, together with the *Deutsche Hochschule für Körperkultur* in Leipzig, which went on to become one of the leading sport research institutes and training centres for sport teachers. In 1955, the GDR could celebrate its first international success as the International Olympic Committee provisionally recognised the East German National Olympic Committee. However, during the following years (1956-1964) the two German states were only allowed to participate in the Olympic Games as a joint team. In 1968, East German sportsmen and women were permitted to take part in the Olympic Games as a separate team for the very first time. Only four years later, East German athletes were finally able to compete under their own flag and the East German anthem was played when they won gold. From 1972 onwards, the country's growing success was also reflected in its athletes' ability to finish in the top ranks of Olympic medal tables.<sup>879</sup> The aspiration to establish itself as leading sporting nation was reflected by the country's decision to focus exclusively on a restricted number of sports in which it would be financially

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<sup>876</sup> Teichler, 'Die Kehrseite der Medaillen', p. 286.

<sup>877</sup> Hans Joachim Teichler, 'Sport in der DDR: Systemmerkmale, Folgen und offene Forschungsfragen', *Deutschland Archiv*, 37.3 (2004), p. 418.

<sup>878</sup> Holzweißig, 'Die Funktion des Sports für das Herrschaftssystem der DDR', p. 644.

<sup>879</sup> Barrie Houlihan, *Dying to Win: Doping in Sport and the Development of Anti-Doping Policy* (Strasbourg: Council of Europe Publishing, 1999), p. 21.

viable to secure international medals.<sup>880</sup> As a result, a sport such as ice hockey could not expect any substantial governmental support and nearly fully disappeared in the country. A similar motivation can be recognised in the promotion of women's sport in the GDR. Few countries had paid attention to provisions for women in sport, making it far easier for women to gain international success with the right support. However, elite sport and its success was not only of external importance; internally it supported the development of a national identity and, as Grix and Dennis note, created a 'feel good' factor among the population.<sup>881</sup> Giselher Spitzer also stresses the role of East German elite athletes in the process of identity formation and acceptance of the political system.<sup>882</sup> Although other highly important aspects of sport in the GDR, such as the citizen's mass participation and its significance for the state, will not be part of this chapter as the British did not cover it, it should be briefly explained. Even during the GDR's earliest years, the East German government had already recognised the significance of sport beyond the sphere of the elites. It hoped sport could provide a tool to develop 'socialist personalities' and strengthen character and discipline.<sup>883</sup> Moreover, it was seen to be a way of enhancing the country's military strength.

In the rest of this chapter, firstly the generally positive representation of the GDR in connection with sport will be examined. Finally, the representation of East German athletes will be investigated more closely. It will then be possible to see the ways in which the often very personal sports coverage of particular East German sportswomen helped to enhance a positive image of East German sport.

## 6.1 Successful presentation of the GDR

A certain image of East German sport and its athletes developed during the 1970s and 80s; the sportsmen and sportswomen were perceived as outstanding and regarded as world class. In this light, it will be demonstrated that sports coverage did not reflect the political realities of the time, as the GDR was of minor political importance on a

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<sup>880</sup> Jürgen Hiller, 'Ergänzende Darstellung aus ostdeutscher Sicht unter besonderer Berücksichtigung der deutsch-deutschen Sportbeziehungen', in *Materialien der Enquete-Kommission 'Aufarbeitung von Geschichte und Folgen der SED-Diktatur in Deutschland'*, ed. by Deutscher Bundestag, vol. III/1 (Berlin: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 1995), p. 657.

<sup>881</sup> Dennis and Grix, p. 1.

<sup>882</sup> Giselher Spitzer, *Doping in der DDR: ein historischer Überblick zu einer konspirativen Praxis; Genese – Verantwortung – Gefahren*, 2nd edn (Cologne, Sport und Buch Strauss, 2000), p. 405.

<sup>883</sup> Dennis, *German Democratic Republic*, p. 68.

global scale. A close textual analysis focusing on the East German athletes' portrayal in connection with the Soviet and American superpowers, in addition to articles featuring British and East German sportsmen will show the outstanding role of the country which cannot be identified in connection with any other subject in the British press. Therefore, these findings are significant for determining the overall image of the GDR. In addition, it will be shown that the subject of doping which now dominates the discussion of East German sport was only of minor importance for the overall image of East German sport in the British press. Finally, the explanations provided by the British press for the GDR's sporting successes will be examined, and the ways in which these explanations further promoted a positive representation of East German sport .

### **6.1.1 The GDR as a superpower?**

The positive perception of the GDR as a powerful and important state was particularly promoted through the use of regular comparisons between the East German state and the two superpowers: the Soviet Union and the United States. These two countries were not just political heavyweights during the 1970s and 80s; they were also highly successful countries in a variety of sporting disciplines.<sup>884</sup> In sporting terms, the British press commonly considered the GDR to be on a par with the Soviet Union and/or the United States, and in some cases, it was even proposed that the GDR had outstripped its fellow 'superpower' competitors. Considering the current strength of Australian swimmers or Jamaican runners, it could be argued that this David-Goliath representation always was and is still a popular feature in sports coverage. However, the GDR's consistent dominance in so many different summer and winter sports was rather unique. In contrast, the often discussed rivalry between the two German states did not form part of the press' coverage due to the supremacy of the East German athletes over their West German counterparts in the vast majority of sports.<sup>885</sup> This

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<sup>884</sup> The Summer Olympic medal tables during the 1970s and 80s illustrate the dominance of the two superpowers and also show the equally successful East German athletes. In 1972, the Soviet Union finished first in the Summer Olympic medal table, ahead of the United States and the GDR. The following Games saw the Soviet Union triumphing again, with the GDR coming second and the United States in third place. In 1980, with the US athletes boycotting the Games, the USSR finished first and the GDR second. In 1984, with the Soviet Union and the GDR not participating, the USA dominated the Games. Finally in 1988, with all countries taking part, the Soviet Union once again finished first, the GDR second and the United States came third.

<sup>885</sup> Mike Dennis suggests that sport was promoted to demonstrate the superiority of socialism over capitalism. In: Mike Dennis, *The Rise and Fall of the German Democratic Republic, 1945-1990* (Harlow, New York: Longman, 2000), p. 114; see also R. Gerald Hughes and Rachel J. Owen, "The Continuation of



shows that sports coverage did not reflect the political reality of the time, where the two superpowers dominated the Cold War world and the GDR was of minor importance. Therefore, the coverage is in contrast to the strong politicisation of the subject in contemporary academic literature. Instead, the press created simple narratives of the 'struggle between the Soviet Union and East Germany'<sup>886</sup>, the 'East German – American battle of the giants'<sup>887</sup> or 'the battle [...] for supremacy between East Germany and the United States.'<sup>888</sup> In each case, the tone of the coverage depended on which of the two states represented the stronger opponent within the individual sport at that moment in time, whilst the political alliance or antagonism was not mentioned. The regular comparison of the East German state to one of the two most important states of the time helped to enhance awareness of the small country and promoted its status as a decisive player, at least in the world of sport. This is exemplified in *The Times*' swimming coverage, where it described the 'two giants of the sport, the United States and East Germany'<sup>889</sup>, and additionally when it termed the GDR and the Soviet Union as the 'two major powers in the Warsaw Pact alliance'<sup>890</sup>. Similarly, *The Guardian* described the 'Soviet Union and East Germany as the most successful countries with the strongest state-organized sporting system' in the world.<sup>891</sup>

Occasionally, it could be recognised that the British press even regarded the East German state as superior to the two other countries. Thus, East Germans were able to 'end the American dream'.<sup>892</sup> It was noted that 'the Americans have had to eat humble pie behind the all conquering East Germans'<sup>893</sup> and that 'the East Germans won 10 of the women's gold medals [...], while the Americans got only three.'<sup>894</sup> Taking these three examples from *The Times*, it becomes clear that as early as the beginning of the 1970s, the GDR had gained an outstanding reputation within the world of sport

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Politics by Other Means": Britain, the Two Germanys and the Olympic Games, 1949-1972', *Contemporary European History*, 18.4 (2009), p. 447; for more about East-West sport relations see also: Martin H. Geyer, 'Der Kampf um nationale Repräsentation: Deutsch-deutsche Sportbeziehungen und die "Hallstein-Doktrin"', *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 44.1 (1996), pp. 55-86.

<sup>886</sup> Christopher Dodd, 'German eyes on Olympic gold', *The Guardian*, 07/09/1983, p. 27.

<sup>887</sup> 'Rip Van Winkle wakes up to reality in West Berlin', *The Times*, 18/08/1978, p. 6.

<sup>888</sup> Anita Lonsbrough, 'Golf begets gold', *The Sunday Telegraph*, 20/08/1978, p. 31.

<sup>889</sup> 'Australians too long out of water', *The Times*, 19/07/1975, p. 5.

<sup>890</sup> Iain MacLeod, 'Athletics: Old rivals prepare for confrontation', *The Times*, 20/06/1987, p. 42.

<sup>891</sup> John Samuel, 'Computer path to Olympic success', *The Guardian*, 16/02/1976, p. 21.

<sup>892</sup> Ken Mays, 'Witt can end American dream', *The Daily Telegraph*, 14/03/1987, p. 37.

<sup>893</sup> Pat Besford, 'Britain are sixth in Berlin', *The Daily Telegraph*, 30/08/1978, p. 25.

<sup>894</sup> Brian Crowther, 'US can think again', *The Guardian*, 18/07/1974, p. 24.

and that it was able to maintain this standing until the end of the 1980s. The perception of East German superiority became especially obvious when *The Daily Telegraph*, which was usually very critical towards the GDR or even ignored the country entirely, suggested that ‘the Russians have always done their best to avoid a clash with East Germany’, implying a certain level of reverence, if not fear from the Soviet side and completely abandoned the idea of the GDR as a dependent, satellite state.<sup>895</sup> The image of the GDR as a great sporting nation reached a new height in 1978 when the increasing success of the US-swimmers was explained by their adoption of similar training schedules to those of the East Germans.<sup>896</sup> The East Germans were now the role models for US athletes hoping to achieve similar results.

Contrary to the ‘fierce sporting rivalry’ detected by the historians Hughes and Owen<sup>897</sup>, a direct connection or established antagonism between the GDR and the neighbouring Federal Republic cannot be traced in the media coverage of the time. On the rare occasion that equally strong East and West German athletes or teams participated in the same event, as for example in cycling or figure skating, the sports coverage remained factually oriented and did not differ from its reports on other countries.<sup>898</sup> In the majority of sports, however, the East German athletes were clearly superior when compared to their West German opponents, and so a closer examination of the East German athletes with reference to their West German counterparts would not have been newsworthy for the British press. It is therefore correct when Teichler points out that competitive sport was one of the few areas in which the GDR was able to outperform the Federal Republic. Nonetheless, the British press never focused on that fact.<sup>899</sup> Instead, it concentrated on the much more highly anticipated rivalry that existed between the Soviet Union, the United States and the GDR. The sporting ‘battle’ between the comparatively tiny GDR and the American and Soviet superpowers was depicted in terms of the classic struggle between David and Goliath, rather than with reference to the political sphere.

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<sup>895</sup> Desmond Hill, ‘E. Germany’s eight-boat challenge’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 28/06/1974, p. 28; see also: ‘[...] that even Russia avoid a clash where possible.’ In: Peter Mildreth, ‘Germans blitz R.A.F. track’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 01/02/1976, p. 33.

<sup>896</sup> Brian Crowther, ‘Gold standards’, *The Guardian*, 26/08/1978, p. 20.

<sup>897</sup> Hughes and Owen, p. 473.

<sup>898</sup> John Hennessy, ‘Ice skating: Hint of fallibility could mean end of era for Zaitsev couple’, *The Times*, 02/03/1977, p. 11.

