

INTRODUCTION

Disempowering a Dictatorship

Media and Consumer Culture in East Germany

This book focuses on an intriguing paradox of East German society and the overall dynamics of the cultural Cold War. On the one hand, the German Democratic Republic (GDR) was a totalitarian regime that attempted to impose a monopoly as well as strict control over its media and culture and frequently asserted these ambitions with brutal efficiency and a complete disregard for the resulting casualties. On the other hand, especially in the 1970s and 1980s, the regime led by the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands [SED]) condoned an ever-greater influx of especially Western popular and consumer culture that directly contradicted and undermined its own vision of a new and unique socialist culture. This paradox created a remarkably hybrid international popular culture in East Germany, especially during the late socialist era. In addition to its own unique cultural expressions, imports and influences from the West stood side by side with Soviet and Eastern European media and consumer products, all of which daily vied for the attention of the East German public. This diverse popular culture and “consumer socialism” stands in stark contrast to the popular notion of a closed-off, provincial socialist GDR state where all the power rested in the hands of the party elite.¹

Even when it came to its own media, the SED leadership was never able to impose a tight political control or a strict homogeneity among official East German media expressions. What is often referred to as the “politically staged public sphere” (politisch inszenierte Öffentlichkeit) of the East German dictatorship developed cracks and frequently had to bend to overwhelming popular demand or the irrepressible intrusion of an internationally mediated culture. As in all of Europe, East and West, the GDR regime could not escape an unmistakable and seemingly un-

stoppable trend toward entertainment programming in the postwar decades—nor the erosive commercializing effects of this cultural trajectory. Likewise, in the spirit of engagement with the world at large and its own propagated openness to a variety of political perspectives, East German officials tolerated a tightly controlled satirical magazine, slightly varying editorial perspectives of newspapers, annual events like the international Leipzig Book Fair, as well as the introduction of video and computer games in the 1970s and 1980s. In addition, despite the fear of Stasi surveillance and recriminations, ordinary East Germans smuggled, duplicated, and hand-copied prohibited or hard-to-get books, albums, and other cultural products. Because of the variety of media sources and cultural expressions, East Germans became experts at reading between the lines, perennially skeptical of both Eastern and Western political news and adroit at forming their own opinions as well as individualized cultural preferences within the confines of a circumscribed surveillance state.²

As this introduction indicates, my book squarely sides with historians who have emphasized the limits of the totalitarian East German regime, while not overlooking the dictatorial practices and aspirations of the SED leadership throughout the existence of its socialist state. As Konrad Jarausch has emphasized, “The GDR [was] a contradictory system of both repression and every-day normalcy.” Despite the steady expansion of the Stasi network of informants as well as the expulsion of political opponents and cultural critics, for example, there remained both direct and indirect ways for the East German population to talk and push back against the attempts by the SED regime to dictate and impose its exclusive political, economic, and cultural priorities. And East Germans pushed back in diverse ways, both large and small, from submitting complaints through the officially sanctioned petition process and participating in oppositional subcultures to shopping or exchanging currency on the black market and many more. As Andrew Port has aptly put it, despite the highly controlled GDR public sphere there was a surprising and widespread willingness to voice criticism in East Germany despite the intimidation and terror of Stasi surveillance: “There was no deafening silence of the lambs; in fact, many bleated quite vigorously.” The East German people thus had limited influence and agency in their society—and not just in 1953 or the last few years before the fall of the Berlin Wall.³

Eigen-Sinn—translated as “gumption” or “a dogged and creative self-reliance”—and *Meckerkultur*—a culture of constant grumbling and dissatisfaction—were well-known and distinct aspects of East German

society and could at times work as useful safety valves for the GDR regime. But individualized low-level dissent could also swell into a chorus of loud semi-public criticisms, which did get the attention of the SED leadership and repeatedly forced it into accommodations and course directions. Significantly aided by broader political, economic, and international developments, this constant pressure and criticism by the East German people produced limited but cumulatively significant results, which usually materialized not immediately and abruptly, but influenced their society and culture more like the proverbial bending of the arc of history. At best most East Germans only extended reluctant loyalty to their government, tolerating its political dominance and patronizing control rather than embracing it. And this grumbling acceptance implied a certain bargain. Sensitive to popular opinion and the potential for large-scale protests like the 1953 uprising, East German politicians knew that the stability of their regime was dependent on meeting the basic needs of the population and demonstrating gradual progress in the standard of living for ordinary people. The numerous crises these negotiations and protests provoked allowed East Germans—together with broader international developments—to steadily alter the course of East German history and change the nature of the socialist society and culture in ways that were subtle, but ultimately defining. Therefore, this constant churning of popular disinterest, dissonance, or—more rarely—outright dissent on the part of GDR citizens and groups produced long-term results that significantly contributed to the steady crumbling of the Berlin Wall and the eventual collapse of the East German regime.⁴

