THE EAST GERMAN OPPOSITION

THE EAST GERMAN OPPOSITION:

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND THE CHURCH IN THE GDR

AND THE NEW BUNDESLÄNDER

By

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ABSTRACT

This thesis focuses on the roles played by the Protestant Church and several social and political movements in the communist GDR and throughout the East German transition to democracy. Where many other studies give only cursory treatment to these social forces, this thesis argues that they played a valuable role in building the foundation on which a democratic civil society could develop.

The thesis further argues that these church-based movements were similar in several important ways to New Social Movements in Western Europe. Moreover, the close, and at many times conflictual, relationship between the Protestant Churches and the social movements created under their umbrella, had an important influence on the ideology and structure of the variety of NSMs which developed. The lack of serious consideration given movement (and round table) proposals to build an egalitarian, ecological, and democratic socialist state in the GDR is explained by a number of factors: the marginal character of the movements themselves, their own internal weaknesses and at times overly moralistic approach, the speed with which events unfolded in the fall of 1989, and the great lack of legitimacy of the GDR itself, as a state that was never a nation. Finally, the thesis sheds new light on the reasons how and why this particular religious institution was able to play such a pivotal role in an atheistic state.

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INTRODUCTION

This thesis looks at the role that social movements and the East German Protestant Church were able to play under a repressive state-socialist regime, at the centre of a mass democratic movement, and in the first few years of post-communism in their "new" state. Analysis of history has dismissed the contribution of these forces too quickly. "Forgetting them," says Vladimir Tismaneanu, "abandoning the sense of solidarity that had emerged at that time, is to deny East Germans the right to be proud of their short-lived but nevertheless noble and historically effective moments of revolt."[1] Although these different groups only won a very small margin of support in the 1990 elections, they were able to contribute to a smoother democratic transition at the outset by providing the roots of a nascent civil society in that country. Unification with the FRG, a state with a strong civil society of its own, resulted in what many Easterners felt was a colonial situation, and one which left them with no history of their own. Even for that reason alone, a closer look at how East German social movements and the church were able to rise to such visible symbols of democracy in the fall months of 1989, and then disappeared so quickly from public discourse, is worth pursuing.

Many studies of the varieties of transition in Eastern and East Central Europe have

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[1] Taken from a debate published in *Partisan Review* (Fall 1995), on the question, "How Can the New Germany Defuse Its Neighbors' Fears?", p. 615.

been conducted over the past few years. Although social scientists differ on questions of what should come first, most agree that market reforms, political institution building and the creation of a democratically organized civil society are all necessary. By addressing the many difficulties encountered over the past few years as simply "problems of unification", research on the East German case has tended to fall short in coming to terms with that country's recent communist past.[2] Although few would propose that the Eastern Bundesländer are in danger of reverting to any regime other than a democratic one, questions of transition need to be posed if the continuing cultural divide between the two Germanies is to be explained.

Central Argument

What this thesis aims to demonstrate is that the wholesale adoption of the institutions of West German democracy did not preclude the necessity of building a civil society in Eastern Germany. The social movements that congregated in major cities across the GDR under the umbrella of the Evangelical Church had as their primary goal the ability to live in a society that was "civil", in other words, free from state control in their personal lives, and that would ensure the ability to play a role in decisions that seriously affected their lives. In essence, they sought the bottom-up democratization of East German society. Building a nascent civil society in the GDR was probably a precondition for a successful

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[2] Andreas Pickel, "The Jump-Started Economy and the Ready-Made State", *Comparative Politics* (April 1997), 211.

revolution, and a large part of this task was accomplished by the activists studied here.

New social movement theory contributes to an understanding of the characteristics of the key protest groups in GDR and society. The strong ties between the East German peace and environmental movements and the Protestant Church, whether the groups themselves were Christian or not, demonstrates an interesting factor that created in the GDR a different, more moralistic but also more moderate brand of NSM activism. The institutional characteristics of these movements foreshadowed no easier path for eastern groups than for their western counterparts in the desire to take part in governing the new state. But the particularities of the East German transition left little opportunity for these NSMs to develop beyond their protest group origins.

The social movements that developed in the GDR were certainly marginal, but they were able to avoid more explicit discrimination by maintaining ties to the church, and by working within the limits that that association entailed. This relationship was a frustrating one at times for many of those not wishing to have their views filtered through the church. At the same time, it also likely helped movements gain a broader public - both because it was more palatable for nervous citizens to attend church functions than to participate in highly illegal gatherings, and also because the church provided them with a ready-made institutional structure, including access to church presses, and also provided ideas and symbols with a particular legitimacy. Both church and social movements fostered a reformist vocabulary, advocating the creation of a true people's state which was both more socialist and more democratic. The resulting variation of new social

movements was undeniably influenced by its relationship with the church.

Sources and Methodology

The research undertaken here draws largely upon a broad variety of English and German secondary sources. No genuine primary research was conducted, due to the difficulty of including travel time in a one year thesis. However, several sources allowed for a type of primary research, namely two collections of interviews with movement and church activists, as well as several edited collections of material which included various statements from church synods and declarations of the citizens movements. Emerging empirical material on the East German transition to democracy has provided a solid base for the research conducted here as well.

At times the temptation is great to try to convince one's reader that the topic of study is not only relevant, but that its influence was more profound than it may have been in reality. It is hoped that the latter is not the case with this study. Specific details have sometimes been difficult to establish, leading to the necessity for personal assessment and assumptions, all of which were substantiated whenever possible by either material drawn from interviews conducted by other academics, or from a variety of sources. The need to extrapolate from limited empirical support was a particular challenge in chapter four of the thesis, as little recent research has been conducted on church social and political involvement in the new Bundesländer, or on the fate of the former East German social movements in recent years. Some questions would be well served by being revisited

further down the road, when surely a clearer perspective on the outcome of German unification and its impact can be gained.

Thesis Outline

For a number of reasons, it was felt that a chronological organization would best suit this thesis topic. Following the presentation of the theoretical approach, the chapters correspond to three different phases - the 'old regime phase', which focuses on the 1970s and '80s, the transition phase, which involves the pivotal years of 1989-90, and the post-unification phase, which of course looks at experiences over the past 6-7 years.

Chapter One lays out the theoretical framework of the thesis. The argument is put forward that in several important ways, the movements which appeared under the church's umbrella in the 1970s and '80s, and persisted in some cases into the post-communist period, resembled new social movements (NSMs). Because this approach was seldom associated with movements outside the advanced industrialized democracies of the West, several reasons are given for its applicability in the East German case. These include not only the accessability of West German television, but also the better fit of NSM ideals within the church community. The chapter then goes on to demonstrate how the characteristics of this type of movement influenced one eventual outcome: not only were these groups ill prepared for power, they were also uncomfortable with the idea of power. Finally, transitions to democracy in general are discussed, and it is suggested that perhaps some of the particularities of NSMs are a difficult fit in these times of extreme instability.

The movements active in the campaign to democratize the institutions of the GDR did not inspire enough trust in the people to achieve the grassroots democracy that they were seeking, as time ran out on the process of gradual transformation and round table democracy.

Chapter Two looks first at how the Protestant (Evangelical-Lutheran) Church's internal organization, its community involvement, and its own history and theology, not to mention its unique relationship with the Ulbricht and Honecker regimes, all contributed to its becoming the shelter for an East German opposition. The chapter then proceeds to analyze the varieties of social protest which grew out of this environment. Special attention is paid to the peace and environmental movements, whose goals and origins, tactics and strategies share some similarities with NSMs in the West. These activists would go from more thematically-oriented, consciousness raising work to a more action-oriented approach when activists realized that the regime would only respond to their demands with arrests and one-way tickets to West Germany. Increased tensions between the church leadership and the movements organized at its grassroots would eventually push activists to move outside of the church and into the open, laying the foundation for the first public demonstrations.

Chapter Three assesses the role that these movements and the church played in the critical events just prior to and during the Fall of 1989 and Winter of 1990. The chapter is divided into two phases, the first corresponding to the period leading up to the critical breakdown of the party's monopoly on power, and the second involving the months

leading up to the first free elections in March. Both Church and movements are looked at separately in the context of these two periods, albeit with less discussion of the church in the latter period due to its declining political role at that time. In the first section, a closer look at the achievements attributed to the church demonstrates that this institution's continuing calls for open dialogue at a time when this was still illegal, and when the exit flood was beginning, made particular churches (namely, Leipzig's Nikolaikirche) a focal point for the revolution. It also led to the church's being credited with the peaceful nature of the revolution. Just prior to this period, a new type or political organization had developed - the *Bürgerbewegungen*, or citizens' movements. Visibly rooted in the traditions of the social movements existing on the margins of the church in the 1970s and '80s, groups like New Forum and Democracy Now wanted to create a citizens' democracy of sorts in the GDR, with institutions such as the Central Round Table serving as an example of how this could be brought about. As public opinion shifted in favour of unification, time ran out on the process of "democratization from below", and the citizens' movements quickly became associated with the old regime that they had sought to reform.

The post-unification period, Chapter Four demonstrates, provided those former church and social movement activists with serious new challenges which questioned their existence as independent institutions. In the case of first the church, and then the former East German citizens' movements, the chapter demonstrates that each was incorporated into a corresponding Western organization - the church into the EKD, and *Bündnis 90* (the grouping of movements which made the jump to official party status) into a

partnership with the West German Greens. The new social movement focus of the East German opposition in the period leading up to 1989 facilitated its integration into the German movement sector following unification, and the East German Evangelical Church's membership in the EKD prior to 1961 and continuing ties thereafter, made its reentry into the EKD a logical conclusion. The years of separation led, however, to unexpected problems in bringing these different institutions together. The result has been a 'normalization' of their political role.

Chapter 1:
The Theoretical Approach

In the immediate aftermath of the revolutions in Eastern and Central Europe many answers were suggested as possible explanations. The unpredicted and rapid crumbling of the entire Soviet bloc were explained as due in part to economic reasons - primarily the unsustainable character of communist economies at that time. Others stressed the importance of Gorbachev's liberalization through *glasnost* and *perestroika* in the USSR and the belief that that government had stepped back as a military force that would back up Eastern regimes in cases of domestic upheaval. The mass waves of people who unexpectedly took to the streets to push their own governments to step down in countries such as Czechoslovakia and the German Democratic Republic was a factor also remarked upon and later studied.

What would lead so many citizens to collectively rise up when the threat of reprisal by the state was so strong and had prevented them from doing so before? There are a number of reasons that have been given in response to the question "why 1989?", and those will not be contested to any great extent here. Gorbachev's reforms had raised expectations of a softening of regime stances throughout East-Central Europe. Also, the economic weakness of those states helped to erode further the legitimacy of regimes already weakened by their inability to deal with obvious cracks in the system such as widespread pollution, poor working conditions and crumbling infrastructures. In the

GDR, the huge increase in people demanding the right to emigrate and those flooding across the Hungarian border without state sanction made inaction on the part of the state an unattractive option. The appearance of alternative political and social groups, even while only involving a very small percentage of the people in their early stages, clearly demonstrated the erosion of the regime's monopoly on truth and power.

Anthony Oberschall has written that when a regime's legitimacy is denied, "public discourse compels the recognition of other groups and institutions as legitimate representatives of the people and the nation."[3] This is exactly what happened in the GDR, as well as in Czechoslovakia and Poland: the public looked toward the people that had organized in protest of the state's human rights abuses and disregard for the environment - the isolated pockets of civil society that had emerged over the previous two decades.

In retrospect, the speed with which a democratic opposition was created and pushed to the forefront of the mass mobilization in East Germany foreshadowed the quick decline of these new political formations just months later. But the ability of movements already in existence, and almost exclusively in the Protestant church, to 'frame' the revolutionary mass movement and provide leadership and common themes for its protests was certainly influential. Without discounting the significance of the other factors

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[3] Oberschall, "Opportunities and framing in the Eastern European revolts of 1989", in D. McAdam, J. McCarthy and M. Zald, eds., *Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements* (Cambridge University Press, 1996), 100.

mentioned, it is the role of social movements in the 1989 revolution[4] that will be the focus of theoretical consideration in this thesis.

Despite the keen interest of some scholars in the small but influential opposition groups in the Soviet Bloc, social movement theorists had largely left these countries untouched prior to 1989-90.[5] Only now is it possible to begin to see some of the outcomes of the revolution in terms of electoral participation and the public's willingness to use protest as a political tool. Civil society is no longer repressed by the state in these countries, and the existence of a culture in which social activism is broadly accepted is likely to distinguish a more stable democracy.

By outlining the central characteristics associated with new social movements, this chapter will begin by explaining why few social scientists working in this area attempted to apply this approach to movements that arose in East-Central Europe during the 1970s and '80s. It will then make a case for applying this theory to the social movements and issue groups that grew up within the Protestant church in the GDR. By arguing that what made the new social movements in the west "new" also distinguished these East German groups - even from most other dissident movements in East-Central Europe - the chapter will establish a framework for analyzing the form, content, and outcomes achieved by those

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[4] Despite the continuing debate amongst academics over whether or not what occured in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union really was a 'revolution', that term will be used here. Perhaps Timothy Garton Ash's term "refolution" - implying a combination of reform and revolution - is more fitting, but revolution is less cumbersome. Furthermore it is felt that the radical, sudden, and unexpected change that occured is indeed revolutionary.

[5] Karl-Werner Brand wrote that "Bis 1989 spielten osteuropäische Bewegungen für die Diskussionen der NSB-Forschung keine oder nur eine marginale Rolle". See: Brand, "Massendemokratischer Aufbruch im Osten: Eine Herausforderung für die NSB-Forschung", in *Forschungsjournal Neue Soziale Bewegungen* (1990), 9-16.

social movements active within the church prior to, during, and following German unification.

A further point that differentiated East German social movements from those in the rest of East-Central Europe, aside from Poland, was their location: the early peace movement in the GDR as well as the first environmental groups, which would later serve as an opposition to the Honecker regime, grew out of church congregations and around church synods. The ability of the church to play this role is one of the central interests of this research, and a subject that has not been adequately understood.

No single theory exists that can neatly explain the role both of the church and of social movements in the East German transition to democracy. Because of the ways in which environmental, peace and human rights groups that developed under the umbrella of the church resembled NSMs, and because of the role that these groups, as institutions of civil society, played in aiding democratization in that country, both new social movement theory and the transition to democracy literature, with an emphasis on the notion of civil society, will be used here. With an interest in explaining the religious aspect of new social movements in the GDR, this study will address what Christian Smith calls "a curious neglect"[6] in recent studies. This is not to say that these were solely, or even primarily, religious movements, but rather that many of the ideas embraced by activists had religious roots, and faith was in some cases a decisive factor. The literature on civil society as well

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[6] Smith, " Correcting a Curious Neglect, or Bringing Religion Back In", in Smith's *Disruptive Religion: The Force of Faith in Social Movement Activism.* (New York: Routledge, 1996).

as Protestant theology itself can aid in explaining the church's role as the meeting place for social movements and the democratic opposition in the GDR.

An alternative approach that can also aid in a study such as this is the literature on the role of ideas in politics. What united activists and average citizens, Christians and non-Christians, was in many cases a very few central but unifying symbols in the form of words like "peace", "Schwerter zu Pflugscharen" (or 'swords into ploughshares' - a phrase so politicized by church peace groups and the youth that wore it on their sleeves that the state criminalized it), and "we are the people", the rallying cry of the mass movements in late-1989. Furthermore, the inability in many cases of the social movements studied here to develop a new language less focused on the reform socialism of the past undermined their hopes of winning support for a 'third way' and contributed to their subsequent failure to win electoral support.

While focusing on East Germany in particular, the theory will attempt to include comparative references where it is appropriate so that the context of a continental shift is not lost.

SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND DEMOCRACY

For a number of reasons, social movements, organized and otherwise, have long been associated with the breakdown of authoritarian regimes. They have been characterized as demonstrations of discontent and public anger - the emotional and active demonstration of

disapproval or support for any number of different things. More recently, and in the German case in particular, movements have been associated with democratization in both the capitalist West and state-socialist East. For example, in West Germany in the 1970s and East Germany in the late 1980s, environmental movement activists challenged the established state-society relationship by seeking a greater degree of citizen participation in decision-making processes.[7] Movements are also connected to a nation's political culture, affecting what types of forms they take, what Sidney Tarrow calls "contention by convention."[8] They also are most likely to arise where a well established democratic civil society is firmly in place. But such a civil society did not exist in countries like Czechoslovakia, the GDR and Poland. Rather, a kind of nascent civil society had been growing in all three of these countries since the 1960s and 70s in the form of underground groups and movements.

It is important to note that the existence of groups of citizens who in any way set themselves up outside of state authority was very risky in all of East-Central Europe. The GDR was by no means an exception to this fact, and indeed was known to be one of the most dutiful of Soviet satellites. For that reason it is not useful, nor even 'fair' to participants in movements in a country such as the GDR, to compare the mobilization capabilities of movements in East and West and measure success by those standards. Few citizens made a move to participate in anything which would jeopardize their jobs, their

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[7] See: Carol J. Hager, "Environmentalism and Democracy in the Two Germanies", *German Politics* (April 1992), 95-118.

[8] Tarrow, *Power in Movement* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 18.

vacations, or their children's education. East Germany was in no uncertain terms a "niche society": people withdrew and tried to lead private lives, while still going through the motions of participating in the compulsory parades and state celebrations. There was little room for outward difference.

What is known of social activism in East-Central Europe is a history of repression. The East German workers' uprising of June 1953 was quickly put down by East German and Soviet bloc troops. The Hungarian revolt of 1956 was also repressed by Soviet troops. And the infamous Prague Spring in Czechoslovakia, led mainly by intellectuals and reformists in the Party, ended in even greater repression by the state with the help of Soviet tanks. Finally, Poland's Solidarity movement had a turbulent history of advances and state restraint.

The underground movements that existed in the GDR were not always well known in the West or in their own country for that matter. They were seldom studied due to the paucity of empirical information available on these illegal groups, but were also poorly understood by the majority of the East German public due to the fact that they were, in many ways, ghettoized by the state and by their church location. Most groups in the East did not have membership lists or regular publications, both of which would be dangerous, and were unable to lobby the state publicly for changes. They were left with a choice between providing members with a closed environment where they could meet with like-minded people - in other words, exist as another niche, but one that in its own way undermined the authority of the state. Or they could try to draw the attention of the

Western media, which some did, bringing respite from state pressure in some cases, but greater repression, expulsion from the GDR, or imprisonment in others. An outcome of this situation was the abundance of attention paid to some groups, and the complete lack of any published material on others, as the lack of any real empirical support for such a study limited its appeal.

New Social Movement Theory

A new approach to the study of social movements emerged in Western Europe in the 1970s and early 1980s which looked at the growth of a new type of social movement. These movements were seen as representing both new issues and above all, a whole new style of politics. The environmental movements that grew up in the late 1960s and early '70s, and the peace movement of the 1970s and '80s are central to this 'new politics', as are the women's movement, gay and lesbian rights' movements and other self-realization movements.

Where the 'old paradigm'[9], which gave priority to such issues as economic growth, welfare and security issues, saw a fluctuating configuration of power between the forces of capital, labour unions and governments; the 'new paradigm' in contrast espouses "non-institutional politics" and gives priority to issues such as environmental protection, human rights, peace, and gender equality. What differentiates the latter group, or rather, what

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[9] Claus Offe uses this classification - "old" and "new paradigm"- in his article "Challenging the boundaries of institutional politics: social movements since the 1960s", in C.Maier,ed. *Changing Boundaries of the Political.* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987).

makes new politics "new", is not so much the issues themselves, but their newer style of politics which is mainly located in the non-institutional sphere. In his study of the peace movement in Western Europe, Thomas Rochon writes:

> . . . the significance of the environmental movement lies not in fostering awareness of the need to conserve the earth's resources, and the significance of the peace movement is not in trying to end the nuclear arms race. Although theorists of NSMs acknowledge these goals, NSMs are said to be important primarily because of their commitment to radically democratic political procedures based on interpersonal solidarities that are fundamentally antithetical to large organizations and to political legitimacy based on appeals to material interests.[10]

The willingness of social movement activists to use protest and similar forms of action as a rational alternative to traditional politics is usually connected to discussions on the failure of parties - so central to the agenda-setting and policy-making process - to incorporate their concerns into party platforms. Such reasoning however is not convincing on its own; the "weakly structured, fluid, and open"[11] form of grass-roots new social movements is also "more in tune with the participatory tendencies of their supporters."[12]

Another important aspect in the new social movement approach deals with mobilization: the how and why and who of social movements. Although it is not synonymous with new social movements (NSMs), postmaterialist theory is closely associated with NSMs in many studies in this area. The postmaterialist thesis claims that

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[10] Rochon, *Mobilizing for Peace*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1988), 17.
[11] Joachim Raschke, *Soziale Bewegungen. Ein historisch-systematischer Grundriß*. (Frankfurt, 1987), 412.
[12] Dalton et al, "The Challenge of New Movements", in Dalton and Kuechler, eds. *Challenging the Political Order*. (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1990), 13.

modern industrial society experienced in the postwar era several decades of steady economic growth alongside the expansion of state social programs, both coinciding with a relatively peaceful period in history. As a result, a growing proportion of the population was socialized in a period of relative security, leading them to address concerns beyond those focused on by parents and grandparents who lived through the depression and two world wars. Therefore security is said to lead to the greater likelihood of self-realization and quality of life issues becoming more important, and these citizens' expectations of their governments will also change as a result. The postmaterialist thesis provides an image of a generally younger and more politically adept group of citizens with an above-average education. Activists are said to be much more likely to hold postmaterialist values, but these values are not necessarily the only factor causing citizens to mobilize into such movements.[13]

In addition to the 'push' of value change, the 'pull' of a number of other factors has been influential as well. Most social movement theorists that have studied the newer movements cite the quality of life in advanced industrial society at this stage in history as a key factor inciting people to become politically active and to choose movements as their forum. At the same time that most publics have increasingly become better educated, there has grown the awareness that the unending search for 'progress' is increasingly a questionable ideological position. Discontent with modernization processes that resulted

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[13] Ronald Inglehart, probably the foremost proponent of postmaterialism, recognises this as well. See, *Culture Shift in Advanced Industrial Democracies*. (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1990), 373.

in high levels of pollution, in the threat of an accident like Chernobyl, and in an arms race that put Europe in the middle of a potential deadly war, also led many people to become politically active.

In summary, although there is still debate over the particular achievements of this theory, most agree that the brand of social movements to arise out of the 1960s and 70s share a number of characteristics and common goals. They are characterized by a growing awareness within a section of the public that modernization has had unwanted consequences, and that traditional political institutions like parties and bureaucracies are limited in their ability to provide solutions. A growing willingness on the part of a less deferential and more knowledgeable public to play a greater role in addressing these issues themselves is also evident.

New Social Movements in Socialism?

In view of the characteristics generally associated with NSMs, it is not genuinely surprising that few social movement theorists attempted to apply this theory to movements in the East.[14] A key reason may be the noted association of NSMs with postmaterialist

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[14] One exception is David S. Mason's, "Solidarity as a New Social Movement", *Political Science Quarterly* (1/1989), 41-58. This somewhat unconvincing study attempts to apply the theory to Poland's Solidarity movement. Mason argues that the origins of Solidarity were rooted in part in the changes caused by modernization, which resulted in a criticism of the elite and a general sense of frustration with the lack of participation or input possible for workers even at the factory level. In contrast to most social movements however, and NSMs in particular, Solidarity was relatively centralized and organized, and had a charismatic leader. One point on which Mason effectively linked Solidarity, and the East German social movements, to western NSMs is with the argument that such movements are inspired by the fact that the "core institutions of the political system - parties, parliaments, elections and unions - have lost the capacity to provide collective identities and solidarities", p. 50. Solidarity's linking of new and old politics, in this author's opinion, makes it a more difficult fit for NSM theory than those East German movements studied here.

theory. Very few social scientists objectively saw the GDR or Poland as countries which were comparable to West Germany or the Netherlands in terms of satisfying their citizens' basic needs and security concerns. Looking at Maslow's 'hierarchy of needs', as Inglehart does, could citizens have their physiological needs satisfied adequately enough to share a growing concern in "quality of life" issues, when they live in a society that is not capitalist and where they must fear repression from their own government?

But postmaterialism is not the defining characteristic of most NSMs, and is also too one-dimensional to provide an adequate analysis of most social movements. Alberto Melucci has written that what "new" social movements seek is a "democratization of everyday life", and what they emphasize is that local events have global ramifications.[15] The East German movements that will be studied here sought and expressed very similar goals, and in fact some did hold postmaterialist values. It has been argued that young East Germans too grew up in a climate where a certain level of social security was taken for granted. The Berlin Wall for them had simply been a given, and they had no memories of the more repressive Stalinist period or of the 1953 uprising. The state provided the bare essentials of life - albeit without the choice or variety offered by capitalist states.