<sup>899</sup> Teichler, ‘Die Kehrseite der Medaillen’, p. 286.

### 6.1.2 Team GB against the East Germans – an inverted relationship

During the 1970s and 80s, the British and East German athletic teams regularly competed against each other in annual international meetings. The coverage of these sporting events can be seen as an important source in discerning the attitudes of the British press towards East German sport. These yearly fixtures represented the most direct competitions between Great Britain and the GDR, and thus offer the clearest indication of relations and attitudes between the two countries from the British perspective. Generally, the events were characterised by the notable gap between the superior East German athletes and the considerably weaker British athletes. In this sense, the relationship between the two countries as it existed outside the world of sport (in which Great Britain was a well-established and recognisably important Western power, and the GDR was a relatively insignificant newcomer to the international community) was reversed. The press analysis represents another convincing demonstration of the apolitical character of the sports coverage. In addition, a comparison of the sports coverage as presented by the individual newspapers shows that only minor difference existed between them.

The ways in which the press regularly described the results of the British-East German meetings revealed the clear supremacy of the East German team as the ‘most powerful nation’<sup>900</sup> and also the undeniable acceptance of this ranking by the British press. *The Guardian* noted without hesitation that ‘Britain, of course, cannot match this.’<sup>901</sup> The idiom ‘of course’ particularly presents the British inferiority as something obvious and well known. Even the often critical *Daily Telegraph* stated that ‘no country in the world could bear comparison with East Germany.’<sup>902</sup> In particular during the 1970s and early 1980s, the press left no doubt that the British team had no chance against their East German opponents: the British were ‘crushed’<sup>903</sup>, whereas the athletes from the GDR ‘cruised to a victory the like of which has rarely been seen.’<sup>904</sup> The choice of the verb ‘crushed’ instead of for example the more neutral ‘defeated’ emphasises the easiness of the East German victory. After the 1978 meeting, *The Guardian* was even unable to find a fitting comparison and suggested that it was

<sup>900</sup> John Rodda, ‘East Germans present formidable test’, *The Guardian*, 07/06/1972, p. 18.

<sup>901</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>902</sup> James Coote, ‘Girl’s relay record is cold comfort’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 23/06/1975, p. 22.

<sup>903</sup> Mildreth, ‘Germans blitz R.A.F. track’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 01/02/1976, p. 33.

<sup>904</sup> ‘GDR pound GB’, *The Guardian*, 18/02/1978, p. 22.

'possibly a defeat unparalleled in the history of British athletics.'<sup>905</sup> Notably, articles which covered meetings between the GDR and Great Britain rarely contained negative remarks about the East German athletes, the general East German sports system or the GDR itself, despite the British athletes' inferiority. Even when *The Guardian* published a negative comment by a British athlete after the indoor meeting in 1976, ('We didn't do too badly against the robots.') the newspaper did not leave this unanalysed: 'It is too easy to dismiss lightly the success of these visitors whose performances are machine-like. They were remarkably happy robots revelling in their own excellence as any top class performer does.'<sup>906</sup> The journalist uses the expression 'happy robots', an oxymoron, as robots are usually not associated with feelings, to object against the statement by the British athlete.

Admiration for the East German achievements went so far that the press occasionally even presented them as a possible role model for British sport, combined with direct and indirect demands for improvements.<sup>907</sup> Better facilities, extra funding and the adoption of new training methods ranked especially highly in the press' requests. *The Guardian* stated that 'The benefits of indoor facilities for athletes can be seen tonight in BBC TV's *Sportsnight* coverage of the international match at Cosford between Great Britain and the German Democratic Republic. [...] Britain need[s] more places sheltered from the ordinary British winters. Only then will Britain have any chance of avoiding the kind of humiliation they are likely to suffer this evening.'<sup>908</sup> Noticeably, the competition had not yet taken place at that point; however the newspaper was already convinced that the final result would be a defeat for Team GB.

Interestingly, *The Daily Telegraph's* sports coverage was much less explicit in its demands for better facilities in comparison to *The Guardian*. Despite the fact that stronger similarities can be recognised across the coverage by individual British quality newspapers than in reference to subjects outside the world of sport, minor differences still existed. Notably, reports in *The Times* focused more strongly and positively on

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<sup>905</sup> James Coote, 'Connor and Stock save British pride', *The Daily Telegraph*, 18/02/1978, p. 27.

<sup>906</sup> Sandy Sunderland, 'Germans are so slick', *The Guardian*, 02/02/1976, p. 17.

<sup>907</sup> In the context of other sports, the press recognised a similar attitude concerning the East Germans and their approach to sport in general. Thus, when the international oarsman and coach to Oxford University, Dan Topolski, stated in connection with a newly implemented monitoring initiative: 'We've got to start somewhere. We need to learn from the East Germans and others who monitor their sportsmen.' In: John Rodda, 'Plan to draw a picture of health', *The Guardian*, 12/11/1982, p. 26.

<sup>908</sup> John Rodda, 'Televised torture', *The Guardian*, 28/02/1979, p. 25.

British athletes than *The Daily Telegraph* and *The Guardian*. *The Times* did not attempt to hide the superiority of the East German athletes, yet it was much more willing to pick out the few British victories or point towards personal best performances instead of focusing too much on East German opponents. This can be seen when in 1975, the British team experienced ‘one of our heaviest international defeats.’<sup>909</sup> The article, including the headline, first reported on the only British victory in the meeting and pointed out: ‘The only British victory [...] was perhaps the least expected because the East German 400 metres girls are about the strongest group in the world. Their superiority in the individual event on Saturday demonstrated that.’<sup>910</sup> The information that the East Germans had won the event was only of secondary importance. In further contrast to *The Times* and other broadsheet newspapers, *The Guardian* was more willing to examine the British sports system and the nation’s approach towards sport in attempting to explain the failure of the British team. The newspaper, for example, claimed that the British system ‘is patently inferior in the international field’<sup>911</sup> and quoted the parting Scottish coach as stating that he ‘cannot wait for the government attitude towards sport in this country to change.’<sup>912</sup>

### 6.1.3 ‘Outstanding’ – ‘Exciting’ – ‘Magnificent’: A language analysis

The following analysis of the language used in sports articles further demonstrates the positive perception of East Germans in terms of sport. It will be shown that Gary Whannel’s claim, that the massive success of the GDR made the western media uneasy,<sup>913</sup> cannot be confirmed and in fact that the opposite can be observed: excited reactions to the achievements can be recognised as they guaranteed ‘enticing’<sup>914</sup> and ‘exciting’<sup>915</sup> competition. In addition to the regular usage of superlatives, journalists employed a multitude of positive adjectives and metaphors to reflect the scale of the East Germans’ achievements. *The Daily Telegraph*, for example, decided that ‘no country would bear comparison with East Germany’<sup>916</sup> and that it showed ‘more talent

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<sup>909</sup> Cliff Temple, ‘Britain’s only victory in final strides least expected’, *The Times*, 23/06/1975, p. 11.

<sup>910</sup> Ibid.

<sup>911</sup> John Rodda, ‘British way exposed by Germans’, *The Guardian*, 12/06/1972, p. 17.

<sup>912</sup> John Rodda, ‘Scots coach down the brain drain’, *The Guardian*, 09/05/1974, p. 22.

<sup>913</sup> Whannel, p. 108.

<sup>914</sup> John Rodda, ‘Splendid race in prospect’, *The Guardian*, 15/06/1973, p. 27.

<sup>915</sup> Brian Crowther, ‘East German challenge to American reign’, *The Guardian*, 06/09/1973, p. 23.

<sup>916</sup> Coote, ‘Girl’s relay record is cold comfort’, p. 22.

than any other country'.<sup>917</sup> The press was convinced that the GDR had the 'most exciting swimmers'<sup>918</sup> and 'the greatest competitor of all time'<sup>919</sup> in its team, and was 'easily the most successful team.'<sup>920</sup> Even critical readers could not ignore the quality of the East Germans when faced with one of the following descriptions: splendid,<sup>921</sup> magnificent,<sup>922</sup> extraordinary,<sup>923</sup> remarkable,<sup>924</sup> phenomenal<sup>925</sup> and incredible.<sup>926</sup> In particular, the adjective 'outstanding'<sup>927</sup> was regularly employed, emphasising the GDR's exceptional position. Occasionally, the East Germans' impressive success provoked the use of a number of descriptions to illustrate the power of the athletes even further. Expressions such as 'theme of the year "East Germany versus the rest of the world"'<sup>928</sup> and that the East Germans did it 'in the formula one' while 'we were the formula two champions'<sup>929</sup> emphasised the gap between the general perception of the GDR and its image in the world of sport. At the same time, descriptions of the East Germans' opponents reflected their inferior status and underlined the reputation of the East German athletes. Such articles noted that many opponents were not just defeated but rather 'shattered',<sup>930</sup> 'outclassed'<sup>931</sup> and 'suffered such humiliation',<sup>932</sup> whilst their 'achievements are drowned in the sea of German excellence.'<sup>933</sup> The press felt that the 'opposition looks mediocre'<sup>934</sup> and were forced to 'look for crumbs'.<sup>935</sup>

The acknowledgment that East German success was not a one-off event was clearly expressed by the regular use of the adverb 'again'. *The Times*, for example, reported from two individual international rowing competitions and pointed out that

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<sup>917</sup> James Coote, 'Aukett's record relay run lifts British spirits', *The Daily Telegraph*, 18/02/1973, p. 31.

<sup>918</sup> Crowther, 'East German challenge to American reign', p. 23.

<sup>919</sup> Norman Fox, 'Back to the drawing board for US', *The Times*, 24/07/1976, p. 15.

<sup>920</sup> 'Girls get tough', *The Guardian*, 22/08/1977, p. 17.

<sup>921</sup> Ken Mays, 'Lewis keeps his', *The Daily Telegraph*, 09/08/1983, p. 20.

<sup>922</sup> Christopher Dodd, 'Man overboard saves the magnificent 7', *The Guardian*, 30/06/1975, p. 15.

<sup>923</sup> John Hennessy, 'Goodhew achieves his big ambition', *The Times*, 23/07/1980, p. 11.

<sup>924</sup> Sunderland, 'Germans are so slick', p. 17.

<sup>925</sup> Frank Keating, 'Cherished by the state with love and money', *The Guardian*, 01/05/1974, p. 24.

<sup>926</sup> 'Three more world records', *The Times*, 05/06/1976, p. 23.

<sup>927</sup> For example: 'Thompson keeps selectors waiting', *The Times*, 24/08/1981, p. 13; Pat Besford: 'No medal for Moorhouse despite breaking British record', *The Daily Telegraph*, 03/08/1982, p. 18.

<sup>928</sup> Jim Railton, 'British coach decides not to use carbon fibre boat in final', *The Times*, 22/07/1976, p. 11;

Jim Railton, 'East Germans promise something special', *The Times*, 30/07/1975, p. 9.

<sup>929</sup> John Samuel, 'Double cheer to British', *The Guardian*, 13/02/1984, p. 21.

<sup>930</sup> Anita Lonsbrough, 'Anke panky to a record', *The Sunday Telegraph*, 23/08/1987, p. 39.

<sup>931</sup> Coote, 'Girl's relay record is cold comfort', p. 22.

<sup>932</sup> John Rodda, 'Morale slumps as British are outclassed', *The Guardian*, 23/06/1975, p. 18.

<sup>933</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>934</sup> Athole Still, 'Swimming: Clean sweep for Britain', *The Times*, 14/09/1981, p. 7.

<sup>935</sup> 'Swimming: World titles and records to go together', *The Times*, 16/07/1975, p. 9.