This book focuses on one specific arena of this larger bargain and a set of central questions: How did the popular demand for and increasing influence of Western mass media and consumer culture in the 1970s and 1980s contribute to the fall of the Berlin Wall? And equally significant, why did the East German government not just condone but increasingly embrace and showcase Western culture over its own socialist expressions in the late 1970s and 1980s? Clearly, allowing more Western cultural influences and consumer products into the GDR was not what the East German political elite desired or envisioned, since it directly challenged its own rule as well as cultural vision and often reflected poorly on East Germany in the always present comparison with its archenemy, the West German government (Federal Republic of Germany [FRG]).⁵

Meeting the demand for Western culture and consumer products on the part of the East German public was one of the key concessions that the SED leadership felt it had to make. In fact, negotiating Western

media and consumer culture in East Germany is a prime example of the continuous accommodations between the East German leadership and its population. However, especially in the 1980s the GDR government no longer just condoned but frequently embraced and privileged Western media and consumer culture over its own socialist alternatives. This was done in a desperate attempt to preserve audiences for its media outlets to be sure and placate an ever-increasing popular demand. But just as important, these Western imports frequently secured financial resources needed to fund the continuation of Erich Honecker's consumer socialism. In fact, as this study argues, it was the dynamic and intricate interplay between popular demands, economic and fiscal crises, and the inexorable influences of Western media and consumer culture that cumulatively had a decisive impact on disempowering the GDR dictatorship during the late 1970s and 1980s and the eventual fall of the Berlin Wall.

Grudging accommodation was a common feature on the part of the majority of the GDR population, but it also reflected one of the main governing strategies of the GDR leadership. For the SED party officials, this accommodation most commonly came about as the result of popular pressure, against the increase of prices or the preference for Western films, for example, which was filtered up through the East German surveillance network. These course directions were made reluctantly by the GDR government, usually when no other options seemed available. It was generally a forced accommodation of spurts, stops, and reversals, carried out in an inconsistent manner. It should also be clear that this was a very uneven and asymmetrical relationship, in which the state always held the overwhelming power and did not meet the population halfway. But with an eye toward the unrest in Poland and other Eastern European countries in the 1970s and 1980s, the SED leaders certainly understood that their power had limits and that a certain quid pro quo with the people was necessary, especially when it came to meeting the basic needs of the population and securing a steadily increasing standard of living. As Erich Honecker frequently stated during the economic crises of the late 1970s and 1980s, the mood of the people had to remain as positive as possible, which meant that significant reductions in consumer goods or subsidies had to be avoided because of the potential for large-scale protests or an uncontrollable popular backlash.⁶

In fact, this policy of steady and often reluctant accommodations by the GDR leadership became far more explicit and binding when Honecker replaced Walter Ulbricht as the general secretary of the SED in 1971 and took control of the Politburo in East Germany. The focus

of his new initiative, “the policy of social and economic unity”—often shortened to the “Main Task”—was to increase consumer goods as well as to improve the standard of living of the GDR population. In 1973, as part and parcel of this new beginning and as a sign of increased openness and more direct competition with the West, Honecker and his advisors also lifted the prohibition against watching West German television. In 1974 the Politburo allowed East Germans with access to Western currency entry to Intershops; up until 1973, these East German luxury stores had been reserved for visitors and guests of the GDR. All of this amounted to a new departure toward consumer socialism, developed in the heyday of East Germany’s newfound confidence after the international recognition of the country had been achieved in the wake of the Vietnam War, détente, and the implementation of *Ostpolitik*. Introduced in the early 1970s, Honecker’s “Main Task” was a policy filled with hope and built on the assumption that East Germany’s economy would further improve, that its government would stabilize, and that the GDR would establish itself as a normal country, an accepted socialist neighbor to Western countries and a sovereign actor in the international sphere.⁷

As a myriad of studies have highlighted, Honecker’s vision did not come to pass. One of the central reasons for its failure was that East Germany was caught in an increasingly vicious cycle of indebtedness and economic crisis mode by the late 1970s already. To be sure, the SED government reaped some immediate successes in the early to mid-1970s, achieving greater political stability and slightly more acceptance by its own population in the few short years after the implementation of the “Main Task” policies. Yet the advances were purchased through loans from Western creditors, which increased as the 1970s progressed. Honecker refused to reverse course, despite the dire warnings of his economic advisors. By the early 1980s, East Germany’s debt had spiraled out of control, driven by the grand bargain that Honecker had struck with the East German population in the early 1970s. But the GDR economy was unable to sustain it for very long, especially as the oil shocks of this era and the global recession began to take their toll on the East German economy as well. While one might have been able to find a respectable GDR economist who genuinely believed that East Germany could outcompete the capitalist FRG economically in the late 1960s, it would have been impossible to find such a brave soul a decade later. Honecker’s priority for consumption and the expansion of social policies over production and technological innovation, implemented in the 1970s and stubbornly defended in the 1980s, ultimately reduced the

long-term opportunities for the next generation and sharply limited the economic prospects for the future development of the GDR by the mid- to late 1980s.⁸