Not long after there existed a broad-based peace movement in Western Europe, one also appeared within the Protestant church in the GDR. As analysis in the following chapters will demonstrate, the East German movement resembled in many ways its

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[15] Alberto Melucci, "Social Movements and the Democratization of Everyday Life", in John Keane, ed., *Civil Society and the State* (London: Verso, 1988).

Western counterpart, as did the ecological movement in the GDR. Without dismissing the important differences between the two that their political contexts make unavoidable, the evidence suggests that their similarities are in many ways surprising, despite these very different contexts. The NSM approach has something to offer in the analysis of these phenomena, despite the obvious differences in terms of 'political opportunity structures' between the two sides.

Comparing East and West German NSMs

The intention of this study is not to make the broad spectrum of mainly small and locally organized peace and environmental groups within the church fit into the mold of western NSMs. To do so would be no better than neglecting these democratic movements entirely. However, similarities between the two sides should not be ignored.

The most visible similarity between the small East German alternative culture which formed within the Evangelical Church and the much studied West European NSMs was their issue focus. The programmatic profiles of social movements in both states were similar in their criticism of advanced industrial civilization, and the impact that industrialization was having on the environment and the quality of life in general.[16] By focusing on peace issues, the environment, and numerous other topics associated in recent years with new social movement activism rather than on human rights and other more

[16] Burghard Brinksmaier, "Die Gruppen und die Kirche", in Jürgen Israel, ed., *Zur Freiheit Berufen* (Berlin: Aufbau Taschenbuch Verlag, 1991), 53.

straightforward 'dissident' strategies, the East German movements and groups differed from those elsewhere in East-Central Europe.

An additional, but no less relevant similarity between these movements is observed in the make up of their supporters and in some of their motivations for choosing to become active. Although empirical support for such questions is limited, it has been said that the average age of eastern activists in church circles was barely 30 years, and was even lower in the "action-oriented" groups, which were made up of members in their teens to mid-twenties.[17] Furthermore, even though no such thing as the "new middle class" existed in the GDR, the social background of activists appears to have been made up by a higher proportion of workers and intellectuals - again, particularly in the action-oriented groups - and also to have a strong concentration of former theology students. Most members of the thematic groups had also finished their technical training. NSMs in Western Europe have, of course, been characterized as attracting mainly younger, middle class, and comparatively well educated members. In addition, the common response amongst peace movement activists (and surely others) that, "responsibility for this important issue can no longer be delegated to the politicians," bares a strong resemblance to the participatory motivations of western movements,[18] as does the attraction of many to movement activism out of identity-oriented motivations.

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[17] D. Pollack, "Sozialethisch engagierte Gruppen in der DDR", in *Die Legitimität der Freiheit: Politische Alternative Gruppen in der DDR unter dem Dach der Kirche* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1990), 134.
[18] Dietmar Linke, "Thesen zur 'Unabhängige Friedensbewegung' in der DDR" (1982), in Israel's, *Zur Freiheit Berufen*, p. 131.

Only a small number of studies have applied NSM theory to movements in the GDR, and these have differed in the degree to which the theory is upheld as a good fit. First and most widely referenced is a 1988 article by Hubertus Knabe.[19] Knabe was writing to combat what he felt was a deficit in research on the appearance of alternative political orientations in the GDR. He argued that up until that point they were merely viewed as

> gesellschaftliche Randerscheinung, Außerungen einer jugendlichen Subkultur oder kulturpolitische Widersprüche, als Ubernahme westlicher kultureller Muster oder Reibungspunkte im komplizierten Verhältnis zwischen Staat, Kirche und Gesellschaft.[20]

What Knabe felt these different orientations represented was much more an expression of broader structural tendencies in advanced industrial societies. They provided evidence for a societal paradigm-shift that is triggered also in socialist states by the evident contradictions of the industrial way of life. Overall, Knabe argues that groups in East and West are 'comparable enough'. He demonstrates this point by presenting a comparative typology of the origins, issue horizon and values of the key movements that developed within the GDR and their Western counterparts.

Knabe claims, however, that for most eastern NSMs, the West was not a strictly followed model. Instead they articulated the desire for a "third way" between the ruling systems and ideologies.[21] There existed in many parts of the small activist groups and

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[19] "Neue Soziale Bewegungen im Sozialismus. Zur Genesis alternativer politischer Orientierungen in der DDR", *Kölner Zeitschrift für Soziologie und Sozialpsychologie*, (Jg. 40, 1988), 551-569.
[20] Ibid, p. 554.
[21] Ibid, p. 563.

parts of the church the idealistic notion that they could bring about this change within the socialist DDR, and would as a result create a more just, and more democratic society than had existed in the West.

In another study that looks at the applicability of NSM theory to the DDR, the author states that at first glance it is remarkable how similar movements in the socialist state were to those in West Germany in terms of form and content.[22] The themes they addressed were very comparable, and they also possessed similar internal structures: grassroots, anti-hierarchical, and anti-bureaucratic. Certainly, in the 'revolutionary Fall', these types of internal structures became the watchwords for democratic reform. Unlike Knabe, Probst argues that important differences existed in terms of organizational form, theoretical and *weltanschauliche* reference points, and openness.[23] According to Probst, the most fundamental difference between NSMs in the FRG and the GDR was that the degree of openness espoused by Western groups was impossible in the East.

To simply look at the movements that were formed within the GDR as a symptom of advanced industrial, or 'post-industrial', society does give one too limited an understanding of social and political life in that country. Conditions were much different in the authoritarian GDR where members of society were treated more like subjects than citizens, and where no democracy existed, let alone radical democracy. There are ways in which the theory simply does not fit, for example in terms of examining the organizational

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[22] Lothar Probst, *Ostdeutsche Bürgerbewegungen und Perspektiven der Demokratie.* (Cologne: Bund-Verlag, 1993), 31-36.
[23] Ibid, p.35.

structure of these movements: eastern movements had no choice as to whether they would take a direct or indirect approach toward seeking policy changes, or whether or not they would prefer to work within the state, by forming their own party.

The social movements in the GDR were undeniably influenced by their relationship with the Evangelical Church. Whether particular groups were themselves characterized as "religious" or not, the themes and tone of the debate addressed by the resulting broad movements were somewhat blurred together with Christian ideas and symbols. This is evident in the greater emphasis these movements placed on personal responsibility and religious ideas such as the need for greater reverence for creation.

Why *new* social movements?

Before moving on to discuss the relationship between new social movements and democratization, it is important to suggest some reasons why East German activists took a form similar to NSMs in the West. First, the GDR was geographically and culturally close to the FRG. Unlike most other East-Central European countries, the majority of East Germans had access to West German television programming, where they could witness the massive anti-nuclear demonstrations and the rise of the Green party via the media. But there are other reasons that go beyond this case of limited imitation. The fact that Western groups were protesting issues that the East German state was not, in the beginning at least, even giving lip service to, was extremely frustrating. Some of the same problems targeted in West Germany existed in the GDR, albeit in even worse form.

During its last two decades, East Germany was the most militarized society on earth, with military education being made compulsory at an ever earlier age, and while the threat of nuclear war was a weight on many in East and West.[24] Environmental conditions were also some of the worst in the Soviet bloc, with Leipzig's nearby brown coal industry as an excellent case in point. Although they were addressed less directly by East German social movements, human rights abuses were also widespread in that country.

A further reason for the closer resemblance of Eastern movements to the Western NSM model than to dissident groups like Charter 77 and Solidarity was the local and global, but not truly national character of NSMs. Because of the always present factor of German history and East Germany's existence as a "state, but not a nation", social movements in the GDR were deprived of the ability to appeal to 'national' symbols. The East German state was established on an antifascist platform, but failed to develop a national identity on this somewhat loose notion. Intellectuals such as Christa Wolf maintained a loyalty to the state for what outsiders considered far too long at least in part because of this antifascist claim. Although Joppke goes too far in dismissing the effect of environmental and peace groups in the GDR because of their shying away from outright opposition,[25] this form was also the most plausible. Furthermore, such activism was more tolerable in the eyes of the state due to the participation of the church. It thus experienced less repression than outright opposition or a more strictly human rights focus would

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[24] Christian Joppke, *East German Dissidents and the Revolution of 1989. Social Movements in a Leninist Regime.* (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 78.
[25] Ibid, p.115.

garner, even within the church.

Finally, in terms of its institutions and its ideology, the church itself was conducive to new social movements. This is perhaps the most surprising conclusion of this study. Churches in Western Europe hold the possibility of accommodating this type of grassroots movement, and movements lacking in a resource base have worked with and within the church in other nations.[26] Nonetheless, the new anti-institutional movements are characterized as atheistic, and as such, little attention is paid to this religious connection. Movements can and do use the space and resources provided by the church without being Christian, as was the case in the GDR. The church was not only open to peace, ecology, and third world movements. It was also a 'Church for Others'.[27] It had interests and ideas in common with those concerned with peace and environmental protection issues.

The church took on the peace issue long before specific movements had developed, protesting the introduction of a compulsory military service and advocating conscientious objection in 1955, and then pursuing this theme throughout that period. The church organized peace forums, sponsored the creation of institutions for peace

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[26] The Dutch peace movement - the IKV - is a good case in point. The "facilitating" role that established actors such as the state, political parties, labour unions or churches can play by providing personnel, infrastructure or financial subsidies, and also *legitimacy*, is mentioned by both Rood Koopmans, *Democracy from Below: New Social Movements and the Political System in West Germany* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1995), 28, and Claus Offe, "Challenging the boundaries of institutional politics", p. 93.

[27] Dietrich Bonhoeffer's concept was influential though, particularly in church involvement with political prisoners and others isolated by the state, including alcoholics. See Goeckel: *The Lutheran Church and the East German State.* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1990), 174.

research, and supported independent peace groups after 1981.[28] The environmental degradation that surrounded their cities also drew the attention of many of the younger, more sensitive clergy. The church framed this theme by advocating respect for creation. The postmaterialist consciousness of modern industrial societies came out in East German new social movements as a Christian religiosity, "die in eine neue Sozialgestalt transformiert war".[29] Because attempts to organize outside of the church's protection had always met with state repression, in many cases the "demands and ideologies of NSMs were united with religious ideas and institutional church interests".[30] This blurring together of religious and new social movement themes created an authentically East German type of NSM.[31] Although many of those activists involved within these movements wanted to remove their groups from the church's borders into a freer civil society, their approach to these issues retained its religious roots.

What an understanding of East German social movements as a variety of NSMs also points to are some of the reasons why groups like the Initiative for Peace and Human Rights, reconstituted into the Bündnis 90 party, failed to win more than marginal electoral support in 1990:

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[28] Vladimir Tismaneanu, "Against Socialist Militarism: The Independent Peace Movement in the German Democratic Republic", in Tismaneanu, ed., *In Search of Civil Society: Independent Peace Movements in the Soviet Bloc.* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 145.

[29] Probst, *Ostdeutsche Bürgerbewegungen und Perspektiven der Demokratie*, p. 60.

[30] Author's translation, Knabe, "Neue Soziale Bewegungen im Sozialismus", p. 555.

[31] Erhart Neubert laments the lack of consideration given the relationship between religion and NSMs in the German case. Despite the fact that the church provided the only free space available, Neubert feels that the role of religion and religious ideas in the socialisation of social movement activists has been underemphasised. See "Religiöse Aspekte von Gruppen der Neuen Sozialen Bewegung", *Berliner Journal für Soziologie* (3/1991), 393-411.

> The East German regime opposition's modeling on Western-style NSMs proved inadequate for the particular context of (post) communism. A characteristic of NSMs is their 'self-limitation'; they complement rather than replace market and state.[32]

Even as parties such as New Forum and Democracy Now were forming and distributing their platforms, they remained reluctant to assume power. In reaching the party stage - while still avoiding the 'party' label where possible - these groups appeared to go through the same identity crisis that the Greens did in West Germany, and were taken up by the "party versus movement" debate at a crucial stage. The power vacuum left by the rejection of the communist government demanded a self-assured and speedy replacement. They did not reassure the people by suggesting they would bring economic security, but offered instead something new and risky, something, in other words, that few East Germans were willing to gamble on, particularly from such newcomers. At the same time, as the post-unification period will demonstrate, a certain proximity to the FRG model of NSMs also facilitated the integration of East German movements into the parliamentary as well as extra-parliamentary politics of the new Germany.

What the experience of movements espousing non-institutional means to express their alternative views in Western Europe show us is that it is very difficult for these movements to then make the jump to being an alternative *within* those institutions of which they are critical. The Green Party in West Germany succeeded but only by altering their organizational form to be more conducive to party democracy. By placing such a

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[32] Joppke, *East German Dissidents and the Revolution of 1989*, p. 203.

situation within a dramatic transition to democracy, where the majority of the people chose 'security', the wholesale adoption of Western institutions which occurred is not surprising. Those postmaterialists that existed in the GDR, although statistics on this are unavailable, were overwhelmingly those socialized in the environment provided by the church and social movements. For the rest of the public material concerns were still foremost, and understandably so.

In the immediate post-unification period these disillusioned groups were still needed to question the paths chosen by West German bureaucrats, and to provide local voices in the ranks of the new parties. That is the most and the best that these movements could do: institutional and non-institutional politics should complement, not undermine each other, particularly at a time when democracy is fragile.[33] Joppke states that the failure of the *Bürgerbewegungen* to win electoral support in fact allowed them to become "what they had always been at heart: a new social movement dealing with issues of ecology, peace, and minority rights".[34] While that author may be right, it was with no uncertain disappointment that many members of the pseudo-opposition in the GDR faced the prospect of unification.

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[33] Elizabeth Kiss, "Democracy Without Parties? 'Civil Society' in East-Central Europe", *Dissent* (Spring 1992), 226-231.

[34] Joppke, *East German Dissidents and the Revolution of 1989*, p.178.

TRANSITIONS TO DEMOCRACY - EAST AND WEST

The argument that social movements, as institutions of civil society, can play an important role in consolidating democracy is part of the theoretical foundation on which this thesis is built. Despite the uniqueness of the East German transition via its integration into the established Federal Republic, the need for democratization in the new eastern Länder should not simply be assumed solved with the achievement of unification. The difficulties encountered over the last six years serve as an excellent case in point. A number of questions on the role of new social movements in the process of consolidating democracy are relevant in a study such as this. For example, if new social movements aim in Western Europe to democratize civil society and the existing institutions by making them more participatory, what function could they serve in the transition from authoritarian state-socialism to democracy? Research into the specific role of NSMs in transitions to democracy has been limited, partly due to the limited approval of the existence of "new social movements in socialism", but also because of the newness still of this topic. In order to gain an understanding of where this approach would fit into the discourse on civil society, transitions to democracy in general should be examined.

What makes for a smooth transition from an authoritarian state-socialist society to a stable democracy? This is a question that has concerned students of the former Soviet Union and Eastern Europe for the past six or more years, and social scientists elsewhere for many more years. Prior to the wave of revolutions in Eastern Europe, very little was

written on what possibilities there were for democratic transition in those states, or more specifically, on what factors would aid in achieving this end. This is for the simple reason that there was little consideration of the fact that such an upheaval was even a remote possibility. The liberalization introduced by Gorbachev in the Soviet Union was remarkable in itself, but seldom was the case made that *liberalization* was a prelude to *democratization.*

Although a magic formula for painless and speedy transitions has yet to be discovered, a number of criteria are held up as facilitating factors that will deter democratization when not present. These factors are usually defined broadly to include a series of market reforms, political reforms, including the reform of the structure of government, of the electoral system, and of the media sector, and the opening up of civil society, all of which are undeniably connected. Linz and Stepan speak in terms of five specific "arenas of a consolidated democracy":

> First, the conditions must exist for the development of a free and lively civil society. Second, there must be a relatively autonomous and valued political society. Third, there must be a rule of law to ensure legal guarantees for citizens' freedoms and independent associational life. Fourth, there must be a state bureaucracy that is usable by the new democratic government. Fifth, there must be an institutionalized economic society.[35]

Instability, both in the market and in political institutions, is generally considered to be the enemy of civil society, just as a poorly developed civil society can undermine support for new political institutions. For some, the market provides all that is needed for a people to

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[35] J. Linz and A. Stepan, *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 7.

become involved citizens. For others, that participation requires more than the ability to make a profit and own property.[36] This study focuses on the 'civil society' factor. The intention is not to say that the growth of a more participatory and open civil space precludes the importance of market reforms or the building of political institutions, but rather to further an understanding of their interdependence.

New social movements have as primary goals the democratization of both the state and civil society. What this means is that they want to flatten hierarchical organizations where possible and encourage the public to act on their concerns, and to respect difference. Where elites are central to most democratic transitions, combating hierarchies could be difficult. Where NSMs may stumble, and did in the East German case, is in their concern with putting civil society before market reforms and institution building. The debate over what should come first, markets or political reforms, is without end. Ideally, they should coincide, but where they do not, precautions should be taken not to disregard the other. In the case of some East German citizens' movements, there existed the hope that a third way could be achieved which would eliminate the need for some of the traditional political and economic institutions of Western capitalist democracies, and create a more grassroots democratic state. This alternative would have likely met with limited success, but was never actually contemplated outside of movement circles.

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[36] These two perspectives were demonstrated by Vaclav Klaus, the Czech Prime Minister, and Vaclav Havel, the President and former leading dissident of that country, in a debate that took place in the spring of 1994. In Klaus's (liberal) view, intermediary groups are not needed between citizens and state, only individual interests. See: Daniel N. Nelson, "Civil Society Endangered", *Social Research* (Summer 1996), 350.

CONCLUSIONS

The combined role of a still influential church and a moderate number of grass-roots social movements espousing social and political change may have at times led to stalemate. For the most part, however, it existed as an example to the state leadership and the foreign media, if not at all times its own public, that civil society was still alive in East Germany. Michael Ignatieff writes:

> The teachers, writers, and journalists of the Czech underground, the shipyard workers and intellectuals of Poland's Solidarity, and the pastors and laymen who met in East German church crypts did more than dream of civil society. They sought to implant one in the very womb of communist society . . . Within these covert institutions came the education in liberty and the liberating energies that led to 1989. In the revolutions of that year . . . civil society triumphed over the state.[37]

What should become clear in the following chapters is that whether the East German social movements were "new social movements" or not, and whether or not they were motivated by reasons of faith or by other convictions, each contributed to the building of a civil society in that country. The post-unification period casts some doubt on how important this aspect was in the German case, where new institutions did not have to be built, but rather were transferred to East Germany from the West upon unification of the two Germanies. In defense of all of the activists and clergy who went on to join not just Bündnis 90, but also the SPD and the CDU, and also of those who continue to work in small grass roots groups addressing various concerns and representing various identities,

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[37] Ignatieff, "On Civil Society. Why Eastern Europe's Revolutions Could Succeed" (a review essay on Ernest Gellner's *Conditions of Liberty: Civil Society and its Rivals*), in *Foreign Affairs* (March/April 1995), 128.

their involvement was not wasted.

On its own NSM theory does not go far enough in explaining some of the particularities of the East German case, although it is interesting in itself that environmental groups and peace initiatives that were challenging institutional politics in Western Europe were doing the same in parts of Eastern Europe, (albeit in a completely different social and political setting and thus with far fewer participants). What is more interesting and more central to this study is the role these movements played in the building of a democratic political culture in that country. One of New Forum's founders expressed this as a recognized goal of the citizens' movements: "Wir wollen . . . die politische Kultur des 21. Jahrhunderts entwickeln."[38] Whether they succeeded or not is a question left to future researchers. The theoretical approach used in this thesis demonstrates how a new type of social movement formed in the GDR out of NSM and Protestant conceptions of democracy. These movements engaged in a dialogue which may not have lasted, but certainly was itself a "Sonderfall", and played a crucial role in the short transition phase from state socialism to liberal democracy.

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[38] Jens Reich, quoted in Lothar Probst, *Ostdeutsche Bürgerbewegungen und Perspektiven der Demokratie*, p.148.

Chapter 2:
The Evangelical Church and the Growth of Social Activism in the DDR, 1970-1988: Balancing Acts and the Roots of Dissent

In East Germany today the clerics are now talking like revolutionaries while the functionaries are talking like priests. -Stefan Heym, 1982.

The first evidence of peace and environmental activism in the late 1970s and '80s in the German Democratic Republic, a famously rigid 'state-socialist' society, was met with a certain degree of interest and curiosity in the West. For such public forms of protest to occur in what was commonly referred to as a 'niche society', and one in which such activism was illegal, was remarkable. This chapter will address the key elements which made this social activism not only possible, but also made it one of the only existing challenges to the state and its absolute authority throughout this period. It will also demonstrate how the social movements that were established in the Protestant churches in East Germany resembled in their issue focus, their generational appeal, their self-limiting approach, and their use of grass-roots forms, the new social movement paradigm studied in Western Europe. The part that this new social movement leaning had to play in the development of a uniquely East German protest culture will only be truly demonstrated in the Transition to Democracy phase in Chapter 3, but the roots for this trend will be explored below. This nascent civil society provided the roots for the democracy

movements of 1989-90.

To understand how such groups drew their albeit limited numbers to meetings, tree-plantings and peace seminars, it is essential to understand both the nature of the church - state relationship in the GDR, and the place of the church in GDR society. The forms, activities, and themes of these small grass-roots organizations were intrinsically connected with the churches throughout the 1970s and '80s, not just, it will be argued, in terms of the space that they shared, but with regards also to the content and tone of the issues they addressed. The Evangelical Church was still able in the 1970s and 80s to respond to the needs of some of the citizens of that country, and to do so in a way that undermined in certain ways, and helped legitimize in others, the authority of the one-party state.

A number of questions that are central to the study of the politics of social movements will be of importance here as well. These include three main areas of inquiry. First, why have citizens turned to the social movement as the chosen form of political action? Were they trying to change specific policies, or to transform the whole political system? Second, what accounts for their tactics and strategies? Finally, what accounts for the outcome of social movements.

THE RELIGIOUS ROOTS OF SOCIAL ACTIVISM AND OPPOSITION

It would be impossible to look at the changes that took place in GDR society in the 1970s

and 80s without discussing the involvement of the church in this change. As a gathering place and source of employment for well-educated and often more disenchanted young people, as the only forum in which free-speech was allowed, albeit in the presence of countless Stasi informers (IMs), and as the only institution offering any kind of alternative to the state's version of the truth, the church community in the GDR was at the centre of the new social movement/regime opposition development which occurred in the 1970s and '80s. Due to its dependence on the state for its own freedom, and its desire not to be reduced to a forum for opposition, the church leadership was forced to walk a difficult path in its relations with the Ulbricht and Honecker regimes, with the line between confrontation and cooperation often being blurred.

The church and the social movements that formed under its protective umbrella should not be thought of as interchangeable. Despite the central role played by many clergy and laypeople, the church 'still remained the church', even in the face of the demands of grass-roots groups and social movements. Churches were first and foremost religious institutions, and Church leaders felt their primary responsibility was to God, not to any particular political cause. Furthermore, only a portion of the Protestant congregations became involved in the work of the groups, while many Christians carried on in their usual 'niches' without getting involved. The line between church work groups on peace and environmental protection and groups which had little association with the work of the church, yet used the shelter it provided, was however often blurred. The early involvement of the church in leading and housing what in effect were community groups

and social movements led some to expect that the church would assume a position in society for which it was both ill-prepared and unwilling. This point becomes clear in the mid- to late-1980s, as the divisions between the grassroots and the church leadership became more pronounced.[39]

Given some of these complexities, what is meant by "the Church", a term used extensively throughout this thesis. In his study of the 'social-ethical groups' in the church, Uwe Funk states that in order to define these groups in relation to the church, the "church" itself must first be defined. He argues that there is a "*sichtbare und unsichtbare Kirche*",[40] (a visible and an invisible church). 'The Church' included a loose grouping of regional churches that differed in terms of their theological traditions. Its leadership worked at a level quite removed from the average rural congregation, but was often in the spotlight, as the representatives of the church to the state. The clergy ranged in their theological and political views from the more traditional and apolitical to the generally younger, and much more action-oriented and theologically 'open'. And when one considers finally all those Christians who participated in the hundreds of congregations across the GDR, it becomes evident that their views and expectations of their church also varied to a huge degree. In short, the fact that the church included so many different voices should be taken into consideration at all times when assessing the many later writers who would label the church as a whole 'revolutionary' or, alternatively, as an

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[39] Marlies Menge, "Wir haben zu große Erwartungen. Treffen im Raum der Kirche", *Die Zeit* (Nr. 2, 19.2.1988), 5.
[40] Funk, "Die Existenz sozialethischer Gruppen in der Evangelisch Kirche der DDR als gesellschaftswissenschaftliches Problem", in Detlef Pollack ed., *Die Legitimität der Freiheit*, p. 88.

accomplice to the regime.

