

The University of Chicago

**Redemption of the Progressive Dystopia — Failed
Renewals of the Socialist Immanence**

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August 2022

A paper submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the
Master of Arts degree in the Master of Arts Program in the Social
Sciences

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Introduction and the concept of Socialist Immanence

One hundred and sixteen-four years after Marx critiques that Germany is trapped in a historical anachronism of political passivity in which Germany has only thought about what other nations have done and begins from where others conclude¹, the socialist German Democratic Republic (GDR) experiences a historical Déjà vu echoing the conservative monarchies of the last centennial. In the Summer of 1989, the ruling Socialist Unity Party (SED) finds itself isolated from the reforming waves of other Warsaw Pact nations. When Hungary, Poland, and the Soviet Union all prepare to break away from Stalinism, the GDR has probably not even thought about what these nations had done and only hesitates to act when the expected renewals of socialism might already be too late to turn the tide of history. On August 23, 1989, the State Security Ministry (Stasi) presents to the Politburo of the Central Committee of the SED an exhaustive review of the political changes happening in the socialist neighbors of the GDR, including Poland, Hungary, and Czechoslovak. In the report, the Stasi explains to the SED party leadership that the sovereign power of the Polish United Worker's Party has been weakened by the *Solidarnosc*, and its future remains uncertain. The political situation in Hungary incites further anxiety since the nation's newly revised constitution will renounce the leading role of the Communist Party of Hungary and its Marxist-Leninist worldview.²

The political change in Hungary raises a sovereignty crisis for the SED party leadership when thousands of East German citizens travel via the Hungarian border with Austria to defect to West Germany. The Western German *Berliner Morgenpost* newspaper describes the opening of the Hungary-Austria border as the “end of an epoch” on the day the barbed wires on the border are

¹ Karl Marx, Friedrich Engels, “Contribution to the Critique: Introduction”, *The Marx-Engels Reader*, Robert C. Tucker edited, (New York: W.W Norton & Company, 1978) 54-57

² *Most of the German texts of this essay are self-translated unless specifically indicated. BStU, “Monatsübersicht 9/89 über aktuelle Probleme der Lageentwicklung in sozialistischen Staaten”, Nr. 5338, 23.8.1989, 9-22

dismantled.³ But the SED party leadership disavows the severity of the imminent political crisis and conveniently accuses the refugees of traitors of socialism who have betrayed their moral values for the capitalist temptations. The flagship party newspaper, *Neues Deutschland*, condemns the refugees by citing a notorious statement of the incumbent Secretary-General, Erich Honecker: “They (refugees) have through their behaviors ostracized themselves from the moral values of our society. Therefore, no tears should be cried for them.”⁴ The party leadership refuses to change its courses of politics even when the Soviet president, Mikhail Gorbachev, warns Honecker on October 7, 1989, the 40th Anniversary of the founding of GDR: “life punishes those who come too late” (Wer zu spät kommt, den bestraft das Leben).⁵

Two weeks after the 40th anniversary, Honecker is forced to resign from Politburo. But the party-state carefully avoids criticizing him for the sake of integrity. The new Secretary-General, Egon Krenz, decides not to make Honecker the “scapegoat” for the existing social problems.⁶ By the time Krenz comes to power, the sovereignty of the party-state has already been vitiated by opposition groups such as *Neues Forum*, *Partei Demokratischer Aufbruch*, and *Demokratische Erneuerung*. However, it should be highlighted that as opposed to the political revolutions of liberal capitalism, many opposition groups intend to reform socialism rather than abolish it. For many international observers and participants of civil movements, the GDR would instead continue to exist as a democratic republic inspired by the theories of Marx and Lenin.⁷ For example, *Neues Forum*, the largest opposition force, inextricably links its political agenda to the Marxist-Leninist doctrines on the one hand. On the other hand, it makes a clear statement to distance away

³ *Berliner Morgenpost*, 3. Mai 1989

⁴ *Neues Deutschland*, 2. Oktober 1989

⁵ Hubertus Knabe, *Aufbruch in eine andere DDR: Reformer und Oppositionelle zur Zukunft ihres Landes*, (Reinbek bei Hamburg: Rowohlt Taschenbuch Verlag, 1989), 15

⁶ BArch DY 30-87, Über die Reaktionen der Bevölkerung auf die 9. Tagung, 11.1989

⁷ Knabe, *Aufbruch in eine andere DDR*, 29

from anti-socialist or pro-capitalist/pro-market initiatives. The founding statement of *Neues Forum* explicitly declares: “We want playrooms for economic initiatives but not a degradation into an elbow society. [Ellenbogengesellschaft]”⁸

