

ON UNREGULATED MARKETS AND THE FREEDOM OF MEDIA
THE TRANSITION OF THE EAST GERMAN PRESS AFTER 1989

BY

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DISSERTATION

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ABSTRACT

This thesis fills a gap in research, literature and our understanding of transitioning media in post-socialist countries. It tells the fascinating and complicated story of a press moving from state control to a Western free press model. The focus lies on the German Democratic Republic (GDR) between the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989 until after German unification in October 1990. It is a story untold in English-language literature, and it is a largely ignored part in contemporary German media history. Being written for an international readership while engaging largely with a unique moment in German and international media history, this thesis bridges a gap between national, continental and academic disciplines. Its primary question is in how far the democratic *potential* that existed in the moment of revolutionary change in 1989/1990 found its institutional and/or political manifestation in the post-socialist East German press. Contrary to current research, it answers this question by approaching it from the perspective of an expanding Western democratic, and market economic order. It is, thus, not concerned with case studies or one press-related sector but looks at structural change on various levels; its focus lies on the simultaneous battles fought over a free press. Core concern is the intersection between the normative role the press holds in a democratic society and that of a newly developing, or rather established expanding Western market economy.

This thesis analyzes three press-related sectors within a transitioning political setting: first, the opening of the GDR to (and *sale* of) West German print media; second, the reform and building of *distribution* infrastructures, and, third, emerging East-West joint ventures and subsequent changing newspaper *ownerships*. While closely interlinked, reforming distribution became the point of conflict over which issues of a “free press” were being debated. This thesis shows that *nothing* that happened in the GDR before, during and after the transition happened in isolation nor was it an exclusively East German problem. Instead, East Germany became the battle ground for various interests groups, East and West, but with clear and all-overshadowing interests of West German political and economic groups. These groups generally expanded and continued their long-established interests and disputes onto the newly opened political arena and economic market. Aiming for power at different levels, all had an interest in influencing media and its policies to their own advantage or, by simply circumventing them, created situations on the ground that, once put into place, were hard to change.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

“No one had expected that after the end of command journalism in the GDR, the structure of the press market ... would copy [former] SED demarcations – of course, not for political but for economic reasons.”

Walter Mahle, *Pressemarkt Ost*, 1992¹

On May 8, 1990, the theologian and newly elected East German Media Minister Gottfried Müller sat down to write in his minister's diary. With a sense of satisfaction he noted, the four major West German publishing houses Heinrich Bauer (Hamburg), Axel Springer (Berlin), Gruner+Jahr (Hamburg), and Burda (Offenburg) had just experienced a “slap in the face.”² Representatives of the “Big Four,” joined by a representative of the Association of (West) German Magazine Publishers, had once again met at the Ministry of Media Policy (Ministerium für Medienpolitik, MfM) to lobby for their country-wide press distribution system in a still sovereign German Democratic Republic (GDR). Just when the meeting was about to start, however, they were handed the “Resolution on Press Distribution” that had been passed a few days earlier and had been made public just hours before. After having carefully studied the document, the publishers were in outrage. While the Springer representative spoke of a “massive infringement of press freedom,” others doubted that the resolution was at all democratic, and all jointly threatened to stop investments and to leave the GDR at once (see Chapter 5).³ Why?

The Berlin Wall had fallen six months earlier, on November 9, 1989, and the Socialist Unity Party (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschland, SED) had lost its power. The first free elections on March 18, 1990, had brought a new (conservative) government and its newly created Media Ministry was to ensure a “cultivated transition to media freedom” in the GDR.⁴ In early March, however, Bauer, Springer, Gruner+Jahr, and Burda had independently divided the territory of the GDR among each

1 “Denn niemand hatte nach dem Ende des Kommandojournalismus der DDR erwartet, daß die Gliederung des Pressemarkts ... den Grenzziehungen der SED nachgebildet sein würde – natürlich nicht aus politischen Gründen, sondern aus wirtschaftlichen Gründen.” Mahle, Walter A. (ed.), *Pressemarkt Ost*, Nationale und internationale Perspektiven, Munich: Ölschläger 1992, p. 13.

2 “die Folgen des Eindringens in die Grauzone DDR.” “Ohrfeige ... Gottfried Müller, minister diary (April-May 1990), May 8, 1990, sent to author on January 12, 2017.

3 “massiven Eingriff in die Pressefreiheit.” Internal note, Aktennotiz über ein Gespräch mit BRD-Verlagen, May 8, 1990, pp. 3-4, private archive Ralf Bachmann (file was handed to author).

4 “kultivierten Übergang in die Medienfreiheit ... durch die Hintertür die Medien [zu] beherrschen.” Cited in “Anwalt der Länder, die es noch gar nicht gibt,” Jens Brüning, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 4/27/90, BArch DC 9/1033 (1/2).

other. They had started to build their own press distribution infrastructures and began distributing and selling largely their own publications. Though Müller generally aimed for a small government in media matters, he now made clear that this single-handed act of the publishers endangered universal equal market opportunities, which made necessary state regulations. During the meeting on May 8, Müller made clear that by having built their own, exclusive distribution system, the publishers “had consciously pushed into a grey zone, a legal vacuum. It seemed,” he continued, “that after the fall of the 'real existing socialism,' [the publishers] wanted to demonstrate 'real existing capitalism'.”⁵ A developing free press in the GDR, Müller added, could further be suffocated by an overflow of Western print media, and he pointed to “dubious forms of cross-border production by naming a place of production in the GDR even though production itself took place in the Federal Republic.”⁶ All of these market methods had far reaching consequences for a transitioning domestic press that was disadvantaged on many levels. “The resolution,” Müller concluded, “is not directed *against* but is to *secure* press freedom” [emphases added].⁷

The Big Four were not amused. During the previous months, they had put considerable efforts into importing publications into the GDR and by now, had made significant investments into distribution infrastructures. Not only had they started operations “from scratch,” but with a 70 percent market share in the newspaper and magazine sector of the Federal Republic, they had successfully established a similar percentage in the sale of West German print media in the East.⁸ If the resolution was to be applied, months of negotiations and work, it seemed, had been for nothing. Gottfried Müller, on the other hand, like most other officials of the new government, had taken over office just weeks earlier. The former chief editor of the church paper *Heimat und Glaube* had little idea of prior negotiations and no experience in media policy.

What he did see, however, were the massive problems faced by his ministry. In his minister's diary, he outlined the most pressing issues: “Postal [press] Distribution is failing” (April 23), which

5 “bewußt in eine Grauzone, in rechtsfreie Räume, vorgestoßen seien ... Man habe hier nach dem Scheitern des real existierenden Sozialismus wohl den real existierenden Kapitalismus demonstrieren wollen.” Man habe hier Internal note, Aktennotiz über ein Gespräch mit BRD-Verlagen, May 8, 1990, p. 2, private archive Ralf Bachmann (file was handed over to the author).

6 “zweifelhafte Formen einer grenzüberschreitenden Produktion, wobei ein Herstellungsort in der DDR genannt wird, obwohl die wirkliche Produktion in der Bundesrepublik erfolgt.” Internal note, Aktennotiz über ein Gespräch mit BRD-Verlagen, May 8, 1990, p. 2, private archive Ralf Bachmann (file was handed over to the author).

7 “Die Verordnung richtet sich nicht gegen, sondern schützt die Pressefreiheit.” Internal note, Aktennotiz über ein Gespräch mit BRD-Verlagen, May 8, 1990, p. 4, private archive Ralf Bachmann (file was handed over to the author).