The Organizational Structure of the Protestant Church in the GDR

The position of the Protestant (Evangelical-Lutheran) church in East German society was unique and could offer a protective space for dissent for a number of reasons. First, Protestants were in the majority in GDR society. In 1950, membership in the evangelical Church included more than 80 per cent of the total population, with the Roman Catholic Church claiming 11 per cent, and other Christian denominations drawing approximately 0.7 per cent of the public's support. Those without confessional ties were few in number - just over 7 per cent, a figure close to the norm in the rest of Europe at that time.[41] Although the overall number of those with confessional ties dropped dramatically during the 40-year life of the GDR, as it did in much of Western Europe as well, the Protestant Church maintained a proportional level of support from those practicing Christians. It also retained the status of a *Volkskirche*, even when its numbers would no longer seem to warrant it. In addition, despite the degree of discrimination against Christians in education, employment opportunities, and other areas of everyday life, this popular base was a first source of legitimacy and strength.

Second, the Evangelical Church was distinguished by its institutional and spiritual ties with the Church in West Germany. Until 1969 this denomination still shared one

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[41] From Detlef Pollack, *Kirche in der Organisation Gesellschaft* (Stuttgart: Kohlhammer, 1994), 374.

overarching organization, the Evangelical Church in Germany (the EKD), and the whole of Berlin still constituted one Landeskirche, a remarkable institutional link given the regime's official atheism and its constant demonization of the West. After state pressure to withdraw from the EKD, the East German Landeskirche formed their own Kirchenbund (Federation of Evangelical Churches in the GDR) that same year, but ties with the Western Church remained.[42] These links took the form of financial support for building projects as well as for the everyday functioning of churches. The regime was reluctant to prevent these practices because it valued the hard Western currency involved. Despite a cool reception from the state, Western pastors also agreed in numerous cases to move to the East, where the decreasing supply of young pastors left many churches in crisis. This support was crucial because it enhanced the autonomy of the church from the regime. The regime, in turn, tended to view this relationship as a barrier to the creation of a strong independent East Germany with its own national identity.

The internal structure of the church provided an environment where again independent discussion might take place. The basic unit is the Landeskirche, or the territorial church, the borders of which have changed little since the Peace of Augsburg in 1558.[43] This organizational feature made it both easier to develop dissenting groups and

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[42] Despite the fact that the state tolerated these continuing ties to some extent, state propaganda still argued such links could form "a potential fifth column to aid the forces of imperialism." Hilary Black, "The Church in East Germany", *Religion in Communist Lands* (July-Oct., 1973), 4.

[43] These Landeskirchen are Anhalt, Berlin-Brandenburg (East), the Church Province of Saxony (Magdeburg), Gorlitz, and Greifswald, which together formed the Evangelical Church of the Union (EKU), a merger of Lutheran and Reformed churches stemming from the nineteenth century and existing in Prussian areas. The other three Landeskirchen remained purely Lutheran, and are loosely linked together in the United Evangelical Churches in the GDR (VELKDDR). Discussed in Robert Goeckel, *The Lutheran Church and the East German State* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press,

for the regime to target dissent. Until the 1970s, the regime would often target Landeskirchen that were less cooperative, while rewarding the more cooperative with freer travel and more autonomous control of social activities.[44] Nevertheless, the division of the Evangelical Church into various Landeskirchen also left "significant decision-making power in local and regional, rather than national, hands."[45]

The internal structure of the Landeskirchen is both democratic and hierarchical. It is hierarchical in having a bishop or church president who would be consulted by the state. The democratic principle, according to Robert Goeckel,

> . . . takes the form of the synod . . . The synod is largely elected in a democratic process that begins in the local parish councils. The synod in turn chooses the bishop, or church president, along with the church leadership. Thus the leaders of the Landeskirchen are subject to a certain amount of democratic input and control from below.[46]

This democratic element cannot be discounted. As discontent grew amongst many in the grass-roots of the church in the 1970s and 1980s in particular, the pressure that these groups and individuals were able to put on the church leadership was certainly effective. Synods at both the regional and federal level were organized around themes such as environmental protection and alternatives to military engagement. Moreover, the fact that such synods were able to take place on themes out of favour with the state, or which the state had simply given lip-service to, is in itself relevant. They allowed not only for

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1990), 15.

[44] A clear description of this tactic and others in the state's *Kirchenpolitik* is found in Ibid, p. 84.

[45] M. Jones, "Origins of the East German Environmental Movement", *German Studies Review* (May 1993), 238.

[46] Goeckel, *The Lutheran Church and the East German State*, p.15.

needed information sharing and free discussion, but the work done in church discussion groups and synods also enabled those involved to gain some experience in democratic decision making.

The church's potential for providing space for dissent was enhanced by its ongoing social activities. It has been the tradition of the Evangelical Church in East Germany to have a strong social presence in the community. The presence took the form of work in hospitals, kindergartens, homes for the elderly and the mentally disabled, and the like. Churches also organized popular activities which accounted for at least part of the draw of young people to the church. This is, incidentally, the sphere that the state tried hardest to crack down on in changes to laws which affected the church.[47] Well known were the Jazz services and youth events. These activities were often very popular, and according to one writer, took up a great deal of the leisure time of local communities. In the district of Plauen alone, the SED had compiled statistics on 16 youth groups with 420 members, 14 women's groups, boasting around 720 members and 11 men's groups with around 200 members, this all in five parishes.[48] It would be difficult to deny the importance of this socializing aspect of the church's normal activities. All laid the basis for learning what one writer has called an "*Ich-Bewußtsein*",[49] or a kind of self-awareness as an individual apart

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[47] The best known of these laws was the Council of Ministers' "Order on the Holding of Public Events", approved Nov. 26, 1970. This made it compulsory for all public events to be announced in advance to the local police, and narrowly specified which events - such as worship services, communions and baptisms - could be considered valid religious activities. Sporting and dance events on church premises were forbidden outright. The greatest impact was felt in youth retreats, church music events, and modern worship services. See Ibid, p. 191-92.

[48] Mary Fulbrook, *Anatomy of a Dictatorship*, (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1995), 102.

[49] Lothar Probst, *Ostdeutsche Bürgerbewegungen und Perspektiven der Demokratie*, p. 57.

from the socialist identity that state schools taught. Particularly in the 1970s and later, the existence of the church as an alternative to the values offered by the state was a genuine concern to the regime, which tried on many occasions to limit the churches' realm of activities to the purely religious.

In summary then, the Protestant Church in the GDR had several institutional characteristics that permitted it to provide an umbrella for dissent, somewhat protected from state repression. The considerable economic support from the West German church and the Protestant dominance in numerical terms allowed the church to establish and maintain its independence from the state, as did the church's ties to international ecumenical organizations.[50] The decentralized organizational structure of the church had democratic aspects which provided a framework in which dissent could occur, and without which the volume of activism which formed within the church would have been unlikely. As will be demonstrated below, the roots for later activism lay in part in this early development of spheres of action outside the state. This limited freedom of expression and association which existed within the church did not necessarily have to develop any further. For some, the possibility to express their concerns within a group of like-minded individuals was sufficient, or at least initially.[51] A number of factors however combined at this time, on both the international and the domestic front, to create the

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[50] Jones writes that the fact that Protestants were in the majority was not insignificant, stating that in both Hungary and Czechoslovakia the state played Protestants off against Catholics in order to diminish their strength. See p. 239.
[51] For a description of the different motives of participants in what he labels "social-ethical" groups, see Detlef Pollack's, "Sozialethisch engagierte Gruppen in der DDR. Eine Religionssoziologische Untersuchung", *Die Legitimität der Freiheit* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lange, 1990), 129.

possibility for social movements and the growth of civil society in the GDR. All that was needed was a willing public.

Protestant Theology, Church-State Relations and the Roots of Social Movements

Historical Background

In order to understand some of the reasons for church involvement in social movement activism, some historical and theological background should be given. The church that existed in East Germany under the Communists was a church greatly affected by its experiences during the Nazi regime, and that emerged wary of a subservient role to the state. Members of the Confessing Church - those theologians and other Christians that had resisted Nazification of the Church and its theology - were pivotal in the rebuilding of the post-War church in Soviet occupied Germany. They had, however, not been in the majority prior to 1945. Many Christians, at all levels of the church, had accepted Hitler's views on the strong state and a nationalist religion. Lutheran Theology itself was rooted in a deferential attitude toward authority. The "Two Kingdoms Doctrine" dictated that Christians must submit both to God and to their temporal authority, which, Luther wrote, "restrains the unchristian and wicked so that . . . they are obliged to keep still and to maintain an outward peace".[52] This doctrine was discredited to a certain degree by the Third Reich, which used the churches, and particularly the Lutheran Church, to suit its

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[52] Luther, quoted by Goeckel, op.cit., p.16.

purposes.

In partial response to this experience, German Protestantism was influenced during this period by the theology of Dietrich Bonhoeffer, Martin Niemöller, and Karl Barth, a Calvinist who emphasized that the Church does indeed have political responsibilities in society. The move to a more theologically active church which shared a concern for social issues, and felt anxious to make up for the Nazi period contributed a great deal to the outlook of the church in the postwar period. Although some Landeskirchen, particularly those pure Lutheran churches of the VELKDDR, maintained a stricter divide between church affairs and political matters, this switch to a greater responsibility for the church in society, as a kind of 'guardian office', was of central importance. It encouraged many in the church to become less deferential to the state.

The regime's policy toward the churches also reflected a desire to use the church to help achieve some other broad objectives.

> Since the formation of two separate Germanies in 1949, two primary objectives of the regime have been to win international recognition, and to create a new sense of national identity for its citizens . . . The support of the Church and Christians generally has been sought to help foster a new collective consciousness.[53]

This need to be recognized internationally went hand in hand with the need to be 'recognized', or have legitimacy, amongst at least a portion of its own population. One should not get the impression from this that an institution such as the church, or dissident

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[53] Caroline Ward, "Church and State in East Germany", *Religion in Communist Lands* (Summer 1978), 90.

intellectuals, or any other group within the GDR for that matter, really had an upper-hand with regard to relations with the state. This need for legitimacy is one reason why the state tolerated the continuing social presence of the church, but any time that they felt that the churches in the GDR were taking this too far, they were reprimanded in one way or another, or privileges were taken away.

It is important to note that even when state treatment of Christians improved somewhat after the more repressive 1950s, the existence of an independent religious community in the communist GDR still presented at all times an ideological challenge to the state simply by virtue of its existence. At no time did the East German regime's anti-religious propaganda let up, nor did its efforts to make the lives of practicing Christians difficult cease at any point.

Church-state relations in the newly-created East German state were initially modified by a truce-like agreement between the two sides out of respect for their mutual suffering under the Nazis.[54] The fact that most in the Church appear to have looked on the GDR as merely a transitional state also helped in keeping them somewhat silent. As Stalinist reforms were unleashed in the 1950s, however, many came to accept, and lament this state of affairs, while many others simply left the country for the West. Religious education in schools was banned, the travel of clergy to meetings of the EKD in the West was strictly watched, church activities were limited, particularly those involving youth, and

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[54] Ward (Ibid., p. 91.) addresses the importance of the shared experience of the Nazi prison-camp on the first generation of church-state relations in East Germany.

the *Jugendweihe* - a youth consecration ceremony replacing confirmation - was introduced and made compulsory, all during the 1950s. These types of changes were happening across the GDR, and to churches of all denominations across Eastern Europe. The atheism of Marxist-Leninist ideology was compulsory teaching from an early age, and was combined with the desire of all of the communist regimes to break the hold of what in many cases were nationalist religions, and to eliminate the worship of any gods other than those provided by the state.

Nonetheless, compared to church-state relations in the USSR and Czechoslovakia, GDR Protestants were relatively well treated -- at least on the surface. The GDR's constitution stated that "Each citizen of the GDR has the right to profess a religious faith and to take part in religious activities,"[55] and also included a recognition of the right of the churches "to express their opinion on vital issues affecting the nation,"[56] a notion entirely superficial in the sense that all knew that any opinions expressed must not contradict the state's opinion on those 'vital issues'. The state also produced numerous statements on the 'special relationship between Christians and Marxists', and other such labels. In practice however, as will become clearer throughout this chapter, being a Christian was not politically acceptable.

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[55] Hilary Black, "The Church in East Germany", *Religion in Communist Lands* (July-Oct.1973), 7.
[56] Cited in a report on a lecture given by Professor Bohdan Bociurkiw of Carleton University, May 1973 at London University. Titled, "Religion in Eastern Europe", *Religion in Communist Lands* (July-Oct. 1973), 11.

The Church and Broader Social Issues

It has already been stated that the church was able for a number of reasons to provide a shelter for the growth of social activism in the GDR. But why would church leaders and congregations feel compelled to do so if they were aware that such an action would threaten their own limited freedom? A partial answer is that the Church's own theology and traditions laid the foundation for such a role, albeit to a lesser degree than what eventually evolved. The shelter that the church provided for what became the GDR's own peace and environmental movements, was not incidental to Christian beliefs and some were drawn to the church because of the attraction of those beliefs. Many activists were either practicing Christians, or were drawn to the church by its Christian approach to peace issues. They also valued the grassroots setting of the work done by its congregations.

The church's approach to dealing with the state on issues outside of the religious sphere was to provide opportunities for the application of these Christian beliefs. Although church leaders and pastors varied in their specific feelings and misgivings with regards to the state, the guiding principle from the 1960s onwards was largely one of "critical solidarity." This, like the now infamous "Kirche in Sozialismus", or Church in Socialism, position first taken by Schönherr in 1971, has as its basic premise that the Church accepts that the GDR is a socialist state, and any work that it does will be within that setting. Bishop Schönherr set this trend by stating that: "We want to be a Church not

alongside, not against, but rather a Church within socialism."[57] This formula was vague enough to appease the state somewhat, while also confirming that the church would continue to play an active role within society, which was key. Schönherr also rejected "the extremes of both political opposition and a 'church for socialism'".[58]

What 'critical solidarity' and the 'church in socialism' approaches entailed was a critical focus on specific policies of the regime that they disagreed with, rather than broader criticisms of the regime itself. Discussions of state policies on abortion, and environmental concerns, for example, did not attack the state too directly and were thus acceptable, albeit not encouraged. Issues that crossed this line were those demanding an alternative to military service and the removal of military education from the school system, to name just two.

The regime's own practices provided ample opportunities for such a 'critical focus'. First, and more broadly, the effects of modernization visible in the crumbling buildings in its old city centers, and in destroyed landscapes, frustrated many even in the state bureaucracy. They knew that any ideas for reform they offered would not be honoured by the political leadership. With a growing sense of frustration, some of these "middle class" people sought other outlets to voice their discontent.[59]

Second, by virtue of its discrimination against those active in the church, the

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[57] Quoted by Mary Fulbrook, in: *Anatomy of a Dictatorship*, p. 106.
[58] Robert Goeckel, "The GDR Legacy and the German Protestant Church", *German Politics and Society* (Spring 1994), 89.
[59] Probst, *Ostdeutsche Bürgerbewegungen und Perspektiven der Demokratie*, p. 23.

regime contributed to creating an atmosphere of protest within the churches.

> By denying political nonconformists and committed Christians chances of higher education outside theology, and hence career prospects in a range of secular professions, the regime itself unintentionally *produced* a relatively cohesive group of disaffected activists: pastors, theologians, and people unable to pursue other career paths who gained employment in some capacity with the Church.[60]

This outcome is clearly demonstrated in the fact that entering the theological field was seen by some as a viable alternative for those in disagreement with the state and its policies. Said one East Berlin pastor, "I became a theologian in the GDR. I wouldn't have become one in any other country."[61] Similarly, parishioners were more likely to have strong beliefs and a strong association with the church given that they had remained active throughout the years. Congregations in this setting depended heavily on the self-organization and self-initiative of their members,and social movements in the GDR grew out of this environment.[62]

Ideas often ignited the public protest, and in many cases brought the Evangelical Church and potential activists together. The symbolism of the religious imagery of turning 'swords into plowshares', a symbol also ironically used by the Soviets in a monument dedicated to the UN - an irony not lost on the movements using it - was powerful. Furthermore, the fear of not only war, but an environmental Armageddon, drove many to

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[60] Fulbrook, *Anatomy of a Dictatorship*, p. 89.
[61] Quoted by Joppke in, *East German Dissidents and the Revolution of 1989: Social Movements in a Leninist Regime*, p. 228.
[62] Neubert, "The Political Culture of Protestantism", in D. Berg-Schlosser and R. Rytlewski, eds. *Political Culture in Germany* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 161.

lament the inability of their regime to hear the concerns of its citizens.

> For some, Protestantism itself provided a protective umbrella for independent thinking, and using Evangelical terminology enabled them to speak a different language and to offer an alternative interpretation of reality from that offered by the party.[63]

Some of these people were drawn to the church by its position that there should be a greater 'respect for creation', and by the stance of many active within the church that those wishing to share their concerns in an open environment should be able to do so there. The church too suffered greatly under the communists, and members and leaders alike had their own reasons for wanting to take a critical approach to state policy. Even in the eyes of nonbelievers, the Protestant churches in the GDR had great symbolic importance for the role they were able to play in the area of peace and environmental issues.[64]

Playing such a role would have been difficult during the heavy persecutions that lasted from the mid 1950s to the early 1970s. But an accommodation phase began after 1972 which was to provide opportunities, in particular, for a new generation of GDR citizens. Christians were still discriminated against in the educational system, but in more subtle ways. The regime took a deliberately two-tracked approach from that time on: it sought to accommodate the Church elite while attacking activity at the grassroots. "While seeking via compromise on some institutional issues to temper criticism by the church

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[63] Ronald Asmus, "Is there a Peace Movement in the GDR?", *Orbis* (Summer 1983), 330.
[64] Erhart Neubert, "The Political Culture of Protestantism", in D. Berg-Schlosser and R. Rytlewski, eds., *Political Culture in Germany* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1993), 161.

elite, the state sought to foster further erosion in church adherence on the grassroots level, especially among youth."[65] Frustration over this state of affairs troubled many at the grass-roots, and resulted, tragically, and most symbolically, in the self-immolation of Oskar Brüsewitz in a town square in 1976 in protest.[66] Brüsewitz's death was publicized widely in the West, criticized by the Honecker regime, and lamented by the Church leadership, which was forced to identify their weak communication with the grass-roots as a serious problem. It also demonstrated how wide the gap had become between the disenchanted youth which made up a large part of the grass-roots, and the Schönherr generation. This gap was clearly still a serious problem in 1987 when the "Church from Below" appeared, a group formed in protest to the cancellation by church officials of some of the more controversial activities planned for the *Kirchentag* in East Berlin that year. This grassroots group called for "Glasnost in State and Church", and claimed more than one thousand members by late 1988.[67]

In an interesting characterization of the roughly three generations of Christians and non-Christians associated with the Protestant Churches in the GDR, Richard Schröder describes a generational divide which existed in that country, and in the church, in the 1980s.[68] These correspond, according to Schröder, with three generations of experience. The first generation was marked by the memory of Nazi repression, the Stalinist anti-

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[65] Goeckel, op.cit., p. 234.
[66] Ibid, p. 202.
[67] Tismaneanu, "Nascent Civil Society in the German Democratic Republic", *Problems of Communism*, (March-June 1989), 105.
[68] Schröder, "The Role of the Protestant Church in German Unification", *Daedalus*, (Winter 1994), 257.

church campaign and the uprising of June 17, 1953. The second generation had also experienced great hardships and witnessed the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961. Their strategy, as discussed above, was to adapt to the conditions that existed in their country, and not to expect more than minor improvements in state policy. The third generation had not witnessed the Nazi or the Stalinist pogroms, and was "too young to regard present circumstances as an improvement over the Stalinist climate of the 1950s.[69] This younger generation, like the generation growing up on the other side of the German-German border, was also much less deferential, and much more willing to demonstrate their unhappiness. Their preference did not necessarily lean toward capitalism, however, as they criticized capitalism as openly as they pushed for socialism to be improved. This is the generation that clearly most closely resembles the postmaterialist trend in value change in the West. It is also the generation that formed the basis for much of the social movements and groups that organized around particular issues in the 1970s and '80s.

All of these factors - the presence of a facilitating institutional framework, an alternative source of socialization, an often concentrated group of well-educated young people who have been discriminated against by the state, and ideas and symbols which provided common cause and legitimacy - add up to produce very favourable conditions for the growth of at least pockets of social activism and dissent in an otherwise rigid state-socialist society. They also point to conditions favourable to new social movement

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[69] Ibid, p. 257.

mobilization. Those movements which evolved will be looked at next.

THE GROWTH OF NEW SOCIAL MOVEMENTS IN THE GDR

We have established that within the GDR, an institution existed, the Evangelical Church, that was able to provide the space for a variety of social movements, due to the level of freedom granted it by the state, its relatively democratic institutional organization, its openness to a theology that was politically involved, and its continuing active participation in East German society. This section examines two of the social movements that grew up in the space provided by the church. These movements, it will become clear, share many characteristics of the 'new social movements' in the West. But many of these characteristics were hobbled compared to their Western counterparts because the GDR movements had to learn to work within a state which did not permit freedom of speech and which had the police apparatus to harass systematically and continuously the persons willing to involve themselves in these movements.

Placing all of the 'social-ethical groups', or what are termed here broadly as 'social movements', under one heading is difficult because of their great variety.[70] It is also very

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[70] In response to those who would argue with the notion that what existed in the GDR were in fact 'social movements', new or otherwise, it can be argued that this is more a question of definition. It has been said that the assortment of peace groups, for example, "don't constitute a movement in the traditional sense of an organization with a set hierarchy, lines of responsibility, official spokesmen, policy programs, and so forth. At the same time, it is a movement in the sense that these groups share broad objectives and goals and have a sense of a common fate." The latter idea is set forward by Ronald Asmus, in "Is there a Peace Movement in the GDR?". These traditional social movement characteristics do not, however, apply in the case of new social movements, where there is no set hierarchy, or official spokesmen, so perhaps a closer fit is achieved.

difficult to gain an empirical basis on which to ground a theoretical study of the informal groups which existed within the church, as their illegality in itself made keeping specific records of their members and activities quite dangerous.[71] There are however common themes running through much of the group work that suggests similarities with Western new social movements.

One writer has divided the groups which existed in the GDR into three categories which seem to fit groups in both East and West quite well. The first category is the "action-oriented groups", which concentrated mainly on the social situation in their own country, and on achieving changes in a hurry. They spent much less time on broad thematic questions. Examples are the *Arbeitskreis Gerechtigkeit,* and the *Arbeitsgemeinschaft Menschenrechte.*[72] Secondly, thematically-oriented groups, such as the Leipzig group *Arbeitsgruppe Umweltschutz* and the better known women's peace group, *Frauen für den Frieden* . These groups tended to seek change more through consciousness raising via the spread of information. These groups existed first and were usually the most welcome within the church. They also addressed global problems in addition to those in the GDR. The third category does not fit any forms taken by the peace movement in the GDR, as it includes the introspective, and identity-oriented type of groups. 'Identity' was however an important mobilizing factor in all of the groups, a trait shared with many West European NSMs, and evident in many of the interviews with

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[71] Uwe Funk, "Die Existenz sozialethischer Gruppen in der evangelischen Kirche der DDR als gesellschaftswissenschaftliches Problem", in Pollack ed., *Die Legitimität der Freiheit,* p. 83.
[72] Pollack, "Sozialethisch engagierte Gruppen in der DDR", p. 131.

participants after the *Wende*.[73]

An examination of two broad movements that grew out of and around the church in the GDR - the 'unofficial' peace and environmental movements - serves to illustrate the key similarities and the obvious differences between these movements and the NSMs so familiar in the West. Several of the criteria identified by Offe as characteristics of NSMs fit well with the GDR groups: the rise of participatory moods and ideologies; the increased use of noninstitutional or nonconventional forms of political participation; and the importance of 'moral' issues formerly largely left outside the political domain.[74]

Whether these movements were 'new' or 'old' does not deter from the fact that they were to have a profound influence on the development of a democratic political culture in that country. The appearance of grassroots movements in the GDR would not cause the downfall of the Honecker regime, but the existence of pockets of informed individuals who were willing to risk their own security to take the regime to task did help erode the state monopoly on power, as well as provide the democracy movement with many of its leaders.