'the East Germans dominated [the scene] yet again'<sup>936</sup> and 'the East Germans once again dominated the Rotsee with a clean sweep of the women's events.'<sup>937</sup> On other occasions, journalists used terms such as 'consistently'<sup>938</sup>, 'always'<sup>939</sup> or 'usual'<sup>940</sup> to stress the regularity of East German success. As a result of the high frequency of East German sporting successes during the 1970s, the conviction in their prowess was further enhanced as the press started to develop expectations in connection with the East German athletes during the 1980s. This became detectable when the press started to identify the success of East German sportsmen and sportswomen as 'habit'<sup>941</sup>, 'custom'<sup>942</sup> or even 'traditional'<sup>943</sup>. All terms contain the notion of an acquired and regularly performed pattern which has been developed over a longer period. Noticeably, the image of the GDR as a successful sporting nation cannot be limited to a particular newspaper; it was widely perceived and accepted by the British quality press as the norm. The previously identified views of individual newspapers were much less pronounced within the context of the overall sports coverage.

## **6.2 East German sport and the minor importance of doping in the press coverage**

Considering the emphasis on doping in current publications concerning East German sport, one might expect to find frequent references to this topic within the press coverage of the time, especially in light of the East Germans' aforementioned remarkable success.<sup>944</sup> Werner Franke and Brigitte Berendonk's claim that the sporting authorities remained silent regarding East German doping despite widely publicised

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<sup>936</sup> Jim Railton, 'Britain emerge with credit but E Germany dominate', *The Times*, 16/06/1980, p. 9.

<sup>937</sup> Jim Railton, 'Reputations rocked by the East German bow-wave', *The Times*, 11/07/1983, p. 17.

<sup>938</sup> Howard Bass, 'Soviet girl holds edge over Witt', *The Daily Telegraph*, 10/01/1984, p. 22.

<sup>939</sup> Stephen Bierley, 'Wogan jogs appeal', *The Guardian*, 01/02/1984, p. 23.

<sup>940</sup> Michael Coleman, 'Holtom's medal mission', *The Times*, 06/03/1982, p. 20.

<sup>941</sup> Ken Mays, 'Drechsler leaps to indoor record', *The Daily Telegraph*, 28/02/1987, p. 44.

<sup>942</sup> 'Swimming: Uncatchable look of East German women', *The Times*, 14/08/1987, p. 30.

<sup>943</sup> Athole Still, 'Diving: Diver of diverse talents', *The Times*, 18/04/1981, p. 17.

<sup>944</sup> See, for example, Molly Wilkinson Johnson's book about the sport in the GDR where she sees 'for many as the most prominent example - alongside the Berlin Wall and the Stasi - of the abusive nature of the East German dictatorship: the 'doping' of athletes [...]. In: Molly Wilkinson Johnson, *Training Socialist Citizens: Sport and the State in East Germany* (Boston: Brill Academic Publishers, 2008), p. 1.

reports about drug abuse, supports this assumption.<sup>945</sup> *The Times'* generalisation in 1989, that there had 'always been a widespread belief that the East German competitors have been drugged'<sup>946</sup> further strengthens this belief. However, a closer examination of the British quality press shows that doping within East German sport was rarely mentioned in British newspapers before 1989. In combination with the minor importance of the subject in the overall press coverage, this section will explain how the press' language contributed to the uncertainty about drug misuse by East Germans. Finally, it will again be shown that the press' alternative explanations for East German successes also contributed to a positive representation of the country's sporting achievements.

Despite the extraordinary success of East German sportsmen and sportswomen, the press only occasionally expressed accusations of substance abuse whereas it regularly rejected respective rumours.<sup>947</sup> Doping rumours were limited to certain sports such as athletics and swimming while others such as cycling and rowing were completely omitted from the discussion. The absence of winter sports from the doping discourse is also worthy of note, as sports such as figure skating, speed skating and bobsleigh were successful events for the GDR and received a good deal of attention from the British press. Furthermore, a continuous connection between East German sport and doping cannot be traced. Instead, it has been found that interest in this topic peaked in certain isolated years. The number of articles relating to East German doping accusations spiked in 1976 and 1978, following the successful implementation of the first official doping tests and other events such as allegations by an East German athlete. Despite this temporary increase in interest, the subject all but disappeared from the newspapers during the following years. It was not until 1988, when Canadian sprinter Ben Johnson was disqualified for a doping offence, that the press renewed and increased their interest in doping in sport. It was at this time that they specifically connected such accusations with East German sport.

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<sup>945</sup> Werner W. Franke and Brigitte Berendonk, 'Hormonal Doping and Androgenisation of Athletes: A Secret Program of the German Democratic Republic Government', *Clinical Chemistry*, 43.7 (1997), p. 1274.

<sup>946</sup> John Goodboy, 'East Germany stands accused', *The Times*, 27/06/1989  
<<http://www.lexisnexis.com/uk/nexis/docview/getDocForCuiReq?lni=41BB-VCN0-00YJ-Y3W0&csi=10939&oc=00240&perma=true>> [accessed: 21/11/2011].

<sup>947</sup> For example: Norman Fox, 'The X factor may be the East Germans' secret', *The Times*, 28/01/1974, p. 8. The article points out those accusations against East German swimmers have been discounted by most coaches as jealousy and ignorance.



A brief overview of the development of doping and anti-doping policies in sport during the 1970s and 80s can provide a background to the press' coverage of this topic: The first half of the 1970s was defined by a lack of knowledge about the use of drugs, their impact and spread. The GDR had been using performance enhancing drugs such as anabolic steroids since 1964.<sup>948</sup> The first formal drug testing programme was introduced during the Olympic Games in Munich in 1972 and steroids were added to the list of banned substances in 1975. During the Olympic Games in Montreal (1976), the first official tests were implemented.<sup>949</sup> However, not until the late 1970s did drug testing become systematic and professionalised.<sup>950</sup> The International Olympic Committee banned the practice of 'blood doping'<sup>951</sup> in 1986.<sup>952</sup> Eventually, the aforementioned 'Ben Johnson' case in 1988 brought the topic of 'doping' to the top of the sports agenda after the Canadian sprinter was banned as a result of using anabolic steroids during the Olympic Games in Seoul.<sup>953</sup> The following section will provide significant examples of how the British presented this subject with regards to the GDR, and how this often ambivalent representation was unable to drastically influence the overall positive image of East German sport.

### 6.2.1 20 years of doping and the GDR in the press

During the early 1970s, the British press focused almost exclusively on one very specific aspect in terms of doping in sport. It was not overly concerned about possible advantages for athletes, or the negative side effects for the health of those concerned. Instead, questions about the femininity of East German sportswomen determined the press discourse of doping in East German sport. The perception that illegal substances were only consumed by a small group of athletes, predominantly sportswomen, strongly contrasted with the reality of the situation. It has now been shown that the

<sup>948</sup> Spitzer, *Doping in der DDR*, p. 409.

<sup>949</sup> R. Craig Kammerer, 'What is Doping and How Is It Detected?', in *Doping in Elite Sport: The Politics of Drugs in the Olympic Movement*. ed. by Wayne Wilson and Edward Derse (Champaign, IL: Human Kinetics Publishers, 2001), p. 5; Michele Verroken and David R. Mottram, 'Doping Control in Sport', in *Drugs in Sport*, ed. by David R. Mottram, 2nd edn (London: EFNSpon, 1996), p. 237.

<sup>950</sup> Houlihan, *The Government and Politics of Sport*, p. 203.

<sup>951</sup> Blood doping is an illicit method to improve performances in sport. The aim is to manipulate the blood that it is able to carry more oxygen to the muscles with the aim to enhance the stamina of athletes.

<sup>952</sup> 'A Brief History of Anti-Doping', in *World Anti-Doping Agency* <<http://www.wada-ama.org/en/About-WADA/History/A-Brief-History-of-Anti-Doping/>> [accessed: 14/11/2011].

<sup>953</sup> Houlihan, *The Government and Politics of Sport*, p. 202.

East German sports system provided drugs to their male and female athletes in nearly all of the Olympic sports in 1972.<sup>954</sup> Moreover, the reduction of doping to a discussion of mere physical attributes and the cautious coverage of the newspapers led to a belittlement of the subject. The focus and purported importance of the women's physical appearance was best represented in a statement by Norman Sarsfield, Secretary of the *Amateur Swimming Associations*, which *The Times* published in 1975: 'Our girls look like ladies but the East Germans look like athletes.'<sup>955</sup> The positive understanding of 'ladies' was further strengthened through their classification as 'our girls' and the separation from the 'others' which were perceived as different. *The Guardian* described the East German sportswoman as 'weighed down by muscles'.<sup>956</sup> Muscles are usually connected with men and the exaggeration 'weighed down' further contradicts common notions of femininity. Moreover, the press argued that they were built like 'locomotives'<sup>957</sup> and their 'physical development' as 'unnatural'<sup>958</sup>. The connection between doping and the physical appearance of the sportswomen could be observed more clearly in several articles. *The Guardian*, for example, reported that Swedish doctors had 're-opened' accusations that East German women were taking hormone products which gave them a muscular development comparable to men's. With it the newspaper indicated an on-going debate. However, it refused to strongly support the allegations and instead remarked that the East German Kornelia Ender 'seems, as it happens, to be getting more feminine.'<sup>959</sup> Like *The Guardian*, *The Times* only indirectly reported that 'Rivals in the West often accused East German women of being pure swimming machines [...] possibly with doses of hormones and other drugs to build their muscles.'<sup>960</sup> On a different occasion, *The Times* reported that 'Many people here believe that the physical development of the East Germans [...] has been unnatural [...].' Later on, the newspaper remarked that 'It must be remembered that there is nothing in the regulations of the *International Swimming Federation* (FINA) to

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<sup>954</sup> Franke and Berendonk noted that anabolic steroids were administered in all Olympic sports, with the exception of sailing and female gymnastics, as well as all national sports teams. In: Franke and Berendonk, p. 1264.

<sup>955</sup> Neil Allen, 'Brinkley could provide fillip for Britain', *The Times*, 29/03/1975, p. 16.

<sup>956</sup> Brian Crowther, 'Hencken beats record twice', *The Guardian*, 05/09/1973, p. 21.

<sup>957</sup> Brian Crowther, 'Eastern challenge leaves US uneasy', *The Guardian*, 10/09/1973, p. 23.

<sup>958</sup> Norman Fox, 'Swimming: Two issues unanswered in Belgrade', *The Times*, 10/09/1973, p. 7.

<sup>959</sup> Brian Crowther, 'East Germans write a new record book', *The Guardian*, 23/08/1974, p. 19.

<sup>960</sup> 'A lynchpin in E German swimming machine', *The Times*, 19/04/1978, p. 11.

stop swimmers taking weight-building drugs including anabolic steroids.<sup>961</sup> After the success of the swimmer Ulrike Tauber, *The Guardian* added in surprise: 'yet she is a normal-looking teenage girl',<sup>962</sup> whilst *The Times* pointed towards the 'masculine build of some of their women'.<sup>963</sup> The entire discussion of the misuse of drugs during the first half of the 1970s was further weakened by the contemporaneously positive representation of East German female athletes which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

From 1976/77 onwards, a slow change of perception and thinking can be identified in the press coverage. More articles reflected a growing acceptance of the East Germans' physical appearance and therefore, rejected it as indication of the use of banned substances. The changing perception was expressed in an article reporting on the rivalry between the American and East German female swimmers. *The Guardian* reported that 'the American girls are disinclined to do a lot of weight training since they feel that the East German girls [...] do not look feminine enough'.<sup>964</sup> Thereby, the newspaper identified training and their seriousness as athletes as the main reason for the East Germans' muscular appearance. In contrast to earlier articles, the newspaper disagreed not only with the statement itself but dismissed the whole approach of prioritising appearance over success. The acceptance of the East Germans can also be observed when the article referred to them, as to the American swimmers, as girls without further comment. The article continued: 'the question of femininity may be a factor that prevents American girls from being as good as East German'.<sup>965</sup> That the quality press freed itself from allegations of East German athletes' lack of femininity can be seen in a *Times* article from 1977. In this article, *The Times* responded to allegations made by *The Daily Mail* against East German athletes in general and in particular against the successful swimmer Kornelia Ender.<sup>966</sup> It appears the quality newspaper felt impelled to portray a more balanced portrait of East German sport in contrast to the tabloid newspaper. *The Times* accused *The Daily Mail* of sinking to 'a new low in political prejudice in the world of sport' as 'the petty

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<sup>961</sup> Norman Fox, 'Swimming', *The Times*, 10/09/1973, p. 7.