8 “Start aus dem Nichts,” *Springer Aktuell*, No. 1, March 1990, p. 12, Corporate Archives of Axel Springer SE; Deutsche Presse Agentur, “Hintergrund. Pressemarkt der DDR – Dezember 1989 bis Juli 1990,” August 10, 1990, pp. 1-17, p. 2, BArch DC9/1050.

made necessary fast and effective actions of the government (April 16/May 23) while the position of the MfM was going to be a difficult one (April 11) in that it would need to explain its role to various interest groups and would very likely face constant criticism (April 27/May 10).⁹ Most importantly, two days before taking office, Müller noted that after having studied the current situation, it was clear that the issues of the press were first and foremost economic ones. This related in particular to the “cut-throat and destructive competition of West German *Grossisten* [press distributors].”¹⁰ Unfortunate for Müller and the MfM: both entered the scene *months* after the fall of the Berlin Wall, a time during which various interests groups had already begun exploring new territories and markets. They had created a situation on the ground that required and allowed for corrective measures only. Müller added in retrospect, “above all, everything had to go very, very, very fast.”¹¹

This thesis tells the story of this “very, very fast” transition by looking at multiple levels of the structural transition process in the press sector. Grounded in historical methods and based on the theoretical foundation of a critical political economy of media and communication, this thesis works at the intersection of what political scientists call “institution transfer” and what economists might call a “natural experiment.” While the former looks at the expansion and subsequent takeover and/or rejection of West German institutions and norms in East Germany, the latter might view this thesis as a case study of a unique historical moment in time providing empirical evidence of what happens in an emerging unregulated market.¹² The primary question of this thesis, however, is normative. It asks to what extent the democratic *potential* that existed in the moment of revolutionary change in 1989/1990 found its institutional manifestation in the post-socialist East German press. It answers this question by approaching it from the perspective of an expanding democratic and market economic order. Contrary to current research, this thesis, therefore, is not concerned with biographies, specific case studies or the developments in individual press-related sectors. Instead, it provides insights into the complexity of structural shifts and their underlying dynamics in different sectors, and the simultaneous battles fought

9 “der PZV versagt.” Gottfried Müller, minister diary (April-May 1990), sent to author on January 12, 2016.

10 “Verdrängungs- und Vernichtungswettbewerb der Westgrossisten.” Gottfried Müller, minister diary (April-May 1990), sent to author on January 12, 2016.

11 “vor allem musste alles ganz schnell, schnell, schnell gehen.” Personal communication with author, Gottfried Müller, Email, January 19, 2017.

12 Note: “A natural experiment occurs when some feature of the real world is randomly changed in a way that allows using the exogenous variation due to this change in order to study causal effects of an otherwise endogenous explanatory variable.” See Sauter, Wolf Nicolas, “Essays on Natural Experiments in Behavioral Finance and Trade, dissertation.” PhD Dissertation, Ludwig-Maximilian-University Munich, 2009, p. 3. For definition and discussion of institution transfer see: Seibel, Wolfgang, “Erfolgreich gescheiteter Institutionentransfer.” *Transformation der politisch-administrativen Strukturen in Ostdeutschland*, edited by Wollmann, Hellmut et al. Opladen: Leske + Budrich, pp. 473-494, 1997, p. 476. Bogumi, Jörg, and Werner Jann, “Transformation der Verwaltung.” *Verwaltung und Verwaltungswissenschaft in Deutschland*, 2nd ed., Wiesbaden: VS Verlag, pp. 261-262, 2009.

over a free press. It, thereby, fills a gap in research, literature, and our understanding of the transition of media and the development of media markets in transitioning countries. Since the GDR only set the precedent for a broader Eastern expansion of a Western political-economic order, this study provides detailed insights into the workings of such expansion. Placed in the international context of market liberalization pushed by Reagan/Thatcher neoliberalism, it documents the consequences of cross-border media marketization and production for democratic media reform in post-socialist countries.

It does so by focusing on the time period, as the East German paper *Junge Welt* put it, between the “old muzzle” of political censorship falling off and new market structures setting in.¹³ Gazing into this short but fast-changing time period reveals condensed struggles over *all* matters of a free, democratic media and press: arguments over the role and rights of the state and industries, debates over the role and rights of journalists and citizens, and the definition of a “free press” itself. These stories are untold in English-language literature, and they are largely ignored in contemporary German-language media history.

Journalist Joachim Nölte, who spent these months of transition at the documenting division of the MfM, compiled a chronological overview of the changing press landscape between Fall 1989 and Fall 1990.¹⁴ He described three transitional stages: First, the time of departure (Aufbruch) and awakening defined by an atmosphere of optimism and liberation from state patronage closely interlinked with damage control of an old system in despair. Second, the phase of political and structural reshaping. Here, new publishers and publications were being founded, and democratic structures in journalism were being debated. Third, the market penetration of West German companies that brought along the transformation of the press to a market economic system. Along came the fight for existence of East German publishers, and the beginning of a restructuring process of the media according to federal principles.¹⁵

The first phase roughly started with the precipitating events around the fortieth anniversary of the GDR, the second began in November/December 1989, and the beginning of the third, Nölte defines by a specific date: April 1, 1990, the day press subsidies for East German publications ceased to exist. Not only did newspapers drastically increase their prices, but they also introduced advertising as a

13 “alte Maulkorb.” Pressefreiheit adé, Frank Schumann, *Junge Welt*, May 12, 1990, IISH/ID-Archive MKR, File 35a-b, DSC07754.

14 Personal communication, Joachim Nölte, Email, February 26, 2018. Nölte, Joachim, “Oktober 1989 bis Oktober 1990. Ausgewählt und kommentiert von Joachim Nölte,” in Claus, Werner (ed.), *Medien-Wende, Wende-Medien? Dokumentation des Wandels im DDR-Journalismus, Oktober '89-Oktober '90*, Berlin: Vistas, pp. 17-116, 1991.

15 Nölte, Joachim, “Oktober 1989 bis Oktober 1990. Ausgewählt und kommentiert von Joachim Nölte,” in Claus, Werner (ed.), *Medien-Wende, Wende-Medien? Dokumentation des Wandels im DDR-Journalismus, Oktober '89-Oktober '90*, Berlin: Vistas, pp. 17-116, 1991, p. 19.

revenue stream while still working within old structures of centralized resource allocation.¹⁶ At the same time, as the West German business paper *Handelsblatt* put it, they needed to compete with a “flood of West German publications [that] after the opening of the border” likewise aimed to capture market positions at East German newsstands.¹⁷ While none of these phases were clearly separable, and were defined by breaks and turmoils, it is legitimate to claim that the press was never to be as free as in its immediate transitioning period (stage two), breaking free from a former party monopoly over information and still free of future market demands.

This thesis gives insights into the initial concepts, negotiations and lobbying strategies that allowed West German firms to not simply adapt better to shifting playing fields but to, in fact, become major agents that largely defined these shifts. In particular early market pressures exercised by major but also smaller West German publishing houses influenced media policies and reform initiatives in the GDR early on. And while East German institutions, in particular those consisting of reform- and civic groups that had initiated the democratic movement in the GDR, pushed for their visions of reform from within, they had little to counteract these early political influences and market interests. Both were fostered by an “increasingly faster pace to unify both German states,” which was largely based on the “stimulating effects” of the Deutschmark pushed by the federal government (see Chapter 3).¹⁸

However, just as there was not *one* cohesive interest of East German publishers and/or institutions, there was also not *one* political or economic West German agenda. Rather, *various* interest groups in East and West Germany (ministries, publishers, associations, and parties etc.) had their own interests at stake and struggled for power on various levels. More successful and overshadowing, however, were those pushing from the West to the East. East German media policies largely *reacted* to situations on the ground partly by adopting West German legislative measures. These regulative attempts were generally ineffective and German unification itself became a regulatory act that put back in check the actions of West German publishers to comply with federal practices. But since ineffectiveness does not equal irrelevance, a closer look at the dynamics of domestic reforms and their early succumbing to Western influences are just as revealing as the analysis of the latter. This is because discussions on issues of labor as on the definition of “free media” bring to the fore alternative

16 Nölte, Joachim, “Oktober 1989 bis Oktober 1990. Ausgewählt und kommentiert von Joachim Nölte,” in Claus, Werner (ed.), *Medien-Wende, Wende-Medien? Dokumentation des Wandels im DDR-Journalismus, Oktober '89-Oktober '90*, Berlin: Vistas, pp. 17-116, 1991, p. 20.