The Unofficial Peace Movement

It is difficult for many in the West to relate to the situation which existed in the countries

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[73] One of the best known members of the East German dissident scene, Bärbel Bohley, said that the feeling of belonging (Zusammengehörigkeitsgefühl) that she and others felt in the IFM played an important role in bringing them together, particularly for a group of outsiders. *Die Entzauberung des Politischen*, p. 51.
[74] Offe, "Challenging the Boundaries of Institutional Politics", p. 63.

of the Soviet Bloc in terms of their everyday existence. Certainly, life went on, people still developed personal relationships, married, and held jobs, but the state of living without the ability to express openly one's concerns or fears is a feature of life that is difficult for persons living in democracies to comprehend fully. The all-pervasive nature of Marxist-Leninist propaganda and the facade of upholding its truths, the lack of trust in one's neighbors, even in one's own family, for fear of being labeled hostile to the state, and the ever present awareness of the threat of living in the middle of a potential war-zone were all facets of daily life in the GDR. Of course, many citizens simply continued to live their lives by ignoring as much as possible the conditions that they felt powerless to change. For some, however, these problems weighed heavily and they sought outlets for their concerns.

Origins and goals:

Although peace movements independent of state authority appear to have existed in most if not all East and East-Central European states in the late 1970s, and early-1980s, only in East Germany was this type of movement the driving force behind the domestic opposition scene.[75] In the late 1970s, the peace movement became the first organized and

[75] Two good comparative studies of the independent peace movements in this part of Europe include Tismaneanu's, *In Search of Civil Society: Independent Peace Movements in the Soviet Bloc.* (New York: Routledge, 1990); and A Helsinki Watch Report, *From Below: Independent Peace and Environmental Movements in Eastern Europe and the USSR.* (New York, NY, October 1987).

sustained social movement in the GDR.[76]

The roots of the peace movement in the GDR were located in church circles and Christian ideas, and stemmed initially from the church's reaction to the introduction of compulsory military service in 1962.[77] The introduction of the *Bausoldat* option in 1964, after much pressure from the church community, did not provide Christian and non-Christian pacifists with much of an alternative though, as it usually involved construction projects of a military nature and resulted in obvious discrimination once the service was completed. In fact, in many areas, the Bausoldaten were to become the core activists in peace circles.

The emergence of a peace movement also was not completely surprising given both a domestic and an international situation that caused a great deal of fear and frustration amongst many concerned citizens. The reality of life in East Germany in the latter two decades of its existence was one in which peace took on an altogether relevant meaning.[78] Honecker's self-declared "Peace State" was in fact the most militarized society

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[76] Unlike Joppke however, this author feels that the focus on "peace" in the GDR opposition scene was not mainly a cautious choice on the part of those activists in and outside of the church. To downplay the risks taken by participants in the peace demonstrations and campaigns as being inadequate, which Joppke in essence does by criticising the 'revisionist' approach of these groups, does not provide the reader with the full meaning of "peace" to those groups. A look at the issues addressed by many of the peace groups and initiatives in East Germany testifies to the breadth of their focus, as does the fact that it was from within their circles that the first environmental and human rights groups in the GDR formed.

[77] Wolfgang Ruddenklau, *Störenfried. DDR-Opposition, 1986-1989* (Berlin: Basis Druck, 1993), 28.

[78] It is perhaps worth mentioning as an aside that this point contrasts with the perception of 'peace' in the rest of East-Central Europe, if Vaclav Havel is to be believed. Havel wrote a letter in April of 1985 directed at Western peace activists, explaining the reasons why many in Czechoslovakia and elsewhere in Central Europe are unenthusiastic on the topic of peace. The reason, he writes, is not only that speaking out against the bomb in his country means becoming a dissident, and thus "the complete transformation of one's life", but the word itself (peace) has been drained of all content as a part of the ideological facade of that political system. Havel, "Anatomy of a Reticence", *Open Letters. Selected Writings, 1965-1990.* (New York: Alfred A.Knopf, 1991). Why the struggle for peace in Eastern Germany was still

on earth, with 1.2 million GDR men and women under arms in 1983, or 11 soldiers or militiamen per square kilometer.[79] Furthermore, not only was military service compulsory for of age males, and hatred of the enemy stressed in the educational system along with militaristic values, but military 'training' actually began in elementary schools, and military images and propaganda were even introduced in kindergarten.[80] The irony of the approach taken by the East German government is summed up in the response of one regime official to the question whether an independent peace movement existed in the GDR: "[T]here cannot be a pacifist movement because the government's policy is pacifism. The entire country is pacifist."[81] For some, it was the desire to draw attention to the "contrast between the GDR authorities' professed and practiced values, between official slogans and actual behaviour"[82] that drew them into peace activities organized by and within different parishes. At the same time, East Germany's situation in the middle of Europe and the fear-mongering of its own government with regards to Western states' willingness to start a nuclear war, led many to take on a more global outlook.

The central issues of the peace movement in the early 1980s included:

> ... the introduction of a "social peace service", military education in the schools, police harassment of people engaged in peace initiatives, and the

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able to draw so much support points to the particularities of the East German case, the influence of West Germany and West German movements, and the new social movement focus in that country. It also is partly a result of the fact that the Church seems to have reclaimed 'peace' from the state.

[79] Joppke, p. 78.

[80] For example, the following song was taught to 3-6 year olds in Kindergarten: "Soldaten sind vorbeimarschiert, die ganze Kompanie. Und wenn wir groß sind, wollen wir Soldat sein so wie sie". In Gisela Helwig, "Eine Hoffnung lernt gehen", *Deutschland Archiv*, (No. 4/1988), 236.

[81] Quoted by Ronald D. Asmus, "Is There a Peace Movement in the GDR?", *Orbis*, (Summer 1983), 302.

[82] Tismaneaunu, "Nascent Civil Society in the German Democratic Republic", p. 96.

> contrast between official praise for the Western peace movement and the major difficulties encountered in organizing a similar movement in the GDR.[83]

The idea of a social peace service as an alternative to the *Wehrdienst* was one on which the church seems to have taken a firm and united stance, yet which the state found wholly unacceptable. For many of these groups, the goal of keeping the 'peace state' true to its word, or at least to show the hypocrisy of this claim, was of central focus, an approach shared with Charter 77. Most adherents by this time had come to accept that the search for world peace cannot be separated from the lack of peace and justice in one's own country.

What originally began as a religious pacifism, due to the central role played by the church in housing the great variety of dissent falling under the 'peace' banner, did by 1987 begin to move in some cases out from under the leadership of the church. This was partly out of frustration due to the moderating influence of the church on pacifist activities, as the pressure on the church leadership by state officials to quell the more vocal dissent which had always been present was increased after 1986.[84] Another factor was simply the desire of grassroots activists to speak out in the open, not just within the open space provided by the church. The desire not to be represented to the state or by the church for that matter was obviously reminiscent of the activities of Western NSMs. However, few in these movements ever thought that they could have any real influence on some of the

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[83] Asmus, "Is There a Peace Movement in the GDR, p. 312.

[84] In the jargon of the secret police, the disciplining and containment of opposition groups by the church was referred to as the "theologization of hostile-negative activities". Joppke, p. 89.

issues addressed by the anti-nuclear movement in the West. Although there existed a hope that at least the GDR could exist as a nuclear-free state, they had no illusions of turning around Western stationing decisions. What these groups, small and large, aimed to achieve in many cases, was simply to break down part of the state-created farce surrounding the "peace state" and live their own lives as free from militarism as possible.

The forms of pacifist social protest in the GDR:

Most of the discussion groups which began in different church congregations and grew out of regional synods, peace decades, and peace workshops, were initially thematically oriented, as suited their original aims and their wish to earn the state's attention without being overtly anti-regime. The shape taken by pacifist activities in the GDR was very much influenced by religious symbols and themes. The best known 'demonstrations' in the whole East German peace movement was likely the peace prayers at the Nikolaikirche in Leipzig. Every Monday over a period of years, people gathered in the evening for peace prayers, which became a gathering place not just for pacifist Christians, but for a great many dissidents. This was also to be a very important gathering point for the democracy movement in the Fall of 1989.

The best opportunities for the early peace movement to exchange ideas and information came during the 10-day long *Friedensdekaden,* or 'peace decades', which was first held under the 'swords into plowshares' banner, and organized by the Kirchenbund and the Landesjugendpfarrämtern, in November 1980, and held annually thereafter. In

general, the church spent a great deal of time in the 1980s on the question of peace, making it the main topic of a number of regional and the federal synods, and of other conferences, and often at the expense of good church-state, and inter-church relations.

It goes without saying that most groups did not have the opportunity of choosing from a whole repertoire of possible forms of protest. Hans-Jürgen Fischbeck called the situation faced by groups like the *Absage an der Praxis und Prinzip der Abgrenzung*, a thematically-oriented peace group of which he was a founding member, "opposition with few possibilities for action".[85] Demonstrations were out of the question prior to the Fall of 1989. The result was in most circumstances dissent within the church in the form of peace services and workshops, but the target of these activities was always the society at large.

The East German Environmental Movement

The origins of the first environmental activism in the GDR looked quite similar to those of the peace movement. The early church initiative on the environmental question is said to have arisen due to a number of factors, not the least of which was the international attention being paid to environmental deterioration in the 1970s, particularly following the publication of the Club of Rome's "The Limits to Growth" report in 1972, and the attention paid to the issue by ecumenical organizations.[86] Added to this was the growing

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[85] Author's translation. Fischbeck interview, in H. Findeis, D. Pollack and M. Schilling eds., *Die Entzauberung des Politischen*, p. 80.

[86] Goeckel, *The Lutheran Church and the East German State*, p. 251.

realization among a small part of the population that the ecological situation in the GDR was becoming catastrophic in some regions. Some of these people were subsequently attracted to the church - the only space in which alternative ideas were openly debated. It also comes as no surprise that the first environmental groups were founded in the heavily polluted, brown-coal mining region near Leipzig.

As with the peace movement, groups started out discussing environmental themes within church circles and groups in the 1970s, although most activities only took place after 1980. At that time there still existed the belief that these questions were not at odds with the socialist system, and could be addressed with instruments available in the GDR.[87] The environmental movement, like the peace movement, also benefitted seriously from the forum it was given at regional synods in the late-1970s which provided an excellent, and in fact the only, opportunity for information sharing at that time. The church also provided groups with the benefit of having a permanent research facility devoted to environmental questions - the Ecclesiastical Research Centre in Wittenberg.

The forms and tactics of environmental activism:

Once it became clear that the state was indeed unwilling to change its focus on economic growth at all costs and its policy on allowing little or no debate or participation of the population on environmental questions, the approach of environmental activists

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[87] Hans-Peter Gensichen, "Kritisches Umweltengagement in den Kirchen", in Jürgen Israel, ed., *Zur Freiheit Berufen,* (Berlin: Aufbau Taschenbuch Verlag, 1991).

became visibly more politicized.[88] In response, many thematic groups moved to a clearer action-oriented focus, becoming more critical of technology and its effects on advanced industrial societies. The following is a sample of the activities of a number of East German environmental groups in the early to mid-1980s. All are consistent with the kind of political action expected by NSMs:

- Tree-plantings were a popular activity used by many of the church environmental groups. Such events may have revolved around a whole weekend, where thematic work would take place on the Friday night, with the tree-planting, or an alternative activity on the Saturday, and a religious service with more thematic discussion on the Sunday.[89] This may seem an inconsequential activity, but the symbolism even of planting trees in the GDR was clear.
- *Mobil ohne Auto*, or car-free weekends, were a very recognizable activity, first recommended by the research centre in Wittenberg and undertaken by many congregations in cities across the GDR. The aim of such a program, according to organizers, was to offer alternatives rather than just criticisms. A number of permanent groups evolved from these weekend-long activities.[90]
- *Eine Mark für Espenheim*, a GDR-wide program organized by a Rötha church group. Groups had asked the state to clean up the large industrial complex at Espenheim, but

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[88] Indeed, in 1982 the state declared all environmental information classified. Jones, "Origins of the East German Enzironmental Movement", p. 243.
[89] Genischen, "Kritisches Umweltengagement in den Kirchen", p.150.
[90] Ibid, p. 151

decided to take the initiative and ask supporters to sign a petition and donate one Mark to the cause. Although nowhere near the amount of money needed for the clean up project, an impressive 50,000 signatures, and Marks, were collected.[91]

- *Aufklärungsarbeit*, or work that sought to address the information deficit on the environmental situation in the GDR, can also be included with concrete action, as it included the bulk of environment movement activities. This includes the publication of 'inter-church newsletters', which were circulated to as many as possible outside of the church. Other activities that fall under *Aufklärungsarbeit* are the environmental libraries, *Lesecafes*, exhibits, information events, political evening prayers, seminars, film festivals and much more.[92]
- Other activities included sending children from the more polluted regions on clean-air summer vacations,[93] group bike rides into polluted areas, art exhibits, and joint activities with groups from the Netherlands in at least one case.[94]

These concrete activities, aimed mainly at raising awareness of environmental issues, appealed to many participants because they offered the chance to actually do something. Participation in environmental, peace, and human rights activism had a great appeal to young people who usually found the values taught by their state-socialist society

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[91] Jones, p. 251.
[92] Ulrike Poppe, "Das kritische Potential der Gruppen in Kirche und Gesellschaft", Pollack, ed., *Die Legitimität der Freiheit* (Frankfurt a.M.: Peter Lange, 1990), p. 72.
[93] "Saubere Luft für Ferienkinder" - the state tried to harass this program out of existence by interfering with their mail, and similar tactics, but church officials maintained their support for it. Jones, p. 244.
[94] The Dutch IKV, a broad inter-church peace group, and Dutch pastors built ties with peace groups in Mecklenburg for example, sending youth groups to this Land in the summer for hikes and bike tours, with the idea that this opportunity to share concerns would build peace. Probst, p. 47.

completely void of meaning. This activism was argued to provide "youth with the chance of doing something that is both useful and noble."[95]

Summary

In the early stages of group activity, information sharing and "consciousness raising" activities appear to have been central. There is also no doubt that the access to West German television programming and reports on the mass protests engaged in by the anti-nuclear movement and the Greens had an effect on the desire of many Eastern activists to get involved and urge their government to take on some of these issues. This influence is evident in the forms East German activism has taken, with slogans, peace demonstrations, and direct contacts in some cases with West German activists.[96] The realization that their government would not do anything, and the understanding that the government really could not sufficiently address environmental concerns on its own in any respect, led to the push for a more participatory and renewed socialism.

Although statistics on factors contributing to movement mobilization in the GDR are difficult to find, some attempt has been made to assess which motives did play a role in the choice to become involved. These motives fall into roughly four categories, although many people were certainly motivated by a combination of these factors. First, genuine concern and even fear with relation to the current state of affairs in the GDR drew some

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[95] Tismaneanu, "Against Socialist Militarism: The Independent Peace Movement in the GDR," p. 169.
[96] Asmus, p. 334.

people into action. Pollack calls this a subjective *Betroffenheitsgefühl*, a feeling of shock or perplexity, which grew in the face of ecological conditions, world armament, and the lack of justice and equality in their own country: "Man will nicht schweigen und tatenlos zusehen, wie alles nur noch schlimmer wird, sondern eingreifen, verändern, mobilisieren."[97]

A second motive for participation in the new social movements was simply the desire of some to express their concerns and be in the company of others who hold similar views. As a release for built up tensions and frustrations, participation in thematic groups was undoubtedly effective. It is likely, however, that for some the discovery that others felt the same way served as a stepping stone toward a greater impulse to act on those shared concerns and try to achieve real change.

For others, the motivation may have been more the desire to differentiate themselves from the status quo, and to be autonomous. The impulse to no longer go along with everyone else and to be true to oneself was not uncommon, particularly in a state where accepting the status quo and the characterization of the 'socialist personality' was so central.

Lastly, it is also likely that a number of mainly younger participants were motivated simply out of curiosity. An alternative youth culture developed namely in East Berlin, but also in other major cities, in the late 1970s around the music scene. Some were

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[97] Detlef Pollack, "Sozialethisch engagierte Gruppen in der DDR", p.129.

drawn from that scene to events organized by the church or under its umbrella. Pollack says an expression of this would be along the lines of, "Dort, wo die Gruppen sind, da ist was los".[98] One example of the draw of such events is the incredible turnout at a peace demonstration held in Dresden on the anniversary of the bombing of that city. More than 5,000 young people from all across the GDR are reported to have shown up for this demonstration which the *Friedenskreis Wolfspelz* had only advertised via circulars.

Regardless of their particular reasons for joining, what all groups formed under the church's umbrella and within the church, as well as East German intellectuals, shared was an approach that was largely reformist and self-limiting. The reasons for the revisionist approach of intellectuals and social movements in the GDR are complex and in themselves warrant book-length treatment. What will be said in explanation here are a few key points. First, there was an understanding that the democratization of the GDR would mean the end of its existence as an independent country. This particularity of the East German situation is illustrated by Ulrich Beck, who stated that: "Poland minus communism is still Poland. The GDR without communism is - the Federal Republic".[99] As much as these activists had problems with their lack of freedom and human rights, and with what had become a corrupt bureaucracy in the GDR, they did not think a pure capitalist system was the answer. What they sought was a 'third way' - a reformed socialism where citizens would be able to take part in questions concerning their future,

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[98] Ibid, p. 130.
[99] Joppke, *East German Dissidents and the Revolution of 1989*, p. 154.

but where economics would not take priority over social justice.

Most groups and movements formed in the hope of achieving some level of dialogue with the regime. They did not see themselves as an opposition to the regime. The key change in this approach followed two important events of state repression in 1987-88. The first of these was the police raid of the *Umweltbibliothek* - the 'Environmental Library' - which was a very important permanent base for the environmental movement in East Berlin, as well as the home of the presses for the underground dissident newsletter, the "*Umweltblätter*". Second, the state arrested and either imprisoned or deported a number of well-known activists at the annual Karl Liebknecht/ Rosa Luxembourg march. They had organized alongside the official march and carried placards with Luxembourg quotes which demonstrated the state's own contradictions. The regime crackdown on unofficial movements and groups was publicized in the West as well, and showed its unwillingness to put into place Gorbachev-style reforms. The realization that the state would not engage in dialogue with these groups in good faith contributed to their politicization.

ASSESSMENTS AND CONCLUSIONS

In conclusion, this analysis has shown two aspects of the GDR social movements: they acted as a "harbinger of changing attitudes towards dissent in a self-proclaimed socialist

society,"[100] and thus provided hope for a changing, more democratic political culture. Second, they shared some similarities with NSMs in the West. The attempt to demonstrate the similarities between the East German social movements and West European NSMs, however, should not distract from the incredible difficulties these groups faced as a de facto opposition. Both their opposition status, regardless of their efforts not to appear as an opposition, and the somewhat reminiscent NSM form they took are important in any study of the role of these groups in the East German transition to democracy. As Carol Hager states in her study of environmentalism and democracy in East and West Germany: "Grassroots environmental groups in the GDR and the FRG raise important questions about the democratic potential of modern industrial society, whether capitalist or state-socialist."[101] The value of such questions is beyond dispute.

The presence of churches in the social life and activities of many communities in the form of youth and men and women's groups, has been noted above. There is a definite link between the presence of these meeting places and their politicization at a time when discrimination against Christians was increasing, and the militarism and environmental degradation in GDR society were taking its toll on people's daily lives. Moreover, those predisposed to action had ready-made examples of grassroots protest visible nightly on West German news. When this is combined in many congregations with more activist clergy and the church's "consistent opposition to the resurgence of

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[100] Joyce Marie Mushaben, "Swords to Plowshares: The Church, the State, and the East German Peace Movement", *Studies in Comparative Communism* (Summer 1984), 123.
[101] Hager, "Environmentalism and Democracy in the Two Germanies", *German Politics*, (April 1992), 96.

militarism in East Germany",[102] the result was often workgroups and services, youth retreats and seminars, that focused thematically on the concerns of the people on issues not all that different from those being addressed by 'new' social movements in West Germany.

The church was an institution in which some, albeit isolated, experiences with democracy were able to occur. Whether or not such movements would have evolved out of GDR society without the church's shelter and involvement is difficult to say. It is likely that the mass protests which filled the streets of Dresden, Leipzig, and Berlin in November 1989, mobilized in large part by the emigration flood which had begun out of the GDR across the Hungarian and Czech borders, would have taken place in some form without the Leipzig peace prayers, or the Berlin environmental groups. But the Church certainly helped ensure that these movements were democratic and peaceful. In the words of Robert Goeckel, "Although not the mother of the revolution, the church certainly seemed to act as midwife to it."[103]

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[102] V. Tismaneanu, "Against Socialist Militarism: The Independent Peace Movement in the GDR", p. 151.
[103] Goeckel, "The GDR Legacy and the German Protestant Church", p. 84.

Chapter 3:
Social Movements, the Church and the East German Transition to Democracy

Since 1990 a great amount has been written about East Germany's sudden and unexpected collapse and its subsequent unification with the Federal Republic. However, in the words of one academic, the speed with which these events occurred led to its being both "over reported and under analyzed."[104] Phrases such as "Wir sind das Volk", and "Demokratie - jetzt oder nie" (democracy - now or never), and snapshot images of joyous Berliners climbing the Wall that separated them for almost thirty years, became part of the collective memory of more than just Germans. Few, however, understood their origins or their deeper meaning. In light of the evidence presented in the previous chapter on the particular nature of the East German alternative political groups and movements and their relationship with the Evangelical Church prior to 1989, this chapter will advance the argument that those earlier experiences with grass-roots organizations and ideas provided the roots for the democratic opposition in the GDR. Although factors external to the movements themselves and even external to the GDR were pivotal in bringing the regime in that country to its knees, the presence of an authentically East German opposition in the form of a blend of citizens' initiatives and new social movements also had its own direct

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[104] Konrad H. Jarausch, *The Rush to German Unity*. (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1994), 4.

impact on the transition to democracy which ensued.

Although one should not in retrospect over or undervalue historical developments because of their eventual outcome, the fact that feelings of disappointment with the result of the East German democratic transition - a virtual takeover by Western parties, institutions, and capital - have been widespread in the new Bundesländer does influence the goal of this study. Civil society was developed too late in the GDR, and was too isolated to involve more than small pockets of the population. But the question still must be asked whether or not a slower pace of change could have allowed for a broader East German challenge to the SED and to the FRG to develop. If the transfer of the basic institutions of a market economy and a liberal democracy were not enough to ensure that the transition would lead to a prosperous economy and a consolidated democracy, could a more developed civil society have aided in achieving this outcome?

This chapter will look at the origins and goals of the East German social movements and at what accounted for the form that their political action took. It will also examine what led to the eventual outcome of the dissolution of the GDR. During the period of revolutionary upheaval in the Fall of 1989, the forms taken by social activism in the DDR changed to something more openly political. In contrast, their issue focus and goals changed remarkably little throughout much of the process, leaving them as marginalized voices as soon as the regime had been forced to give up its hold on power. Throughout the months just prior to the crumbling of the Berlin Wall and up until the first free election in March 1990, the different citizen groups and initiatives, which formed out

of the peace, human rights, feminist and environmental circles, maintained part of their new social movement focus. This time of rapid political, social and cultural change undoubtedly allowed for a changed political opportunity structure, and for a window of opportunity for new groups and parties to move in and to frame the issues at hand - namely, the process of democratizing the GDR. To a certain degree, groups such as New Forum and Democratic Awakening did just that. They had several difficulties, however, which hindered their gaining support in the general population. They were unsure whether they wanted to exercise power. They sought a chance at a 'third way' between Western capitalism and the 'socialism' that they had experienced at a time when pressure toward the capitalist model was high. They also pushed for a new, more actively democratic state along the lines espoused by many Western new social movements. Building a state out of new social movement principles such as direct democracy, self-determination and ecological priorities, was too experimental and its sponsors too inexperienced and too divided to win strong support from the general public.

Questions surrounding what accounts for the outcome of social movements will also be addressed in this chapter and the next. It is perhaps of greatest importance here that some explanation is sought for the turn of events that included the landslide-like regime collapse, the growing groundswell of support for grassroots groups such as New Forum, and their subsequent and equally speedy fall from the proverbial pulpit. This is not so much to prove that social movements, new or otherwise, were able to lead the East German people into revolution, but to sort out what role they and the church did play

from information published by groups themselves, their opponents, and social scientists in general since 1990.