<sup>962</sup> Brian Crowther, 'East German girls still unbeatable', *The Guardian*, 22/08/1974, p. 21.

<sup>963</sup> Neil Allen, 'Where special treatment means a pension for javelin throwers', *The Times*, 15/07/1976, p. 12.

<sup>964</sup> Brian Crowther, 'Weighty problems of femininity', *The Guardian*, 27/07/1976, p. 19.

<sup>965</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>966</sup> John Hennessy, 'No medals for this political plunge', *The Times*, 08/02/1977, p. 11.

jealousy shown towards the East Germans in view of their success in sport recently has fallen little short of mean-mindedness'.<sup>967</sup> *The Daily Mail* claimed that the East German athletes were in fact not women at all, but would occupy 'a shadowy place somewhere in limbo between the sexes.' *The Times'* counter-argument was that Kornelia Ender looked 'rather attractive' and was 'what we used to call well-adjusted, and would now call healthily heterosexual.'<sup>968</sup> In the following years, the press completely stopped making remarks about the appearance of female East German athletes. As a result of this restricted view of female athletes, along with the small number of articles relating to doping in the overall media coverage, allegations of drug misuse were unable to substantially influence the largely positive image of the East German athletes before 1978.

The year 1978 was pivotal in the history of doping, and also for East German sport. The positive tests of the East German shot-putter Ilona Slupianek and cyclist Norbert Dürpisch, the allegations made by former East German sprinter Renate Neufeld against the East German sporting system and the disqualification of further Eastern European athletes during the Prague Athletic Championships all strengthened the press' focus on the topic. However, despite the increasing interest in the subject which was reflected in a higher number of articles dealing with the use of illegal substances in sport, the related media coverage did not negatively influence the overall perception of East German athletes in the long-term. In the following section, the articles dealing with Neufeld's allegations and the exposure of the two East German athletes will be analysed. It will be shown that the content and language used in the press' coverage was unable to influence the image of East German athletes in the long run. Soon after the events outlined above, the number of articles decreased once again and stayed at a very low level, showing that the topic remained of little importance in the following years.

Only two East German athletes, the shot-putter Ilona Slupianek and the cyclist Norbert Dürpisch, were ever disqualified for the use of banned substances during international competitions.<sup>969</sup> During the world championships in 1978, Dürpisch tested positive for anabolic steroids. He consequently lost his silver medal and was

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<sup>967</sup> Hennessy, 'No medals for this political plunge', p. 11.

<sup>968</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>969</sup> 'Cycling: East German stripped of medal and banned', *The Times*, 19/08/1978, p. 5.

banned for one month. Only *The Times* covered the incident, whilst all other newspapers remained silent.<sup>970</sup> *The Times'* article presented Dürpisch's point of view in direct and indirect quotations, while counterpoints by either the responsible journalist or other professionals were missing. This unbalanced report combined with Dürpisch's further argumentation in the article supported doubts as to the athlete's responsibility in this case. He explained that the banned substance *Ephedrine* was also found in nasal sprays and other cold remedies and pointed out: 'I took no medicine. I did nothing illegal.'<sup>971</sup> References toward the medical uses of the substance distracted from its illegal usage in doping. After the cyclist's forthright denial, the article concentrated on the East German team's 'superiority in track events' and anticipated that 'their third gold medal win appeared to be only a formality.'<sup>972</sup> This final positive assessment offered another counterpoint to distract from Dürpisch's doping offence.

The East German shot-putter Ilona Slupianek was disqualified for Nandrolone abuse at the 1977 European Cup in Helsinki.<sup>973</sup> In contrast to the case of Norbert Dürpisch, the coverage left little doubt over her complicity in the offence. In addition, Slupianek remained part of sports coverage and was referenced until the end of the 1980s, both in articles covering her sporting career and also in general reports about doping. However, as the only example the press referred to on a regular basis, this case was unable to make a negative impact on the overall image of East German athletes or East German sport. It rather appeared as an isolated incident without any significance for other East German athletes. In a series of three articles about the East German sports system, *The Times* journalist, David Miller argued that if Slupianek, as part of the official state sport system, was doped, 'it is reasonable to assume there are others.'<sup>974</sup> However, Miller also added that he did not rule out that 'East Germany's medical researchers are dramatically ahead of the world, not in stimulants but in legal areas which remain secret.'<sup>975</sup> This additional suggestion, which was in line with the

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<sup>970</sup> 'Cycling: East German stripped of medal and banned', p. 5. *The Guardian* only printed the results of the World Championship and did not cover the case at any point. *The Observer* also did not cover the topic.

<sup>971</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>972</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>973</sup> Franke and Berendonk, p. 1267.

<sup>974</sup> David Miller, 'David Miller's conclusions about the system: East Germany faces balancing act', *The Times*, 19/04/1985, p. 29.

<sup>975</sup> *Ibid.*

often ambivalent coverage on doping in the press, weakened Miller's first statement and left the readers uncertain about the situation in the GDR.

Another example of the missing effect of individual events on the overall East German sport image as presented in the British press is highlighted in the coverage of Renate Neufeld's allegations against the East German sport administration in December 1978. The East German sprinter defected to the Federal Republic in 1977. Only one year later she gave evidence that as part of the national sprint squad, she had been forced to take performance-enhancing drugs. *The Guardian* was the only newspaper which covered the Neufeld case, and it did so in two articles published at the end of 1978.<sup>976</sup> The headline, 'GDR girl confesses on drugs', suggested that one individual female athlete from the GDR was involved in the use of banned substances. Neufeld's allegations of state involvement and thus of doping being a widespread problem were also not reflected in the lead of the article. Only later on did the article mention the responsibility of the East German sporting authorities by it pointing out that Neufeld had been forced to use performance enhancing drugs 'because reprisals against her were threatened.'<sup>977</sup> Despite the establishment of 'valuable, tangible evidence' of the use of 'illegal methods' in the GDR, in the course of the article the focus shifted from the initial allegation toward the oppressive methods employed by the GDR authorities against its citizens and additionally the 'terrible side-effects' caused by drug misuse. The article stated that 'she feared for her life. Her father has lost his job as an English teacher and her sister has been removed from a handball squad.'<sup>978</sup> The strong impression of the state's actions overshadowed the initial accusation and therefore the negative association moved away from the world of sport and centred instead on state authorities. For this reason, the positive and 'clean' image of sport could be easily reconstructed and the case only affected the future representation of East German sport to a very small extent. The follow-up article published the following day focused more on international doping policies than on the original accusation against the East German authorities.<sup>979</sup> The article reported that

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<sup>976</sup> John Rodda, 'GDR girl confesses on drugs', *The Guardian*, 28/12/1978, p. 17; John Rodda, 'Hurdle to GDR drug inquiry', *The Guardian*, 29/12/1978, p. 17. *The Daily Telegraph* did not seem to regard the topic as important as it did not report on it, whilst *The Times* was not in print during the period.

<sup>977</sup> Rodda, 'GDR girl confesses on drugs', p. 17.

<sup>978</sup> Ibid.

<sup>979</sup> Rodda, 'Hurdle to GDR drug inquiry', p. 17.

the investigation might not proceed as an official complaint was required and it doubted that a country would initiate this. The newspaper wondered in this context: 'who is prepared to rock the boat about what a young girl, who has fled her country illegally, might have to say?'<sup>980</sup> This rhetorical question was surely intended to explain the lack of initiative from western sport associations. But it also weakened Neufeld's credibility and devalued her statement to a certain degree. Her credibility was further undermined when the newspaper portrayed Neufeld as 'a young girl' who might not be able due to her age to fully understand the scope of her allegations. Neither the quantity nor the content of the press coverage dealing with Renate Neufeld was convincing enough to have future implications. Due to the lack of focus on the actual topic and the representation of Neufeld herself, the story was unable to make any substantial contribution to the perception of East German sport.

During the 1980s, the press coverage of substance abuse by East German athletes decreased noticeably and remained constantly low until 1988. In addition to the actual absence of a substantial discourse, the remaining press coverage about doping was characterised by an ambivalent view towards East German athletes and East German sport. In the context of doping, some articles now even presented the GDR in a new role as an active campaigner in the fight against doping.<sup>981</sup> The press also published critical accounts addressing the use of allegations against the GDR in Britain to distract from the country's own shortcomings. An ironic account published by *The Guardian*, for example, emphasised the growing perception that the allegations against East German athletes were regularly raised only to distract from the fact that 'encouragement, coaching and facilities for young sporties (12 years and up) in Britain are pathetic.'<sup>982</sup> The article's reference to three different areas of sport emphasised that the problem was far-reaching. It continued: 'Nothing's changed since, 25 years later, and the commentators are still whingeing on in their good old racist way.'<sup>983</sup>

The press coverage in 1988 and 1989 provides an early indication of how doping would dominate the image of East German sport after 1989. The sports coverage during the final years of the GDR changed in contrast with the earlier

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<sup>980</sup> Rodda, 'Hurdle to GDR drug inquiry', p. 17.

<sup>981</sup> John Goodbody, 'East Germany set to back Coe in battle against drugs', *The Times*, 06/04/1988, p. 40; Paul Harrison, 'IAAF to double drug testing laboratories', *The Times*, 30/10/1981, p. 23.

<sup>982</sup> Michael Rosen and Tim Madge, 'Input', *The Guardian*, 16/09/1987, p. 12.

<sup>983</sup> *Ibid.*

coverage. This stronger focus also contributed to a general deterioration of the overall image of East German sport from mid-1988 onwards. After the publication of allegations made by the former East German Olympic champion Hans-Georg Aschenbach and the former official Hans-Jürgen Noczanski about the systematic use of doping in the GDR in June 1989, the discourse surrounding doping in the GDR gained new impetus and with it the quantity and quality of the press coverage reached a new level. This development must also be seen in the context of the Ben Johnson case, which generated a huge amount of media coverage and raised public awareness of doping in sport.<sup>984</sup> Even before Johnson's disqualification, *The Times* and *The Sunday Times* published critical articles related to the use of doping by East German athletes which indicated a growing awareness of the problem.<sup>985</sup> Under the headline: 'Goose stepping for gold at the Games', the *Sunday Times*' journalist not only accused the East Germans of performing under the influence of drugs, he also explained how this negatively affected the world of sport as a whole. The headline with its reference to the goose step, which had been closer analysed in Chapter 2, draws the comparison between the world of sport and the military world. As result, the athletes were no longer perceived as individuals but rather as part of an undefined mass. The article further described the East German athletes as 'steroid-logged' and claimed that their attitude and the dominant Americans 'turn sport sour in the mouth. Human life after sport is put at risk by the drug factor'. Overall, the presented analysis has shown a clear positioning of the press concerning the drug abuse by East Germans did not exist during the 1970s and 80s and the subject remained of minor importance for most of the time.

### 6.2.2 Language as a reflection of uncertainty

Along with the irregularity and ambivalence of the initial press coverage of doping, the language used in newspaper articles also suggested an ambiguous press approach towards the topic. The press coverage of the East German athletes and their connection to doping was often determined by indirections, paraphrases and

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<sup>984</sup> Ivan Waddington, *Sport, Health and Drugs: A Critical Sociological Perspective* (London: Taylor & Francis, 2000), p. 133.