The newly elected SED leadership also intends to reform the republic under the principle of preserving its independent sovereignty. The new party secretary, Egon Krenz, reaffirms with Gorbachev that the reformed German Democratic Republic would remain anchored in the socialist bloc while “German unification” is not the political task of the day.⁹ However, the change of rally mottos in December of the year from “We are the people” [Wir sind das Volk] to “We are one people” [Wir sind ein Volk] reflects the vicissitude of East German politics in 1989. What is typically categorized as the *Change* [Wende] or the *Peaceful Revolution* [Friedlich Revolution] means more than German unification or the triumph of liberal democracy. Rather, the revolution originally expects to rehabilitate the vitality of socialism as a progressive force over bourgeois politics. The historical result — the accession of the Federal Republic over the GDR — typically ignores the content-meaning of the supposed “democratic socialism” and its failure. This essay argues that the downfall of East German socialism is a transitional process from the “alternatives of socialism” to the “alternatives to socialism.”

This essay attempts to establish a theory-inspired historical interpretation of socialism’s failure in the GDR. To this end, most primary sources of this essay are excerpted from the archives of the SED party-state in which the party leadership discusses the actions and potential actions to reshape the pathway of socialism in the last months of 1989. The historiography of East Germany tends to develop into two disciplines. The first discipline tries to explain the failure of East

⁸ *Gründungsaufwurf des Neuen Form*, 10. September, 1989

⁹ Egon Krenz, “Anmerkungen zur Öffnung der Berliner Mauer im Herbst 1989, 366

Germany by highlighting its political and economic inferiorities to the Federal Republic, thereby essentially judging the GDR as an “illegitimate state” [Unrechtsstaat], or a puppet regime imposed on German soil by the Soviet military. For example, the market-oriented economic interpretation of the demise of East Germany attributes the failure of socialism to its economic inefficiency in comparison to West Germany.¹⁰ The market-oriented economic interpretation does have some merits since even the Stasi report admits that one of the key reasons forcing GDR citizens to defect is the scarcity of high-quality consumer goods and poor working conditions.¹¹ However, the economic critique incurs philosophical incompetence that essentially justifies one subject’s failure for its not-being another subject. While it explains how inefficient the “unification of economy and social politics” is when compared to free markets, economic critique fails to account for socialism’s own demise beyond the realm of economics, let alone the fact that “economics” means a different concept under the Marxist-Leninist worldview. The underlining logic of the market-oriented explanation presumes the naturalization of market relationships which itself is despised by Marxism-Leninism.

The moralistic criticism against East Germany, the claims of an “illegitimate state” [Unrechtsstaat]¹² or the “totalitarian dictatorship,” on the other hand, ontologically denies the socialist liberalism of East Germany. While the SED dictatorship and the Marxist-Leninist worldview postulate a historical and political “totality” that claims to be the only true social science, it cannot be simply categorized as a totalitarian regime since Hannah Arendt’s concept of

¹⁰ See Ulrich Blum, Leonard Dudley, “Blood, Sweat, and Tears: The Rise and Decline of the East German Economy, 1949—1988”, *Journal of Economics and Statistics*, Juli 2000, Vol. 220, No. 4 (Juli 2000), pp. 438-452

¹¹ BStU Nr. 5351, Hinweise auf motivbildende Faktoren im Zusammenhang mit der Ausreisebewegung, 9. September 1989

¹² Rudolf Wassermann, “Zur Aufarbeitung des SED Unrechts,” *Auspolitik und Zeitgeschichte*, n. 4 (22 January 1993), pp 3; Wassermann, a judge of the 1992 trial against East German border guards, argues that the SED dictatorship is even more illegitimate than the Nazi dictatorship since it utterly lacks board consent from the population being ruled.

totalitarianism is not so much obsessed with the dictatorial sovereign power than with the societal incapability of rendering judgments. Totalitarianism for her means the destruction of men as the *animal rationale*. It refers to the destruction of the contemplative life and its replacement by the shapeless masses who are ignorant of factual truths and are incapable of making judgments on their own.¹³ Although the SED party-state inherits the Stalinist brutalities (especially in the earlier years, such as the 1953 labor uprising), it fails to develop its “totality” to the degree that the human facilities of making judgments and seeking factual truth are deprived. The GDR state lacks both the intention and capacity to rule the country with totalitarian movements in which victims are innocent even in the eyes of perpetrators. Moreover, unlike their parents or grandparents living through the Nazi era, East German citizens have not been indoctrinated with the racist or nationalist “hatred education” but instead by internationalist solidarity.