THE EAST GERMAN REVOLUTION

There are so many questions that can and already have been asked concerning the remarkable string of events which began roughly in September 1989 and ended with the unification of the two Germanies just one year later. For example, how did it happen when it was not predicted even by specialists in that area? Moreover, how did the Germans achieve a 'peaceful revolution'? Furthermore, why was unification the outcome, and did there exist any alternative? The primary interest in looking at the transition period in a study on social movements and democratization is to assess whether or not social movements were able to aid in facilitating regime collapse and/or democratic consolidation. It is generally considered a precondition for democratic consolidation that a free and lively civil society is able to develop. As one aspect in this sphere, movements can aid in this development.[105] While assessing this factor in depth, this study does not seek to overvalue - as has sometimes been the case - one piece in an interconnected series of elements. Due however to time and space limitations, other factors will only be looked at in broad overview.

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[105] Linz and Stepan define civil society as "that arena of the polity where self-organizing groups, movements, and individuals, relatively autonomous from the state, attempt to articulate values, create associations and solidarities, and advance their interests". *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation* (Baltimore, Maryland: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1996), 7.

How and Why it Happened

The first cracks began to appear in the Soviet bloc considerably earlier than 1989, but few imagined that these would cause the major structural damage which eventually occurred. Gorbachev's policies of *glasnost* and *perestroika* in the USSR had contributed to liberalizing trends elsewhere in the bloc, namely in Poland and Hungary, but few believed its logical extension would be democratization.[106] Similarly, the economic crisis which has been credited by many as the decisive factor in the overthrow of communism was not fully recognized until after these states were already beginning to transform their political and economic systems. Dissent occurred, but was still repressed in most Soviet Bloc states, and particularly in front-line states such as Czechoslovakia and the GDR. In other words, although in retrospect it is easy to remark on these regimes' success at lasting as long as they did, there is little proof that the Soviet Bloc could not have survived a good deal longer.

What seems to have made the difference was a combination of factors which led to a crack big enough for opposition groups and the general public to begin to openly question - and display, in the case of the mass of emigrants leaving the GDR - their states' illegitimacy. As Havel's analogy of the Greengrocer's refusal to put up the now meaningless "Workers of the world unite!" poster had foreshadowed, the system of lies was undermined in part by a number of 'powerless' figures. In their recent study of

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[106] The GDR leadership prided itself instead on not needing such policies.

democratic transitions, Linz and Stepan characterize post-totalitarian regimes - a description which fits the GDR very closely - as increasingly dependent on actual performance as a basis for their legitimacy, due to the weakening of the utopian ideology.[107] People were willing at least to give lip service to the regime if it was performing comparatively well.[108] The most important causal factor in opening up these regimes to democratic opposition was likely "the unmistakable refusal of the Soviet leadership to assume the role of re-insurers of the state socialist order, with the backing of their military clout, as in 1953, 1956, 1968 and 1981."[109] In addition to this, the Soviet leader himself criticized the Honecker regime most directly with his statement upon visit to the GDR that: "Life will punish those who stay behind . . . If the Communist Party does not respond to life, she will be condemned."[110] With the removal of the Soviet threat, and an increasingly contentious public, states eventually either found it in their best interest to reach some agreement with the opposition, which occurred first in Poland and in Hungary, or were forced out of power.

In the GDR, 1989 began as almost any other year. There was an urge amongst the fragmented protest scene to coordinate efforts and leave the confines of the church in order to work toward gaining legal opposition status, but this met with little success.[111]

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[107] Juan Linz and Alfred Stepan, *The Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*, p. 49.
[108] East Germans appear to have taken pride in their economic successes in relation to the other COMECON countries. Unfortunately for the regime, however, it also was frequently compared to West German standards by its population.
[109] Claus Offe, "A 'Special Path' of Transformation? The German Accession Territory Compared with its East European Neighbours", in *Varieties of Transition* (MIT Press, 1997), 134.
[110] Manfred Görtemaker, *Unifying Germany* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1994), 73.
[111] Christian Joppke, *East German Dissidents and the Revolution of 1989: Social Movements in a Leninist Regime* (New York: New York University Press, 1995), 139.

State repression of non-church sanctioned groups, and increasingly even of some groups which did have church ties continued. The major event for both the church and opposition groups in the first half of 1989 was their contesting of the May local elections. The state intended the election as an affirmation of its staying the 'anti-pereistroika' course. Grass-roots groups from different church congregations in East Berlin sent observers to 131 polling stations in order to monitor the voting.[112] The regime opponents even tabulated their results at St. Elizabeth's Church - in front of West German correspondents. Such proof of regime lies only solidified what most East Germans already knew, and had long felt immune to change.

In fact, dissidents in East German social movements realized a long-term goal, the chance to step out into an open public political space, when the mass flight out of the GDR, which resulted from the opening of the Hungarian-Austrian border, began. East German citizens had been trickling across the border, both legally and illegally, since the Wall was raised in 1961. The pressure to leave the GDR was on the increase since 1988, and by the time the East German regime was gearing up for the country's fortieth anniversary, international attention was focusing on the dramatic human flight that was taking shape in that country.[113]

The Berlin Wall embodied tellingly the novel situation that existed in the GDR, a situation outlined very well by Claus Offe:

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[112] Jarausch, *The Rush to German Unity*, p. 38.
[113] Albert O. Hirschman, "Exit, Voice, and the Fate of the German Democratic Republic", *World Politics* (1993), 188.

> The GDR was an economic state without being a nation state. . . Despite its economic successes, its fragile statehood was threatened by continual offers of a nation state made by the FRG, whose mere existence and frequently also its policies weakened the internal GDR opposition. The GDR was able to extricate itself from this confrontation with the neighbouring state in the West only by physically locking its own population in, to which end a building project was embarked on that on 9 November 1989 finally proved to be not a 'protective wall', but instead the Achilles' heel of the whole Eastern bloc system.[114]

Having as close and as powerful a neighbour as the FRG, a state to which many East Germans felt great loyalties, had always limited the legitimacy of the GDR. When the Wall was finally breached on 9 November, the state's claim on its citizens' loyalty was shown to be so little as to virtually negate the regime's legitimacy. The flight out of the GDR of many of its younger and most capable citizens mobilized those already advocating that the state needed to reform its institutions to become more democratic and accountable. Eventually, the state was forced to respond.

The actual collapse of Honecker's regime happened very quickly. As if in a dream, the niche society became awash with peaceful citizens marching in the streets of Leipzig, afterwards labeled the *Heldenstadt* (city of heroes), Dresden, and later, Berlin and other cities. Although this surprising revolutionary momentum was quickly replaced by the "rush to German unity", this was the period in which the citizens' movements and the church took centre-stage. Looking at those few brief months illustrates some important facts about the East German opposition movements, and about the fate of the GDR.

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[114] Offe, " A 'Special Path' of Transformation?", p. 48.

Challenging the Old Regime: Citizens' Movements and the Church, June - December

The role of the *Bürgerbewegungen*, or citizens' movements, and the church in the East German transition to democracy is viewed principally in two different ways. The first credits the Protestant Church and the citizens' movements which organized mainly from within its institutional walls with bringing about a 'Protestant Revolution',[115] and/or a victory for grassroots democracy. The second discounts this role for a number of reasons. First, the opposition's 'utopian' search for a 'third way' was not seriously considered by the broader population, thereby leading to their marginalization. A second factor further supporting claims that these grassroots movements and parties were inconsequential is the fact that they were virtually flattened by the established West German parties and their co-opted eastern partners in the March elections. It is clear upon closer study of the material at hand that neither the 'Protestant Revolution' scenario, nor the complete negation of these groups is accurate.

To facilitate a clearer understanding of this period of rapid change, this argument will be presented in terms of two somewhat distinct periods: the first leading up to the overthrow of the SED and its security apparatus, and the second focusing on 'round table democracy' and the development of the competition for votes leading up to the March elections. These two periods have been labeled by Thaysen as the "old power struggle"

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[115] This is the title of a collection of documents from, and essays on, the revolution in the GDR, collected and edited by Gerhard Rein: *Die Protestantische Revolution, 1987-1990. Ein deutsches Lesebuch.* (Berlin, 1990); and also of an article by Erhart Neubert, "Eine Protestantische Revolution", in *Deutschland Archiv* (23/1990), 21-29.

and the "new power struggle", a classification with which this author is in agreement.[116]

Protestants and politicians? The church's role in the revolutionary Fall

Many in the Church were disappointed by the state's refusal to adopt Gorbachev's liberalization strategies. Particularly in the first few months of the transition, the views of the most active part of the church community appeared firmly supportive of the goals of the growing citizens' movements. In fact, the conclusions of the Kirchenbund Synod, held in Eisenach in September, were seen as an expression of their consensus with the citizens movements, due to the similarities between the two.[117] Essentially, the movements and the church wanted the same thing: a renewal of the system, but differed on the means each saw as necessary in order to achieve this. The church advocated a *"Politik der kleinen Schritte"*, or policy of 'small steps', which tended to mean "secret diplomacy", while the groups and movements clearly favoured unconventional tactics and public confrontation.[118] There were also disagreements within the church over the degree to which it should get involved in what were by this time more purely political activities. In the 1980s, environmental and peace issues had been categorized under notions that 'respect for creation', and an education for peace were firmly within the church's area of

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[116] Uwe Thaysen, "The GDR on Its Way to Democracy", in Dieter Grosser, ed., *German Unification: The Unexpected Challenge* (Providence, RI: Berg Publishers, 1992), 77.
[117] Karl Bruckmeier, "Vorgeschichte und Entstehung der Bürgerbewegungen in der DDR", in Gerda Haufe and Karl Bruckmeier, eds., *Die Bürgerbewegungen in der DDR und in den Ostdeutschen Ländern* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1993), 37.
[118] Adapted from Christiane Heinze and Detlef Pollack, "Zur Funktion der politisch alternativen Gruppen im Prozeß des gesellschaftlichen Umbruchs in der DDR", in Grabner, Heinze and Pollack, eds., *Leipzig im Oktober* (Berlin: Wichern Verlag, 1990), 86.

concern, and their interest in being a 'church for others' led many pastors and congregations to accept those alienated by the state for their political views. The way in which this church - namely its leadership and the many Evangelical congregations - would respond to a far more politicized democracy movement under its roof was not clear in the Fall of 1989. It was however clear to most at the church's grassroots by 1989 that the changes that they were seeking in society were not possible unless a general democratic opening up was allowed to occur. The inflexibility of the regime led many to believe this could never happen.

What roles the Church did play in the East German revolution are still widely debated. It is clear that the role of the church in the GDR prior to 1988 must be understood before an understanding of its role in the transition to democracy period can be grasped. A number of points stand out in the literature on this transition which point to the church's continuing "stellvertreter" role - which is translated roughly as deputyship. How this role was demonstrated is exemplified by the church's serving as the location in which many of the 'Bürgerbewegungen' (citizens' movements) were born,[119] and its apparently neutral role in not only this matter, but also in its later moderator role at so many round tables and discussions on the future on the GDR. There were, admittedly, a great variety of views coming from within the church on what degree of changes was most

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[119] Democractic Awakening, the SDP and Democracy Now all originated in the 'protestant milieu'. See: Bruckmeier, "Die Bürgerbewegungen der DDR im Herbst 1989", *Die Bürgerbewegungen in der DDR und in den Ostdeutschen Ländern.* Haufe and Bruckmeier, eds. (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1993), 70; also: Reinhard Henkys, "Die Kirchen im Umbruch der DDR", in *Leipzig im Oktober.* Grabner, Heinze and Pollack, eds. (Berlin: Wichern Verlag, 1990), 28.

desirable. But at a time when this debate was still illegal, and then uncoordinated, many churches provided the physical space and logistical support through which this dialogue could occur.

A number of specific achievements are frequently attributed to the Evangelical Church in the literature on the East German transition. The church was the 'birth place' of the revolution, as the Nikolaikirche in Leipzig provided the stage for the drama which unfolded in September, October and November. It is difficult to imagine the revolution of 1989 without the Leipzig Monday night peace prayers, with one writer calling them "the beginning and the motor of the revolution."[120] On 25 September, the peace prayers drew about 8,000 people, the largest demonstration in the GDR since 1953. This number reached 20,000 the following Monday, and continued to increase as the weeks passed, with approximately 300,000 taking part in the demonstration following the peace prayers on 23 October. [121] The trend of protests occurring particularly on Monday evenings even spread to other cities where peace prayers were not taking place at this time. This regular event actually began in 1981 under the banner of Swords into Plowshares. By 1989, it began to develop as a forum for a growing number of disenchanted groups and individuals - both those wishing to emigrate and others who were wishing to bring about change

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[120] Opp, Voss and Gern, *eds., Origins of a Spontaneous Revolution.* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1995), 20.

[121] Dirk Philipsen, *We Were the People. Voices from East German's Revolutionary Autumn of 1989,* (Durham, N.C.: Duke Universtiy Press, 1993), 394.

within the GDR.[122]

As it had been during the previous two decades, the church's provision of shelter for the opposition was of undeniable importance to the development of the groups which took the stage in the Fall of 1989. It is also widely known that by this time, most activists did not want to have to go through the church's diplomatic channels in order to express their concerns. East German intellectual and co-founder of Women for Peace and New Forum, Bärbel Bohley, compared the church to a "regulating corset", which "did not irrefutably stand behind the groups."[123] The two groups which Bohley was most closely involved with prior to the revolution - Women for Peace and the IFM - were the only two that had organized outside the church. Although not all of those involved with social activism and citizens movements in the GDR are as critical as Bohley is of the church as an institution, statements by many oppositionists demonstrate frustrations with that institution. Without the use of the church space and resources for their meetings, however, it is still unclear whether or not the opposition movement would have been able to take off in the way that it did. As frustrating as it was for many who sought a true 'civil society', and for whom the church represented a barrier and a paternalistic presence in their work, the ability to have a place to meet and to discuss their concerns was essential. This place was what the church provided, albeit with restrictions.

The debate over whether the church made a positive or a negative contribution to

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[122] This mingling of would-be emigrants and citizens movement activists caused certain tensions within this institution, reportedly even erupting into shouting matches in some cases.
[123] From an interview with Philipsen, *We Were the People*, p. 296.

the growth of democratic tendencies in the GDR has been carried on in numerous forums, and is addressed by most activists involved during that dynamic period of East German history. For most who were not themselves closely involved with the churches and unfamiliar with the tensions between grassroots movements and the church leadership, what the church, through a number of its pastors, involved parishes, and sympathetic individuals, was able to achieve appears remarkable. In the hectic months between September and December 1989, the doors of many churches in the larger cities of the GDR and their services were "opened for wide ranging discussions of current issues."[124] Furthermore, "[c]hurch synods throughout the country issued numerous declarations expressing the popular demands for political and social reform."[125]

In addition, through its earlier role as a place where Christians and non-Christians could organize into numerous groups, take part in activities and discussions, youth work and environmental consciousness-raising activities, the church provided many of the leaders of the democratic movement. Most of the first East German party representatives with at least some experience with democratic forms, and also with a greater support group also had some association with the church. In his study of the development of the New Forum in Rostock, Probst says that those who had been active in church work were some of the founding members of NF, bringing with them "Netzwerke an

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[124] John S. Conway, "How to Serve God in a Post-Marxist Land? East German Protestantism's Contribution to a Peaceful Revolution", in *Journal of Religious History*, (Dec. 1990), 127.
[125] Ibid., p. 127.

Vertrauenspersonen", and "Erfahrungen im Praktizeren der Demokratie."[126]

The peaceful nature of the revolution has also been credited by some as largely due to the church's active involvement in the events leading up to the democratization of the East German state. As Pollack[127] and others have stated, this is an argument that is persuasive, but difficult to prove. There are examples where churches and clergy helped to avert violence against protesters, and by protesters, but it is not clear that protesters would have otherwise used tactics that included violence.[128] Nevertheless, the symbolism of the 'peaceful revolution' and its strong ties to the Protestant Church is worthy of further study. The close association between the church and 'peace' was still an aspect of social protest and activism in the GDR in the late eighties, which accounts in part for the idea of the peaceful 'Protestant Revolution'.

Finally, the involvement of church representatives as mediators at the Central Round Table and countless other regional round tables between December 1989 and April 1990, a period which will be addressed below, has drawn considerable attention. At a time when East Germans were experiencing such a dramatic shift from a closed to an open

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[126] Probst, *Ostdeutsche Bürgerbewegungen und Perspektiven der Demokratie*, p. 121.

[127] D. Pollack, "Der Umbruch in der DDR - Eine Protestantische Revolution? Der Beitrag der Evangelischen Kirchen und der politischen alternativen Gruppen zur Wende 1989", in *Protestantische Revolution?* (Göttingen: Vanderhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), 67.

[128] In his essay on the church in the GDR during this period, John Conway discusses an example surrounding the huge rally in Leipzig on 9 October, a day many cite as the turning point for regime and opposition. According to Conway, while riot police, paramilitary groups and security forces were gearing up to meet demonstrators, the seven inner-city churches opened their doors for peace services in what was a rare display of ecumenical cooperation. "The clergy made repeated and united pleas for peace, for the renewal of society, and for the abstention from all forms of violence. Holding only lighted candles in their hands, the demonstrators paraded through the city in an unstoppable display of defiance." Taken from: "How to Serve God in a Post-Marxist Land? East German Protestantism's Contribution to a Peaceful Revolution", *Journal of Religious History*, (December 1990), 33.

society, the church's past involvement and continuing social presence in that society left it as the only institution, which all sides trusted in the position of intermediary.[129]

In summary, the church made a considerable contribution to the revolution. It did this both via participation in the ranks of the civic movements and by contributing to the ideas of the movements more or less indirectly, and on its own right, via the church's public calls for peace and its support for democratic reforms at the many round tables. It is also worth mentioning that, unlike the Catholic Church in Poland, the church in the GDR was faced with a much more secularized society, which made its role all the more surprising. In the words of one writer, it is perhaps relevant enough "that theologians played such a significant role in shaping a democratizing nation's political discourse, even if only for a short time."[130]

The development of the *Bürgerbewegungen*: origins and goals of a new political form

Discontent was visibly growing within East German society in the summer of 1989, and a series of citizens' movements were founded which moved out in front of the church. One need look no further than the numbers of people applying for permission to emigrate legally for evidence of increasing discontent. The number of legal emigrants had doubled in the previous year, from 11,500 in 1987 to 28,000 in 1988.[131] Furthermore, it is

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[129] Henkys, "Die Kirchen im Umbruch der DDR", in *Leipzig im Oktober*, p. 27.
[130] Burgess, "Theologians and the Renewal of Democratic Political Institutions in Eastern Germany", *Journal of Church and State* (Winter 1995), 87-102.
[131] Joppke, p. 136.

reported that by 1989, a backlog of 1,5 million permanent emigration requests had built up.[132] Frustrations even amongst party supporters were on the rise as a result of what was seen as the Honecker regime's absolute unwillingness to make any reforms, even when its brother countries were putting social and political reforms into effect. Gorbachev's policies had given reformists new hope, but by 1988 it was clear that the GDR's 'gerontocracy' was not willing to do the same. The banning of the Soviet magazine *Sputnik* in November 1988 had angered many reform-minded members of the party, as had the awarding of the Karl Marx-Order to the Romanian dictator Nicolai Ceaucescu that same month.[133] The regime's public endorsement of the bloody Tienanmen massacre in China in June 1989 was deplored by many in and outside of that country.

At the same time, pressure was being put on the Evangelical Church to discipline the groups under its protection. This, added with the negative experiences which groups had had with the church leadership, and the proof of regime falsification of the local elections, led groups to begin to make the move outside of the church's sphere of influence.[134] It is interesting that it was only at this point that the dialogue of 'civil society against the state', which had been dominant amongst dissidents in Czechoslovakia and Poland since the 1960s, began to take shape. Up until this point, even though work within

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[132] Daniel V. Friedheim, "Accelerating collapse: The East German road from liberalization to power-sharing and its legacy", in Y. Shain and J. Linz, eds., *Between States: Interim Governments and Democratic Transitions* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), 160.
[133] Hubertus Knabe, "Politische Opposition in der DDR. Ursprünge, Programmatik, Perspektiven", *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* (1-2/1990), 25.
[134] Ibid, p. 26.

the numerous peace and environmental groups had sought to affect the society at large, their sphere of political action remained solidly within a number of churches. These functioned as a result as a kind of substitute civil society, but one which had in almost all cases sought to avoid any label that would set it 'against the state'. Only in 1988-90 did these movements define themselves as an opposition, even though they had long opposed particular regime policies.

Initiatives and calls for support for a number of objectives were circulated as early as June, although they were only established in the form of different Bürgerbewegungen and parties in quick succession in September and October of that year. The roots of these groups go back further though, as the previous chapter illustrates. In a Stasi Report from June 1989, approximately 150 grassroots church groups and 10 alliances, including the 'Church from Below', the Green Network "Ark", and the Initiative for Peace and Human Rights, were listed as seeking the "dilution and subversion of socialism and the political destabilisation and fundamental change of the GDR".[135]

In part growing out of the initiative group *Absage an Prinzip und Praxis der Abgrenzung*, and in response to the increasing number of GDR citizens wishing to emigrate, the call went out in mid-August for a collective movement for renewal. Four days later an initiative group formed with the goal of building a social democratic party in the GDR which could be a viable alternative at the federal elections in 1991. The SDP

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[135] Glaeßner, *The Unification Process in Germany: From Dictatorship to Democracy.* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 69.

party was founded 7 October in a village church manse.[136] New Forum was founded on 9 September by 30 dissidents of varied background. Democracy Now, established 12 September, evolved in connection with a document titled, *"Thesen für eine demokratische Umgestaltung in der DDR"*, and had ties also with the 'Absage', and the IFM. In a vein similar to those other groups mentioned, the 'Democratic Awakening - social, ecological', grew out of an initiative group mainly made up of theologians which had formed the previous June, and was established as a party on 30 October. A collection of reform-minded communists titled the "Vereinigte Linke", or, the United Left, an unapologetically Marxist and 'old politics'-oriented group, was formed 2 October. The Initiative for Peace and Human Rights continued on in its own right in the spirit of its earlier work, but now as a legal initiative. The call to found a green party in the GDR was made public in November of 1989, growing largely out of the Green Network Ark which was founded in January of 1988 out of grassroots religious environmental groups from across the GDR. Around the same time, an initiative took shape that appears to have been in part a reaction to what its members felt the other movements and parties were lacking - a full consideration of women's issues and concerns. The "Unabhängige Frauenverband" was established on 3 December. These are the primary groups, movements, and 'party' which made up the opposition in the Fall of 1989 and Winter of 1990.

In their first calls for support there appear to be only minor differences of emphasis

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[136] Reinhard Henkys, "Die Kirchen im Umbruch der DDR", p. 28.

between these initiatives, and particularly those first established - New Forum, the IFM, Democracy Now and Democratic Awakening. A consensus on a number of points is clear, namely, the need for the immediate democratization of society, an end to one-party rule by the SED and the establishment of the rule of law, a common desire to maintain the open and democratic structure of social movements, and not become party organizations, the priority of ecological issues and notions of equality, and the call to get society involved so that citizens would be able to express their own concerns. In the words of New Forum, a "democratic dialogue" is needed in order to fully understand and thus be able to address people's concerns and opinions on the duties of a *Rechtsstaat*, on the economy and on cultural issues. According to Democracy Now, this was a call for "*Einmischung in eigener Sache*", or 'interference in our own affairs', something which citizens had never been entitled to in the GDR.

Each group cited a catalogue of demands that they thought were most important, beginning with those mentioned above, but also including an emphasis on the immediate separation of state and society, an "ecological reorganization of society",[137] and, most memorably in the view of their many critics, the protection of basic socialist values. Although New Forum (NF) shied away from using the word 'socialism' directly, its importance was implied, and directly stated in the appeals of Democratic Awakening (DA) - "Der DA tritt für eine sozialistische Gesellschaftsordnung auf dem Basis ein" - and

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[137] From the platform of Democratic Awakening: *Gründungsaufruf zum Demokratischen Aufbruch - sozial, ökologisch*, 2. October 1989. Drawn along with other primary documents of the democratic opposition from Gerhard Rein: *Die Opposition in der DDR - Entwürfe für einen anderen Sozialismus.* (Berlin: Wichern Verlag, 1989).

Democracy Now (DN). Despite the willingness initially to work within the existing constitution - once notions like the one-party nature of the state were eliminated - it must be stated that on the whole, the different movements specified many particular changes to policy and ideology in the GDR which counter the argument that they were moderate reformers.

The roots of these democratic movements were located within the very small and active circles of dissident activity, 'East German-style', in the Protestant (Evangelical) Churches, and in intellectual circles situated mainly in East Berlin. This is most clearly demonstrated by the degree of continuity in membership, particularly in terms of the founding members. The list of signatories to the appeals of Democracy Now and New Forum, for example, reads like a 'who's who' of the dissident scene from the 1980s. The tendency toward ideas deeply rooted in the peace and environmental movements, and the later developing human rights movement, in addition to the moral questions and religious ideas raised by the church, were all influential in the development of the opposition in 1989.