<sup>985</sup> Edward Pearce, 'Goose stepping for gold at the games', *The Sunday Times*, 18/09/1988 <<http://www.lexisnexis.com/uk/nexis/docview/getDocForCuiReq?lni=41B4-YKX0-00YK-015K&csi=332263&oc=00240&perma=true>> [accessed: 20/11/2011].



vagueness. The use of nouns such as ‘belief’,<sup>986</sup> ‘claims’,<sup>987</sup> and ‘suggestions’<sup>988</sup> support this impression. *The Times*, for example reported that there ‘have been suggestions that East German women receive medically controlled hormone injections. This is not just sour grapes from frustrated coaches of defeated countries.’<sup>989</sup> The author signalled with the paraphrase ‘sour grapes’ that jealousy had been perceived as a motive for allegations against East German sportswomen. In this article he suggests now that this is at least partly true. However, the article stressed that ‘the most important factor [for the East Germans’ achievements] is patriotic motivation’ and therefore moved attention again away from doping abuse. On other occasions, the allegations were accessed as ‘rumours’. In the following example the noun ‘rumours’ is enhanced through the adjective ‘wild’ which weakens the reliability of the content even further: ‘Accusations after Belgrade that the East German swimmers, in particular the girls, were being given muscle building stimulations now seems to have been discounted by most coaches, who say that jealousy and ignorance prompted some wild rumours.’<sup>990</sup> As already mentioned, the newspapers seemed to distance themselves from claims of doping misuse by referring to other sources without commenting on it. If, for example, an article contained allegations, these were often presented in the form of quotations, or the source remained unnamed.<sup>991</sup> Additionally, if an article contained references to the use of banned substances by East German athletes, they would frequently also include comments which immediately weakened the claim, for example: ‘The East German success inevitably prompted allegations that their women were on drugs. But if this allegation was serious, how was it that the East German men were so poor, relatively.’<sup>992</sup> The article disconnects the subject of drugs from the GDR with the adverb ‘inevitably’. Instead it points out that any other country with similar success would have experience the same. The second sentence notes further doubts regarding the doping allegations. This type of language was especially recognisable in early articles from the beginning of the 1970s. It can be seen that the

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<sup>986</sup> John Rodda, ‘Britain protest over opposition’, *The Guardian*, 12/06/1978, p. 20.

<sup>987</sup> “‘Wonder” pill claimed to be secret of success’, *The Times*, 27/08/1976, p. 10.

<sup>988</sup> Allen, ‘Where special treatment means a pension for javelin throwers’, p. 12.

<sup>989</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>990</sup> Fox, ‘The X factor may be the East Germans’ secret’, p. 8.

<sup>991</sup> ‘A lynchpin in E German swimming machine’, p. 11; John Rodda, ‘Western problems on the hard road to Moscow’, *The Guardian*, 05/09/1978, p. 23.

<sup>992</sup> John Hopkins, ‘Best effort by Britain in six years’, *The Times*, 27/08/1974, p. 5.

language of the press coverage did not strengthen the perception that East German success was based on the use of illegal substances. It revealed, rather, that the press was willing to consider them as innocent until proven guilty.

### 6.2.3 Alternative explanation for success

The question of how the GDR, a country with a mere 17 million inhabitants, was able to become one of the most successful sporting nations in the world was an integral part of the British press' sports coverage during this period. As demonstrated in the previous section, the press did not readily believe the use of banned substances to be the answer. Instead it identified three main reasons for the GDR's sporting success, which, in contrast to the wider discourse surrounding doping, supported a positive image of the East German state. The press generally agreed that the talent and character of the East German athletes, training methods and the support of the East German government all contributed to the nation's sporting success.

The press suggested the 'overwhelming talent'<sup>993</sup> of the East German athletes was one of the main explanations for their success. *The Daily Telegraph* claimed that the GDR had 'more talent than any other country'<sup>994</sup> whilst *The Times* identified that there was a 'wealth of talent available'<sup>995</sup> in the country. The press did not investigate the question of why the citizens of one particular country should have more talent than others. Other explanations focused on the specific characteristics which purportedly helped the East Germans to be particularly successful, such as them being 'terribly efficient'<sup>996</sup> and 'strong minded'<sup>997</sup> or their 'steely will'.<sup>998</sup> *The Guardian* determined that a mixture of self-discipline, patience, dedication and patriotism were behind the success rate, but also claimed that this trend was 'not so much a national trait as a product of society.'<sup>999</sup>

The training methods used by the East German governing bodies for sport also aroused a great deal of interest from the British press. The press was convinced that these methods were another reason behind the country's success. In particular, the

<sup>993</sup> John Rodda, 'Women produce German victory', *The Guardian*, 12/07/1982, p. 19.

<sup>994</sup> Coote, 'Aukett's record relay run lifts British spirits', p. 31.

<sup>995</sup> Jim Railton, 'Rowing: Why it is difficult to stay at the top in East Germany', *The Times*, 18/06/1975, p. 9.

<sup>996</sup> John Rodda, 'Eastern promise is fulfilled', *The Guardian*, 01/09/1987, p. 25.

<sup>997</sup> John Rodda, 'The events and people to note', *The Guardian*, 04/02/1976, p. 18.

<sup>998</sup> John Moynihan, 'John Moynihan reports from Montreal', *The Daily Telegraph*, 18/07/1976, p. 27.

<sup>999</sup> Jim Riordan, 'Boiler house pressure on Russia's athletes', *The Guardian*, 15/10/1975, p. 23.

country's sports schools, progressive training schemes, youth talent scouting programmes and its use of sports medicine were key factors in the discussion.<sup>1000</sup> One way in which the press highlighted the impressive facilities behind the East German success was to emphasise the high quality and quantity of medical support available within the country. *The Times* reported that the East Germans have six doctors per sports club<sup>1001</sup> and 'more than 200 special sport medicine centres in their sport and health conscious country.'<sup>1002</sup> The *Institute of Physical Culture and Sport* in Leipzig particularly caught the attention of the press with its '30 doctors, 200 beds, world fame, and an endless trail of visitors from the West.'<sup>1003</sup> This positive portrayal of the East German state became even more evident when the press cited the GDR as a positive example for Britain. *The Guardian*, for example, reported that the British team's physiotherapist 'has offered to draw up individual schedules and monitor the swimming progress' of British swimmers, as the East Germans 'had been doing something similar.'<sup>1004</sup> *The Times* went even further and quoted British rower, Chris Baillieu, as saying, 'We train like the East Germans; we spend now as much time in the sport as they do; and that is why we beat them.'<sup>1005</sup>

Finally, the financial and moral support the East German athletes received from their government was clearly identified as one of the main reasons behind their outstanding performance. This support was in stark contrast to the British government's policy on sport which was characterised by a stronger non-intervention policy and which tried to keep 'sport at arm's length' as Dennis Brailsford points out.<sup>1006</sup> Not all newspapers or journalists would go as far as Neil Allen, sports reporter at *The Times*, when he suggested that 'British competitors here might be tempted to jump over the notorious Wall and wear East German colours if they could hear Mrs Fuchs [East German javelin thrower and double Olympic champion] explaining how much she is helped.'<sup>1007</sup> In this example, the positive impression given by the supportive sports system was even able to overshadow the negative image of the Wall.

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<sup>1000</sup> Pat Butcher, 'A harvest ripe for easy pickings', *The Times*, 05/09/1987, p. 36.

<sup>1001</sup> Fox, 'The X factor may be the East Germans' secret', p. 8.

<sup>1002</sup> Neil Allen, 'Medical cover for Britain's top athletes', *The Times*, 22/07/1975, p. 8.

<sup>1003</sup> John Samuel, 'Ropes away', *The Guardian*, 10/04/1976, p. 9.

<sup>1004</sup> 'Exercises for top swimmers', *The Guardian*, 28/08/1974, p. 25.

<sup>1005</sup> Jim Railton, 'British scullers have world class touch', *The Times*, 12/07/1977, p. 10.

<sup>1006</sup> Dennis Brailsford, *British Sport: A Social History* (Cambridge: The little Lutterworth Press, 1992), p.

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<sup>1007</sup> Allen, 'Where special treatment means a pension for javelin throwers', p. 12.

Overall, the financial support and the provision of excellent facilities were regularly praised. The newspapers did not view the East German government's support as being solely financial, and thus stated that it 'cherishes [the athletes] with love and money.'<sup>1008</sup> This comment broadened the focus from purely the material side of sport to the appreciation of sport on a personal level. Moreover, it allowed British readers to identify with the GDR more easily, as they too came from a sport loving country.

### **6.3 Female athletes - the heart and face of East German sport**

The press' coverage focused strongly on the presentation of individual athletes. In particular, articles about individual female athletes and their successes were of great interest, and offered a more individuated image of the GDR. These athletes were not portrayed as 'diplomats in tracksuits' whose primary task was to represent the GDR, but rather as average, likable women who were incredibly successful in their chosen sport. Through the increased focus on the individual, it can be seen that the athletes' nationality and thus their connection to the GDR became less noticeable without completely vanishing. In particular, the press coverage of the figure skater Katarina Witt reveals the absence of this link. The East German figure skater Katarina Witt personified the modern sports hero beyond any political or national restrictions. The media coverage around Witt just represented the climax of the overall positive image of East German female athletes which was not restricted to an individual athlete, sport or period.

The press coverage of East German athletes was part of the general media sports discourse. Some features of this discourse will be briefly discussed as they determined important parameters for the coverage of East German athletes – in particular sportswomen. Several scholars have pointed out that female athletes have been seen to be determined more by their femininity and less by their physical capacity as might be expected for an athlete.<sup>1009</sup> In light of the East Germans' massive success, the press could not ignore the sportswomen's achievements. However, their portrayals also had to fit into the described patterns of reporting of female athletes and femininity. Therefore, a strong focus on appearance and femininity was another

<sup>1008</sup> Keating, 'Cherished by the state with love and money', p. 24.

<sup>1009</sup> Mary Jo Kane and Helen Jefferson Lenskyj, 'Media Treatment of Female Athletes: Issues of Gender and Sexuality', in *MediaSport*, ed. by Lawrence A. Wehner (London, New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 187.

component of the newspaper's coverage.<sup>1010</sup> The image of East German sport benefited from this representation of female athletes in the media as it allowed a more individualized perspective to be presented. The following section will show that the East German sportswomen were clearly described in gender specific terms, relating to their appearance, personal information, feelings and emotions. At the same time, the coverage also contained information about their strength and sporting ability without compromising their femininity. Moreover, it will show that with this focus, respective articles contributed to the previously established apolitical view of East German sport while showing a more personal side of the country through its athletes.

Whenever East German sportswomen participated in the Olympic Games or World Championships their reputation as medal candidates preceded them. British newspapers regularly reflected these successes, and moreover, they portrayed the female athletes as individuals with interests, a private life and emotions. Firstly, the depiction of sportswomen's appearance in this context will be analysed. The press coverage of figure skating events in particular contained such information. The 17-year old Christine Errath, for example, was described as a 'powerful little Berlin skater'<sup>1011</sup> while her colleague Annett Pötzsch was regarded as 'the new European ice queen', 'graceful as any doll from her Dresden hometown' and 'slender framed'.<sup>1012</sup> *The Times'* journalist John Hennessy observed that the pair skater Manuela Mager had developed 'into a mature young woman and she skates like one.'<sup>1013</sup> Although all of these examples come from the world of figure skating, attention to the appearance of sportswomen was not restricted to one sport. Thus, the female luger Ute Rührold, whose sport was hardly associated with attractiveness or grace, was described as 'glamorous'.<sup>1014</sup> Despite being 'tall' and 'muscular', the speed skater Karin Enke was also deemed to be 'an elegant sight'.<sup>1015</sup> *The Times* reported that the athletics superstar,<sup>1016</sup> Marita Koch, was 'an attractive medical student [...] long-legged, slim girl

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<sup>1010</sup> Margaret Carlisle Duncan and Michael A. Messner, 'The Media Image of Sport and Gender', in *MediaSport*, ed. by Wehner Lawrence A. (London, New York: Routledge, 1998), p. 181.