However, it should be clear that there was no single factor or single development that caused a historical event such as the fall of the Berlin Wall. Numerous developments contributed to it. The GDR was a weak country from the start, a "rump state" as some historians have referred to it, which despite its eventual recognition by the international community always remained subservient to and dependent on the Soviet Union. Moreover, because of its close proximity to its powerful West German neighbor, East Germany was locked in an unenviable and asymmetrical daily political, economic, and cultural Cold War battle. There is also no doubt that the economic central planning at the heart of the communist enterprise handicapped and significantly weakened East Germany just as it did the other countries in Eastern Europe. In addition, the political leadership of the Socialist Unity Party was frequently aloof and became more disconnected from the population as time went on, and the top-down political approach of governing allowed for no significant chances for meaningful reforms or reversals. Finally, the East German regime always lacked real legitimacy and was only grudgingly tolerated by its people. The leadership's hold on power was tenuous and needed to be shored up by terror and intimidation as well as a generous welfare state and increasingly rising living standards. When this bargain was no longer feasible by the late 1980s, increasing segments of the East German population balked and took to the streets. The audacious mass protests in the last years of the 1980s, which were supported by the churches as well as other oppositional groups, further weakened the hold of the GDR regime on power and emboldened a greater number of GDR citizens to voice their demands for significant reforms more vocally in the "peaceful revolution" of 1989.⁹

This book will put the cultural reasons for the crumbling of the Berlin Wall center stage. Certainly, numerous individual studies have shown that the pervasive influence of Western culture and the daily consumer temptations from West Germany in particular contributed to the weakening of the East German state. This study integrates this diverse scholarship into a broader framework and an overall synthesis. The first monograph of its kind, it analyzes the major East German mass media as well as the GDR consumer culture side by side in a comprehensive and comparative manner. It surveys the political and cultural journey of the GDR under the Honecker administration (1971–89), paying particularly close attention to the dynamic interplay between the popular

demands, intensifying economic crises, and cultural policy decisions by the SED leadership during the last two decades of East Germany's existence. What emerges rather clearly is that the East German mass culture was primarily driven not by the preferred vision and priorities of the SED government, but rather by the unrelenting pressure of the majority of the East German people as well as international developments beyond the control of the East German government. The main argument of this book is that the popular demand for and influence of Western media and consumer culture forced the SED leadership into a series of grudging and fateful accommodations that were intended to ensure its survival in the late 1970s and especially during the 1980s. Instead their combined cultural impact further weakened the East German government's political legitimacy as well as its economic stability and cumulatively became one of the root causes for the GDR's ultimate demise in the late 1980s.

Since this study focuses primarily on the last two decades of the GDR and highlights developments related to popular culture, it is also important to recognize a partial generational slant inherent in this analysis. While all GDR citizens were affected by the cultural influences and changes, much of the ensuing discussion applies most directly to those referred to as the third generation of East Germany, generally those born in the 1960s and early 1970s, who were supposed to carry the socialist torch into the twenty-first century. As many scholars have highlighted, this generation had little interest in taking over this leadership role. Instead, they are frequently characterized as "the distanced generation" (*die distanzierte Generation*) or "the unintegrated generation" (*Generation der Nicht-Mehr-Eingestiegenen*). They were quite different from the first and second generation in the GDR. The first or "founder generation" (*Aufbaugeneration*) were the true believers, many of them born in the late 1920s and early 1930s, who built socialist East Germany and stayed in the 1950s when there was still an easy way to leave. The second generation, referred to as the "integrated generation" (*integrierte Generation*), "born into the GDR" in the 1940s and early 1950s, largely followed the lead of their elders, despite the setbacks of the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961 and the disappointment of the violent dismantling of reform efforts such as the Prague Spring in the late 1960s. For those born in the 1960s and early 1970s, by contrast, the appeal of socialism and their willingness to integrate themselves had dwindled significantly. They were more likely to embrace Western culture more thoroughly as well as to resist the regime in both subtle and sometimes overt ways than the previous two generations.¹⁰

The reluctant embrace of Western-style consumption and media developments discussed above was not unique to the GDR socialist government. The leadership in every Eastern European country, including the Soviet Union, adopted and adapted to the dominant modes of Western-style consumer society and the overpowering impact of rapidly expanding media models and technologies during the late socialist phase, especially from the 1960s toward the end of the communist era in Europe. Moreover, the national responses to the dual processes of expanding consumption and mediatization in Eastern Bloc countries created diverse and hybrid media and consumer cultures, each of which was uniquely embedded in its national context. Likewise, the tacit agreement or social contract between national socialist governments and their populations, which promised greater access to consumer goods, higher living standards, and enjoyment of Western media, became—to varying degrees—a hallmark of all Eastern Bloc countries in the decades of the late socialist era. This implied bargain is reflected in developments all across Eastern Europe since the 1960s, from the steady expansion of Western-style department stores in communist countries to the emphasis on “goulash communism” in Hungary and the consumer-focused policy adjustments in the Czechoslovakia after the crushing of the Prague Spring in 1968. The Westernizing trends and cultural adaptations of the media in the Soviet Union during the last few decades prior to 1990 reflect a similar trajectory. All of them highlight the powerful influences of modern media and consumer cultures and especially the inexorable pull that the “Imaginary West” had on the respective populations. Every socialist government was painfully aware of the inherent ideological contradictions involved in these cultural and consumerist negotiations as well as the potential ideological and political damage they inflicted. But simply denying access to such attractive influences or remaining irresponsive to the popular desires and demands they created was not an option for any government in Eastern Europe.¹¹

While a comprehensive and systematic transnational analysis of the many similarities and differences of Eastern European countries is well beyond the scope of this study, what becomes very apparent through a selective comparative perspective is that no Eastern Bloc country experienced these influences and their seductive attractiveness more powerfully than the East German leadership and its population. Because of the shared language, culture, and history with West Germany as well as its unique geographical location, the GDR could never escape the head-to-head rivalry and direct encounter with the capitalist media and consumer culture. Despite its high living standard compared to its Eastern

European neighbors, the comparison that mattered to its population was the material culture, economic standards, and cultural trends in the FRG. This daily exposure heightened the significance and impact Western influences had in the GDR and made this competition all the more urgent and ultimately dire.