The other school of East German historiography, the “nostalgia of the east” [Ostalgie], portrays the GDR as the better Germany or a “potentially” better Germany than the Federal Republic. This school of historiography externalizes the responsibility of the demise of East German socialism to the “evil-minded” aggressions committed by Bonn and the betrayal of “renegade socialists” [abtrünnige Sozialisten].¹⁴ Authors of the pro-SED historiography also tend to eulogize the political “success” of China in 1989 as the counter-example of the GDR’s failure.¹⁵

¹³ See Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, (Penguin Books, 2006), 132; *Between Past and Future*, 243; “Philosophy and Politics”, *Social Research Vol. 57, No. 1 1990*, pp 90. Arendt was very cautious to apply the concept “totalitarianism”. For example, in *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, she does not make clear-cut conclusions as whether to call the Maoist China totalitarian or not. She also makes distinctions between the Stalinist Russia and the Post-Stalin communism. See *The Origins of Totalitarianism*, (The Harvest Books, New York: 1976), xxvii

¹⁴ See Egon Krenz, *Gefängnis Notizen*, (Verlag Das Neue Berlin, November 2000); *Walter Ulbricht* (Verlag Das Neue Berlin, Jan 2013). Egon Krenz in the two books respectively praised the contributions of Erich Honecker and Walter Ulbricht, and portrayed them as heroes of socialism who should not be criminalized. Krenz uses the term “renegade socialists” to criticize Günter Schabowski.

¹⁵ Egon Krenz, *China Wie ich es sehe*, (Edition Ost, 2018); Hans Modrow, *Brückenbauer: Als sich Deutsche und Chinesen nahe kamen. Eine persönliche Rückschau*, (Verlag am Park, 17. Feb 2021)

Even the less perceptive minds would easily discern that such narratives not only romanticize the SED dictatorship but also fail to explain the innate failures within the socialist apparatus. The demise of East Germany, although being influenced by the foreign powers (such as the diplomatic deal between Bonn and Moscow), essentially reveals the intrinsic malfunctioning of the socialist edifice. A famous socialist dissident of East Germany, Wolf Biermann, for example, interprets the republic's political crisis as the malfeasance of doctrinarian bureaucrats who tarnish the validity of socialism with their power-greed and stupidity.¹⁶

Between anti-socialist and pro-SED historiographies, a new perspective emerges — the study of *Eigen-Sinn* (individual meaning) and *Alltagsgeschichte* (every-day history).¹⁷ Instead of making overarching arguments or generalizing claims, *Eigen-Sinn* and *Alltagsgeschichte* examine the interdisciplinary specificities of the socialist culture, politics, and, most importantly, individual life. The study of individual meaning and everyday history shifts the focus of East German historiography from the top-down to the grassroots without ignoring the economic and political structures so much as investigating the complex ways in which such structures influenced individual lives.¹⁸ But this perspective also induces a soft-centered pluralism in which every cultural and individual experience occupies a distinctive experiential realm that cannot be sufficiently grasped by theories seeking to construe a generally applicable explanation. In short, the study of individual meaning and everyday history is more descriptive than analytical.

This essay explains the failed reform initiatives of East German socialism by focusing on the *Eigen-Sinn* of the party-state. In this essay, *Eigen-Sinn* interprets socialism as political and

¹⁶ Wolf Biermann, *Wer war Krenz*, in *Aufbruch in einer andere DDR*, Hubertus Knabe, (Rowohlt, 1990), 23-31

¹⁷ See A. Lüdtke, *Eigen-Sinn. Industrielltag, Arbeitererfahrungen und Politik vom Kaiserreich bis zum Faschismus* (Hamburg, 1993); T. Lindenberger (ed.), *Herrschaft und Eigen-Sinn in der Diktatur. Studien zur Gesellschaftsgeschichte der DDR* (Cologne, 1999); K. H. Jarausch (ed.), *Dictatorship as Experience. Towards a Socio-Cultural History of the GDR* (New York, 1999)

¹⁸ Jan Palmowski, "Between Conformity and Eigen-Sinn: New Approaches to GDR History", *German Historical Institute London*, 11 May 2002, pp 495-50

philosophical individuation that is both self-standing and self-fulfilling. In other words, socialism is both an individuation and a full-sense [*Voll Sinn*]. East German socialism can be interpreted as a form of immanence which becomes the fullness of its own and requires no external justification. Political epistemology has exhaustively explained that East German socialism is a self-fulfilling prophecy installed by the party-state “from heaven to earth” (in contradistinction to Marx’s claim of “from earth to heaven”¹⁹). As a self-fulfilling prophecy, East German socialism, or real-existing socialism in general, builds its political project not upon the advanced material conditions as Marx has predicted but instead on the ideational knowledge created and constantly recreated by the vanguard party.²⁰ Starting from the critique of East German socialism as a “conscious-driven model of social transformation”²¹, this essay would explain the failure of socialism as the result of self-struggles and self-destructions within the socialist apparatus. The essential argument to be made in this essay is that apart from the political influences of West Germany, the failure of East German socialism can be interpreted as a process of self-destruction.