17 “nach der Öffnung der Grenze eine Flut von Titel.” Die Post und private Grosse-Firmen sollen Chancengleichheit am Lesermarkt bieten, *Handelsblatt*, p.8, 5/10/90, IISH/ID-Archive MKR, File 35a-b, DSC07777.

18 “immer schneller werdende Tempo der Vereinigung der beiden deutschen Staaten.” Protocol, “Protokoll über die Beratung der Arbeitsgruppe ‘Grundsatzfragen’ der Gesetzgebungskommission ‘Mediengesetz’ im Ministerium für Medienpolitik am 26. Juli 1990,” p. 3, Archiv Grünes Gedächtnis / B.V.3 – Grüne Partei DDR; Box 27-30, File 30.

visions of what might have been but subsequently gave way to expanding vested Western interests.

It is important to recognize, however, that also West German interest groups, even those with similar agendas in one aspect, did not necessarily follow a consistent line of cooperation. For instance, while the “Big Four” temporarily and selectively joined efforts for matters of distribution (see Chapter 5), they simultaneously started a fierce dumping price competition on the newly opened Eastern market (see Chapter 4) and fought rigorously over the re-distribution of ownership shares of East German publishers (see Chapter 6). It was, as the East German TV guide *FF dabei* wrote in a letter to its readers, a “rampant fight between media corporations, in which neither East nor West German law applies.”¹⁹ In particular the issue of distribution, however, was, as the *Berliner Zeitung* put it, the “key issue for the future structuring of the market in the GDR.”²⁰ Therein lay the root for questions of import and sales, and, subsequently, ownership changes.

The head of the Federal Ministry of the Interior (Bundesministerium des Inneren, BMI), Erich Schaible, held a different view. During a meeting on the issue of distribution in the GDR on February 14, 1990, he made clear that contrary to current East German rhetoric, one needed to distinguish between “the direct, uncontrolled import of print media into the GDR and their respective logistics.”²¹ Both were separate issues and needed to be approached as such. Schaible spoke out of the federal context, within which their institutionalization had been set for decades. His statement with reference to the GDR, however, not only showed an insufficient understanding of the workings of a planned press economy, within which matters of media production, import and distribution were economically interdependent, but also a (willful?) disregard for the West German market interests at work in it. And here, distribution was the key.

Already by February 14, 1990, the growing “legal vacuum” of a media landscape in transition was being filled increasingly by the joined market interests of major West German publishing houses; they, as the West German union magazine *Publizistik und Kunst* pointed out, “take advantage of the circumstance that currently there exists no particularly efficient distribution system [in the GDR].”²²

19 “zügelloser Kampf der Medienkonzerne, bei dem weder Ost- noch Westgesetze gelten.” Mit dem Fuß in der Tür, Alfred Wagner, *FF dabei*, 5/22/90, IISH/ID-Archive MKR, File 35c, DSC08036.

20 Full quote: “Kernfrage für die künftige Gestaltung der Verhältnisse aus dem Medienmarkt ist das Vertriebssystem.” Neue Vertriebsverordnung wirkt auch keine Wunder, K. Bischoff, *Berliner Zeitung*, 5/11/90, IISH/ID-Archive MKR, File 35a-b, DSC07780.

21 “der unmittelbaren, unkontrollierten Einfuhr von Presseerzeugnissen in die DDR und der danach dort zu erbringenden Logistik.” Protocol, Protokoll einer Besprechung im Bundesinnenministerium am 14.2.1990 in Bonn zum Thema Pressevertrieb in der DDR, Klaus Wagner, Bonn, February 16, 1990, p. 2, BArch DM3/21121 (1/3).

22 “Zunutzen machen sich die BRD-Verlage den Umstand, daß in der DDR bisher kein sonderlich leistungsfähiges Vertriebssystem existiert.” Marketing in ausgehungerten Märkten, Günter Herkel, *Publizistik und Kunst*, 5/90, pp.50-54, p.52, IISH/ID-Archive MKR, File 35a-b, DSC07921.

These insufficient infrastructures initially endangered the import and sale of West German publications in the GDR, and West German major publishers aimed at closing potential market obstacles. Further, with an estimated total annual revenue of about 1 billion DM in distribution, looming profits were high.²³ Other effects, however, were immediate: the success of about one million sold copies of Springer's *Bild* in the GDR by June 1990, for instance, would not have been possible without the respective distribution infrastructures. It required the latter to allow for sales, and along with the distribution concepts of the major publishers came initiatives for sales, marketing and joint ventures. They were based on common federal practices, interests and market logic. Schaible's statement, therefore, only exemplified a more general self-righteous approach of the BMI towards press matters in the GDR, potentially because of its own close relations to the major publishing houses (see Chapters 4, 5 and 6).

Closer to the historic reality of a transitioning press in the GDR was a declaration drafted by the newly created, reformist Media Control Council (Medienkontrollrat, MKR) on March 28, 1990. Underlining that the media situation “in our country has changed drastically” and that current legislation offered “barely a basis for solutions,” the MKR urged the East German government to step in and close legislative loopholes.²⁴ This referred, first, to the massive sale of West German print media in the GDR and the “extremely uneven competitive chances between West German major publishers and the domestic press.”²⁵ Second, it pointed to issues of press distribution, and, third, it urged for “[e]conomic and legal regulations over ownership changes of newspapers and magazines to safeguard the independence of the press and to prevent a too great concentration of capital and market dominance.”²⁶ The MKR, thereby, drew a close relation between all three press-related sectors, and underlined that they were mutually dependent if the goal was to establish a free, independent press in the GDR. Following these political developments and market shifts, Joachim Nölte, in his chronology

23 Stern und Geo für Suhl und Gera. Vier westdeutsche Verlage wollen ein Vertriebssystem in der DDR aufbauen, Andreas Kühner, *Horizont*, January 26, 1990, attachment V to letter, Thomas Ganske, Jahreszeitenverlag et. al. an Runden Tisch, Hamburg, February 3, 1990, BArch DA3/34.

24 Full quote: “unseres Landes [hat sich] drastisch verändert. Dabei sind eine Reihe von Problemen entstanden, auf die unsere Gesellschaft nicht vorbereitet war ... kaum eine Grundlage, die entstandenen Probleme zu lösen.” Draft, Entwurf - Erklärung des Medienkontrollrates an die Regierung, Berlin, March 28, 1990, p. 1, Archiv Grünes Gedächtnis / B.V.3 – Grüne Partei DDR; Box 27-30, File 30; also in Medienkontrollrat der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, ID-Archiv-Sammlungen, IISH/ID-Archive MKR, Box 1-4, File 1.

25 “extrem ungleichen Wettbewerbschancen zwischen westdeutschen Grossanbietern und der einheimischen Presse.” Draft, Entwurf - Erklärung des Medienkontrollrates an die Regierung, Berlin, March 28, 1990, p. 2, Archiv Grünes Gedächtnis / B.V.3 – Grüne Partei DDR; Box 27-30, File 30.