The series of adjustments and accommodations analyzed in this study highlight the difficult choices and dilemmas that the SED leadership faced in terms of responding to the Western media and consumer culture. To be sure, this never led to a wholesale takeover of GDR culture by Western influences, but the consequences were systemic and deeply troubling nevertheless. In response to the constant churning of consumerist and media demand and fearing public dissent and perhaps even large-scale unrest in the late 1970s and the 1980s, the GDR government eventually negotiated itself into a corner and significantly reduced its control through a series of disempowering accommodations by the mid- to late 1980s. In the process of allowing ever more Western cultural and consumer products into East Germany, the SED leadership ultimately forfeited the cultural vision for its popular media and consumer culture.

Just as important, by the early to mid-1980s GDR officials no longer simply condoned Western imports and influences, but actively began to privilege and showcase capitalist cultural expressions and products over its own GDR counterparts in a desperate search for public approval, ratings, or economic resources. For example, GDR film officials loosened their restrictions against certain Western film imports in the 1980s because they knew that these imports, especially Hollywood blockbuster films, would attract larger audiences and produce much-needed revenue for its struggling film industry. Likewise, East German television planners were well aware that imported Western films and TV adaptations slated for GDR television would find wide approval among its population and drive up ratings. In a similar vein, SED cultural planners could be certain that allowing a Western rock band to appear in concert on East German soil bought a significant, though temporary, portion of goodwill from its alienated youth. Finally, those in charge of trade and commerce in the GDR understood only too well that East Germans were willing to spend far more on imported Western consumer goods and would part with their safely guarded Western currency to attain these highly desired products, which added desperately needed hard currency to the East German coffers.

As this comparative analysis highlights, this compensatory, and to a large degree economically motivated, importation of Western media

and consumer culture escalated in the 1980s, when increased ratings and public approval as well as economic gain and profits, rather than ideological priority or vision, drove the decision-making process of the East German leadership. The ultimate political and economic failure of the SED regime was closely intertwined with its failures in the areas of popular culture and consumption, then, and eventually led to the widespread adoption, adaptation, and embrace of Western influences, products, and models. And while this enormous shift from an ideologically based media and consumer strategy in the late 1960s and early 1970s to a predominantly popularity- and profit-based approach in the late 1970s and 1980s reflected a broad trend in all Eastern Bloc countries, it will be up to broad-based syntheses of specific Eastern European countries to ascertain whether the argument advanced in this book applies to them with the same dynamic force and to the same degree.

The opening chapter ("Successful Media Campaigns in East Germany in the 1960s and 1970s: The Vietnam War and the 1972 Olympics") sets the stage for the main part of the book. It is important to remember that Erich Honecker started his tenure at the helm of the SED government in 1971 with a lot of wind at his back. This chapter focuses on the promising early period of the Honecker era and highlights two of the most successful developments of the early 1970s: the GDR's prominent role in the anti-Vietnam War activities of the late 1960s and early 1970s and its spectacular successes at the 1972 and 1976 Olympics. Both of these international achievements and their accompanying media campaigns significantly enhanced the status and legitimacy of East Germany both abroad and at home by the mid-1970s.

The succeeding chapters of this book focus on the fairly sudden shift from the guarded optimism of the early 1970s to the sudden and quickly deteriorating public mood in the GDR in the late 1970s and analyze this transformation through the lens of the cultural policies and developments in East Germany from the mid-1970s to the late 1980s. In these comparative chapters, the analysis focuses on the major mass cultural arenas in East Germany: film, television, youth radio and popular music, as well as consumer culture. In all of these areas, East German political and cultural officials began the 1970s still hopeful that the goal of establishing an independent and culturally vibrant socialist alternative that compared favorably with that of the capitalist West could be accomplished. Buoyed by the political tailwinds of the early to mid-1970s, which included America's loss in Vietnam as well as political and

economic crises in both the United States and West Germany, they envisioned a robust GDR society and culture that could hold its own in the ideological and cultural competition with the West. By the late 1980s, this vision was lying in shambles. Plagued by an aging and increasingly inefficient economic and technological infrastructure as well as strong political headwinds, SED policy makers had to make one painful accommodation after another. And each step of the way, they had to concede a bit more of their cultural home turf to the relentless drive of the Western media and consumer culture as well as the reach of ever more powerful international influences.