What does “self-destruction” mean in the context of East German socialism? As mentioned before, real-existing socialism is not naturally formed but consciously installed by the party following a top-down model. The conscious-driven socialism also assumes that the party has a particular project for a bright future which can only be achieved through the party leadership. Real-existing socialism can, therefore, be interpreted as a party-led transformational process from the current materialistic actuality to the future virtuality. Socialism is immanence in which virtuality

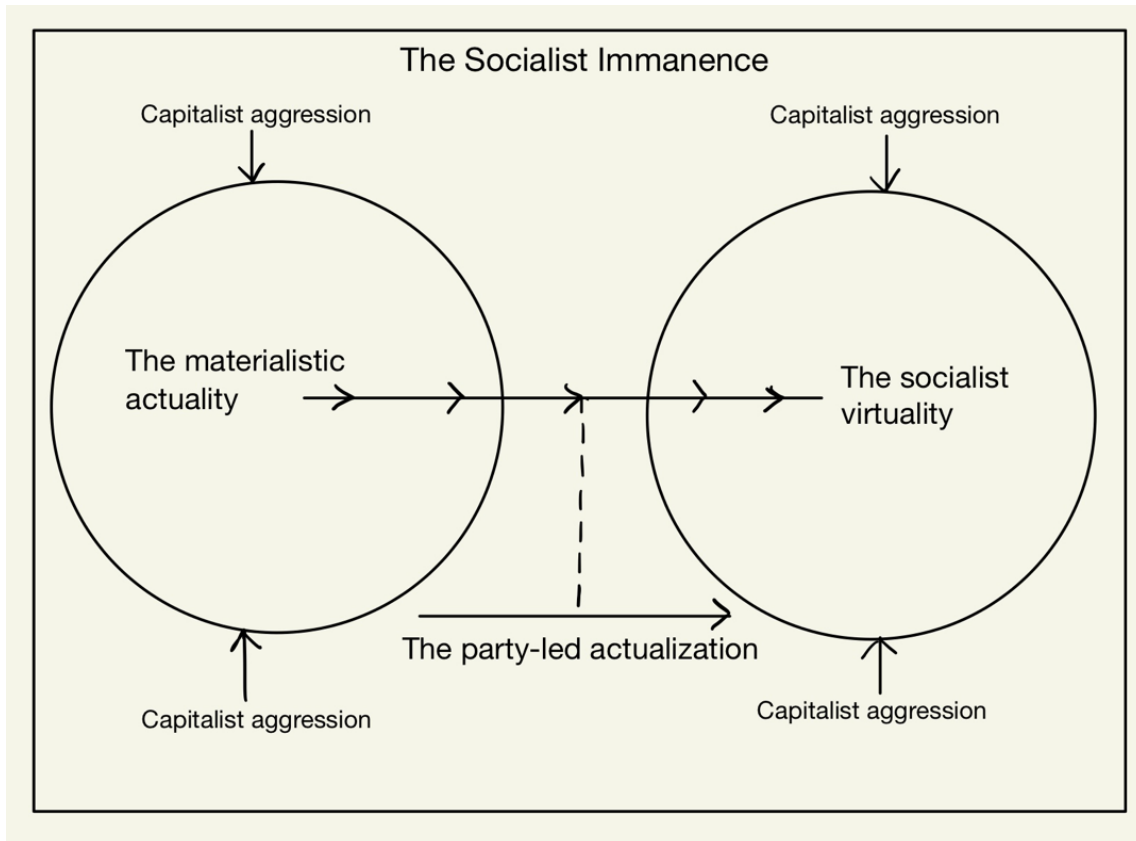
¹⁹ The original term “from heaven to earth” is used by Marx in *The German Ideology*. In this essay, Marx critiques German Idealism as reversing the “from material to ideational” relationship and mistakes the Geist (spirit) as the essence of history. Marx reveals his basic critique of ideology as phantom-like beings and also unfolds the theory of historical materialism. Karl Marx, *The German Ideology*, The Marx-Engels Reader, Robert C. Tucker ed, (W.W Norton & Company, New York, London: 1978)

²⁰ Andreas Glaeser, *Political Epistemics: The Secret Police, the Opposition, and the end of East German Socialism*, (The University of Chicago Press, 2011), 75-81