26 “Wirtschaftliche und rechtliche Kontrolle der Eigentumsveränderungen bei Zeitungen und Zeitschriften zur Wahrung der Eigenständigkeit der Presse und Verhinderung zu großer Kapitalkonzentration and Marktbeherrschung.” Draft, Entwurf - Erklärung des Medienkontrollrates an die Regierung, Berlin, March 28, 1990, pp. 2-3, Archiv Grünes Gedächtnis / B.V.3 – Grüne Partei DDR; Box 27-30, File 30.

of the transformation of the press, documented their *outcome*; he claimed that it was for future historians to make out the closer and more complex developments behind subsequent events and policies.²⁷ This thesis takes up this challenge.

It does so by looking at all three interrelated sectors of an emerging press market within a transitioning political setting. Chapter 2 gives an overview of the literature, theoretical frame, methods, and sources. Chapter 3 provides the historical context of German-German relations during the transition period in general and introduces the main policy institutions and actors of a transitioning media in particular. Chapter 4 documents the fast increase of West German print media in the GDR. It analyzes different market strategies employed by West German publishers to secure a future readership, and it shows the different interests and strategies of East German publishers and institutions to deal with the changing market situation. Chapter 5 is the central chapter of this thesis. It tells the complicated story behind what the trade journal *kressreport* called the “secret diplomacy of the four major publishers with the Postal Ministry of the GDR over the building of a functioning press distribution system in the GDR – a pact of a state monopoly with big business.”²⁸ This chapter gives insights into the various and competing interests of East and West German interest groups involved in it and holds that a focus on the “Big Four” alone is a too narrow frame to sufficiently understand developments on the ground. Chapter 6 then moves to early cooperation and joint venture agreements between East and West German publishers, and the eventual “wave of mergers ... so massive, yet unparalleled in international media history.”²⁹ Eventually administered by the East German trust agency *Treuhandgesellschaft*, the subsequent “massive buy-out” of East German publishers was the third cornerstone of a complex accession process preceded by an appropriation through market interests on various levels.³⁰

The spectrum of problems documented and analyzed in this thesis, namely the transition of the press, represents only a fraction of larger transitional shifts, similar pressures and interests that affected

27 Full quote: “Die Chronik ... muss es zunächst dem Leser, bzw. einer späteren wissenschaftlichen Aufarbeitung überlassen, sich daraus ein Gesamtbild zu formen.” Nölte, Joachim, “Oktober 1989 bis Oktober 1990. Ausgewählt und kommentiert von Joachim Nölte,” in Claus, Werner (ed.), *Medien-Wende, Wende-Medien? Dokumentation des Wandels im DDR-Journalismus, Oktober '89-Oktober '90*, Berlin: Vistas, 1991, pp. 17-116, p. 20.

28 “die Geheimdiplomatie der vier Großverlage ... mit dem DDR-Postministerium zum Zwecke des Aufbaus einer funktionierenden Pressevertriebssystems in der DDR – ein Pakt des Staatsmonopols mit dem Großkapital.” Alles ohne Gewähr, *kress report*, no.3, February 1, 1990, p. 2, attachment III to letter, Thomas Ganske, Jahreszeitenverlag et. al. an Runden Tisch, Hamburg, February 3, 1990, BArch DA3/34 (see Chapter 6).

29 “Die Konzentrationswelle rollt in so gewaltiger Form, wie dies in der internationalen Mediengeschichte bisher einmalig ist.” Wolfgang Mayer, *Publizistik und Kunst*, 5/90, p.53, IISH/ID-Archive MKR, File 35a-b, DSC07921.

30 Full quote: “Bundesdeutsche Verlage überrennen die DDR nicht nur durch den Vertrieb ihrer Zeitungen und Zeitschriften – sie kaufen sich in der DDR auch ganz massiv ein.” Wolfgang Mayer, *Publizistik und Kunst*, 5/90, p. 53, IISH/ID-Archive MKR, File 35a-b, DSC07921.

all socioeconomic sectors during the early transition period, and the more general westward expansion of a democratic and market economic order across Eastern Europe. Though different by sector and in respective outcome, in particular the insurance sector, the aviation, the energy, and the automotive industry, early on, showed, for instance, an “alarming density of coalitions” similar to those of the press presented in the following chapters.³¹ By reassessing post-socialist history through the lens of a changing media and press system in East Germany, this project, therefore, aims to trace the broader social, economic and political realities of this unique historical moment and its lasting ramifications for post-Wall Germany. Laying open the close connection between political and economic interests in the exploration of new Eastern markets, it shows that *nothing* that happened in the GDR before, during and after the transition happened in isolation nor was it an exclusively East German problem. Instead, East Germany became the battle ground for various interests groups, East and West, but with clear and all-overshadowing interests of West German political and economic groups. These groups generally expanded and continued their long-established interests and disputes onto the newly opened political arena and economic market. Aiming for power at different levels, all had an interest in influencing media and its policies or in simply circumventing them, they created situations on the ground barely changeable once put into place.

31 “bedenkliche Kooperationsverdichtungen.” “Die Fusionskontrolle soll in der DDR nur in einer abgemilderten Form gelten,” *Das Handelsblatt*, June 7, 1990, IISH/ID-Archive MKR, 35d, DSC08071. See Czada, Roland, and Gerhard Lehbruch (eds.), *Transformationspfade in Ostdeutschland: Beiträge Zur Sektoralen Vereinigungspolitik*, Frankfurt am Main [u.a.]: Campus-Verlag, 1998. Kreiss, Sylvia, *Ausgleichsforderungen im Rahmen der deutschen Wiedervereinigung*, Hamburg, 2003. Nägele, Frank, Strukturpolitik wider Willen? Die regionalpolitischen Dimensionen der Treuhandpolitik, in: *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*. Beilage zur Wochenzeitung Das Parlament. B 43-44, 1994. Seibel, Wolfgang, *Verwaltete Illusionen – Die Privatisierung der DDR – Wirtschaft durch die Treuhandanstalt und ihre Nachfolger 1990-2000*, Frankfurt a. M., 2005.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

“The GDR, however, is by no means the endpoint of the Eastward expansion of West German publishing houses.”

Publizistik und Kunst, May 1990¹⁹³⁵

“Since the press was and is subject to market principles, its role in the service of the public depends on the coincidences of the private sector. ... This is one of the paradoxes of our democratic society.”

European Parliament, April 1992¹⁹³⁶

Underlining the intrinsic connection between a free press and a viable democracy, in 1992, the European Parliament made clear that in spite of their “public task,” newspapers were still “subject to the laws of the market.”¹⁹³⁷ Its assumption was that a free market allowed for all competing voices to take their equal share in a media landscape. Then free media would represent the plurality of opinions that constitute a viable democracy. Acknowledging that market interests did not always go hand-in-hand with those of a democratic society, to the parliament this was a given paradox of the press, and self-regulation and other regulatory means could be applied if needed. This paradox defined the transition of the press in East Germany; lacking sufficient regulatory means, it went one-sidedly in favor of market interests and impeded exactly those voices that had brought about democratic change in the GDR.

What some called “the decade for gold-diggers”¹⁹³⁸ that reminded others of “the early days of capitalism”¹⁹³⁹ related to a (media) transition defined almost exclusively by market logic. Little,

1935“Die DDR ist allerdings nicht der Endpunkt für die Expansion bundesdeutscher Verlage Richtung Osten.” Wolfgang Mayer, *Publizistik und Kunst*, 5/90, p. 53, IISH/ID-Archive MKR, File 35a-b, DSC07921.