Chapter 2 (“Fade Out: Hollywood Movie Imports and the Cultural Surrender of the GDR Film Control in the 1970s and 1980s”) focuses on the importation of American feature films in the GDR in the 1970s and 1980s and the cultural, economic, and political repercussions that arose in their wake. Roughly ten US films were imported to the GDR every year. This chapter explores which American movies were chosen for import and how they were advertised and received, as well as analyzes their influence on the overall cultural policies of the GDR. What becomes apparent rather quickly is that ideological priorities were receding into the background by the late 1970s and early 1980s. Instead the key questions in the selection process became focused on their potential to deliver much-needed revenue for the struggling East German film industry. Throughout the 1980s, GDR cultural officials reluctantly undertook one accommodation after another, which ultimately left its film policy a bundle of contradictions. Left with no alternatives, the SED leadership lost control over its film policy and programs during the 1980s and culturally capitulated to the combined forces of East German popular demands, economic pressures, and political fears, as well as the relentless expansion of a Western, especially Hollywood-dominated, international film culture.

After its rise to media dominance in the 1960s, television was seen as the primary and most vital of all media by the East German political and cultural officials. Its cultural and political significance was unchallenged and far superseded that of the film industry, as chapter 3 argues (“The Westernization of East German Television in the 1970s and 1980s”). Even before the prohibition against West German television viewing was officially lifted in 1973, GDR officials constantly calibrated their own broadcasts as well as their TV strategy along the lines of the programming and initiatives of its West German rival. In the 1970s especially, East German cultural planners and TV producers premiered several new family series, which proved to be very popular with their

general TV audiences. Yet despite such innovations, the outcome for the GDR television industry was similar to the movie sector: ultimately, East Germany's television planners lost control over the industry due to relentless viewer demands, increasingly tight economic budgets, and international developments beyond their control.

As chapter 4 ("Fighting against All Odds: GDR Popular Music and Youth Radio in an International Context") shows, East German youth radio and, closely related to it, popular music were particularly exposed to the continuous confrontation with the West because of the quickly multiplying Western options that East Germans had at their fingertips. With a turn of the dial, they could tune in to Cold War broadcasting stations like Voice of America, Radio Free Europe, or the popular Berlin-based Radio in the American Sector (RIAS). By the late 1970s and especially in the mid-1980s, private, commercial Western radio stations added their channels to the already plentiful mix that penetrated deep into East Germany. The other major strand of this chapter focuses on the diverse impact of popular music and its related subcultures in the GDR. Rock, pop, and punk music forever altered the cultural life in the GDR as well as the identity formations of a large number of East German youth. As this chapter emphasizes, GDR officials in charge of popular music and youth radio were faced not only with Western competition and the unyielding demands of their youth, but also with the structural transformations of an international media environment against which their initiatives and responses ultimately proved ineffective.

Consumer culture and consumption were highly politicized in the former East Germany, just like sports and popular culture. Chapter 5 ("Western Consumer Culture or Bust: Intershops and East German Consumption Policies in the 1970s and 1980s") turns its attention to this critical area of the contest between the socialist East and the capitalist West. The SED party leadership was painfully aware of the constant comparisons in the marketplace and the public debate that they engendered. It was not a theoretical debate, but a perennial part of everyday life and conversations. It mattered greatly which products one could buy and which ones were out of reach. Likewise it mattered greatly how products tasted, looked, or felt because it was a daily reflection of the economic and political system that had produced them. At the heart of this lure for Western consumer products were Intershops, the hard-currency stores where those with Western money could fulfill their long-delayed consumer desires among a cornucopia of imported products. Intershops are a good barometer of the economic and political developments of East Germany as well as the consumerist aspirations

of the government and its citizens in the last two decades of the GDR. They also reflect the desperate degree to which the SED leadership would go in order to buy legitimacy from a perennially disgruntled population. Just as importantly, against the best economic advice, the SED's accommodations to meet East Germans' rising consumer expectations led to continuous overspending, which mortgaged East Germany's future and further divided an already stratified and deeply demoralized East German population. The ensuing consumer policy, which the East German government pursued in the late 1970s and 1980s, was politically and economically ruinous, and it was one of the root causes for the repeated economic crises during these two decades as well as the ultimate demise of the GDR in 1989.

When East Germans finally came face-to-face with the Western mass media and consumer culture as well as the political and economic realities that accompanied them after the fall of the Berlin Wall, they soon realized that the West was not as golden as they had imagined it to be. The epilogue, entitled "Out with the Old—in with the New? *Wende*, *Ostalgie*, and the Serpentine Unification," analyzes some of the most significant changes, transformations, and adjustments that occurred in the cultural and consumer landscapes of the former East Germany from 1990 through the early twenty-first century. For many East German citizens, the early euphoria and consumerist buying frenzy receded rather quickly when the security of the socialist welfare state was stripped away and as their lives were turned upside down with the arrival of a capitalist market economy. In addition, the jubilant celebrations and the chant "We are one people!" (*Wir sind ein Volk!*) faded into history as the welcome of East Germans in the reunified republic soured. In fact, Germans on either side of the collapsed Wall soon referred to each other as *Ossis* and *Wessis*, terms that emphasized demarcation rather than unification. The return of a more somber public mood in the 1990s and early 2000s included the emergence of *Ostalgie*, a nostalgic desire to return to the familiar, material landscape of the socialist lifestyle and a shared past in the eastern regions of Germany. As many West Germans were wondering if the price of reunification was too high, the majority of East Germans struggled to adjust to the disorienting and life-altering transformations of the post-socialist period and resented what they saw as their second-class citizenship in the new Berlin Republic. All of these turbulent post-1989 twists and turns are reminders that German unification followed an unexpectedly serpentine path and that the often invoked "inner unity" of Germany still remains a work in progress.