²¹ Ibid, 67

and actuality are supposed to justify one another through the leadership of the SED party-state. According to Gilles Deleuze, absolute immanence is in itself. It does not depend on an object or belong to a subject; absolute immanence is complete power and complete bliss. Immanence for Deleuze is a virtual life that is engaged in the process of actualization following the plane that gives it its particular reality. Being virtual does not mean something is untrue but rather it is a truth to be actualized.²² The socialist virtuality proclaims a particular future that is to be actualized by the party leadership. Immanence is consequently established by the party-led actualization process that connects the present to the future. The party leadership incites a carceral-progressivism that posits itself as the only true pathway to socialism while simultaneously excluding the possible alternatives, thereby turning socialism into a progressive dystopia. East German Socialism establishes its immanence upon a process of “exclusive inclusion” in which the concept of socialism is first excluded from all other alternatives and then re-included into the monolithic pathway led by the party-state. To perpetuate socialism as a self-standing and self-fulfilling project, the party needs to eradicate both the “alternatives of socialism” and the “alternatives to socialism”. In the first case, the party-state tolerates no “cliques” that might deviate from the mainline. In the second case, the party remains vigilant in defending socialism against its western rivals.

²² Gilles Deleuze, *Pure Immanence: Essay on a Life*, trans. Anne Boyman, (Zone Books, 2005)



The above graph shows that the Socialist Immanence incurs three structural peculiarities. First, it postulates a monolithic actualization process (the arrow between two circles) from the socialist actuality to the virtuality. The dictatorship of the party-state recognizes its Marxist-Leninist Worldview [*Marxistisch-Leninistische Weltanschauung*] as the only true science of liberation. Second, the relationship between actuality and virtuality is one-dimensional (always forward) and positivistic. It is assumed that the party leads the population toward progress rather than setbacks. As the party song of SED beautifully claims: “*The party, the party, which is always right, is forward against lies and exploitations*”²³ As opposed to the market fluctuations and economic uncertainties of bourgeois society, socialism represents the stable and positivistic social developments. Third, virtuality represents the ultimate political and ideological beliefs of the

²³ Louis Fürnberg, *Das Lied der Partei—Hymne der SED*, 1950, (http://www.hdg.de/lemo/html/dokumente/JahreDesAufbausInOstUndWest_liedtextSEDLied/index.html)

party-state while achieving such virtuality requires the party to make compromises to the actuality. The party needs to convince the population that the socialist future is achievable whereas the current hardships are temporary.

The demise of East German socialism in 1989 as a process of self-destruction occurs when the party-state's ultimate beliefs (the socialist virtuality) and its responsibilities to the population (the socialist actuality) run into irreconcilable conflicts. As a result, the party could no longer balance its responsibility to the people with its beliefs in Marxism-Leninism as the only truth. The epitome of this self-destruction is the unexpected fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989. At that moment, the party could choose either to adhere to its ultimate belief and restore the border through violence or, vice versa, renounce the socialist belief and instead protect the lives of citizens. But why socialism has come to the stage of to-be or not-to-be? Why did the oppositions and the party-state fail to reach a consensus? Why did the reform initiatives of the party-state fail to win widespread support among the population?

The failure of GDR socialism and its reform initiatives can be explained as the gradual opening-up of alternatives to the monolithic socialist actualization process. Socialist oppositions first create alternatives to the monolithic pathways of socialism prescribed by the SED party-state. Opposition groups like *Neues Forum*, albeit being inspired by the teachings of Marx and Lenin, strike to overturn the dictatorship of the party-state and replace it with socialist democracy. By contrast, the party-state, in the period between Honecker's resignation (October 18) and the downfall of the Berlin Wall (November 9), aims to mediate its conflict with the opposition through a moderate "inner" reform without renouncing its dictatorial power. The "reform initiatives" of the party-state in this period essentially seek to preserve and promote the monolithic socialist actualization.

However, instead of either preserving the old apparatus by brute force²⁴ or actively embracing the new principles of democratic socialism, the SED party-state led by Egon Krenz undertakes a “contemplative” attitude. The reform-minded leadership unsuccessfully tries to mitigate its conflicts with oppositions under the premise of not renouncing the leading role of SED. To this end, the inner-party reform shows no evidence that it intends to embrace a socialist democracy. The party lacks concrete actions to convince the population, and, therefore, is unable to incorporate the oppositions within the existing power apparatus. In the end, when the inner-Germany border unexpectedly falls on November 9, the sovereign power of the party turns destitute. The contemplative attitude of the new leadership has *de facto* incubated potential alternatives to the Socialist Immanence. The decision not to adopt the “Chinese Solution”²⁵ [die chinesische Lösung] in practice removes the last barrack guarding the Socialist Immanence — violence.