1936“Da die Presse jedoch den Gesetzen der Marktwirtschaft gehorchte und gehorcht, hängt ihre Rolle vom Dienste der Öffentlichkeit von den Zufällen der Privatwirtschaft ab. ... Dies gehört zu den Paradoxien unserer demokratischen Gesellschaft.” Session document, Sitzungsdokumente, “Bericht des Ausschusses für Kultur, Jugend, Bildung und Medien über Medienkonzentration und Meinungsvielfalt,” A3-0153/91, PE 152.265/endg., Europäisches Parlament, April 27, 1992, p. 13, Archiv des Liberalismus, FDP Medienkommission/24548.

1937“Aufgabe einer öffentlichen Einrichtung ... den Gesetzen des Marktes unterworfen.” Session document, Sitzungsdokumente, “Bericht des Ausschusses für Kultur, Jugend, Bildung und Medien über Medienkonzentration und Meinungsvielfalt,” A3-0153/91, PE 152.265/endg., Europäisches Parlament, April 27, 1992, p. 13, Archiv des Liberalismus, FDP Medienkommission/24548.

1938“Das Jahrzehnt der Goldgräber” Ulrich Briefs, *Revier*, April 1990, Archiv Grünes Gedächtnis / B.V.3 – Grüne Partei DDR; Box 27-30, File 21. “Medien in der DDR: Vom totalitären Zwang zum manipulativen Kommerz” Ulrich Briefs, *Publizistik & Kunst*, Zeitschrift der IG - Medien, No. 7/90, Archiv Grünes Gedächtnis / B.V.3 – Grüne Partei DDR; Box 27-30, File 21.

1939“Zustände wie im Frühkapitalismus.” Cited in Aschenputtel auf dem Ball. Journalistinnen aus Ost und West

however, happened by “coincidence,” and the continuation of former press monopolies in the service of market oligopolies was no accident. Instead, it was the outcome of aggressive market strategies on various levels employed by West German publishing houses, and the tacit acceptance, if not encouragement, of these strategies by the federal government. The latter did little to nothing to counteract the marketization of the East German press landscape. On the contrary, it explicitly supported the interests of major West German press institutions and gave a helping hand in securing their interests. This is an essential part of the story. It helps to understand that the push of West German publishers onto the East German market did not happen purely on their own account, but it required political will. Thus, while various and competing governmental bodies, publishers and reform groups in the GDR were concerned with reforming a centralized state press into a public institution fostering a transitioning state, early market pressures in close connection to a political federal agenda of a fast unification defined these domestic reform endeavors early on. Both set the principles according to which this media transition was to happen. And while all sides argued for the citizens’ rights of a free press and the freedom of opinion and expression in the GDR, their primary concerns lay with maintaining control over established structures or gaining a head-start in the new markets. A diverse local press and those initiatives that had been founded by various reform movements after the Fall revolution were the first to fall prey to consolidated market forces.

In this way, this thesis underlines the corporate aspect of Hallin and Mancini's categorizing Germany's media as a democratic corporate system. It challenges their state-bound categorization in emphasizing the crucial importance of cross-border media policy influence and media production.¹⁹⁴⁰ Was there a different vision for free media in the GDR and a subsequently unified Germany? Yes there was. How could such a system have looked like? Born out of the dictatorship experience, reformers in the GDR emphasized on workers' autonomy, on *inner* press freedom, on diversity, on gender equality and on the freedom of the press from political *and* economic pressures. Did their visions have an actual chance of success? Given the early market penetration, they did not. Joachim Nölte pointed to April 1, 1990, the day subsidies ended for East German papers, as the day when market penetration of West German companies set in. By May 1990, the West German public broadcast station Hessischer Rundfunk 2 made clear that regardless of differences in opinion, “one thing cannot be ignored any longer: signs are mounting that our media system is being exported to the East. This already applies to a

diskutieren über Umbruch der Medienlandschaft und ihre eigene Zukunft, *die tageszeitung*, Ulrike Helwerth, April 24, 1990, DC 9/1033 (1/2).

1940 Hallin, Daniel C., and Paolo Mancini, *Comparing media systems: Three models of media and politics*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2004.

large extent to the press. And in spite of ... defense strategies in the long run, there will likely be no way around but also the tv sector in the GDR, in one way or the other, will fall in line with West German chains.”¹⁹⁴¹ This thesis has shown that the penetration of market logic had, in fact, already set in in early December 1989 by means of lobbying, imports and cross-border production. Following Hessischer Rundfunk 2, it further showed that what happened with the media in the GDR can only be understood as an institution transfer as part of a broader expansion of the West German political economic order. The FDP media committee agreed “that the West German media order was imposed upon the East” and showed an understanding for resentments on part of the GDR for the subsequent filling of management positions with West German personnel, “because also in the old *Länder* it would cause indignation if, for instance, all management positions at the North German Broadcasting Corporation were filled with journalists from Bavaria.”¹⁹⁴² Whether or not individual transfers in the press sector, such as the acquisition of market positions of West German publications, were successful in the long-run is not as important as the immediate strategies put into their service. The latter, if not disallowed, from the offset fundamentally limited the scope of sovereign reform attempts, not the least because they soon made necessary a response to new market pressures rather than a break of old monopoly structures.

This thesis has shown that the East German press became a market in three interconnected ways: shifts in sales, in distribution, and in ownership. While current studies focus on one to explain general transition dynamics and their outcomes (or to look at their consequences for specific publishers), this thesis has looked at all three. It has shown how deeply intertwined issues of massive imports of West German publications and aggressive sales strategies were with those of distribution, creating new dynamics and pressures that fostered ownership transfers. Not without reason did Alexander Jahr (Gruner+ Jahr) in early 1990, when asked about the chances of East German publishers to survive, predict their “death sentence” given their low competitiveness. They were going to “go

1941“Eins ist bei allen Abweichungen [zwischen beiden Mediensystemen]... nicht mehr zu übersehen: die Zeichen mehren sich, daß unser Mediensystem nach Osten exportiert wird. Das gilt in hohem Maße schon heute für die Presse. Und trotz ... Abwehrstrategien ...wird auf längere Sicht wohl kaum ein Weg daran vorbeiführen, daß die DDR im TV-Bereich sich in dieser oder jeder Form den bundesdeutschen Fernsehketten anschließt. Identität und Eigenständigkeit, die wird die DDR, nach allem, was zur Zeit an Informationen über den Mediensektor vorliegt, wohl nur auf einem Gebiet auf Dauer behalten – im Hörfunk.” Transcript, *Hessischer Rundfunk 2*, 6.15pm/1, 5/5/90, Hermann Mein, Uwe Schulz, IISH/ID-Archive MKR, File 35a-b, DSC07799. Also BArch DC9/1033 (1/2).

1942“daß die westliche Medienlandschaft dem Osten übergestülpt wurde ... [d]enn auch in den alten Bundesländern würde es Empörung hervorrufen, wenn beispielweise beim Norddeutschen Rundfunk alle Führungspositionen mit bayerischen Journalisten besetzt würden.” Protocol, Protokoll der Sitzung der Bundesmedienkommission am Freitag, den 6.9.1991, in Bonn, p. 3, Archiv des Liberalismus, ÜP 45/2014 - Lothar Mahling/22.

down,” and it required Western investments to keep them alive.¹⁹⁴³ In mid-July 1990, FDP media committee member and lawyer at the legal department of Springer, Renate Damm, agreed. “Problematic were ... the sales difficulties faced by East German publications;” Damm sees, the committee noted, “in joint ventures the only possibility for maintaining the press of the GDR.”¹⁹⁴⁴ Following Damm, it was the drop in sales (conditioned by the lagging interest of East German readers) that made for the struggles of the East German press. And while sales generally did drop, this thesis has shown that the realities behind the numbers were more complicated than that. Likewise, while joint ventures turned out to be the only alternative, this was not inevitably so.