The form taken by these groups in this tumultuous period has drawn the attention of some social movement theorists. Despite the wider support for New Forum, that organization was made up of dozens of smaller city wide groups which shared similar concerns, while the other movements and groups also remained in the form of locally driven groups of individuals in a number of cities and regions. It was believed by many that one of the main achievements of the democratic citizens' movements was that they

established a new, and more democratic organizational form - even in comparison to the Western party system. According to one analyst, phrases like 'citizen democracy', 'round table' and 'democracy from below' advanced a "*Leitbild* of general renewal of parliamentary democracy."[138] This language brings to mind similar ideas expressed by the West German Greens in the mid- to late-1980s. The 'party vs. movement' debate with which the latter party struggled for the first few years of its existence and which resulted in inner-party divisions would also plague the East German citizens' movements. However, even those arguing that the movement, NF in particular in this case, needed to become a party still did not favour established party democracy as seen in the West.[139]

The goals of these social movements turned democratic opposition were closely connected to this desire for more democratic forms of political organization. An example of this is found in Democracy Now's manifesto, which aimed at incorporating citizens' movements into a democratized East German political system.

> Wider democracy will be possible by means of citizens' movements which are open to everyone and do not require party membership. Citizens' movements can be parliamentary or extra-parliamentary. They open opportunities for direct democracy. They will mean that a spectator democracy can be replaced by a participant democracy.[140]

Democratization would not simply involve putting in place the Western model of parliamentary democracy, in other words, but would involve a commitment to greater democracy in East Germany than existed in the West. The idea that 'history was open',

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[138] Lothar Probst, *Ostdeutsche Bürgerbewegungen und Perspektiven der Democratie.*
[139] Ibid., p. 115.
[140] Quoted by Glaeßner in, *The Unification Process in Germany*, p. 71.

and that alternatives to old ways of doing things should be sought, is evident in the writings of the different movements between September and December.

During the months of September and October, protest grew to a crescendo. New Forum collected approximately 200,000 signatures for its appeal for 'dialogue' and greater freedom during this two-month period. The other groups' levels of support were significantly lower, but some still numbered in the tens of thousands. This difference appeared to be due to the fact that NF had had more success in making connections throughout the GDR, and therefore had members in major cities across the country. This also was a possible result of the fact that the other initiatives seem less accessible, and more intellectually framed. The divide between the people and the small group of citizens' movement activists would become apparent shortly, but during these few fall months, these groups and their initiators were swept up in a tide of support which allowed them to play the role of the 'voice of the people'.

Between the GDR and a Unified Germany: 'Civil Society' Takes the Stage

What happened between the recognizable collapse of the SED regime and the first democratic elections in the GDR four months later may appear, in retrospect, to have been a foregone conclusion. At the time however, no one involved imagined that German unification would have been achieved that same year, and in the short term at least, that

power would have been up for grabs as of mid-November.[141] Why no one 'picked it up' is an important question, which needs to be addressed. The "new power struggle" took place roughly between January and early March, although the virtual exclusion of citizens' movements like New Forum, the Vereinigte Linke and the IFM from the competition for power was in actuality complete by February. A brief overview of the events, and a closer look at an institution which symbolized both the hopes and achievements, and the corresponding weaknesses of the citizens movements - the central round table - will be looked at below. During this time, the political role of the Protestant Churches appears to be in decline. As already existing and trusted 'peace makers', however, some in the church leadership and clergy assumed at this time the role of mediators at the many round tables established across the country, while others joined the various new parties and initiatives in order to remain directly involved in reforming East German politics. Thus although a democratic civil society began to develop external to the church for the first time, a substantial amount of time would have to pass before the church itself became de-politicized.

The period within which the actual transition from state socialist to democratic political forms occurred in East Germany was incredibly short, a fact which contributed greatly to the argument that the revolution was "spontaneous",[142] as well as inevitable. Once a certain progress of events had been set in place and mass protests had become a

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[141] Joppke, p. 162.
[142] See: Opp, Voss and Gern, *Origins of a Spontaneous Revolution.*

regular occurrence, particularly following the events of 9 October when a feared state crackdown on demonstrators in Leipzig did not occur, the transition, and path to unification, had begun. At the outset, this transition took the form of a liberalizing regime. With Egon Krenz as Honecker's successor, reforms were offered which included the freedom to form political association, freedom of travel and an end to the massive censorship of the communications media. Krenz was a conservative choice, and did not last long, as he was ousted on 3 December in favour of Hans Modrow, the recently selected PM. Despite the degree of changes the regime was carrying out, it reacted much too slowly to the demands of the people, offering 'Gorbachev-style' reforms at a time when even more conservative party members saw this as being too little.

The legalization of political opposition, the elimination of the 'leading role of the party' from the constitution, and the virtual crumbling of the SED in terms of a drastic drop in membership and divisions within the party, all occurred within a matter weeks. Although the different movements which formed the political opposition began to fragment once they were faced with an election campaign and the question of German unity, for a brief time, the attention of people focused on these groups as the voices articulating the concerns of the people. In the face of what became a power vacuum, the different opposition groups[143] chose to negotiate a transition with Modrow's caretaker government instead of assuming power themselves. They accepted, later regrettably, the

[143] With the exception of the SPD, which was grooming itself for an electoral victory which would not materialise.

SED's offer of much sought after dialogue.

Roundtable democracy

Although the round table was not an institution unique to the East German revolution - the Poles and Hungarians had already used this tool in the preceding months - it appeared in several ways to have been tailor-made for the East German opposition's social movement focus. It helped them negotiate their way out of assuming power, as they constituted the only organized opposition at that time. It used principles of direct democracy and brought many of the original areas of interest of the grassroots peace, environmental, human rights, and women's issues to the table. Finally, it incorporated discourse into the process of regime change. "The essential rationale of the Round Table was to initiate a dialogue between the ruling elites of the old regime and the civic groups that represented the moral protest against this dictatorship",[144] the precise goal that many in the earlier social movements had seen as the most important initial factor in building a better political system. In ways less compatible with most NSM principles, however, this period and this 'new' institution also demonstrated these movements' willingness to work within the system. Thus, members of the groups represented at the Round Table agreed to join Modrow's cabinet, and to reach a compromise on many issues - a characteristic likely stemming from their church roots.

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[144] Ulrich K. Preuss, "The Roundtable talks in the GDR", in *The Roundtable Talks and the Breakdown of Communism.* Jon Elster, ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 109.

The Central Round Table,[145] which met between 7 December 1989 and 12 March 1990, did not hold any actual political power, but addressed a great variety of issues, foremost among these being the dismantling of the current regime and much of its machinery, particularly the Stasi.[146] It also recommended that the Volkskammer adopt its rulings, which it did in some cases.[147] Its sessions consisted of 38 voting participants - 19 devoted to the SED, which became, during this period, the SED/PDS, and its satellite parties, and another 19 devoted to 9 different groups with 2 seats each, with the NF receiving an additional seat.[148] The Round Table was initially broadcast live and in its entirety, with a reportedly high proportion of the East German population watching. The participants from the old bloc parties and the different citizens movements cooperated well, helped by the presence of three mediators from the different churches.

There also existed some confusion as to whether or not this forum and the different groups represented at it were intended to represent the people as a whole, perhaps in the form of a type of substitute parliament. If that was indeed the case,

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[145] Although round tables became a popular form at this time, and were found around the country, this section will look almost exclusively at the Central Round Table, which advised the Modrow government.

[146] According to Preuss (ibid), in addition to the top priorities of establishing the rule of law and dissolving the Stasi apparatus, the central RT also created policy directives dealing with the economy, agriculture, ecology, education, youth, gender relations, science, arts and culture, health, aliens, employment, social security, housing, and the armed forces. See p. 124. This focus on dealing with the old regime, which movement activists themselves realized was on its way out, appears particular to the East German case. As a result, whereas in Poland and Hungary the round tables were "laying the fundaments of institutional renewal, East Germany's Round Table would preside over the state's self-extinction". See Joppke, op.cit., p. 169.

[147] Preuss, "The Roundtable Talks in the GDR", p. 125.

[148] The original number of participants was 15 on either side, with the following groups taking part: the SDP, New Forum, the IFM, Democracy Now, the Green Party, Democratic Awakening, and the United Left, made up the opposition side, while the SED, and its satellite parties - the DBD, the CDU, NDPD (the National Democratic Party), and the LDPD (the Liberal Democratic Party) - constituted the other. In January the United Women's Alliance and the Green League, as well as the state workers' union (the FDGB) and farmer's association (VdgB), were added to the table.

questions as to how representative the citizens' movements really were of the public as a whole were justified. Did the round table represent a new, more genuine 'grassroots democracy' in its non-hierarchical organization and it's simple, discussion-based orientation, or rather, an "ineffectual sideshow", due to its lack of real legislative capabilities?[149] The great deal of ambiguity which seemed to envelop this institution early on grew out of this confusion. One of the foremost scholars of this institution, Uwe Thaysen, states that it is important to bring this story to light as soon as possible, because otherwise "legends bloom".[150]

It has been argued that one of the reasons for the round table format being adopted was that the opposition groups wanted to avoid being saddled with power, and therefore sought to reform the existing system slowly 'from below' while the regime and East German society were democratized.[151] The various groups involved seemed to hold the belief that as long as the rule of law was firmly established, and the most hated aspects of the state-socialist system disposed of - from the SED monopoly, to the anti-ecological and unjust practices of the state - and free elections held, then a more democratic (and grassroots-democratic) GDR could evolve. All of this would take time, it was understood, but to reform the system more slowly and get as many people involved as possible, would result in a stronger and better democracy.

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[149] Joppke, p. 170.
[150] Thaysen, *Der Runde Tisch, oder: Wo Blieb das Volk.* (Opladen Westdeutscher Verlag, 1990), 11.
[151] Hans-Jürgen Fischbeck stated this in 1992: "Wir wollten die Macht nicht ergreifen, sondern wir wollten die Demoktatie", (We didn't want power, we wanted democracy) Interview in *Die Entzauberung des Politischen*, p. 94.

In the end, time ran out on this process. As much as the Roundtable was hailed as a more direct-democratic form of political decision making, its role, ambiguous from the start, became even more unclear once it was obvious that the power of the party state had been overthrown. Its existence was negated by the March elections, even though it was not itself a representative body. Little information appears to be available concerning exactly how the Roundtable was dissolved, and on the different groups and parties which took part at the Roundtable between the election and Unification. The election of course gave a surprising victory to the remodeled old bloc party, the eastern CDU, which had only gained the support of the Western CDU the previous month and had distanced itself increasingly from the SED-PDS during the RT sessions. The fact that eight representatives from the different groups represented at the RT had accepted Modrow's invitation in late January to form a "government of national responsibility" by assuming ministries without a portfolio, was also politically damaging for those groups involved. In short, despite the positive profile given the citizens' movements for their contributions in bringing down the regime and in presenting the concerns of much of the public by ensuring that the Stasi was dismantled, these groups were virtually flattened once the election campaigning began.

Summary

GDR society underwent a massive upheaval in the few short months between November 1989 and March 1990. Mass demonstrations suddenly became a common tool

used to show dissatisfaction with the regime, albeit now a 'democratizing' one under a new leader. In response to the change, and in an effort to hold on to some remnants of power, the SED regime invited the various opposition movements and groups to meet with them in a Roundtable format - something groups had actually been suggesting since October. What resulted was an institution which attempted to do a number of things with its psuedo-authority; advise the Modrow government to carry out (from the perspective of the opposition) further democratization; "reestablish the moral foundations of politics, and find solutions for social and political problems through public discourse."[152]

The volcanic character of changes taking place at this time and the unexpected collapse of the SED party hierarchy which further sped up the process of change, took the citizens' movements from being unknown outsiders, to representing the "beacon of hope for democratic renewal."[153] However, their time as the focus of national and international attention was short and they were pushed to the margins by the massive shift toward calls for 'one Germany'. This shift is demonstrated by the language used to describe the citizens' movements. The press in particular characterized these groups first as "showing courageous resolve", then as "political idealists", and finally as "hopeless dreamers."[154]

Why was this the case? Part of the reason lies with the specific issue focus and form of the groups. They sought to maintain some of the more idealistic aspects of

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[152] Preuss, "The Roundtable talks in the GDR", p. 119.
[153] Philipsen, *We Were the People*, p. 66.
[154] Ibid, p. 7. Along the same lines, what was first hailed as a "peaceful revolution from below" became simply, "die Wende", or, 'the turn'.

socialism, including, for example, a solidaristic society, and full employment. They also wished to retain their movement properties instead of adopting a party structure, and also to extend these ideals to the system as a whole. The labeling of these groups as unrealistic reformers finally resulted most of all from their being some of the few eastern voices not joining the chorus for unification. Despite the important contribution of the citizens movements in framing the democratic dialogue and providing a symbol for change, their above-mentioned weaknesses and the clear indication that they would be excluded altogether if they did not become more pragmatic, left them with no choice but to look for Western partners as well.

What makes the study of this period particularly important is the fact that because the unification process took over so quickly, and the revolution turned into one that was more from "outside", than from above or below, disillusioned citizens later questioned the legitimacy of a state in whose creation they played no role and which made them second-class citizens due to their financial dependence and lack of useable 'expertise'. The church too continued to play an active role in the transition, but more in the form of a number of outspoken pastors who moderated round tables and headed up commissions,[155] than as a facilitating body as a whole. It remains that the "annexation" of the democratic transition by the FRG - an annexation sought by many East Germans - and the "*DM-Nationalismus*" which motivated it, did not diminish the need for East German citizens' movements' and

[155] One well known example is the so-called "Gauck Authority", the federal authority set up following unification that was charged with administering the vast Stasi files, and led by the pastor Joachim Gauck.

opposition, but rather made it all the more important.

Assessments From a NSM Perspective: Missed Opportunity or Inevitable Outcome? Tentative Answers to the Question, Why Movements 'Failed'.

The election outcome, which saw the coalition of the core citizens movements, Bündnis '90 (New Forum, IFM, and Democracy Now), only winning about 3 per cent of the vote, raised questions as to what meaning these groups had for the societal and political upheaval in the GDR. Did they contribute to the speed with which the regime collapsed by giving voice to many of the concerns shared by the general public, but fail to represent the people once it was clear that the people wanted a speedy reunion with West Germany? Asking such a question as this is very important if any understanding of the growth of a genuine civil society in the former GDR is to be gained. It also hints at another question which is seldom addressed in the literature on these movements: who exactly made up the 'Basis' - 'the grassroots' peace, and environmental movements, and the *Bürgerbewegungen*, or the masses which demonstrated for full democratic rights and eventually for German unification? The answer to this question, and to questions concerning the contribution that the movements *cum* parties made to the East German transition to democracy lies in part in their original conception, as a type of NSM in a state socialist, and later democratizing regime. Before this is discussed further, it is necessary to look at some of the main reasons why the East German citizens' movements failed to win real electoral support, after their role as a crystallization point for the protests

preceding and during the regime's collapse made a larger role seem likely. The question as to not just 'why', but whether or not movements did fail will be posed.

One of the principal reasons why a well established and more unified opposition movement was unable to develop in the first place in the GDR was its proximity to the FRG. To use Hirschman's terminology, in this case, the existence of the 'exit' option undermined the development of 'voice'. Nothing along the lines of a Charter 77 or a Solidarity Movement could have existed in the GDR, as its leaders would have been deported - sent to the 'other Germany' - before any organized movement could develop. The opportunity to leave the GDR for a better life in a country that was still Germany, and a much less repressive one, drew many, mainly young discontented people, who may have otherwise participated in dissident activities, across the border.

Another factor undermining a strong showing by the citizens parties and movements in the 1990 elections and in support of their politics in general was that the marginal character of these movements' never quite faded. In the opinion of this writer, this fact appears to have been disguised by the power vacuum which ensued while the socialist state was in the process of collapsing. It is not surprising that a large percentage of the population supported these articulate groups at a time when they represented a moral opposition to the regime and were the first democratically organized groups in the country, but the goals of many of their supporters ended when the transition was clearly underway. Due to the fact that in the 1970s and '80s, these movements had little contact with the majority of the population not involved in or connected in any way with the

churches and its groups, they remained outsiders.

Furthermore, the movements and parties themselves suffered from internal divisions, particularly following the membership boom in November which added to their ranks many who supported unification.[156] Imagining the long battles fought between the 'fundis' and 'realos' in the West German Green Party over whether or not to adopt a more traditional party structure applied to the context of a transition to democracy gives one some idea of the difficulties these movements faced. Preoccupation with the movement vs. party debate diminished the ability of parties like New Forum to address other issues. The lack of a positive answer to the question of German unity, which the people clearly wanted, was also noticeable.

Moreover, the united focus - until February of 1990 for the most part - on an alternative to FRG capitalist democracy, and particularly the desire to retain the GDR's autonomy, put movement activists in a difficult position. A vote for the CDU, even if they had so recently been a puppet of the SED regime, was closely associated by the public with the quickest route to unification, and thus to rapid economic growth. Very little national identity appears to have developed in the East, weakening the opposition's ability to persuade its citizens to save that country from extinction. "No experiments" was a common cry against the suggestion of a 'third way'.

The speed with which developments took place, which has already been discussed,

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[156] Jan Wielgohs and Marianne Schulz, "Reformbewegung und Volksbewegung", *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* (13 April, 1990), 20.

in itself undermined any opportunities these groups may have had to win further support and build a stronger platform of their own. An additional way of looking at this is by looking at the reasons why groups themselves failed to take the opportunity that the regime's inherent weakness in the late Fall of 1989 provided. The fact that the different groups and parties which made up the opposition did not attempt to assume a greater position during this transition, which appears to have been a possibility, is not surprising for two reasons. First, most activists have since stated that they were quite simply unprepared for such a responsibility. A local leader of New Forum stated that:

> An organization that is just two months old cannot run a country. We have slept during the last 10 to 20 years, and we have failed to build up an opposition competent enough to seize power. At best, we might consider to participate in power in order to control it.[157]

Second, although this point cannot necessarily be applied to all of those involved in the various opposition groups and parties, there is some sense that the ideology of the groups was adverse to power. This notion combines some of the ideas of West European NSM 'fundamentalists' with the idea that because of their experience with the GDR state and party dictatorship, the movements had from their inception an "antietatistisches Politikverständnis", (an anti-state political conception).[158] The last point is only true of a portion of those involved, as the willingness of some participants in the citizens movements to join more pragmatic parties or to encourage their organization to adapt to the changing political reality by adopting a party structure has been witnessed since early

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[157] Quoted in Joppke, p. 163.
[158] Probst, p. 151.

1990.

Sebastian Pflugbeil, physicist and prominent opposition spokesperson, later stated he regrets that the opposition did not try to take the power that was open to them in November and December. In Pflugbeil's view the two most decisive developments for the collapse of a viable alternative to unification with West Germany were: (1) the breaking apart of a unified oppositional front because of the SPD, and (2), the fact that the old communist regime resisted change for too long, as indicated by their decision to choose Krenz rather than Modrow.[159]

The fact remains that once the debate had turned toward unification and organizing platforms for the March elections, these movements themselves suffered an identity crisis of sorts. Some would go on to join other parties with stronger West German ties and funding, while others remained with the original East German movements. Their issue focus did change somewhat at this time, from more of a postmaterialist focus, to one which emphasized the defense of East German interests at a time when that country was literally being absorbed sector-by-sector by the Federal Republic. This particular point will be addressed more closely in the following chapter.

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[159] From interview with Philipsen, p. 236.

CONCLUSION

Unfortunately, as is common in studies of this kind, "the outcome of a historical process is routinely used to explain certain decisions and the availability of options actually existing at the outset of the process. . . ."[160] That is, these groups have been reduced by some to footnote status in Germany's recent history because of their inability to draw much support from the mass public for their goals at election time. In response to this fear, it is important to note that the influence of these different movements on the transition to democracy in the GDR should not be limited to a registering of their support at the polls. At a time when such radical changes were occurring, perhaps it can even be stated that whether or not these groups were elected or not was irrelevant. What was most important at that time was that a healthy civil and political society was able to develop, which included the mobilization of domestic voices in defense of their interests, whether collective or individual. At the same time, it is equally important that institution-building occurs, a job for which the citizens' movements were unprepared.

The implications of a 'radical renewal' in the GDR, to use Christa Wolf's term, along the lines advocated by the citizens' movements are difficult to imagine. Furthermore, despite the desire for greater democracy, it is unknown whether such a state would have been more or less democratic in the end. If a 'third way' had in fact been pursued, it would have likely been very unstable in the period of democratic consolidation.

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[160]Philipsen, *We Were the People: Voices from East Germany's Revolutionary Autumn of 1989*, p. 343.

Whether it could have lasted in the long term is also impossible to tell.

Even though some have labeled this period a "Protestant Revolution", the church in many ways dropped from view once the 'peacefulness' of the revolution seemed assured. In the earlier stages of the 'Wende', the church's symbolic presence was very evident, and its location as the birthplace of the revolution guaranteed that it received a great deal of attention from the international media. In later months this role did not necessarily diminish, but the location of debate moved out into the open as well as into the legislatures, which was of course a very welcome change. Pastors and layworkers were now relevant as mediators at the many round tables and committees formed in the process of transforming the GDR into the five new Bundesländer, but for most the process of reunifying the churches under the Western EKD, and coming to terms with the return to diminished congregation sizes, became equally pressing issues. The continuing presence of East Germany's Protestant activists was also felt on a different level. Many of those former religious activists joined the ranks of the numerous new (and old) parties and extra-parliamentary groups, at the local and federal level,[161] with a number of pastors becoming parliamentarians - a reminder again of the surprisingly political role this

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[161] Although no specific numbers on this are available, at least one study has demonstrated that despite its lower numbers in comparison to Western members of the Bundestag, in comparison to the former East German population overall, the number of representatives from the new Bundesländer with religious affiliations is considerably high. According to Helga Welsh, only 30 per cent of the population in the East were affiliated with the Protestant church, and 6 per cent with the Catholic, while 64.5 per cent of Eastern parliamentarians had religious affiliations. Welsh states that this is a result of the origin of dissident movements (and obviously parliamentarians) in the Protestant Church. In Welsh, "Parliamentary Elites in Times of Political Transition: The Case of Eastern Germany", *West European Politics* (July 1996), 507-524. More specifically, the first democratic elections in the GDR in March 1990 saw 21 Protestant ministers elected to parliament. Data in Conway, "How to Serve God in a Post-Marxist Land", p. 138.

Lutheran church played in the GDR.

Although the use of new social movement terminology by the East German citizens' movements was common, in the context of this period of rapid change, there are limits to how illustrative this theory is. The reader will notice that the *Bürgerbewegungen* were never labeled new social movements here. Their roots were located in that milieu, and they shared with NSMs a distrust of mass parties, of hierarchies, and of bureaucracy - not unusual amongst East-Central European dissidents - as well as an interest in issues that were heavily influenced by postmaterialist values that focused on quality of life issues, rather than simply material ones. But they also chose, (or were forced, by virtue of their opposition status), to address a whole series of issues which arose in this unique political situation. Bruckmeier has stated that due to the very turbulent nature of this period, characterized by speedy change, it does not appear sensible to compare the political structure of groups (for example in the FRG to those in the GDR), as no lasting, stable situation existed, but rather one that was temporary and historically unique.[162] In the end, it is perhaps more important to remember that there *was* an opposition in the GDR, as movement activist Marianne Birthler has stated, and as history may with time otherwise forget.

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[162] Bruckmeier, p. 41-42. An alternative and interesting perspective on the applicability of NSM theory to the mass movements in East Central Europe during the democratic transition is Karl-Werner Brand's, "Massendemokraticsher Aufbruch im Osten: Eine Herausforderung für die NSB-Forschung", *Forschungsjournal NSB*, (1990), 9-16.

Chapter 4:
Coming to Terms With Change: The Post-Unification Period

This chapter seeks to address two key questions. First, how has the role of the Evangelical Church in the 'new' Bundesländer been redefined in response to its dramatically changed political and social environment? And second, what has become of the different activists and groups, many of whom first got together under church auspices, and in turn, contributed to the breakdown of the communist regime in the GDR? Do they continue to play a political (or social) role in the new Germany? The so-called alternative political groups and the church were closely linked prior to the Wende by virtue of their shared space, as well as shared values in many cases. Chapter Three demonstrated that the quickly developing processes of democratization in the GDR in 1989/90 enabled the social and political movements, some of which reconfigured into the 'Bürgerbewegungen' at this time, to move outside the church in order to represent themselves.