Sovereignty requires semiotic power to justify its exclusion of the alternatives.²⁶ The Berlin Wall [bearing the official name of the “Anti-Fascist Protection Wall”] is both the semiotic and the actual power of the party-state to both monopolize the meaning of socialism and combat the capitalist rivals. The downfall of the Berlin Wall manifests the failure of the party-state to maintain its monolithic socialist actualization. Time is longer on the party’s side. Before reaching a consensus with the population, the party now has to make a choice between either its political belief (socialist virtuality) or its responsibility to the population (actuality). The consequent upsurge of political and financial influences from West Germany creates new alternatives to the

²⁴ As what the Chinese and Romanian Communist Parties have done in June and December of 1989.

²⁵ The Chinese Solution refers to the Tiananmen Massacre on June 4, 1989. The SED party-state almost unanimously agreed not to adopt the Chinese Solution to handle the sovereignty crisis.

²⁶ Rutherford, Danilyn, *Laughing at Leviathan: Sovereignty and Audience in West Papua*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2012) Danilyn uses the sovereignty dispute of West Papua to argue that a sovereignty requires a semiotic power to perform to the audiences that it processes the capacity to exclude both domestic and foreign challenges.

continuing existence of the GDR as an independent sovereign state. The question is no longer to choose between Stalinism and democratic socialism. But rather, the political crisis after November 9 undermines the Socialist Immanence in general. As the East German ambassador to the U.S. protested the West German interventions in the GDR election: the CDU victory in the East German Parliament can be attributed to Bonn's "two months of the banana policy."²⁷

This essay unfolds into three chapters. The first chapter explains the structural discrepancy between oppositions and the party-state. The central argument is that socialist immanence is all or nothing. There's no partial immanence for socialism since the "alternatives of socialism" would inevitably pave the ground for the "alternatives to socialism".

The second chapter studies the mediation policies of the party-state to preserve its monolithic interpretation of socialism. The inner-party reforms are more reparative than creative, and more contemplative than active. Instead of creating new theories and abolishing old rules, the party-state tries in vain to appease the population by refining the already breaking system. In other words, the SED leadership, at its best, only adopts *Glasnost* (transparency) but discards *Perestroika* (restructuring).

The third chapter focuses on socialism's self-destruction. This chapter will borrow Weber's concepts of the "administrative" and the "political". The argument is that the SED leadership lacks an "auric mana" that is requisite for political decisions. Instead, the party is obsessed with its administrative role and is trapped in bureaucratic functionalism. To this end, the party is afraid of bearing the responsibility to conduct the "necessary evil" to maintain the pathways of the socialist virtuality.

²⁷ John Rodden, *Repainting the little red schoolhouse: a history of Eastern German education, 1945-1995*, (New York, N.Y.: Oxford University Press, 2002), 7; Note: Banana as a tropical fruit is rarely seen in East Germany. The CDU (Christian Democratic Union), in order to win the national election in March 1990, offers free banana to East German voters.

Chapter One: Exclude the Alternatives of Socialism

This chapter examines the actions of the party-state to externalize the alternative interpretations of socialism. When mass movements and socialist opposition groups in 1989 begin to challenge the monolithic pathway of socialism, the party-state responds with a process of externalization. Contrary to the common consciousness, which considers the protests and citizen movements as anti-socialism, the initial protests do not lead to a clash between socialism and its rivals but a “path struggle” within the socialist framework. The basic conflict between the party-state and oppositions is: that while oppositions intend to democratize and decentralize socialism, the SED leadership disregards their political demands and instead demonizes them with an overarching accusation of the “rivals” [Gegeners]. For the party-state, externalizing the alternative interpretations of socialism as subversive attacks preserves its monolithic pathways of socialism. The party’s intolerance of the alternative voices of socialism reveals one crucial feature of the Socialist Immanence: it can only exist in fullness. Partially immanent socialism does not exist since there’s nothing in-between the party-led totality and utter spontaneity. Even the friendly alternatives, once breaking the monolithic pathways, signals the total demise of the socialist republic.

The interpretative power of socialism is historically monopolized by the party-state. To be more precise, they are determined by the leading organs — the Politburo and the Central Committee. But contrary to the stereotype, “purges” against alternative interpretations of socialism perhaps begin to occur at the very moment when scientific socialism as a political imagination had just been created. Neither the GDR nor the Soviet Union is the first ones to purge other socialists. In fact, the tendency to rule out alternative socialist pathways starts with Marx himself. From

Marx's *ad hominem* attacks against Proudhon to Engels' bitter critique of utopian socialists²⁸, the intellectual tradition of scientific socialism establishes a totality — carceral progressivism that rejects deviations from its self-claimed “only truth.” Deviations from that totality, according to Marx, belong to the “*differentia specifica*” — the elements which are not general and common must be separated out so that their unity and essential difference are not forgotten.²⁹