<sup>1011</sup> Howard Bass, 'Gold for Miss Errath', *The Daily Telegraph*, 04/02/1974, p. 20.

<sup>1012</sup> Howard Bass, 'Winter sports', *The Sunday Telegraph*, 30/01/1977, p. 35.

<sup>1013</sup> John Hennessy, 'Ice skating: Cousins's display puts the arena in a spin', *The Times*, 02/02/1978, p. 13.

<sup>1014</sup> 'Monika eases E. German grip', *The Daily Telegraph*, 06/02/1976, p. 30.

<sup>1015</sup> Howard Bass, 'Gold and record for Enke', *The Daily Telegraph*, 10/02/1984, p. 29.

<sup>1016</sup> Miller, 'David Miller's conclusions about the system', p. 29.

with gamin face, short brown hair, lively blue eyes, and a smile revealed unusually even teeth.<sup>1017</sup>

Moreover, articles often included information about the sportswomen's private lives, which further supports the view that these women were presented not only as athletes. It provided a sense of their everyday lives which was familiar to the readers. *The Times* covered the success of the 'bright-eyed, attractive' 16-year old swimmer Andrea Pollack, and added that the East German was 'keen on boys, books, her mum and her dad', something which probably could have been said about the majority of 16-year old girls in Great Britain as well as in the GDR.<sup>1018</sup> The press also reported on Marita Koch and Kornelia Ender's personal relationships,<sup>1019</sup> and Anett Pötzsch's parents.<sup>1020</sup> Additionally, the reader learned that many female athletes, such as Barbara Petzold, Ute Richter, Barbara Krause, still went to school or were university students.<sup>1021</sup>

The description of female athletes' feelings and emotional responses was one of the most important features in showing a personal side of these athletes, and a feature that could not be found in articles reporting about male athletes. Newspapers described them as laughing, crying, being nervous, enthusiastic or funny. These images demonstrated not only the reaction of the individual after a successful or unsuccessful competition, but more importantly they revealed the diverse personalities of the East German athletes. Moreover, this type of portrayals of the East German athletes contradicts any uniform image of the sportsmen. The swimmer Petra Priemer was regarded as 'not introverted, but needs coaxing into talking about herself'<sup>1022</sup>, while *The Guardian* described the figure skater Christine Errath as being 'enthusiastic, [one] whose delightfully expressive face conveys an infectious vitality.'<sup>1023</sup> After Errath only won the silver medal during the world championships in 1976, the press reported that

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<sup>1017</sup> Roger Berthoud, 'Marita Koch running nicely on time', *The Times*, 21/06/1978, p. 18.

<sup>1018</sup> 'A lynchpin in E German swimming machine', p. 11.

<sup>1019</sup> Pat Besford, 'Brinkley sixth as world record goes', *The Daily Telegraph*, 19/07/1976, p. 22; Pat Butcher, 'Miss Koch brings the World Cup to a dramatic finale', *The Times*, 07/10/1985, p. 29.

<sup>1020</sup> 'Dream for Poetzsch', *The Guardian*, 25/02/1980, p. 16.

<sup>1021</sup> 'Swimming: World record is gift for Miss Krause', *The Times*, 06/07/1978, p. 11; Howard Bass, 'Cousins lies fourth after figures', *The Daily Telegraph*, 19/02/1980, p. 30; Ken Mays, 'Tessa Sanderson fails to qualify', *The Daily Telegraph*, 25/07/1980, p. 28.

<sup>1022</sup> Norman Fox, 'Wilkie fails in gallant attempt to beat rival of long standing', *The Times*, 21/07/1976, p. 21.

<sup>1023</sup> Sandra Stevenson, 'Miss Errath again', *The Guardian*, 03/02/1975, p. 17.

'those blows would have disheartened a less strong and extroverted character.'<sup>1024</sup> Others were 'blushing prettily'<sup>1025</sup> or getting nervous,<sup>1026</sup> showed nerves<sup>1027</sup> and were portrayed as charming.<sup>1028</sup> In particular, the long jumper and runner Heike Drechsler was presented as the epitome of a highly successful but also emotional and extroverted sportswoman. *The Times* portrayed her as a person of 'exuberance, grace and wit',<sup>1029</sup> and also reported on occasions when 'she roared with laughter'<sup>1030</sup> or was 'scared'.<sup>1031</sup> *The Daily Telegraph* showed a similar picture of the East German who 'maintained her habit of breaking world records' and told its readers that she 'burst into tears when she was told of the new record by officials.'<sup>1032</sup> For *The Times*, Drechsler simply represented the 'East's human face'.<sup>1033</sup> Along with these positive and personal representations, the newspapers also contained very few negative accounts on the East German sportswomen. Those which do exist, however, can be regarded as marginal due to their limited quantity.

Despite the focus on information from outside the world of sport, the press did not ignore the impressive sporting prowess of the East German sportswomen. In particular, the representation of the East German athlete Renate Stecher as 'Amazonian' portrayed her as combining femininity with power in the tradition of the female warriors in Greek mythology.<sup>1034</sup> Furthermore, she was described as a 'conqueror' which extended her warrior-like image, but this time without a gender specification.<sup>1035</sup> Her strength and appearance prompted *The Guardian* to state that she 'looks more like a shot-putter than a sprinter.'<sup>1036</sup> Whilst this could be regarded as a negative comment, it was modified shortly afterwards through the explanation that 'She seems to follow the tradition of East German runners, combining grace and

<sup>1024</sup> Sandra Stevenson, 'World title is climax to 11 years' training', *The Guardian*, 08/03/1976, p. 15.

<sup>1025</sup> Berthoud, p. 18.

<sup>1026</sup> Sandra Stevenson, 'Enke sets record for gold', *The Guardian*, 10/02/1984, p. 22.

<sup>1027</sup> John Rodda, 'Looking for cracks in the East German fortress', *The Guardian*, 16/09/1988, p. 22.

<sup>1028</sup> 'Lovable "suicide cases"', *The Guardian*, 29/07/1975, p. 22.

<sup>1029</sup> Pat Butcher, 'True respect a touchstone of rival jumpers', *The Times*, 27/08/1987, p. 34.

<sup>1030</sup> Pat Butcher, 'Drechsler shows the East's human face', *The Times*, 27/02/1987, p. 31.

<sup>1031</sup> Pat Butcher, 'The first woman to clear 24 feet', *The Times*, 28/02/1987, p. 34.

<sup>1032</sup> Mays, 'Drechsler leaps to indoor record', p. 44.

<sup>1033</sup> Butcher, 'Drechsler shows the East's human face', p. 31.

<sup>1034</sup> John Rodda, 'Americans heal bruised pride - at expense of goodwill', *The Guardian*, 08/09/1972, p. 22; Rodda, 'East Germans present formidable test', p. 18; John Rodda, 'Scots silent over power show', *The Guardian*, 08/09/1973, p. 19.

<sup>1035</sup> Neil Allen, 'IAAF will press on with steroids inquiry', *The Times*, 08/03/1975, p. 15.

<sup>1036</sup> John Rodda, 'Renate Stecher regains speed and confidence', *The Guardian*, 20/06/1974, p. 23.

power.<sup>1037</sup> Other athletes such as the swimmers Andrea Pollack and Anett Fiebig were described as being ‘a head taller, bigger and infinitely stronger’ than their English competitors.<sup>1038</sup> These associations were not limited to swimming or athletics. Reports about more artistic sports such as figure skating also featured assessments of the sportswomen as ‘powerful’ or ‘enjoy[ing] a fight.’<sup>1039</sup> However, the press occasionally tried to avoid an overly masculine impression of the women also in light of their success. Therefore, newspapers added further explanation to weaken the idea. This was achieved through descriptions such as that ‘there is nothing masculine’ about her and that she is ‘proportionally long legged’.<sup>1040</sup> Moreover, *The Times* described the ‘elegance of a mature woman and the athleticism many man would envy’.<sup>1041</sup>

During the early to mid-1970s, the swimmer Kornelia Ender was not only highly regarded as an outstanding sportswoman, she was also admired to some extent as a ‘super star’.<sup>1042</sup> The press coverage of the swimmer, who *The Times* referred to by her nickname ‘Konny’<sup>1043</sup>, showed connection between the sportswoman and private person which consequently led to a positive representation of her. The use of the nickname in the articles introduced the sportswoman to the readers on a more personal level. Ender was depicted as ‘tall’<sup>1044</sup> and ‘strong’,<sup>1045</sup> yet also as ‘attractive’<sup>1046</sup>, a ‘golden girl’<sup>1047</sup> dressed in ‘a patterned blouse, and blue-green skirt’<sup>1048</sup> and someone who was ‘looking very much a girl’.<sup>1049</sup> Under the headline ‘Kornelia the Greatest’, readers learned that she took up swimming ‘eight years ago as a precaution against developing a carriage defect, but it was not until she began to enjoy holidays on the Baltic coast with her parents that she felt at home in the water.’<sup>1050</sup> Her relationship with the East German male swimmer Roland Matthes was

<sup>1037</sup> John Rodda, ‘Renate Stecher regains speed and confidence’, p. 23.

<sup>1038</sup> Pat Besford, ‘Sue Jenner & Sharron Davies gain bronze’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 19/08/1977, p. 24.

<sup>1039</sup> Bass, ‘Gold for Miss Errath’, p. 20; Christopher Brasher, ‘Olympic fire and synthetic ice’, *The Observer*, 07/02/1988, p. 46.

<sup>1040</sup> Brian Crowther, ‘Klaxon sounds a sour note for Wilkie’, *The Guardian*, 20/08/1974, p. 23.

<sup>1041</sup> John Hennessy, ‘Dancers make one proud to be British’, *The Times*, 08/02/1982, p. 17.

<sup>1042</sup> ‘Three more world records’, p. 23.

<sup>1043</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1044</sup> Pat Besford, ‘Kornelia tells of the “one that got away”’, *The Daily Telegraph*, 27/07/1976, p. 26.

<sup>1045</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1046</sup> Fox, ‘Back to the drawing board for US’, p. 15.

<sup>1047</sup> Besford, ‘Kornelia tells of the “one that got away”’, p. 26.

<sup>1048</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1049</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1050</sup> Brian Crowther, ‘Kornelia the greatest ever’, *The Guardian*, 24/07/1976, p. 14.



a further part of her profile.<sup>1051</sup> Ender's personal side was revealed in articles which showed her to be an emotional person, such as when 'she shed a tear of emotion'<sup>1052</sup> and when she 'broke the East German disciplinary rules by losing her temper.'<sup>1053</sup>

Overall, the image of East German sport and the East German athletes benefited from the general perception of female athletes in the media. Due to the stronger focus on personal information, emotions and appearance, the human side of the individual sportswomen became visible and they were not seen simply as East German winning machines. This gender specific coverage supported a stronger interest in the individual sportswomen as it facilitated identification with them for the readers. The next section focuses on the press coverage of Katarina Witt, the successful East German figure skater and her portrayal as an international sports star.

### **6.3.1 'Communism has never been so attractive'<sup>1054</sup> – Katarina Witt in the British press**

No other East German athlete, neither male nor female, caught the attention of the British press to the same extent as the figure skater Katarina Witt. The press coverage of the double Olympic champion exceeded that of any other athlete, both in quantity and quality. She was presented as 'incomparable'<sup>1055</sup>, a 'queen'<sup>1056</sup> and a 'skating star'.<sup>1057</sup> From 1981/82 onwards, the British quality press regularly reported on her success, the pinnacle of which being her Olympic victory in 1988. Witt's particular image was in line with the overall representation of the East German sportswomen. Her press coverage included similar elements as in the previously discussed coverage of other female East German athletes, such as appearance, personal background, feelings and her powerfulness as an athlete. However, the press coverage surrounding Witt had an even stronger gender-specific focus than that of any other East German sportswomen. On occasion, her sporting performances were almost fully replaced by

<sup>1051</sup> Hennessy, 'No medals for this political plunge', p. 11.