The last six years have demonstrated no sign that movements and the churches are moving closer together again. Despite this fact, it will be demonstrated that the church and the former citizens' movements still have many points in common due to their shared experience of a marginal, but compared to today, more influential role in East German politics. Due to their infiltration by the state, both have also been faced in the post-Wende period with extensive allegations of compromised leaders and an overall tainting of their

accomplishments under the state socialist regime. As the sole location in which any real, albeit marginal, form of civil society could develop, both the social movements and the church were relevant in the creation of the citizens' movements and in framing the demands of the mass protests in the Fall of 1989. When the idea of a 'third way' - a new, democratized, GDR that retained some socialist principles - collapsed, the most likely pattern of change was integration on a sectoral basis into the FRG. As such, the church in the GDR would be absorbed by the larger, and considerably wealthier church in the FRG, interest associations and new political parties by western counterparts, and so on. The consequence of such sectoral integration of the weaker eastern churches and political associations would inevitably be the loss of their 'revolutionary' identities.

There were advantages and disadvantages to the transition path taken in East Germany. To use an analogy mentioned by Offe, "Other states had, as it were, to repair their docks while still at sea, whereas the GDR was retrofitted in the FRG dry dock."[163] The same author, however, also argues that the brisk speed of institutional change in all walks of life led to a "panic-like disorientation", resignation and increasing protest, not to mention a personal deficit in democracy and a tendency amongst easterners to compare their economic situation with that of West Germany as opposed to their neighbors to the East. The mass transfer of not only institutions and money, but also western elites left most East Germans on the sidelines during the rebuilding of democracy in their (former)

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[163] Claus Offe, *Varieties of Transition.* (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1997), 151.

state. One of the outcomes of this state of affairs was a common feeling amongst 'Ossis' that they had been colonized.

Similar to many church members, this feeling of the GDR having been colonized was very familiar within the ranks of the various East German political and social movements which had survived the transition.[164] Certainly a degree of disappointment amongst those who had hoped to achieve democratic reforms within a separate East German state was still detectable up until 1992. Admittedly, some of these groups' broader goals had been achieved, such as an open society, which would allow pluralization and genuine democracy to grow. By the time the two countries were unified in October 1990, their other struggles for a greater degree of grassroots democracy and for a more 'solidaristic', egalitarian, and ecologically sound state had met with little success. The former East German citizens' movements, and a variety of smaller groups, some of which had existed under the church's umbrella in previous years, met with a number of fates in the years following unification. Some disbanded, others joined political parties, and still others became parts of new groups at the federal or local level. Throughout the period, some of these former revolutionaries felt that there was still a relevant role for them to play in the politics of eastern Germany. For these activists, this mission was a particularly relevant one in light of the minimal weight of East German voices in the new Germany.

It must be noted that little in-depth research has been conducted on what has

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[164] The interviews conducted for the study by Findeis, Pollack and Schilling (op.cit.) include the question whether or not they felt that unification represented a colonisation (Anschluß) of the GDR. Not all, but the majority of the 31 activists and former citizens movement participants agreed.

happened to the church groups and activists that were active both before and during the pivotal months between the crumbling of the Wall and unification. Much has been published since that time on the unification period and process, as well as on the role of a unified Germany in the new Europe, the latter stemming at least in part from continuing debate surrounding the 'German Question'. However, only a limited amount of study on those actors who were so recently centre-stage has been made available. This chapter seeks to build upon these limited resources with a larger goal in mind: to establish what this volatile period in German history can tell us about the role such movements and parties can play in a process of democratic consolidation.

THE CHURCH IN THE POST-WENDE PERIOD: THE DUAL CHALLENGE OF DE-POLITICIZATION AND SECULARIZATION

A set of challenges no less daunting than those faced by East and West German political leaders met church leaders at all levels in the transition period. A speedy reunification of the eastern Landeskirchen with the EKD in 1991 later led to criticisms that, just as had occurred in federal politics, the eastern institution was swallowed up by a larger and considerably wealthier western one, the history of its existence and resistance over the past four decades being discounted in the process. In addition, no sooner had the church been congratulated for its contribution to the peaceful revolution, did it begin to hear what would become a stream of allegations concerning the relationship of a number of church officials, bishops, and pastors, to the GDR state, and the Stasi in particular. Coinciding

with this difficult period of adjustment was the growing awareness that the combined effect of state pressure and a trend toward secularization in society as a whole had left the church in a position which hardly seemed to merit the label of 'Volkskirche'. Admittedly, any expectations that the masses pouring into the churches in parts of the GDR the previous fall would remain with the church once the goal of political freedom was realized were unrealistic. Nevertheless, the pivotal role played by the church prior to and during the transition period certainly raised hopes that its role in the new state would be significant as well. This recent period has been disappointing for many involved, as the new role of the church has been moderated to fit the model of the EKD.

In short, the return to 'normal' in the everyday life and work of the churches saw many Evangelical Churches in eastern Germany faced with fewer active members, and the need to rebuild, minus the extended legitimacy that its political role had granted. At the same time, their integration into the EKD led to a greater degree of bureaucracy and closer ties to the state, thus compromising the goals of some of its members for a church closer to the grassroots. While the social work of the churches continued, those wishing for a political voice found that they had to redirect their energies elsewhere.

An Inner-church 'Wende': Reunification With the Evangelical Church in Germany

A meeting of church representatives of both the EKD and the GDR Church Federation at Loccum in January 1990 resulted in a published declaration which stated the intention to give the "special community of the whole of Protestant Christianity in Germany an

appropriate organizational form within one church."[165] The Loccum initiative advocated church unification parallel to political unification, while the federal synod in February advocated a slower process. In a turn of events strikingly similar to those leading to the speedy unification of the two Germanies, formal church unification occurred in Sept. 1991 - two years ahead of the medium target date set by a joint commission of the EKD-BEK.[166]

As with political unification, church unification led to the adoption of the western model of organization, including its system of church finance, and religious education. It would seem that once the decision was made that these two formerly united church bodies would reunite, none of the objections over particular practices or structures of the EKD were considered serious enough to warrant maintaining separate Eastern ones, although each Landeskirche continued to have the ability to act independently on some issues. As was the case with the political and economic transformation of the new Bundesländer, it is also true that the churches' reunification was conducted with limited participants.[167] The Western model included a greater emphasis on the provincial churches and a weaker umbrella organization than had developed in the East in response to the needs of dealing with a centralized state. In the minds of some eastern pastors and church members, what

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[165] Ulrich Ruh, "The Churches and the Path to Unity in Germany", *Universitas*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (1990), 181.
[166] Robert Goeckel, "The GDR Legacy and the German Protestant Church", *German Politics and Society*, (Spring 1994), 102.
[167] The Loccum Declaration was signed by a number of representatives of the EKD and BEK, but had been preceded, according to its critics, "by no process of the formating of opinion in the church whatsoever". See Ruh, "The Churches and the Path to Unity in Germany", p. 184.

resulted from the adoption of this model was a greater volume of bureaucracy, and far too close a relationship with the state. In one series of interviews conducted in 1994 with 12 different people connected with the church in Leipzig, Potsdam and Meissen, all 12 interviewees expressed the opinion that what resulted from the reunification of their church with the EKD was a more top-down, establishment church with a big increase in bureaucracy.[168] Those interviewed mentioned that they felt this was at least in part a result of the pressure and influence of Western money. One eastern pastor complained that "My role as a pastor is being eroded. I'm almost entirely a pen-pusher."[169]

One of the major areas of conflict between the church organizations in East and West was over the appropriate relationship between church and state. Despite the fact that, unlike in other East and Central European countries, the separation of church and state was never complete in the GDR, disapproval of the EKD's relationship with the state was visible among eastern Protestants.[170] This disapproval was expressed in association with the creation of military chaplains, and with the levying of church taxes by the state. The latter was precipitated by the warning that the EKD would reduce its subsidy to the eastern Churches unless the church tax was introduced - no small threat, as this subsidy averaged 350 million DM per year as of 1994.[171]

Disappointment with the result of the institutional reunification of the churches has

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[168] Beth Cantrell and Ute Kemp, "Eastern Germany Revisited", *Religion, State & Society*, (Vol. 23, No.1, 1995), 280.
[169] Ibid, p. 287.
[170] Ibid, p. 280.
[171] Goeckel, "The GDR Legacy and the German Protestant Church", 104.

since been expressed by many pastors and church members. Schwerin's bishop, Christoph Stier said in November 1990: "Von uns bleibt nichts, nichts hat Bestand. Wir sind aus der Gefangenschaft befreit, aber wir sind nicht frei, unsere Wege neu zu gestalten. Die Baupläne sind vorgegeben. Es gilt das Normalmaß: Bundesrepublik Deutschland ehemals und auch EKD."[172] Church members believed that the church had made important sacrifices under the SED dictatorship, and they quickly realized they had varying views on a number of issues. When these sacrifices and different points of view had little impact in the 'new' church, many eastern Christians became disenchanted. The director of the Evangelical Academy in Berlin-Brandenburg stated that Evangelical churches in East and West seem more foreign to each other now than they did in the years they were separated.[173] On a more optimistic note, later evidence seems to indicate that such feelings have become less prominent as these two very different churches became reacquainted. Other cleavages more usual in the EKD have been replicated such as inner-church splits between conservatives and social democrats, and between have and have-not churches.

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[172] G. Helwig, "Kirchen", in Weidenfeld und Korte, *Handwörterbuch zur Deutschen Einheit*, p. 407.
[173] Ibid, p. 405.

A Church Able to Form a Community?[174] The Continuing Social and Political Role of the Evangelical Church in Eastern Germany

A closer analysis of the problems faced by the eastern German churches in the post-unification period illustrates very clearly that despite their previous shared history and theological outlook, the very different environments within which the churches in East and West spent the last four decades had a profound influence on their views on a number of issues. The GDR churches had been reduced to playing the role of minority churches in an atheistic society, where they faced the power monopoly of the SED and an anti-church administration. In contrast, in the FRG, both large confessional groups remained stable as 'Volkskirchen'. It makes sense that different, and even contrary, positions on the relationship of the church to the surrounding society, and to state power, evolved in the two states over time.

Although a variety of political and theological views existed within the churches of the former GDR, in general, the views presented by recent synods and by many pastors give the impression that the eastern churches think differently about economic and social justice issues, and about the role that the church should play in society. Those who had advocated speedy unification appear to have been those who also favoured a minor role outside the confessional work of the church, just as those who favoured a slower unification of the churches, and the preservation of some of the particularities of the

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[174] This is the title of a report given by Klaus Englehardt, the Bishop of Baden, to the annual synod of the EKD held in Suhl, in November of 1992. The synod was originally intended to focus on the theme 'the media and the church', but in fact ended up concentrating on 'coming to terms with the past'. Found in *Religion, State and Society*, (Vol. 21, Nos 3 & 4, 1993), 289-94.

eastern churches, tended to prefer a church which would continue to speak out on social issues. An awareness by those in the old Bundesländer of a more social democratic outlook on the part of the eastern church is certainly evident. For example, the Lutheran Working Group of the CDU/CSU actually raised some concerns that the eastern churches would "socialize Protestantism in Germany".[175]

The Kirchentag which took place in Erfurt in 1992 asked the question what role the church should play in society. The resolutions of the Kirchentag state that:

> The popular answer of the EKD is the 'Volkskirche'. We have the impression that we can no longer be covered by this notion. Secularization in the GDR is not only traced to party political pressure. The question, how much 'Volk' must belong to the church in order to meaningfully speak of a 'Volkskirche' would preferably be avoided than answered by the EKD as well.[176]

According to another writer, it is important to understand that: "The church was in fact challenged to rebuild its religious and social activities at a time when its legitimacy had been based on its political role and when society as a whole and East German society in particular had become predominantly secular."[177] This combination of a secular society and a recently activist church coupled to the great challenge of complete institutional renewal, led to questions of what the role of the church should be. It also pushed eastern church members to ask what that role *could* be in a state where religious adherence had

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[175] Goeckel, "The GDR Legacy and the German Protestant Church", 107.
[176] Author's translation, drawn from the theses of the 1992 Kirchentag in Erfurt, titled: "Thesenreihe: Kirche im Ubergang - wohin?". An attachment to an article by Axel Noack, "Die Rolle der evangelischen Kirche im gesellschaftlichen und politischen Umbruch in der DDR", *Kirchliche Zeitgeschichte* (1/1993), 145.
[177] Kurt Cordell, "The Church: Coming to Terms With Change", in Eva Kolinsky ed., *Between Hope and Fear: Everyday Life in Post-Unification East Germany. A Case Study of Leipzig* (Keele, Great Britain: Keele University Press, 1995), 131.

dropped dramatically over the past few decades.

How the many churches replied to such questions varied. For some, a return to a purely confessional role was a relief. These adherents shared views with those elsewhere in East Central Europe, for whom the greatest victory was to live in a de-politicized society. Other church members have felt used by the citizens movements which had taken over their space so recently and then quickly departed. Still other members sought a new role for themselves in social niches where welfare support activities appeared consistent with a social view of an Evangelical mission.

For example, according to Cordell, a shift in emphasis from the political to the social sphere has occurred in the churches in Leipzig. Individual churches have a considerable amount of autonomy in deciding what types of activities they wish to undertake.[178] In Leipzig, these initiatives included the 'Friendly Circle for Mental Health', a one-to-one counseling service by in-house social workers two nights per week. Therapy sessions, self-help groups, and other creative work programs also fall under this program. These initiatives also embraced the Railway Mission, which opened at Leipzig's main station in 1993. This outreach activity gives assistance to travelers, the elderly, and those in distress. It also operates a soup kitchen and counseling services for the homeless, and anyone else needing them, and is run in cooperation with the Catholic churches in that city. Programs addressing the problems of the unemployed in Leipzig, and similar

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[178] Ibid., p. 130.

programs in other cities, were also organized in the early 1990s. In this way, some in the church are advocating a continuation of their role as a 'church for others'. Some of those who had been actively involved in the social and political groups organized under the church's roof in the 1970s and '80s joined the various political parties, with more appearing to support the SPD, but with support also divided between the CDU and Bündnis 90.[179] Many more chose to become involved in local initiatives and in the numerous project groups which sprang up across the country.[180]

There is a lack of information available on the number of groups still active within the church. Overall, these have surely reduced in number, although some do appear to have continued. New groups dealing with unemployment, right-wing extremism, and other social problems facing citizens of the new Bundesländer have emerged. It is reported that 10 such church grassroots groups survived in Leipzig, although some may have as few as two or three members.[181] Certainly many withdrew from politics altogether in order to focus on their careers and the challenges of everyday life in a society turned upside-down.

What drove some churches to seek a new role and a new voice for themselves in the unified Germany can be related to two primary reasons. First, for those socialized in

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[179] This is extrapolated from the 31 interviews with activists in *Die Entzauberung des Politischen*, which also provides a synopsis of what interviewees were doing prior to and after 1990, and also from U. Franke et al, "Der Pfarrer im Spannungsfeld von Kirche und Gesellschaft", in Grabner et al, *Leipzig im Oktober*, p. 47-60, which involved interviews with 36 pastors and academic theologians in Leipzig.

[180] Statistics on the participation of former church-based activists in these different arenas is not available.

[181] Pollack, "Post-Wende Citizens Movements", in *Between Hope and Fear: Everyday Life in Post-Unification East Germany*, Kolinsky, ed. (Keele: Keele University Press, 1995), 106.

the grassroots of the church in the period prior to the Wende whose activism was connected with religious convictions, the notion that this was a rightful role for the church in contemporary society did not diminish. The "other" may have changed, but the church should still seek to defend and aid those disenfranchised, be they the great number of jobless, or teenage skinheads. For these believers, it was disheartening that the outcome of their political and religious work was integration within an 'establishment church.' This result could only mean losing touch with the grassroots and with the communities within which they are located. Second, if the numerous interviews with pastors and church activists are a true indication of their views, there existed the belief amongst many Christians in eastern Germany, that if the churches wanted to extend their relevance beyond their small number of committed followers to the remainder of society, they would have to address some of the pressing concerns facing eastern Germans.[182]

In an interesting way, the debate over alternative paths that the church could or should take resembles that of the split between the 'Realos' (realists) and the 'Fundis' (fundamentalists) in the West German Green Party and later in the East German citizens' movements. Once the guidelines were set - integration into the federal church organization (the EKD) - the debate which continued was focused more on how the church could fulfil its mission in the new Germany, and to what degree that mission would reflect its previous role as a church under socialism. Despite the church's return under the

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[182] Cordell, "The Church: Coming to Terms With Change", p. 132.

umbrella of the EKD, the eastern Landeskirchen have taken an independent stance on a number of issues over the past few years. These include its more moderate position on abortion and its advocacy of greater dialogue on the topic of anti-foreigner violence. These indicate that despite the dramatically changed environment in the new Länder, the church is continuing to fight to find a new, still distinct, niche for itself.

THE DISINTEGRATION, INSTITUTIONALIZATION, AND SPECIALIZATION OF THE FORMER EAST GERMAN SOCIAL AND POLITICAL MOVEMENTS

As Chapter 3 demonstrated, the turn to unification left the East German opposition groups in a position where they too had to adjust to the collapse of the 'third way' option, and the disappearance of the GDR as a state. Many involved did not survive what in essence was a return to their pre-Wende status as marginal groups, albeit now on the margins of a parliamentary democracy. Those who did had varying degrees of success, depending in large part on their ability to adapt to the demands of the FRG *Parteistaat* (party state) and its 'movement sector'. At the same time, the need to balance this with defending the interests of those most hurt by the speedy political and economic transformation, and to ensure that the past was not whitewashed, kept these groups busy. The question whether or not their new alliance with the West German Greens made the East German citizens' movements (Bündnis 90) more "NSM-like" will be addressed below as well.

The organizational forms taken by the former citizens movements, and by some of the alternative political groups which did not join New Forum or the others, were strongly

influenced by the institutions and demands of their changed environment. This influence manifested itself in a number of different trends. First, a trend toward the institutionalization and professionalization of the different East German movements and alternative political groups was necessitated in general by the nature of the West German party state and by the system of financial support for associations. If these groups desired to continue to play an active role in the politics of their country, in the short term at least, their survival was more assured if they adapted to the institutions and practices of West German democracy. Another common occurrence was the disbanding or disintegration of different groups, particularly those groups which had, prior to 1990, directed their efforts specifically at changing the SED regime. This trend was also seriously influenced by the changing mobilization capabilities of groups. Just as the church saw its sanctuaries return to 'normal', with considerably smaller numbers gathered for weekly services and for special events, a similar normalization faced the former citizens' movements, which also lost support relatively quickly. The different East German social and political groups faced an unfortunate but unsurprising fate. They went from being marginalized by the SED regime to again being on the margins of the new state following their quick rise and fall from the head of the mass protests for democracy. The latter outcome is not surprising in light of the fact that these different grassroots organizations only drew on a very small portion of the East German population as active supporters prior to the dramatic crumbling of the institutions of the SED regime. Furthermore, with East Germany being retrofitted in the FRG's dry dock, to use Offe's analogy, an eager, well-

resourced and even arrogant set of new leaders from *'drüber* was ready to take their place.

Organizational change in the former East German opposition and the broader social movements from which it developed itself varied over the first few years following unification. In 1990, as the election campaigns of that year demonstrate, the trend within most groups was toward differentiating themselves from their competitors. This was unsurprising in some cases, as a great diversity of views did exist within the context of the citizens movements, a fact that was somewhat masked by the common goal of getting rid of the one-party dictatorship.[183] At the same time, survival as an alternative to the large Western parties required coalition formation between the different movements and parties.[184] To this end, Bündnis 90 (Alliance 90) was founded in 1991, and its coalition with the western Greens was formalized in the creation of the Bündnis 90/Greens in 1993. These two different pressures - to be pragmatic and willing to form coalitions, and to offer an authentic policy alternative, and above all, an East German alternative - fell under the principle of "Vielfalt in der Einheit", or pluralism within unity, a somewhat challenging policy that was pursued mainly for the above mentioned pragmatic reasons.[185]

Throughout the early post-Wende period, the various parties and groups which had made up the East German citizens' movements debated the question of whether to

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[183] For example, both the very different Vereinigte Linke (United Left), an initiative made up of traditional Marxists, and Democratic Awakening, whose conservative wing went on to join the CDU in the 'Alliance for Germany' coalition in the 1990 election, were Bürgerbewegungen.

[184] The necessity of coalition building between the different citizens' movements is exemplified by the fact that the only Land in which these movements failed to reach the minimum percentage of votes required was Mecklenburg-Vorpommern - the only Land where the eastern Greens did not enter into a coalition with Bündnis 90.

[185] Haufe, "Die Bürgerbewegungen im Jahr 1990", in G. Haufe and K. Bruckmeier, eds., *Die Bürgerbewegungen in der DDR und in den ostdeutschen Bundesländern* (Opladen, Westdeutscher Verlag, 1993), 155.

stay true to their grassroots movement outlook or become more pragmatic. In the end, this issue was handled with far greater efficiency than it had been within the framework of the West German Greens, although not without losing the movements more 'fundamentalist' supporters. Pollack has written that the eastern citizens' movements took two primary organizational forms by the end of this process: the merged political party Bündnis 90/Grünen, and the numerous local project groups, initiatives and associations. Alongside these, remnants of New Forum, the IFM, the United Left, and cross-regional groups like the Green League and the Independent Women's Alliance still existed, but with little hope of achieving their goals.[186] Various small social activist and self-help groups still existed within the churches as well. Groups that did not join the broad movement party or focus on local projects and receive state funding for their work, seem to have been excluded from any role of political influence.[187]

In a rare study of the East German opposition groups and their successors in the post-Wende period, Blattert, Rink and Rucht focus on the structural changes experienced by these groups over the past several years.[188] They categorize groups as opposition groups, citizen groups and project groups. Each of these three categories is seen as being dominant in a different time period - in the old regime phase, transition phase, and post-

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[186] Pollack, "Post-Wende Citizens Movements", p. 106.

[187] It is reported that a considerable proportion of the former opposition groups constituted themselves as associations, as the new legal framework permitted such groups to be supported by the work-creation program (ABM) by enabling them to draw on publicly-funded staff. This program has however been cut back since 1993, and several groups have disbanded as a result. Ibid., p. 105.

[188] B. Blattert, D. Rink and D. Rucht, "Von den Oppositionsgruppen der DDR zu den neuen sozialen Bewegungen in Ostdeutschland?" *Politische Vierteljahresschrift*, (3/1995), 397-422.

unification phase respectively. Other important findings include that, between 1989 and 1993, the internal structure of groups underwent serious change, which led to a general institutionalization and professionalization, and the building of some level of internal hierarchies. Interestingly, it is the groups that developed earlier (prior to the Fall of 1989) and still existed when the study was conducted in 1993 that have changed the least.

Considering the changing political conditions and rules of the game, not to mention the entire institutional framework of everyday life in the eastern Länder, it is in fact surprising that a number of extra-parliamentary groups regrouped and continued to address some of the same issues which brought them to mobilize even under the repressive state-socialist regime. Some participants were motivated by very strong moral convictions, a factor which could easily have contributed to their resilience, and can also be traced at least in part to their roots in Christian beliefs. The roots of the citizens' movements, not just in a tradition of dissident activities, but also in a focus on broader new social movement themes such as peace, justice and environmental protection, did not guarantee their survival. It did, however, provide groups with a level of programmatic continuity if the political environment was favourable to these themes. The contribution of the West German Greens to the political discourse of that country prior to unification facilitated the entrance of East German movements onto the political stage of the new Germany, but the issue focus of parties such as the Eastern Greens changed somewhat

once in parliament.[189]

The programmatic focus of the citizens' movements - namely, Bündnis 90 and the numerous grassroots groups which the party maintained close ties with[190] - changed considerably between 1990 and 1994.[191] The groups' previous focus was a more anti-politics stance and an orientation toward broader themes normally associated with new social movements but also particular to eastern Germany, such as the emphasis on the demilitarization of society and on reforming the education system.[192] The newer issue focus pays particular attention to a new cleavage - the one between East and West Germany - but Bündnis 90 continues to address the goals of more direct democracy, via a greater degree of citizen participation in politics. The attempt to achieve such changes has focused on the struggle to replace the Basic Law with a new constitution for Germany. The programmatic profile of the citizens' movements has also paid particular attention to another key issue: coming to terms with the past, or a return to the German preoccupation with *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*. The latter has been pursued through various means, foremost among these being several battles to "tackle the Stasi past, to establish a tribunal

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[189] Christiane Lemke argues that the formation of NSMs in Eastern Germany was aided by a number of factors. A favourable political opportunity structure for social movements existed in the FRG, new resources were available to grass roots groups, including state financing, and a relevant source of protest potential for NSMs in the middle-term was provided by the politicization along the political/cultural divide between the old and new Bundesländer. Lemke, "Collective Action in Democratizing Soicieties: The Case of East Germany 1989 to 1994". Paper presented at the Conference of Europeanists in Chicago 1996.