Starting from Lenin, the socialist totality (manifested by a monolithic pathway led by the party) develops into physical destructions of the alternatives, such as the Mensheviks and Trotskyists. Furthermore, unlike orthodox Marxism, real-existing socialism no longer believes the revolutions would spontaneously and naturally occur. Instead, the party-state as the vanguard of the proletariat bears the responsibility to organize a centralized and unified revolutionary struggle. The party needs to consciously cultivate a proletarian class consciousness in the masses. Lenin makes it clear in *What is to be done*:

“Not only are we able, but it is our bounden duty, to guide these "activities of the various opposition strata", if we desire to be the "vanguard". We must take upon ourselves the task of organizing an all-round political struggle under the leadership of our Party in such a manner as to make it possible for all oppositional strata to render their fullest support to the struggle and to our Party.”³⁰

In the German Democratic Republic, the SED leadership inextricably imports the Leninist model of socialism from the Soviet Union. Early in 1952, the Secretary General of SED, Walter Ulbricht, launches the “Accelerated Construction for Socialism” project [Beschleunigten Aufbau des Sozialismus]. The leadership assumes that advanced socialism can be achieved within short periods of time as long as the party is able to mobilize the productivity of the masses. This project seeks to boost the industrial production of GDR through rapid economic centralization and

²⁸ Friedrich Engels, *Socialism: Utopian and Scientific*, MER, 687; in this essay, Engels critiqued utopian dreams of socialism based on the triumph of pure reason as “bitterly disappointing caricatures” and “pure phantasies.”

²⁹ Karl Marx, *Introduction to 'The Grundrisse'*. (London, Penguin, 1973), 85

³⁰ Vladimir Il'ich Lenin, *What is to be done?* 1902, the Marxists Internet Archive, Transcription by Tim Delaney, 53

agricultural collectivization. The ambitious plan expects to increase the iron production from 1952 to 1953 by 239.8%, increase rolling mill production by 364 %, and increase combined harvester production by the insanely amount of 840%.³¹ Needless to say, such an unrealistic economic plan would necessarily cause deterioration of the living and working conditions of citizens. But the party announces its position that the goals are not negotiable. The party organ, *Neues Deutschland* declares: “Our government is well aware of the difficulties of work, but she (the party) is determined that these difficulties must be overcome, and she takes all necessary measures to do so.”³² Economic goals set by the party become even more radical when it comes to April of the year. On April 15, 1953, the Party Secretary of Berlin District, Hans Jendretsky, announces that all kinds of production must be increased by another 15% by May 1.³³ It is to say that the East German workers and peasants must finish 115% of the original quotas within two weeks of time.

Fury and discontent soon explode after the announcement. On June 17, 1953, thousands of workers in Berlin rally in the streets to demand democratic elections and better working conditions. The response of Ulbricht’s regime is undoubtedly ruthless. Ulbricht calls the Soviet tanks to put down the labor uprising without hesitation. The SED’s response to the riot even appalls the communist parties in Czechoslovakia, Poland, and the new Soviet leadership.³⁴ Similar purges are undertaken against intellectuals who do not prove their loyalties to the party mainline. Kurt Wilhelm, the editor of one of GDR’s most renowned literature journals *Aufbau*, is ostracized from the republic due to his undisciplined speeches.³⁵ The commonly used accusation against political

³¹ *Neues Deutschland*, 1953.01.01, Seite 4

³² *Ibid*, Seite 1

³³ *Neues Deutschland*, 1953. 04.15

³⁴ Christian F. Ostermann, ed. *Uprising in East Germany: The Cold War, the German Question, and the First Major Uprising Behind the Iron Curtain* (Budapest: Central European University Press, 2001), 257-285

³⁵ Alexander Petrusek, *Real Existing Ideals: East Germany and the Socialist Imaginary 1945-1991*, PhD dissertation, (Rutgers, The State University of New Jersey, 2022), 109

rivals is to discredit them as representing the *bürgerliche Ideologie* (middle-class/bourgeois ideology). Another editor of *Aufbau*, Wolfgang Harich, is charged with the crime of high treason due to his advocacy for abolishing press censorship. The treatment of Wilhelm and Harich symbolizes the subordination of the socialist spirit [Geist] to the party's power [Macht].³⁶ The party-state remains the power to exclude alternative interpretations of socialism. Spirit's subordination to power also epitomizes the relationship between the socialist virtual and the party-state: it is up to the right of the party to dictate what is socialist virtuality and how to materialize it.