In early 1990, the East German press (still under the limitations of a planned economy) faced increasingly fierce competition and aggressive market strategies employed by (the major) West German publishing houses. In particular the price war, exclusively fought between West German publishers who aimed at securing a future readership, set a deflated 1:1 DM-M price baseline that was impossible to meet, if production and transportation costs needed to be covered. Selling publications for one-third of the original price to win a competitive advantage and to set future claims required a strong, established market position and the respective financial resources, which pushed to the sidelines East German, as well as small and medium-sized West German publishers. East German publishers further lagged in printing and editorial technology, faced high paper prices, if not lacking paper supplies, and simultaneously underwent internal reform processes. By April 1, subsidies ceased to exist and publishers needed to finance themselves by means of higher prices and advertising. This required ad-hoc solutions for building individual marketing infrastructures, often possible only by means of West German investments and expertise; this was the market penetration Nölte pointed to. And while West German publications were superior in the quality of paper, color, print and layout, and exceeded East German standards by far, their initial success cannot be explained by these assets alone. High sales required deflated prices that would have been deemed highly problematic, if not illegal, if held to West German standards.

Publishers admitted to these strategies and to the negative consequences for the East German press, only to continue them out of market necessity. Self-regulation by means of pleas against

1943“Todesurteil.” Cited by Gottfried Müller, Dpa, DDR-Medienminister: Vorrang für öffentlich-rechtliches System, dpa-informationen, 20/90, 5/17/90, BArch DC 9/1033 (1/2). Original quote: “95 Prozent der DDR-Verlage werden eingehen.” Cited in Schlechte Karten, *journalist*, 5/90, p. 40, IISH/ID-Archive MKR 35a-b, DSC07767.

1944“Problematisch seien ... die Absatzschwierigkeiten, vor denen DDR-Presseerzeugnisse stünden. Damm sieht in joint ventures die einzige Möglichkeit für den Erhalt der DDR-Presse.” Protocol, Protokoll der Sitzung der Bundesmedienkommission vom 31.05. 1990, May 31, 1990, Archiv des Liberalismus, FDP Medienkommission/25499.

unrestrained competition, thus, remained ineffective to the promise of new markets.¹⁹⁴⁵ And while Media Minister Müller insisted that “mass media [of the GDR] must not be susceptible to blackmail, economic blackmail” to give into joint venture offers, this is exactly what happened.¹⁹⁴⁶ Ironically, it became the perpetrators of these marketing strategies who then claimed to save the East German press by means of joint ventures, not because of any considerations for a democratic press, but because the initial success of West German publications could not be maintained. Readers showed considerable loyalty especially to former SED regional papers. Those had remained high in circulation and sales. Competition, therefore, soon shifted to the acquisition of these “prime objects” amongst East German publishers even “by means of artifice,” which became the core competitive target.¹⁹⁴⁷ And while the *Treuhandgesellschaft* was officially in charge of their privatization, it largely only gave into prior cooperation agreements and already practiced cross-border productions between still dominant SED regional papers and their market-domineering West German investors. It, thereby, as Schneider's study pointed out, transferred old press monopolies into new private oligopolies.¹⁹⁴⁸ Smaller publishers aimed for their shares and focused on establishing offspring of their publications in the East. Facing strong concentration processes, however, they were largely driven out of this new market. Again, this process required the political will of various institutions and was not a market “coincidence.”

And while sales and ownership were the two more obvious transitional shifts, underlying both was the “completely insufficient distribution situation in the GDR.”¹⁹⁴⁹ The lack of efficient press distribution infrastructures initially put serious obstacles to the sale of West German print media; it became the backdoor through which major publishing houses entered the East German market, and the key to its structural transition. The individual business proposals from November/December 1989, in particular of G+J and Springer, offered holistic approaches to reforming the import and distribution of West German publications by means of a financing scheme based on advertising revenue. The goal on the side of each publisher was to attain a quasi-monopoly market position as the exclusive West

1945“Die Worte veralten im Mund.' Eine Dokumentation zum Pressevertrieb in der DDR.” *Textintern*, DDR extra, No. 13, March 21, 1990, pp. 11-14, p. 14, Archiv Grünes Gedächtnis / B.V.3 – Grüne Partei DDR; Box 27-30, File 29, (see Chapter 4).

1946“Die Massenmedien dürfen nicht erpressbar sein, ökonomisch erpressbar.” Cited in *DFP*, Interview Gottfried Müller, Dr. Peter Gugisch, transcript, 9.40 pm, 6/11/90, BArch DC 9/1033 (1/2).

1947“Filetstücke ... auch mit Tricks.” Treffer sind Glücksache, *journalist*, Horst Röper, 6/90, pp. 32-35, p. 35, IISH/ID-Archive MKR, File 35d, DSC08087.

1948Schneider, Beate, Pressemarkt Ost II. Nur die Konzentration macht Fortschritte, in Walter A., Mahle (ed.), *Pressemarkt Ost, Nationale und internationale Perspektiven*, Munich: Ölschläger, pp. 35-46, 1992. Schneider, Beate, Die ostdeutsche Tagespresse-eine (traurige) Bilanz, in *Media Perspektiven*, 7/92, 1992, pp. 428-441.

1949“völlig unzureichenden Vertriebssituation in der DDR.” Alles ohne Gewähr, *kress report*, no. 3, February 1, 1990, p. 3, attachment III to letter, Thomas Ganske, Jahreszeitenverlag et. al. an Runden Tisch, Hamburg, February 3, 1990, BArch DA3/34 (see Chapter 5).

German partner in joint-venture activities with institutions of the GDR. This related to matters of import, production, distribution, marketing, and the training of journalists. The particular strength of these proposals lay in their adaptation to centralized media structures developed for maintaining a political information monopoly and putting them into the service of monopolistic corporate strategies. Their substantial influence lay, first, in the quick and seamless adoption of an advertising-based free press model and market logic to a planned media economy. They, secondly, offered an easy fix for reform efforts of state institutions whose scope of action was severely limited by the lack of hard currency. All policy proposals on the import and distribution of West German print media on side of the GDR were, therefore, based on these concepts. A reformative East German media (distribution) policy, thus, never developed in its own right but, from its offset, was a blue-print takeover of Western business proposals put into the service of political reform. And while these concepts introduced market criteria and Western concepts of a privately owned press, the legal norms keeping them in check were absent.

With their subsequent building of an exclusive distribution system largely for their own publications – not in cooperation with institutions of the GDR but in opposition to them – the “Big Four” major publishers Springer, G+J, Bauer and Burda disregarded East and West German legal standards and demands for equal market opportunities. Unilaterally established within a weak state, the publishers ignored the protests of various institutions of the GDR and claimed to act on behalf of a free press, pushing the idea of a free flow of information. Small and medium-sized publishers under the leadership of Jahreszeiten, fearing the loss of a potential future readership, went into opposition and appealed to the Round Table *not* because they fundamentally questioned well-known structures, but because it served best their current purposes and future interests. And while the Round Table argued for a sovereign East German media, against a domination of *any* West German interest groups, for a plurality of opinion and information, these demands were heard only if they served the respective interests of publishers. With the distribution practices of the major publishers having been illegal also according to federal norms, these protests could have been matched by those of the federal government. The BMI, however, remained largely inactive with regard to GDR interests. It rejected appeals of the government and emphasized that it had no jurisdiction in any press matters and/or individual actions of publishers; because publishers were not breaking federal law in the FRG, the ministry was in no position to make any adjustments or encourage the publishers to act differently.