Notes

1. On the diverse and often contradictory media culture in East Germany, see, for example, Franziska Kuschel, *Schwarzhörner, Schwarzseher und heimliche Leser: Die DDR und die Westmedien* (Göttingen: Wallstein Verlag, 2016); Wolfgang Mühl-Benninghaus, *Unterhaltung als Eigensinn: Eine ostdeutsche Mediengeschichte* (Frankfurt and New York: Campus Verlag, 2012); Stefan Zahlmann, ed., *Wie im Westen, nur anders: Medien in der DDR* (Berlin: Panama Verlag, 2010); Michael Meyen and Anke Fiedler, eds., *Die Grenze im Kopf: Journalisten in der DDR* (Berlin: Panama Verlag, 2010); Michael Meyen, *Einschalten, Umschalten, Ausschalten? Das Fernsehen im DDR-Alltag* (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2003); Kurt R. Hesse, *Westmedien in der DDR. Nutzung, Image und Auswirkungen bundesrepublikanischen Hörfunks und Fernsehens* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 1988); and Simone Barck, Christoph Classen, and Thomas Heimann, "The Fettered Media," in *Dictatorship as Experience: Towards a Socio-Cultural History of the GDR*, ed. Konrad Jarausch (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 1999), 213–39.

Hubertus Knabe, *Der Diskrete Charme der DDR: Stasi und Westmedien* (Berlin: Propyläen, 2001), and Historische Kommission der ARD, ed., *Die Ideologiepolizei: Die rundfunkbezogenen Aktivitäten des Ministeriums für Staatssicherheit der ehemaligen DDR in der DDR sowie in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (Frankfurt am Main: Redaktion ARD Jahrbuch im Deutschen Rundfunkarchiv, 2008), among other works, highlight the surveillance and propaganda imperatives of the GDR state very effectively.

For other intriguing studies on everyday GDR culture, see among others David F. Crew, ed., *Consuming Germany in the Cold War* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2003); Judd Stitzel, *Fashioning Socialism: Clothing, Politics, and Consumer Culture in East Germany* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2005); Katherine Pence and Paul Betts, eds., *Socialist Modern: East German Everyday Culture and Politics* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 2008); Eli Rubin, *Synthetic Socialism: Plastics and Dictatorship in the German Democratic Republic* (Chapel Hill: North Carolina Press, 2008); and Esther von Richthofen, *Bringing Culture to the Masses: Control, Compromise and Participation in the GDR* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2009).

2. In addition to Meyen's study *Einschalten, Umschalten, Ausschalten?*, which highlights East Germans' skeptical attitude toward both East and West German political news sources, see also the various articles in Zahlmann's anthology *Wie im Westen, nur anders*: Stefan Zahlmann, "Medien in der DDR: Medienproduktion und Medienrezeption als kulturelle Praktiken," 9–34; Michael Meyen and Anke Fiedler, "Totalitäre Vernichtung der politischen Öffentlichkeit? Tageszeitungen und Kommunikationsstrukturen in der DDR," 35–59; Sylvia Klötzer, "Im Rahmen des Unmöglichen: 'Konkrete Sat-

ire' im *Eulenspiegel*," 60–78; Patricia F. Zeckert, "DDR-Leser im Schlaraffenland: Westliteratur, Buchmesse und alternative Medienkultur," 96–118; Knut Hickethier, "Das Fernsehen der DDR," 119–30; Klaus Arnold, "Musikbox mit Volkserziehungsauftrag: Radio in der DDR 1," 307–25; Boris Kretzinger, "Pac-Man vs. Hase und Wolf: Computer- und Videospiele in der DDR," 378–384; and Christoph Classen, "DDR-Medien im Spannungsfeld von Gesellschaft und Politik," 385–407. For an example of the illegal copying of prohibited literature, see Thomas Rusch's interview with Stefan Zahlmann, "Ich war kein Oppositioneller. Ich war Kopierer," 86–95. For a particularly insightful discussion of the commercializing impact of an international media culture, finally, see Edward Larkey's study, *Rotes Rockradio: Populäre Musik und die Kommerzialisierung des DDR-Rundfunks* (Berlin: LIT-Verlag, 2007).