<sup>1052</sup> Norman Fox, 'Miss Ender breaks record with four gold medals', *The Times*, 23/07/1976, p. 8.

<sup>1053</sup> Norman Fox, 'How E German women succeed', *The Times*, 27/07/1976, p. 10.

<sup>1054</sup> Sue Mott, 'Loathe it, or love it: That was 1988 that was; the worst of times', *The Sunday Times*, 01/01/1989 <<http://www.lexisnexis.com/uk/nexis/docview/getDocForCuiReq?lni=41BC-OPX0-00YK-03JB&csi=332263&oc=00240&perma=true>> [accessed: 29/12/2011].

<sup>1055</sup> Michael Coleman, 'Forgiving fault of a 14-year-old', *The Times*, 29/01/1986, p. 20.

<sup>1056</sup> Ken Mays, 'Witt turns tables on Thomas', *The Daily Telegraph*, 16/03/1987, p. 33; Sandra Stevenson, 'Even at \$5m, show business is no business for the ice queen', *The Guardian*, 22/03/1988, p. 19.

<sup>1057</sup> Mott, 'Loathe it, or love it'.

other information about the 'star', Katarina Witt. Articles about Katarina Witt demonstrated how a focus on femininity supported a stronger humanisation of the athletes. However, the strong concentration on non-sport related issues and her status as international star contained the possibility that her connection to the state GDR disappeared. This missing connection between state and Witt could not be observed in article about other athletes. Articles concerning Katarina Witt stand out not only due to the sheer quantity of personal, non-sport related information found within them, but also due to the numerous descriptions of the effect of her performances on spectators, an element which is rarely found in relation to other athletes of the time. Witt did not just perform and win, she also 'charmed the thousands'.<sup>1058</sup> She 'won not only the judges' votes but also the spectators' heart'<sup>1059</sup> and she 'jitterbugged into hearts'.<sup>1060</sup> She not only enchanted<sup>1061</sup> but also and 'dazzled audiences with her looks and skating wizardry'.<sup>1062</sup>

No other East German sportswoman had ever been portrayed as so feminine or sexual. Metaphors such as 'a smile capable of melting icebergs'<sup>1063</sup> and 'doe-like eyes of Audrey Hepburn, a sensuous mouth and a dazzling smile'<sup>1064</sup> demonstrated the different style of her press coverage in comparison to other East German sportswomen. The comparison with the successful Hollywood icon Hepburn who was a symbol of beauty and femininity shows that Witt was perceived as a star first, a sportswoman second. This became even more apparent when her clothes, both on and off the ice, became a topic for the press. She was described as being 'chic in mauve cord pants, smoke grey sweater and lime shirt'<sup>1065</sup>, or to be wearing 'a model's high-fashion silk'.<sup>1066</sup> The press admired Witt with her 'film star's figure'<sup>1067</sup> and her 'elegance'.<sup>1068</sup> *The Sunday Times* journalist Sue Mott even claimed that 'Communism

<sup>1058</sup> Mays, 'Witt can end American dream', p. 37.

<sup>1059</sup> John Hennessy, 'European champions strike the first blow for Britain', *The Times*, 06/03/1981, p. 11.

<sup>1060</sup> Mays, 'Witt can end American dream', p. 37.

<sup>1061</sup> Michael Calvin, 'Ice queen toes the party line', *The Daily Telegraph*, 18/02/1988, p. 44.

<sup>1062</sup> Mays, 'Witt turns tables on Thomas', p. 33.

<sup>1063</sup> Calvin, 'Ice queen toes the party line', p. 44.

<sup>1064</sup> David Miller, 'Glamour girl of seductive charms', *The Times*, 18/02/1988, p. 45.

<sup>1065</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1066</sup> Dudley Doust, 'Witt bows out as the ice queen', *The Sunday Times*, 27/03/1988

<<http://www.lexisnexis.com/uk/nexis/docview/getDocForCuiReq?lni=41B4-YD70-00YK-046P&csi=332263&oc=00240&perma=true>> [accessed: 29/12/2011].

<sup>1067</sup> Miller, 'Glamour girl of seductive charms', p. 45.

<sup>1068</sup> Hennessy, 'Ice skating: Dancers make one proud to be British', p. 17.

has never been so attractive.<sup>1069</sup> Despite the connection to Witt's home country at this point, her geopolitical background was only of minor importance to the overall coverage. Witt was not depicted as an East German; she was an international phenomenon and was sold as such by the British press to its readers.<sup>1070</sup> Her development into an international star was of course not a coincidence, but rather it was supported by the East German administration. In Chapter Two, it was shown that the press recognised an increasing Westernisation in East German society. The East German government also understood that its youth was longing for Western stars while they increasingly withdrew from the official politics of the state.<sup>1071</sup> To win them back, a number of concerts with well-known stars such as Bob Dylan, Joe Cocker and Bruce Springsteen were organised.<sup>1072</sup> Creating their own star, one who would be much easier to control and use for the state's purposes seemed an attractive idea. Moreover, the combination of international success and popularity promised additional and always needed foreign currency, for example through Witt's participation in American figure skating shows.

Along with raising Witt's likeability, personal information in the sports coverage functioned to develop her image as a modern star who transcended political boundaries. Information such as that she was 'swamped with fan letters, many including marriage proposals',<sup>1073</sup> that she was taking acting classes,<sup>1074</sup> her visits to a night club in Havana<sup>1075</sup> and that her boyfriend was a jazz drummer supported her star image.<sup>1076</sup> In particular through the focus on her private life, Witt became almost interchangeable with any other western star, and not just from the world of sport, while her East German roots disappeared. As seen with other female athletes, she was also regularly portrayed as expressing her feelings and showing emotions, for example

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<sup>1069</sup> Mott, 'Loathe it, or love it'.

<sup>1070</sup> When *The Daily Telegraph* described Witt as 'carefully cultivated product of the East German sport system', the newspaper showed one of the few examples where the sportsperson Witt was connected to the East German sport system. In: Calvin, 'Ice queen toes the party line', p. 44.

<sup>1071</sup> Wolle, p. 113.

<sup>1072</sup> Marc-Dietrich Ohse, "'Wir haben uns prächtig amüsiert" Die DDR – ein "Staat der Jugend"?' in *Friedensstaat, Leseland, Sportnation? DDR-Legenden auf dem Prüfstand*, ed. by Thomas Großbölting (Berlin: Christoph Links Verlag, 2009), p. 86.

<sup>1073</sup> Brasher, 'Olympic fire and synthetic ice', p. 46.

<sup>1074</sup> Sandra Stevenson, 'Carmens colliding in common pursuit', *The Guardian*, 13/02/1988, p. 15.

<sup>1075</sup> Miller, 'Glamour girl of seductive charms', p. 45.

<sup>1076</sup> Doust, 'Winter Olympics'.

when she giggled 'like a naughty teenager',<sup>1077</sup> when she broke out 'with tears after a disastrous set of loops'<sup>1078</sup> or was 'bubbling with confidence'.<sup>1079</sup> Her charm was particularly stressed by all newspapers.<sup>1080</sup> This variety of emotions created the image of a multidimensional personality.

Despite the strong interest in the private person, Katarina Witt, the press did not ignore her sporting success. In the 1983 European Championships, *The Guardian* reported that 'her marvellously secure triple toe loop and faultless presentation easily won this section and moved her up to take the lead.'<sup>1081</sup> *The Times* confirmed that Witt had the 'technical expertise'.<sup>1082</sup> The newspaper suggested that she was maybe even 'the best woman skater who ever lived'.<sup>1083</sup> However, her sporting success of two Olympic gold medals and four World Championship titles was occasionally swept aside to make room for other topics connected to the figure skater. In stating that Witt 'skates like an angel',<sup>1084</sup> articles emphasised this as they judged her performance not by the relevant technical standards, but rather by her appearance. Overall, Witt's coverage represents the strongest argument against the representation of East German athletes as symbols of their country as suggested by scholars. The analysis has shown that the young woman was perceived as a highly likeable sporting star. However, it has also been revealed that along with her increasing popularity her portrayal as a national East German icon increasingly disappeared.

Given the often personal representation of female athletes, the news coverage of East German sportsmen will be briefly summarised to show the discrepancy in the portrayal of the two sexes. While newspaper readers received a multitude of background information about the sportswomen beyond their sporting success, they learned comparably little about their male counterparts. However, these qualitative differences between the press coverage of male and female athletes were not mirrored in their quantitative representation in the press. A quantitative analysis of *The Guardian's* coverage of East German athletes showed that the number of articles

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<sup>1077</sup> Michael Calvin, 'Witt elated as Thomas fails ultimate test', *The Daily Telegraph*, 29/02/1988, p. X4.

<sup>1078</sup> John Hennessy, 'Cruel twist of an ankle injury', *The Times*, 09/03/1983, p. 19.

<sup>1079</sup> Doust, 'Witt bows out as the ice queen'.

<sup>1080</sup> Christopher Brasher, 'A champion's tears', *The Observer*, 19/02/1984, p. 44.

<sup>1081</sup> Sandra Stevenson, 'Understudies star', *The Guardian*, 08/02/1983, p. 22.

<sup>1082</sup> John Hennessy, 'Ice Skating: Russian rivals try to lead Torvill and Dean a merry dance', *The Times*, 11/01/1984, p. 19.

<sup>1083</sup> John Hennessy, 'Latest in the line the best', *The Times*, 12/01/1982, p. 16.

<sup>1084</sup> John Hennessy, 'Thomas faces stiff opposition as Witt enchants US', *The Times*, 10/03/1987, p. 35.

was not gender dependent.<sup>1085</sup> The figure skater Jan Hoffmann was one of the few sportsmen the press presented in detail. During the 1970s, Hoffmann successfully represented the GDR in international competitions, and his constant rivalry with the British skater Robin Cousins supported his profile in the British press. Hoffmann was described as 'Mr Dependable', amiable and as a gentleman, albeit a little wooden and stiff.<sup>1086</sup> The successful pole-vaulter Wolfgang Nordwig was characterised as modest, reticent and the coolest and calmest of them all.<sup>1087</sup> Eckhard Lesse, a successful marathon runner, 'showed no sign of distress at the finish and no emotion on the long journey.' But these men remained an exception. In contrast to East German sportswomen, the emotional reactions of male athletes were almost entirely omitted. When *The Times* reported that the bobsledder Meinhard Nehmer 'permitted himself a rare smile' after winning his second Olympic title, the lack of emotions attached to the sportsmen was clearly visible.<sup>1088</sup> The only background information offered in these articles was the athlete's profession, yet this information contributed very little in gaining a closer personal understanding of the male East German athletes or to a sense of knowing them. Instead, the press focused much more strongly on their outstanding sporting success. Athletes were described as a 'skater of the highest class',<sup>1089</sup> 'all poise and precision',<sup>1090</sup> 'the world's best',<sup>1091</sup> 'a class of his own',<sup>1092</sup> and 'the best in the business'.<sup>1093</sup> A demonstrative negative perception of individual male athletes was not identifiable.

The subject of sport played a significant role in the overall press representation of the GDR. The extensive coverage together with a primarily very positive image of

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<sup>1085</sup> Between 1972 and 1989, the newspaper reported 69 times on the runner Marita Koch, 32 times on the swimmer Kornelia Ender, only 16 articles dealt with Kristin Otto, the most successful East German swimmer, but 77 articles contained information about the figure skater Katarina Witt. In contrast, 34 articles were published which mentioned the bobsledder Wolfgang Hoppe, while 48 articles reported on the figure skater Jan Hoffmann and 37 on the swimmer Roland Matthes. All named athletes achieved outstanding result in their respective field and belonged to the best in the world.