Arguing for its own neutrality in press matters, the BMI still held a coordinating function,

however, first, in bringing together and giving space to the major West (rather than *East*) German interest and lobbying groups, second, in fostering legal grey zone initiatives, and, third, in setting clear regulatory premises. The BMI pushed the point that *nothing* that was being built in the GDR must endanger well-established infrastructures in the Federal Republic. This set clear guidelines, less so for a free press in the GDR but for long-established interests in the FRG. With these three points combined, the BMI supported and pushed the idea that a “free press” was to *come* to the GDR by means of press imports and gave little to no consideration to reform processes from within. Though East German publishers were given some thought, the immediate measures focused on imports, not the least because of the upcoming elections heavily influenced by West German party politics. The BMI, thus, stood side by side with West German publishers; their interests met in the aim to sell West German print media and information to an East German readership, and to do so fast. This duality of reasoning, pointing to the lack of jurisdiction while being deeply engaged in dealing with (and encouraging) a factual one-German market, defined the BMI's role during the transition. The Federal Cartel Office would step in only shortly before German unification. It took on the methods and practices of the major publishers to ensure that no harm could be done for an all-German distribution system. It is, therefore, fair to say that the German unification itself became a regulatory act that put back in check the actions of West German publishers to comply with federal practices. Unfair distribution and sales methods, however, had taken their toll on a blossoming East German press. What remained were distribution infrastructures still different from those of the old *Länder*, and a press largely in the hands of Western publishers.

East German institutions, manifold and engaged in their interest in reforming media, were generally ignored in the arguments of West German interest groups, and so were the struggles of publishers. The MfM, the MKR and the Media Commission of the People's Chamber, as well as the Round Table and the government itself, were only left to react to situations on the ground while remaining unsuccessful in setting clear regulations. Especially the MfM and the MKR remained inconsequential in their actions, the MKR because of its lack of legislative and/or executive powers, the MfM because of its ambivalent take on media policies owing to market structures on the ground. Though Müller expressed himself in a vigorous tone against the Big Four distribution system, neither he nor his ministry were (able) to stand up to them. On the contrary, the MfM under Müller was a weak, partly ill-informed and generally ineffective institution that focused on problem management rather than on a pro-active confrontation of issues. It lacked the rigorous stand the many issues in the

media sector would have required. It was the result of structural circumstances, the lack of resources, information and unclear legislative competences of the ministry. It was also due, however, to the lack in leadership and political experience of Müller, and a consistent change of personnel within the ministry.

This only stood representative for East German institutions at large. All faced reform processes from within aiming to find new stands on practical and societal issues. Competing institutional interests and centralized structures contributed to lengthly administrative processes that gave greater leeway to ad-hoc strategies of publishers. And therein lay the most prominent influence of early market pressures: in the necessity of responding to a new playing field defined by major economic players rather than exhausting the full variety of reforms options. This, again, stood in the service of the federal government, as any such reforms (e.g. a comprehensive media law, the introduction of *Redaktionsstatute* or the abolishment of *Tendenzschutz*) might have questioned what was well-established in the FRG.

The reasons why it was almost exclusively West German publishers to explore the East German market lay, first, in language ties that made possible immediate sales of West German products. Also, the East German economy had never been able to disentangle itself from West German capital and dependencies had been well-established. Third, and most importantly, it lay in a federal political agenda that fostered these efforts by means of German-German agreements. In the spirit of CSCE resolutions, underlining the importance of a free press for democratic change, East and West German politicians agreed on mutual press exchanges. But while the political will for such trade was expressed clearly, the economic realities behind them were left aside. Press imports into the GDR needed to be bought by a broke state, while exports required additional scarce paper. With East German publications lagging behind Western standards and with general newspaper demand being higher than their supplies, the East faced an already saturated market of superior products in the West. A *mutual* exchange, therefore, never happened, and the federal government left it to the publishers to take charge of the economic side of this unilateral press trade. This happened according to market rationale, not out of considerations for a democratic press. Still, the bilateral agreements gave the publishers the political justification for their actions.

This stood in a longer tradition of international media policy efforts throughout the 1980s, influenced exceedingly by the US and larger media corporations, to push forward liberal regulatory

communication frameworks regardless political and/or economic boundaries.¹⁹⁵⁰

The case of the GDR shows that this move benefitted not a diverse press but the economic interests of major publishers in close alliance with those of the federal government.

It is not by coincidence that the European Parliament made its assessment of the paradox of a “free press” in the midst of the post-socialist transition in Eastern Europe. In the GDR, everything had happened immediately following November 9, 1989, but it only set a precedent and became the point of entry into the Eastern European market at large. In April 1990, the newly founded Association of Newspaper and Magazine Publishers of the GDR pushed this point in its plea to publishers across Europe. They needed to take seriously concerns of market domination of the Big Four in the GDR “in their own interest, because in the next months to come, significant decisions are being made in the GDR for a future common Europe.”¹⁹⁵¹ Also in April 1990, Springer announced that it had taken over four out of twenty local newspaper publishers in Hungary.¹⁹⁵² Other Western European media corporations (e.g. Hersant) followed.

Ágnes Gulyás shows how, in a process frequently described as “self-privatization,” most newspapers in Hungary were sold to multinational investors such as Bertelsmann, Hersant, and Springer. By the end of 1991, foreign ownership had reached 70 percent, and especially tabloid newspapers skyrocketed.¹⁹⁵³ Similar to Nölte, Gulyás distinguishes between three processes or phases in this transition: first, “the changing political functions of the media with a general aim toward pluralism and democratization,” followed by the “introduction of a market-driven press system,” which culminated in the “commercialization and commodification of the media.”¹⁹⁵⁴ And similar to the narratives of East German journalists, many Hungarian journalists look back on the initial transition

1950Harcourt, Alison, Transnational Media Regulation in Central and Eastern Europe, in Downey, John, and Sabina Mihelj (eds.), *Central and Eastern European Media in Comparative Perspective: Politics, Economy and Culture*, pp. 137–155, London: Ashgate, 2012.

1951“in ihrem eigenen Interesse, denn auf dem Boden der DDR werden in den nächsten Monaten wesentliche Entscheidungen für ein künftiges gemeinsames Europa getroffen.” Open letter, Verband der Zeitungs- und Zeitschriftenverleger der DDR, April 22, 1990, IISH/ID-Archive MKR, Box 1-4, File 1.

1952Wolfgang Mayer, *Publizistik und Kunst*, 5/90, p. 53, IISH/ID-Archive MKR, File 35a-b, DSC07921.

1953Gulyás, Ágnes, The development of the Tabloid Press in Hungary, in Colin Sparks and John Tulloch (eds.), *Tabloid Tales. Global Debates over Media Standards*, pp. 111-127, Lanham, Boulder, New York and Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2000. Also Sükösd, Miklós, Democratic Transition and the Mass Media in Hungary: From Stalinism to Democratic Consolidation, in Gunther, Richard, and Anthony Mugham (eds.), *Democracy and the Media. A Comparative Perspective*, pp. 122–164, Cambridge University Press, 2000. Bajomi-Lázár, Péter, Auksė Balčytienė, Alina Dobрева, and Beata Klimkiewicz, History of the Media in Central and Eastern Europe, *Handbook of European Communication History*, Wiley, forthcoming [2018].