3. Primary among the historians who have challenged the view of the GDR as first and foremost "the second German dictatorship" are Mary Fulbrook, Konrad Jarausch, Martin Sabrow, Thomas Lindenberger, Alf Lütke, Ina Merkel, and Andrew Port. For the quotes, see Konrad Jarausch, "Beyond the National Narrative: Implications of Reunification for Recent German History," in "Contemporary History as Transatlantic Project: The German Problem, 1960–2000," supplement, *Historical Social Research/Historische Sozialforschung* 24 (2012): 340; and Andrew I. Port, introduction to *Becoming East German: Socialist Structures and Sensibilities after Hitler*, ed. Mary Fulbrook and Andrew I. Port (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2013), 16. For other works analyzing the limits of the GDR dictatorship, see Alf Lütke and Peter Becker, eds., *Akten. Eingaben. Schaufenster. Die DDR und Ihre Texte: Erkundungen zu Herrschaft und Alltag* (Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1997); Jarausch, *Dictatorship as Experience*; Thomas Lindenberger, ed., *Herrschaft und Eigensinn in der Diktatur: Studien zur Gesellschaftsgeschichte der DDR* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 1999); Ina Merkel, *Utopie und Bedürfnis: Die Geschichte der Konsumkultur in der DDR* (Cologne: Böhlau Verlag, 1999); Mary Fulbrook, *The People's State: East German Society from Hitler to Honecker* (New Haven and London: Yale University Press, 2005); Andrew I. Port, *Conflict and Stability in the German Democratic Republic* (Cambridge and New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007); and Martin Sabrow, ed., *Erinnerungsorte der DDR* (Munich: C. H. Beck, 2009).
4. The term *Eigen-Sinn* originates with Alf Lütke; see especially his article "'Helden der Arbeit'—Mühen beim Arbeiten. Zur missmutigen Loyalität von Industriearbeitern in der DDR," in *Sozialgeschichte der DDR*, ed. Hartmut Kaeble, Jürgen Kocka, and Hartmut Zwahr (Stuttgart: Klett-Cotta, 1994), 188–213. The translation here is from Eli Rubin, "The Trabant: Consumption, Eigen-Sinn, and Movement," *History Workshop Journal* 68, no. 3 (2009): 28.

In the introduction to his edited volume, Christoph Kleßmann talks about a "tacit social contract between the SED government and the East German people": *The Divided Past: Rewriting Post-War German History* (Oxford and New York: Berg, 2001), 14–15; see also Thomas Lindenberger's essay in the

same volume: "Everyday History: New Approaches to the History of Post-War Germanies," 43–67.

For other authors highlighting these contrarian activities of the GDR population, see Konrad H. Jarausch, "Care and Coercion: The GDR as Welfare Dictatorship," and Burghard Ciesla and Patrice C. Poutrus, "Food Supply in a Planned Economy: SED Nutrition Policy between Crisis Response and Popular Needs," both in Jarausch, *Dictatorship as Experience*, 47–69 and 143–62, respectively; Merkel, *Utopie und Bedürfnis*; Philipp Heldmann, *Herrschaft, Wirtschaft, Anoraks: Konsumpolitik in der DDR der Sechzigerjahre* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 2004); Stitzel, *Fashioning Socialism*; Fulbrook, *The People's State*, introduction; as well as Christoph Boyer, "Stabilisation of Power through Social and Consumer Policy in the GDR," in *Totalitarian and Authoritarian Regimes in Europe: Legacies and Lessons from the Twentieth Century*, ed. Jerzy W. Borejsza and Klaus Zimmer (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2006), 209–27.

5. For an insightful discussion highlighting Honecker's unwillingness to cut social services or increase prices, see Andreas Malycha, *Die SED in der Ära Honecker: Machtstrukturen, Entscheidungsmechanismen und Konfliktfelder in der Staatspartei 1971 bis 1989* (Oldenburg: De Gruyter, 2014), especially part 4, "Der 'Konsumsozialismus der Honecker-Ära'; and Alexander Burdumy, "Reconsidering the Role of the Welfare State within the German Democratic Republic's Political System," *Journal of Contemporary History* 48, no. 4 (2013): 872–89. See also von Richthofen, *Bringing Culture to the Masses*, and Mark Landsman, *Dictatorship and Demand: The Politics of Consumerism in East Germany* (Cambridge, MA, and London: Harvard University Press, 2005), on the central role of culture and consumption for the policies of the SED regime.
6. Malycha sums up Honecker's credo with the following quote: "When the people work, they also need to be able to afford things. Decisive cutbacks cannot occur because it will only lead to unpredictable disruptions." Malycha, *Die SED in der Ära Honecker*, 245–46. The compensatory nature of the GDR social policies is also discussed in Alexander Burdumy, *Sozialpolitik und Repression in der DDR: Ost-Berlin, 1971–1989* (Essen: Klartext Verlag, 2013). On the growth of oppositional groups in the 1970s, see Christoph Kleßmann, "Die Opposition in der DDR vom Beginn der Ära Honecker bis zur polnischen Revolution 1980/81," in Enquete-Kommission, *Möglichkeiten und Formen abweichenden und widerständigen Verhaltens und oppositionellen Handels, die friedliche Revolution im Herbst 1989, die Wiedervereinigung Deutschlands und das Fortwirken von Strukturen und Mechanismen der Diktatur* (Frankfurt am Main: Suhrkamp Verlag, 1995), 1080–1109.
7. See Gert-Joachim Glaesner, ed., *Die DDR in der Ära Honecker: Politik—Kultur—Gesellschaft* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1988); Malycha, *Die SED in der Ära Honecker*; and Stefan Wolle, *Die heile Welt der Diktatur: Alltag und Herrschaft in der DDR, 1971–1989*, 3rd ed. (Berlin: Ch. Links Ver-