[190] One of the strengths of Alliance 90 was that it truly did see itself, at least up until 1995, as the parliamentary voice of a grassroots movement. In his study of the post-Wende citizens movements in Leipzig, Pollack states that both "pragmatic and informal" ties between Bündnis 90 and the movements in that city were the norm. In "Post-Wende Citizens Movements", p. 106.

[191] Ibid, p. 107.

[192] Ibid, p. 107.

to exonerate the victims of the GDR regime, and to set up a commission to evaluate the history and consequences of SED dictatorship."[193] Bündnis 90 representatives are said to have focused with "great energy" on addressing questions of the Stasi files and the criminality of the state in the GDR as soon as they entered the Bundestag.[194] Other areas on which the reconfigured citizens' movements have focused their attentions include a critique of the economic policy of the federal government, and in particular the Treuhandanstalt, and also on extending the rights of asylum-seekers.

The degree to which these policies met with any success is not immediately clear. According to Torpey, the civil-rights activists' "special preoccupation with constitution-making, as the supreme act of consecrating the overthrow of a tyrannical regime and the foundation of a new order," was met with little success.[195] Instead of abiding by Article 146 of the Basic Law, which mandated a forum on the constitution and possibly would have allowed certain East German institutions to be maintained, Article 23 was used to integrate the new states with little of no change to the constitution.[196] The fact that unification resulted in a "rein quantitative Veränderung", or a change only in sheer quantitative terms, is remarkable.[197] Similar to this outcome, what was originally an "extra-parliamentary push for a public process of 'coming to terms' with the East German

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[193] Ibid., p. 108.
[194] Haufe and Bruckmeier, p. 166.
[195] Torpey, "The abortive revolution continues: East German civil-rights activists since unification", *Theory and Society* (Feb. 1995), 116.
[196] There is some discussion of this move in Jürgen Habermas, *The Past as Future* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994), 44.
[197] Even CSU representative Gerhard Friedrich expressed this point in a poll conducted by *Der Spiegel* on whether or not Germany needed a new constitution. "Bazillus gegen das Grundgesetz?", *Der Spiegel* (2/1992), 19.

Communist system was later picked up by the Bundestag in the form of the so-called 'Commission of Inquiry into the History and Consequences of the SED Dictatorship in Germany'."[198]

It remains that issue of constitutional renewal, introduced by Bündnis 90 representatives, received a great deal more attention in parliamentary as well as extra-parliamentary debate than might have been expected given the marginal size of the new party. It is also of importance to the history of the opposition in the GDR that it was the draft constitution prepared by a committee of the Central Round Table and presented shortly before its dissolution that was held up by constitutional experts as a possible model for a new German constitution.[199] Moreover, the fact that the highly charged issue of coming to terms with the past was able to go through extensive debate in the Bundestag, largely due to the work of the East German citizens' movement and the eight Bündnis 90 representatives in the Bundestag, should not be discounted. It is clear in retrospect that although, in terms of concrete policy change, the major efforts of the citizens' movement achieved only a fraction of their goals, it is unlikely that these issues would have been addressed adequately at all without the efforts of those former East German citizens' movement activists working both in and outside of the Bundestag.

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[198] John Torpey, "The abortive revolution continues: East German civil-rights activists since unification", p. 112.
[199] This draft constitution is, according to Ulrich K. Preuss, a West German constitutional lawyer, the contribution made by the Round Table which could prevent it from fading to footnote status in German history. Preuss, "The Roundtable talks in the GDR", in *The Roundtable Talks and the Breakdown of Communism*. Jon Elster, ed. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1996), 129.

The Bündnis 90/Greens

The primary way in which the former East German citizens' movements continued to influence in some way the content of debate in German politics was in the form of parliamentary representation. Those activists making it into the Bundestag - eight in 1990 - were all members of the Bündnis 90, the party made up of parts of New Forum, Democracy Now, the Initiative for Peace and Human Rights, and the eastern Greens, working in a coalition with the West German Greens. The joining together under one party of the Greens and the former East German citizens movements of Bündnis 90 required a number of compromises for both parties involved. For the members of Bündnis 90, the sheer comparative weight of the Greens - 37,000 members to their 2,700[200] - was a threat to their own voice in such a compromise. Furthermore, despite their much larger size, some members of the Western Greens were apparently wary of the more conservative *Weltanschauung* of their eastern partners. As was the case with the unification of the Evangelical Church organizations in East and West, sharp divisions between the two different movement parties became more readily apparent in the process of uniting them. These divisions provide a telling illustration of the differences between new social movements in the West German and the East German contexts.

At first glance, the style and outlook of these two groups appeared remarkably similar and favourable to a shared profile. The past preoccupation of the East German

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[200] Hans-Georg Betz, " Alliance 90/Greens: From Fundamental Opposition to Black-Green", in *Germany's New Politics*, Conradt et al eds. (Providence, RI: Bergbahn Books, 1995), 207.

dissidents under the SED dictatorship with peace, ecology and third world issues was unique in Eastern Europe, and beared an unmistakable resemblance to the focus of the West German Greens. Despite the very different contexts within which each movement developed, each shared a number of characteristics common to new social movements, including a predominance of postmaterialist values, the mobilization of members largely from the well-educated, non-blue collar sectors, and an aversion to hierarchical structures, bureaucratic centralism, and nationalism.

Why then was the fusion of these two groups, or parties, so difficult? The answer is at least in part found in the tone of debate between some members of both parties prior to formal unity in January of 1993. The experience of the eastern movements during the East German revolution understandably led to disproportionately high expectations on the part of those who now shifted their criticisms to the party state in the West. The high sense of moralism of the East German opposition groups in the form of Bündnis 90, in some ways an outgrowth of the greater emphasis placed on moral ideas within the church-based social movements, created some frictions early on, as did the undeniable note of superiority in the statements of some of the new party's eastern representatives.[201]

Outside of these personal differences, the ideological outlook of Bündnis 90 and

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[201] Vera Wollenberger, a founding member of the 'Kirche von unten' in the 1980s and a representative of the East German Greens in the Bundestag remarked somewhat immodestly and incorrectly: "We of the citizen initiatives - helped, of course, by the East German population - attained something which the West Greens, beginning with the student revolts in 1968, never came close to: namely to change society in a most fundamental manner." Quote found in: A. Markovits and P. Gorski, with Susanne Altenburger, "The East German Greens: From Underground Opposition to Bundestag Representation", in *The German Left: Red, Green and Beyond.* (Toronto: Oxford University Press, 1993), 260.

the Greens showed a tendency toward disagreement on a number of issues. These issues stemmed from the less anticapitalist stance of the member groups of Bündnis 90, and their greater stress on social issues of particular concern to eastern Germans in the post-unification period such as unemployment, and the housing shortage.[202] The advocacy of strict environmental protection legislation and of a degree of direct democracy was still central to the platform of both groups, but easterners "insistence on 'open dialogue' - cooperation with all relevant social forces across party lines" was opposed by many Greens. This willingness to negotiate also bears a resemblance to the legacy of Eastern movements' birth under the umbrella of the church - an institution which also negotiated with the regime. According to Joppke and Markovits:

> The *disillusioning* experience of forty years of Communist rule also made Easterners impatient with the Western Greens 'radical chic' and 'anti-system rhetoric'. They tended to see their Western counterparts as 'too leftist', 'too feminist'.[203]

In turn, the Greens accused the Eastern movement of being "too moderate", and "too rightist".[204]

Despite these rocky beginnings, the relationship between the largest movement organizations in East and West has also 'normalized' somewhat, particularly since the 1994 'super election year'. This outcome is likely a result of the declining electoral support for the merged party in the East which coincided with its improved fortunes in the

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[202] Hans-Georg Betz, "Alliance 90/Greens: From Fundamental Opposition to Black-Green", *Germany's New Politics*. Conradt et al, eds. (Providence, RI: Bergbahn Books, 1995), 208.
[203] Christian Joppke and Andrei S. Markovits, "Green Politics in the New Germany", *Dissent*, (Spring 1994), 236.
[204] Ibid, p. 237.

West, further reducing the weight of the eastern members within the party. It can also be linked to the recent changes to the internal party structure of the Greens, which saw a clear victory of the realist faction of the party and a more pragmatic platform. Although members of Bündnis 90 struggled to distinguish themselves from the Greens early on, it is still for all intents and purposes a movement party with ideals similar to those of the Greens. The unwillingness to retreat into "Ostalgie", a new term created to fit the nostalgia for the "good old days" under the SED, where everyone was guaranteed a job, has allowed the more populist PDS to win support that might otherwise have gone to the former citizens' movements. Whether or not the Bündnis 90's future as an alternative to the leading party organizations will continue to draw only a small number votes from those it seeks to represent remains to be seen.

CIVIL SOCIETY, SOCIAL MOVEMENTS AND CONSOLIDATING DEMOCRACY

The particularities of the East German transition, in its providing the former GDR with a ready-made state as opposed to a more gradual economic, political and cultural transformation, created problems of its own.[205] The FRG already had a strong civil society, which clashed at times with the possibility of change due to eastern influence. The absorption of the GDR into the FRG forced assimilation on many levels in order to maximize the economic transition, even at the expense of a cultural, or "psychological"

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[205] For an interesting recent reconsideration of the East German transition, see: Andreas Pickel, "The Jump-Started Economy and the Ready-Made State", *Comparative Politics* (April 1997), 211-241.

unification between the two states.

The debate surrounding efforts to measure the consolidation of democracy in the eastern half of Germany post-1989 resembled in many ways the discussion which took place concerning the strength of democracy in the Federal Republic in the 1950s. In both cases democratic norms in the political culture were put to the test. One of several key differences between these two German transitions to democracy is the level of politicization of civil society in the East German case. Surprisingly, the willingness of former GDR citizens to protest on behalf of their grievances has been considerably high, particularly considering the low level of civil society prior to the Wende.[206] The result has been a highly visible degree of dissatisfaction on the part of eastern Germans with the outcome of unification. Although a level of *Politikverdrossenheit*, or political fatigue, was observed in Germany in the period after 1992, the overriding picture is one of a state with fairly strong beliefs in pluralism, and the right to political opposition.[207]

The degree to which eastern Germans faith in democracy is dependent on economic stability is still being questioned to some extent, whether justified or not. Four years ago one political scientist wrote of Germany that "...if economic recovery comes slowly in the East, especially if it is accompanied by patterns of governmental

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[206] Christiane Lemke, "Nachholende Mobilisierung Demokratisierung und politischer Protest in postkommunistischen Gesellschaften", *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* (24. January, 1997), 29-37.

[207] Studies measuring the degree of support for democratic values in East and West Germany have been conducted by numerous scholars. Two examples are: Michael Minkenberg's, "The Wall after the Wall. On the Continuing Division of Germany and the Remaking of Political Culture", *Comparative Politics* (October 1993), 53-67; and Russell J. Dalton's, "Communists and Democrats: Attitudes toward Democracy in the Two Germanies", *British Journal of Political Science*, (Oct. 1994), 469-493.

irresponsibility that characterized 1991-92, many Easterners may begin to doubt the value of democracy."[208] With the highest rates of unemployment now since the rise of Hitler, no better test of such a notion has been conducted.

One question that can be posed in the face of some of the gloomier prognoses on the future of German democracy is whether or not just the physical, or also the psychological unification of the two Germanies really has to be complete before democracy can be considered consolidated. This is not to suggest that on achieving unification, democracy was consolidated in the new Germany, but rather to question whether or not "the expectation of continued assimilation in all aspects of life"[209] is a prerequisite either.

The importance of intermediary associations in Western democracies is undeniable. Such institutions were almost nonexistent in the post-totalitarian states of East-Central Europe. It is for that reason that the continued existence of those former opposition movements, as well as newer social and political movements in the new democracies of East-Central Europe warrant such attention. Linz and Stepan write that

> . . . a robust civil society, with the capacity to generate political alternatives and to monitor government and state can help transitions get started, help resist reversals, help push transitions to their completion, help consolidate, and help deepen democracy.[210]

Charter 77 in Czechoslovakia, Solidarity and the Roman Catholic Church in Poland, and

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[208] Ibid, p. 491.
[209] Helga Welsh, "Four Years and Several Elections Later: The Eastern German Political Landscape After Unification", in *Germany's New Politics*. Conradt et al, eds. (Providence, RI: Berghahn Books, 1995), 56.
[210] *Problems of Democratic Transition and Consolidation*, p. 9.

numerous other less well-known groups symbolized the growth or continued existence of civil society in the Soviet bloc. Similarly, in the GDR, the Evangelical Church and the broad assortment of groups which developed under its roof and which made up the peace, ecological, human rights, and women's groups represented the few strands of civil society in existence in that country. As has occurred elsewhere throughout East-Central Europe, the primary instances of civil society in the GDR saw their political influence fade over the past few years, and witnessed a process of disintegration and transformation.

The next few years should provide a more definitive answer to the question what role the indigenous East German citizens' movements and the Protestant Church can play in a unified Germany. It is clear that their influence on the consolidation of democracy in that country has, particularly in view of their size, been noteworthy. Whether or not those particular movements which opposed the SED and had a key role in the transition continue to be politically active, the activities of social movements in Germany are unlikely to diminish significantly. Just as the appearance of new social movements in the Federal Republic in the late 1960s was later said to have represented a sign that German political culture finally resembled that of a consolidated democracy, the fact that Eastern Germans have already chosen to mobilize in this way could be said to bode well for democracy there as well.

CONCLUSION

> When all is said and done, one has to admit that it was not only Western pressure, but also the moral revolution of poets, students, priests, conscientious objectors, balladeers, and actors that dispelled the political legend and the constitutional fiction called the GDR. - Vladimir Tismaneanu

One of the difficulties of engaging in a research project that involves such broad and often challenged terms as civil society and democratic transition, not to mention 'the church' and social movements, is in offering definitive conclusions of any kind. The influence of the church on the protest scene in the GDR leading up to 1990, and church and social movement impact on the processes and outcomes of the democratic transition are visible, but not easily measured. The thesis does not prove *definitively* that these forces had a profound influence on the course that democratization took in the GDR. In retrospect, it would be easier to argue that the influence of these groups on the outcome - unification - was marginal at best. That has been the conclusion of many other studies of the East German opposition. One writer has stated that in comparison to Havel and his comrades in Czechoslovakia, who "stood at the crest of a seething wave of indignant and mobilized citizens who viewed them as natural representatives of their political aspirations", East Germany's opposition was "more like the foam that floats on top of the ocean, churned up by the primal forces of the deep but utterly powerless to control them".[211] This thesis did not aim to prove that social movements and the church *caused* the revolution of 1989.

[211] John Torpey, "Two Movements, Not a Revolution: Exodus and Opposition in the East German Transformation, 1989-1990", *German Politics and Society*, (Summer 1992), p. 38.

Rather, it sought to explain why the opposition in the GDR - with its combination of new social movement, socialist and Christian ideas - took the form that it did, why they were not able to achieve more of their goals, and what exactly their impact was on the East German transition to democracy.

After conducting a survey of a considerable amount of the literature written on these movements, it is clear that most of those arguing that the role of East German civic movements was inconsequential do so either by saying that church and opposition groups were too reform-minded, and thus were unrealistic and lacked legitimacy, or by arguing that unification was inevitable, thus ruling out the possibility of any other options at the outset. If that is really the case, why study these movements or the political contribution of the church? In order to answer this question, it is important to return to some of the ideas and questions set out in chapter one.

Why Civil Society "Matters"

In his 1985 study of new social movements, Claus Offe wrote that these movements have something in common with neo-conservatives - both seek to reclaim space in civil society from state control.[212] In East Central Europe, the goal of opposition movements and dissidents was a more urgent, but theoretically similar desire to reclaim a civil society free from the powerful hand of the state, thus the slogan of "civil society versus the state". East German movements avoided a dialogue so directly antagonistic to state power for

[212] Offe, "Challenging the boundaries of institutional politics", p. 64-65.

fear of the repercussions and out of their own desire to radically *reform* the state, but the underlining goals of these movements were not dissimilar.

The reason that so much weight has been given "civil society" in some of the recent literature on transitions is that this sphere of activity is so central to political life: no matter how well planned the political institutions put in place, if people's allegiances to them and understanding of them is weak, they are much less likely to last. The absence of a free press, and of political parties, citizens associations and unions, for example, indicates a weakly developed democracy. Civil society was weak in all of the post-communist states. The process of building these things and of changing peoples' perceptions of politics does not occur over night. One writer has defined the importance of civil society as follows: "Demokratie kann nicht wie ein Mantel übergezogen werden, sondern muß in den Köpfen und Herzen wurzeln".[213] The underlying assumption behind the role of civil society in democratic transitions is that the mode of transition, the way in which new regimes are created, "has important implications for the stability of newly emerging polyarchies".[214]

This thesis has demonstrated that elements of a civil society did exist in the GDR under the communist regime. Because of the special relationship between the Evangelical Church and the state, and the state's own need for legitimacy, the church was able to

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[213] "Democracy is not a coat that can be pulled on, but rather must be rooted in peoples heads and hearts." Haufe and Bruckmeier, p. 156.
[214] Helga A. Welsh, "Political Transition Processes in Central and Eastern Europe", *Comparative Politics*, (July 1994), 379.

function as a (somewhat) free space, and functioned for some participants as a kind of enclosed civil society in itself. This free space made it possible for an alternative source of socialization to exist, and as such, for a younger generation of usually well educated and sensitive East Germans to meet and question the environmental degradation and human rights abuses they saw around them.

East German social movements

The movements which developed under the church's umbrella differed from opposition groups in other East Central European states. They resembled in a sense the precarious situation of East Germany itself - they were caught between East and West. Certainly the daily existence of activists in the GDR was not very different from their neighbors in Czechoslovakia, another front-line state, but activists in the GDR drew only partially on the example of Charter 77. The accessibility of West German culture via television and radio, and the option, albeit restricted, of emigrating to "the other Germany" made relative depravation, to use social movement terminology, a constant feature of life in the GDR. The resulting types of movements in the GDR grew out of this East-West tension, and were in the end almost flattened by it. An awareness of this predicament on the part of East German social movement activists, both in and outside of the church, also helps to explain the tendency of these activists to lean towards reforming their own state. As mentioned earlier in the thesis, the GDR without socialism, (thus without any legitimate reason for being), was in essence the Federal Republic. Eastern

Germans' allegiance to their own state was weak, and the pull towards the capitalist West comparatively strong. Although the same may be true of other Eastern or East Central Europeans, the national identity crisis of the GDR was certainly unique.

While discussions of a 'third way' took place in other states in the Soviet Bloc, the type of state aspired to by groups like Democratic Awakening and the East German Greens went further than a compromise between capitalist democracy and communism. They sought to create an egalitarian civic grassroots democracy, or at least professed this goal in their many public statements. This would be embodied not in the implementation of more democratic legislation by those in power, but after public discussions on values and goals, on a new constitution, and so on.[215] The period of "round table" democracy looked at above represented these efforts to impart the democratized state with a greater degree of grassroots democracy. Once it was clear that unification would be the outcome of the breakdown of SED dominance, the citizens' movements hoped that tools like the round table would be maintained, and some of the ideals of the revolution would be preserved.

In summary then, the reasons for the reformism of the citizens movements, and also for their adoption of new social movement ideas as opposed to a more traditional form of dissidence are linked to East German political culture and political reality. By seeking to bypass traditional parliamentary democracy, these movements, with their

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[215] See for example the *Grundungsaufruf* of Democratic Awakening, printed in Gerhard Rein, ed., *Die Opposition in der DDR.* Berlin: Wichern, 1989.

experience in thematic work and non-hierarchical organizations, sought to implant in the GDR a new system. It was hoped that it would combine new social movement ideals, aspects of a solidaristic society that would differentiate it from the capitalist FRG, and the desire for consensus learned in part from their years in the church. Whether or not these aspirations were successful, or even remotely possible, they represent an aspect of the East German opposition that is seldom understood.

The achievements of Bündnis 90 since 1990 appear to have been hindered, rather than helped by their previous role as 'revolutionaries'. If this is in fact the case, it is not reflective of the actual nature of this movement party. Although the ideals of a greater degree of grassroots democracy and public participation in political decision-making are still important, the party is realistic in terms of its willingness to discuss issues across party lines and work towards compromise.

Bringing the Church Back In

This thesis also demonstrates how the East German Protestant Church played an active role throughout the transition period, from the first signs of tension in the 1970s to the challenges of post-communist transition. While other research has addressed the question of the church's role as an umbrella for the opposition, only a few studies have explained this in a way that makes both the church's own reasons for playing this role and its contribution by providing more than just symbolic support to these social movements. In places where support from individual clergy and congregations was strong, the church's

moral and political assistance was crucial to the survival of an East German opposition, and an East German civil society.

Without giving too much credit to the church itself, whose leadership was usually cautious and fearful of losing its few privileges, it remains doubtful that any other organization or institution could have played this role. One academic questioned this notion in a 1993 conference in Germany: "I find it trivial to suggest that, if for example for whatever reasons the East German stamp collectors association had a free space, they would have played the same role."[216] While certainly overstated, this point does illustrate the fact that the church's relationship with opposition movements, however reluctant and restrictive at times, cannot be reduced simply to its having available free space.

While new social movement theory is not typically associated with religion, in the case of the GDR, the line between theological concepts of peace, morality, and personal responsibility for creation, and the new social movement qualities of groups was frequently blurred. Furthermore, one can go as far as to say that because of the influence of the church, particularly in reclaiming the issue of 'peace' from the state, but also in attempting to avoid serious clashes with the state, new social movement themes and goals were more likely to be found in this setting.

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[216] Author's translation. See commentary following D. Pollack's, "Der Umbruch in der DDR - Eine Protestantische Revolution? Der Beitrag der Evangelischen Kirchen und der politisch alternativen Gruppen zur Wende 1989", T. Rendtorff ed., *Protestantische Revolution?* (Göttingen: Vanderhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), 78.

Transitions to Democracy

One of the reasons motivating the adoption of this particular research question was the fact that Eastern Germany has been treated differently by social scientists in this area. Unlike the transitions that took place in Latin America in the 1970s and 1980s, what set all post-Communist transitions apart was the fact that they faced unprecedented political, economic, and cultural change simultaneously. This was no less the case in Germany's new Bundesländer. The adjustment to a radically changed environment - from the virtual razing of much of East Germany's industrial base, to the adoption of new parliaments and new elites - was as difficult for Eastern Germans as it was for other East Central Europeans. Incorporating Eastern Germany into the already well established and strong civil society and state of Western Germany, in addition to the delegitimization of all things East German, led to a challenge that was indeed unique to this country. It still did not, however, make the need for the development of a civil society in Eastern Germany any less important. This has clearly developed over the past few years, with the growth of associations in the new Bundesländer, but there is no doubt that a very visible divide still exists between East and West, the latter now more politicized than most other clefts in German society.

The connection between the problems in Germany today and the path of unification is not as tenuous as may appear. Perhaps in another five to ten years, answers will be more apparent, but in the short term at least, it seems unlikely that the divide between Eastern and Western Germany will disappear. While a period of economic

catching-up is to be expected, the still apparent cultural divide between the two is an unfortunate response not just to the different experiences of East and West Germans over the past forty years, but also to a transition which former East Germans voted for, but which made them feel they were second-class citizens.

This thesis has demonstrated that transitions have no clear beginnings and endings. The analysis provided by Chapter Two draws into question the spontaneous nature of the revolution. Without question, the events of 1989 took even core activists in the GDR by surprise, and unfolded at a speed that was overwhelming. Events in the previous two decades, however, did contribute to the form that protests took in the GDR, and to the ability of the church and the citizens' movements to serve as a crystallisation point for discontent in the tumultuous months between September 1989 and March 1990. Similarly, the difficulties experienced by the churches and the citizens' movements in coming to terms with the changes unification brought were rooted in a recent history which had given them a particular moral legitimacy as the only opposition to the state.

Conclusion

Instead of becoming part of the foundation myth of the new Germany, this history of activism in the GDR has generally been discounted along with the institutions and ideology of that state. The past should not be romanticized, or made to appear better than it was, which has often occurred in states re-electing former Communists. Memory is a powerful political tool, and should be recognized for its influence. It will be very

interesting to see if the politicized divide between Eastern and Western Germans is translated into new movements in future, and if the past discussed here will play any role in its foundation. Future research should allow for a greater degree of comparison between the new Länder and other countries in East Central Europe, an area of study that is still lacking at present. Only then can some of the 'problems of unification' be viewed as they really are, as an outcome of a particular transition path.

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