1954Gulyás, Ágnes, The development of the Tabloid Press in Hungary, in *Tabloid Tales. Global Debates over Media Standards*, edited by Colin Sparks and John Tulloch, pp. 111–127, Lanham, Boulder, New York and Oxford: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, 2000, p. 113.

period as the “golden age” of media freedom, when the old political elites “were no longer powerful enough to control media, while the new ones did not yet have the will or the power to do so.”¹⁹⁵⁵ Similar narratives are given by journalists in Bulgaria, where “[t]he media market underwent a rapid process of ownership concentration and many of the small outlets fell victim to economic pressure.”¹⁹⁵⁶ In particular the West German WAZ Group managed to become so influential that, as Dobрева, Voltmer, and Pfetsch claim, “it forced local authorities to turn a blind eye to its obviously illegal monopoly on the market (owning a share of over 70%, whereas regulation puts a cap at 35%).”¹⁹⁵⁷ Also in Lithuanian and Estonia, it was “economic logics” that became the driving motives in press production and in matters of representation. A liberal market soon replaced concerns of liberation from censorship and political control with “rapid financial gains and 'new criteria'” of news production.¹⁹⁵⁸ This gave little chance to the development of an effective system of self-regulation. In Poland where, in February 1989, round table negotiations had started an unprecedented political transformation, privatization was administered by state institutions. Policies, however, lacked anti-trust legislation and set no limitations on foreign ownership. The foreign acquisitions of papers and their mergers followed quickly, and in particular Springer found a strong foothold on the Polish market. Generally, foreign owners “tended to 'clone' and bring to Poland products that had met commercial success in their respective countries.”¹⁹⁵⁹ This was true also for other Eastern European markets, and the results could

1955 Bajomi-Lázár, Péter, Auksė Balčytienė, Alina Dobрева, and Beata Klimkiewicz, *History of the Media in Central and Eastern Europe*, *Handbook of European Communication History*, Wiley, forthcoming [2018].

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be seen already in 1992, when Beate Schneider stated that “[a]lso with respect to a common European market, there is a tendency towards standardization. In the West, the dominant competitor liked to keep a smaller competitor, but this was more for cosmetic reasons.”¹⁹⁶⁰ In the East, no such cosmetic reasons were needed. And though the specifics and outcomes differed in each country (with regard to privatization, the sustainability of press markets, and levels of media corruption), common to all were the institutional and regulatory implementation of Western free-press models, the overall penetration of Western market interests and their products, and a considerable foreign ownership and high market concentration.¹⁹⁶¹ This contributed to demise of several media organizations that had been created during the first few years of democratic transition.¹⁹⁶² And *this* is where the paradox of a free media in a free media market, pointed to by the European Parliament, worked *against* the interests of competing voices that make for a viable democracy. In the case of post-socialist countries, it did not break monopolies but only changed their political justification.

Additional Notes of Future Research

Follow-up research, expanding on the issues presented in this thesis, is in the making. While initially also “unions” were to be part of the scope of analysis as an interest group in its own rights, it fell out of the picture for reasons of space. In a follow-up project, I analyze the influence of media unions (i.e. IG Medien, IG Druck, or DJV) and their own “expansion motives” in close relations to

Available online: <https://www.dlib.si/stream/URN:NBN:SI:DOC-R7PMGORA/d3ba274f-d52d-488c-8baa-3e490cb9257e/PDF> [January 2, 2018].

1960“ Auch im Hinblick auf den gemeinsamen europäischen Markt sei eine Tendenz zur Vereinheitlichung zu verzeichnen. Im Westen hielte sich zwar der überlegene Wettbewerber gern einen kleineren Konkurrenten, aber dies mehr aus kosmetischen Gründen.“ Protocol, Protokoll der 4. Sitzung des F.D.P. Medienbeirats am 20./21. November 1992 in Halle, November 20/21, 1992, p. 4, Archiv des Liberalismus, FDP Medienkommission/24548.

1961Jakubowicz, Karol, Rude Awakening: Social and Media Change in Central and Eastern Europe, in *the public*, 8/4, 2001, pp. 59-80. Available online: <https://www.dlib.si/stream/URN:NBN:SI:DOC-R7PMGORA/d3ba274f-d52d-488c-8baa-3e490cb9257e/PDF> [January 2, 2018]. Note: Current comparative studies, therefore, document concentration processes and strong commercialization tendencies on different East European media markets and their difference with regard to political cultures. See Peace Institute, *Media Ownership and Its Impact on Media Independence and Pluralism*, edited by Sandra B. Hrvatin and Brankica Petković, Ljubljana: Peace Institute, 2004. Available online: <http://www3.mirovni-institut.si/wp-content/uploads/2015/02/media-ownership-and-its-impact-on-media-independence-and-pluralism.pdf> [December 10, 2017]. Also Jakubowicz, Karol, and Miklós Sükösd, *Finding the Right Place on the Map. Central and Eastern European Media in a Global Perspective*, Bristol, UK and Chicago: Intellect Books, 2008. Balčytienė, Auksė, and Aušra Vinciūnienė, Older and Newer Media in Transitional Democracies: Similarities and Differences in Media Functions and Patterns of Use, in Reifova, Irena, and Tereza Pavlickova (eds.), *Working Title: CEECOM 2012 conference papers*, pp. 14–20, Cambridge: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2014. Available online: <http://www.cambridgescholars.com/download/sample/61936> [December 13, 2017]. Dobek-Ostrowska, Bogusława, and Michał Głowacki, *Making democracy in 20 years. Media and politics in Central and Eastern Europe*, Wrocław: Wydawnictwo Uniwersytetu Wrocławskiego, 2001. Klimkiewicz, Beata, Structural Media Pluralism and Ownership Revisited. The Case of Central and Eastern Europe, in *Journal of Media Business Studies*, 6/3, pp. 43-62, 2009.

1962Klimkiewicz, Beata, Structural Media Pluralism and Ownership Revisited. The Case of Central and Eastern Europe, in *Journal of Media Business Studies*, 6/3, pp. 43-62, 2009.

those of publishers. While March 1990 was defined by the first free elections, in May 1990 collective bargaining in the Federal Republic kept unions and publishers busy, and their agendas were likewise pushed onto the GDR. East German unions, representing the interests of journalists and other media sector workers, were soon to become the target of information campaigns and inter-union competition over membership. The situation by mid-1990 was such that West German unions faced West German investors in the struggle for workers' rights in the GDR.

A similar study as has been presented in this thesis should be done on the broadcasting sector. While individual studies (i.e. on *Länder* legislation) do exist, a broader approach on the dealings of public and private broadcasters, their lobbying strategies and policy measures in the allocation of frequencies, the “defense strategies” (as Hessischer Runderfunk 2 called them) of East German reformers and officials, such as Lothar Bisky, for a sovereign media and a third public channel in the FRG, and the eventual transition to federal structures would be a highly informative study. Similar debates on how to reform media happened later with regard to broadcasting, but they were even more forceful. Similar patterns of a “run” for frequencies started as soon as German unification stood at the horizon. Public and private institutions battled over policy influence at a time when private broadcasting as part of a “dual broadcasting system” was fairly new also to federal structures, and the Eastern market promised new territories to put into practice and manifest new broadcasting norms. Next to commercial pressures, party politics became a defining feature in the transition of broadcasting by means of *Länder* jurisdiction, the building *Länder* broadcasting stations and the clear and more aggressive stand of the federal government on broadcasting issues.¹⁹⁶³

¹⁹⁶³Examples: Zukunft der Rundfunkanstalten nach Bundesrecht: Medienpolitische Korrekturen, *Das Parlament*, no.22, 5/25/90, BArch DC 9/1033 (2/2); Report, CDU Bundestagsfraktion, Eckwerte für die Medienordnung in einem vereinigten Deutschland, Bericht, Bernd Neumann, pp.1-8, 5/14/1990, Bonn, BArch DC 9/1033 (2/2); Wirtschaftliche Planspiele allein genügen nicht, *Frankfurter Rundschau*, 6/28/90, BArch DC 9/1033 (2/2). Recommended files BArch DC9/1058; Archiv des Liberalismus; IISH/ID-Archive MKR.

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