<sup>1086</sup> John Hennessy, 'Demanding task for Cousins against Mr Dependable', *The Times*, 12/03/1980, p. 10.

<sup>1087</sup> John Rodda, 'Nordwig is better than this modest figure', *The Guardian*, 30/06/1972, p. 21.

<sup>1088</sup> 'Nehmer out on his own', *The Times*, 25/02/1980, p. 8.

<sup>1089</sup> John Hennessy, 'Hoffmann passes test of technique and character to retain world', *The Times*, 08/03/1974, p. 15.

<sup>1090</sup> 'Nehmer out on his own', p. 8.

<sup>1091</sup> Rodda, 'Nordwig is better than this modest figure', p. 21.

<sup>1092</sup> 'Sport in brief', *The Times*, 15/01/1985, p. 24.

<sup>1093</sup> John Hennessy, 'How the medals will be won', *The Times*, 10/02/1988, p. 34.

the athletes and sport in general contributed to an essentially different representation of the GDR than in other contexts which have been discussed in previous chapters. In particular, the multitude of articles featuring the success of East German sportswomen represented a significant part of the overall coverage, as their success was presented alongside background information from outside of the world of sport. Therefore, these articles presented a much more personal side to the GDR than other discourses were able to. In light of the contemporary discourse surrounding sport in the GDR with its strong focus on 'doping', it is surprising that the topic was unable to substantially influence the image of East German sport. It has been demonstrated that neither the quantity of articles featuring doping allegations, nor their style were able to make a decisive difference. Another important feature of the press coverage of East German sport was the unimportance of political realities. The British press accepted the small country as superior to their own athletes and even suggested the country's role as a sport superpower next to the mighty Soviet Union and the United States. Sport journalism is subjected to other conditions than political journalism. As sport competitions take place world-wide, sport journalists depend less on individual governments to report on these competitions and the participating athletes. Therefore, this chapter has paid less attention to the question how the working conditions for journalists in the GDR have influenced the news coverage about East German athletes. That being said, the political authorities in the GDR were aware of the role their sportsmen played for the overall image of the country and supported the extensive coverage about their athletes as argued in the section about Katarina Witt. A more critical coverage is also restricted due to the nature of sport journalism. It primarily focuses on winners, especially in the case of foreign athletes. They are the ones who give interviews and attend press conferences after competitions and they are less likely as part of this positive experience to voice any criticism. Overall, this chapter has shown that it is of paramount importance to include the world of sports coverage into a comprehensible reflection on the British press' representation of the GDR.

## Conclusion

When looking through their morning newspaper, very few people realise how much these mere 40 pages or so can tell us about the time we live in, our views of the world and our priorities, and how much our choice of newspaper and its content can tell us about ourselves, the readers, and the society we are a part of. This thesis has exploited the ability of British newspapers as an historical source to provide a rich source of information, with the aim of discovering the British press' perception of the GDR between 1972 and 1989. Despite recently declining circulation, newspapers have always enjoyed great popularity in Britain and represent an important source for British citizens to gain information about foreign countries and they can therefore be considered as a significant contributor to the GDR's image during the 1970s and 80s. However, to date, there has been no relevant or in-depth analysis of the press discourse surrounding the representation of the East German state. This analysis has therefore made a first step in painting a picture of the image of the GDR in Britain and of revealing the potential of the press discourse to show a detailed picture and with it a multifaceted image of the country.

Before outlining the findings of the individual chapters in more detail, some general conclusions of the study will be presented. Firstly, claims that the press showed little interest in the GDR and even tended to ignore it cannot be substantiated by articles from the quality newspapers investigated. They reported on the GDR and a number of related topics on a regular basis. Secondly, the daily coverage enabled the press to present events as they developed rather than simply their final outcomes. Therefore, the press provided an insight into everyday opinions, ideas and misinterpretations which could be obsolete shortly afterwards. This additionally led to an evolving perception of the GDR. Thirdly, the press was able to react immediately to political changes and incorporate them into the news coverage. This ensured that readers were able to gain more up-to-date information about the current situation than through other discourses at the time. Fourthly, the high quantity of articles concerning the GDR also supported the recognition of individual elements of the GDR, such as the East German population and leadership, and the ability to perceive of them

as separate entities. These separate elements together form the overall image of the GDR. This multilayered image also contributed to a non-static perception of the GDR in Britain, as the individual elements were observed differently during the two decades. Furthermore, a one-sided and particularly negative image, as observed by several scholars, could not be detected.<sup>1094</sup> All of the findings of this analysis contradict the suggestion that there was a straightforwardly generalisable view of the GDR in the British press, whether positive or negative. Finally, the diverse political standpoints of individual quality newspapers has been identified as another decisive reason for the press' ability to provide a more comprehensive image of the GDR, and with it the ability to represent the range of opinions existing within British society. It can be summarised that *The Daily Telegraph* offered a generally more negative representation of the GDR than for example *The Guardian* or *The Times*. The conservative stance of the newspaper meant that it tended to ignore developments in the GDR and its involvement in on-going political affairs to a greater extent than other newspapers. Moreover, the articles found in *The Daily Telegraph* concerned with the GDR were more likely to present a critical view of the GDR. In particular, the press coverage of the political events in 1984, as described in Chapter Three, demonstrated this attitude. In contrast, *The Guardian* has been identified as the most GDR-friendly newspaper in this study, albeit without being entirely uncritical. Along with being the only British newspaper to employ a permanent correspondent in the GDR, the more left-leaning newspaper provided the greatest number of articles covering the GDR in a variety of contexts. During the early 1970s, it enthusiastically reported about the political opening of the country and its new political leader. *The Guardian* tended to offer a more positive assessment of the country, even when other newspapers had already adopted a more critical tone towards the GDR. *The Times* has been identified as another important source of information concerning the GDR. In a similar way to *The Guardian*, *The Times* regularly reported in detail about the GDR and developments connected to it. Despite the newspaper's increasingly conservative bias, particularly after the takeover of the newspaper by the Australian media mogul Rupert Murdoch, the press coverage of the GDR can be assessed as balanced and more GDR-friendly than that of *The Daily Telegraph*. *The Observer* and *The Independent* played only minor

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<sup>1094</sup> Golz, *Verordnete Völkerfreundschaft*, p. 159, Dennis, 'GDR Studies in the UK', p. 284; McCauley, 'British-GDR Relations: A See-Saw Relationship', p. 50.



roles in the overall study due to their providing a smaller text corpus as a Sunday newspaper (*The Observer*) and in the case of the latter's late founding in 1986. However, they provided valuable information in individual contexts and helped to provide a more comprehensive impression of the overall press coverage. *The Observer* regularly contained articles about the GDR and often displayed a critical view of the country. Finally, it has to be noticed that sports coverage represented an exception in this regard. The individual newspapers presented no other subject so uniformly as East German sport.

With reference to the methodological approach used in this thesis, it can be concluded that discourse analysis provided the most appropriate tool for this analysis as it does not perceive articles as isolated texts outside of their respective historical contexts, but rather considers them within their social and historical context.

Following on from these general findings, more specific results of the individual chapters will be outlined. Chapter One provided significant insights into the production of news from and about the GDR. It has been established that journalists were an important factor in determining the image of the GDR in the British press. Moreover, it has been outlined how the GDR had tried to influence the work of foreign journalists and which obstacles journalists had to face in the GDR. How these working conditions had potentially influenced the press coverage has been discussed in the individual chapters. In this context, it should be noted that newspaper articles were shaped by many influences as described in the introduction and Chapter One. Therefore, a direct correlation between certain restrictions and individual articles can only be assumed. Despite regular problems, primarily caused by the East German authorities, the journalists were able to portray a more detailed image of the country. In particular, their personal engagement and interests strengthened the daily coverage.

Chapter Two offered an initial analysis of the press coverage and focused amongst others on the role of East German identity in the press coverage. It has been established that the press' perception of the GDR was very structured and more nuanced than many commentators both before and after the *Wende* have suggested. The press distinguished between individual aspects of GDR, such as its leadership, and its society. Moreover, it was noticeable that newspapers regularly associated the East German population with 'German' attributes, and in this context they were

represented as positive. This positive assessment was in stark contrast to the negative use of the same attributes when applied to West Germans. As a result this representation of a specific 'German' character formed to a certain degree a distinct East German identity, albeit a very different one from the socialist East German identity the GDR leadership intended to establish.

Chapter Three investigated the representation of the GDR in foreign policy through the perspective of the British press. The chapter focused on the press' representation of East German-Soviet relations and the German Question. In particular, it highlighted the advantageous ability of the press to report daily from the GDR if necessary, and it was therefore able to cover minor events and present events as they developed, something which other discourses could not provide. By examining the press coverage during 1984 and 1987, it has been demonstrated that the press immediately incorporated political changes by showing the GDR's shifting ability to manoeuvre politically.

The opposition in the GDR and its representation in the press was the subject of Chapter Four. It has been established that the press was unable to show a realistic view on the opposition scene in the GDR during the 1970s and 80s. That being said, it did provide a fuller picture of the subject than other discourses had done before 1989. By comparing the press coverage during the mid-1970s with that of the early 1980s, it has been shown that the ways in which the opposition was represented changed over time. In particular, during the 1980s, the subject was of great interest for the British press. Newspapers regularly reported on events in the GDR and were therefore able to portray the developing grassroots groups to a much large extent. This strong focus even led to an overestimation of such groups and the apparently significant role of the Protestant Church in this context. The chapter has pointed out how the working conditions in the GDR, such as the willingness of parts of the opposition to cooperate with the press, has contributed to this focus. However, this misjudgment by the press led to a stronger focus on East German society and with it, the addition of new facets to the overall image of the GDR. Moreover, the focus on grassroots opposition in the GDR helped to overcome the earlier restricted and more artificial view of the country.

Chapter Five discussed the Wall, the often-used symbol of not only the division of Germany, but of the entire Cold War. Noticeably during the 1970s and 80s, the Wall

and the border did not have a dominant or highly negative impact on the GDR's image in the British press and was merely one subject amongst several related to the GDR. Despite the temporarily negative press coverage in 1974 (due to the involvement of British citizens in the escape attempts of East Germans), these particular articles had no long-term impact on the coverage of the Wall and neither led to an increased negative image of the GDR in the British press, nor a stronger focus on the Wall. Instead, in the following years, a general acceptance of the current situation by the press can be perceived. Therefore, it can be suggested that today's symbolic value of the Wall is not the result of a long-term development and rather substantially increased during the *Wende*-month in 1989 when images of it went around the world.

Finally, Chapter Six focused on the press coverage of East German sport and East German athletes. Sport played a significant role in the press' coverage of the GDR as it formed a large proportion of the GDR-related articles in the British press. It has been established that the press primarily depicted a very positive view of East German athletes and sport. This very positive perception differed from the representation of the GDR in other contexts, as discussed in previous chapters, and demonstrates why sports coverage should be included within a comprehensive analysis of the East German image. In particular, the very personal reports about East German sportswomen contributed to this positive image. Notably, this positive image was not affected by any extensive press coverage of doping which now dominates the historical discourse surrounding East German sport. Moreover, the analysis has shown that in contrast to the political realities, the GDR was positively perceived as a major player in the world of sport alongside the Soviet Union and the United States, which were often able to surpass British athletes.

Despite an increasing interest in British-East German relations during recent years, scholars have so far paid little attention to the perception of the East German state in Britain. This thesis aims to highlight the importance of the daily press in widening our understanding of the past, which in recent years has too often been ignored. With its aim to provide an overview of nearly two decades, this study is intended as an initial step in the discovery of the GDR's image in Britain, and it is hoped that more work will follow.

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