- lag, 2009). The more upbeat and positive public mood in the early 1970s is discussed in Mary Fulbrook, *Anatomy of a Dictatorship: Inside the GDR, 1949–1989* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), chapter 5, and reflected by the surveys discussed in Heinz Niemann, *Meinungsumfragen in der DDR: Die geheimen Berichte des Instituts für Meinungsforschung an das Politbüro der SED* (Cologne: Bund-Verlag, 1993), parts 4 and 5.
8. One of the best and most succinct analyses of the GDR economy is provided by André Steiner, *The Plans That Failed: An Economic History of the GDR* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2010). Steiner discusses the positive outlook and optimistic internal assessment in the late 1960s on pp. 122–23; on the 1970s, see chapter 5. See also Hartmut Berghoff and Uta Andrea Balbier, eds., *The East German Economy, 1945–2010: Falling Behind or Catching Up?* (New York: German Historical Institute and Cambridge University Press, 2013), especially part 3.
 9. For studies that address the causes for the fall of the Berlin Wall, see among others Jonathan Grix, *The Role of the Masses in the Collapse of the GDR* (London and New York: Macmillan, 2000); Klaus-Dietmar Henke, Peter Steinbach, and Johannes Tuchel, eds., *Widerstand und Opposition in der DDR* (Cologne, Weimar, and Vienna: Böhlau Verlag, 1999); Achilleas Megas, *Soviet Foreign Policy towards East Germany* (London: Springer, 2015); Oliver Bange and Gottfried Niedhart, eds., *Helsinki 1975 and the Transformation of Europe* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2008); Steiner, *The Plans That Failed*; Wolle, *Die heile Welt der Diktatur*; and Patrick Major, *Behind the Berlin Wall: East Germany and the Frontiers of Power* (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2010).
 10. For great insights into this generational divide in the GDR, see the excellent anthology of essays edited by Annegret Schüle, Thomas Ahbe, and Rainer Gries, *Die DDR aus generationengeschichtlicher Perspektive: Eine Inventur* (Leipzig: Leipziger Universitätsverlag, 2006). For a good overview of the generational breakdown in the GDR and its terminology, see especially two articles in this collection: Bernd Lindner, “Die Generation der Unberatenen: Zur Generationsfolge in der DDR und ihren strukturellen Konsequenzen für die Nachwendezeit,” 93–112, and Karin Bock, “Politische Sozialisationsprozesse in Drei-Generationen-Familien aus Ostdeutschland,” 377–98; Bock uses the term “Nicht-Mehr-Integrierte” for those born in the late 1960s and early 1970s. In his article “Alltägliche Mediennutzung in der DDR: Rezeption und Wertschätzung der Ost- und West-Medien in unterschiedlichen Kohorten,” 247–70, Michael Meyen demonstrates the changed attitude of the third generation toward the use of Western media very convincingly. In addition, see Mary Fulbrook’s focus on the founder generation in this same anthology: “Generationen und Kohorte in der DDR: Protagonisten und Widersacher des DDR-Systems aus der Perspektive biographischer Daten,” 113–30. Her extensive study focusing on a generational approach toward German history in the twentieth century, *Dissonant Lives: Generations and Violence*

through the German Dictatorships (Oxford and New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), adds further breadth as well as depth to this overall analysis.

11. For just a few excellent analyses of these developments, see Paulina Bren and Mary Neuberger, eds., *Communism Unwrapped: Consumption in Cold War Eastern Europe* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2012). Of particular interest here are the introduction by the editors as well as Paulina Bren's article on post-1968 Czechoslovakia, "Tuzex and the Hustler: Living It Up in Czechoslovakia," 27–48; Patrick Hyder Patterson's discussion of the expansion of department stores, "Risky Business: What Was Really Being Sold in the Department Stores of Socialist Eastern Europe?," 116–39; and the article by Tamas Dombos and Lena Pellandini-Simanyi on consumption in late socialist Hungary: "Kids, Cars, or Cashews? Debating and Remembering Consumption in Socialist Hungary," 325–350. See also Paulina Bren's book, *The Greengrocer and His TV: The Culture of Communism after the 1968 Prague Spring* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2010). Another outstanding set of articles is compiled in the anthology edited by David Crowley and Susan E. Reid, *Pleasures in Socialism: Leisure and Luxury in the Eastern Bloc* (Evanston, IL: Northwestern University Press, 2010), as well as in the collection of essays edited by Annette Vowinckel, Marcus M. Payk, and Thomas Lindenberger, *Cold War Cultures: Perspectives on Eastern and Western European Societies* (New York and Oxford: Berghahn Books, 2012). For the development of the Soviet media and culture, see Kristin Roth-Ey's excellent study *Moscow Prime Time: How the Soviet Union Built the Media Empire That Lost the Cultural Cold War* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 2011), as well as Alexei Yurchak's influential book, *Everything Was Forever, Until It Was No More: The Last Soviet Generation* (Princeton and Oxford: Princeton University Press, 2005); the term "Imaginary West" is borrowed from his study (chapter 6).