We can observe from the 1953 Labor Uprising and the consequent purges against intellectuals that the socialist actuality has run into conflicts with the party's portrayal of virtuality. In the first case, the party's unrelenting insistence to accomplish the virtual goals of economic progress significantly jeopardizes the actual living conditions of the population. In the second case, the party has to shut down some free developments of the socialist virtuality for the sake of preserving its actually existing dictatorship. But during this period, the party is able to restore the one-dimensional relationship between actuality and virtuality because of the Soviet military support and the subsequent economic growth during the 1970s.

The VIII. Party Congress [VIII. Parteitag] of SED in 1971 marks a new era of GDR socialism. With the resignation of Walter Ulbricht and the ascendancy of Erich Honecker as the party secretary, socialism shifted from a series of volatile "movements" to stabilized "technical structures." On the one hand, Erich Honecker utterly lacks the intention to innovate the socialist virtuality and instead strictly adheres to the orthodox socialist central planning. Unlike Ulbricht, who swings between the Stalinist project of "Rapid Construction for Socialism" and the reformist

³⁶ Ibid., 14

approach of “New Economic System,” Honecker firmly anchors in a moderate but conservative functionalist structure — the Soviet model of real-existing socialism. On the other hand, Honecker tries to avoid direct confrontations with the masses like the tragedy of 1953 by improving the socialist actuality. The apotheosis of socialist immanence is no longer to sacrifice the present for future virtuality but to make the actuality less sufferable with consumer goods and infrastructural renewals.³⁷

The imagination of the socialist virtuality turns into pragmatic ideology works aiming not to explore the new possibilities of socialism but to preserve the already immanent apparatus. Nothing needs to be changed, orthodox Marxism-Leninism has already prescribed the correct pathways. The practical functionalist stance of Honecker’s leadership is skeptical of the various new experimental thoughts on socialism. For example, Honecker sharply criticizes the emerging economic decentralization, and ideological innovations taken by the party during Ulbricht’s founded New Economic System.³⁸ The new First Secretary is eager to ossify the interpretation of socialism for the sake of securing social stability and diplomatic unity with the Soviet Union.

Compared with Ulbricht, Honecker’s leadership seems to lack interest in theory but the immediate and practical consequence of the theory. For the new leadership, the theory is important because it secures the sovereign power of the party and the socialist republic. For example, as opposed to the radical experiments in culture and literature of the 1950s, writers and cultural critics of East Germany in the 1970s retreat back from the high realms of shaping the socialist consciousness and move toward pragmatic reflections on interpersonal relationships. East German

³⁷ Alexander Petrussek, 23

³⁸ Ibid, 149

literature's turn away from politics during the 1970s and 1980s experiences an "inner emigration" that echoes the eighteenth-century *Bildungsbürgertum*.³⁹

For the pragmatic reason of consolidating the real-existing socialism, Honecker rejects further theoretical experiments since they have the potential to challenge the already robust state power. Even the inner-party debate, the line struggle, would lead to unexpected results, let alone a public discussion on socialism. Briefly before the VIII. Party Congress, Erich Honecker spoke to the central committee on June 10, 1971:

It was, is, and remains our incontrovertible principle that the political leadership of socialism can only be successful through one party, which is armed with the theory of Marxism-Leninism and is continually followed and bounded by the working people. We should pay special attention to the growing role of the working class as the leading force in the further development of the socialist society and its connection with the leading role of our party. The development of the socialist consciousness —we make it clear— is the fundamental condition for the stability of the GDR.⁴⁰

Honecker reveals the essential functionality of the socialist consciousness — securing social stability and the leadership of the party. Ideological work, therefore, means to strictly insist on the doctrine of Marxism-Leninism and combat the bourgeois consciousness and the social-democratic ideology. In the speech, he also repeatedly emphasizes the importance of offering people more consumer goods and services as the future development of socialism. Putting together, the major shift in the politics of the party is to retreat from the future-oriented imagination of socialism to a present-centered realpolitik. The party no longer strikes to embellish the spectacles of a future utopia as the justification for the present hardship. On the contrary, GDR politics since 1971 began to enhance socialism's functionality in the present being. The future virtuality, although it remains a philosophical apotheosis of socialism, is deprived of vitality and becomes ossified. The assumption is: that as long as the party can meet the population's consumer demands

³⁹ Ibid, 149 *Bildungsbürgertum* means "elite bourgeoisie" or "cultured bourgeoisie". It refers to a the study of metaphysical knowledge and classical literatures that are detached from the up-to-date political circumstances

⁴⁰ BArch DY 30/2078, Rede Erich Honeckers auf der 17. Tagung des ZK der SED (10. Juni 1971), 10

and monopolize the interpretative power of socialism, the GDR would successfully achieve long-lasting stability. It can be argued that starting from 1971, the party-state began to lose its utopian mana and gradually transformed itself into a functionalist bureaucracy ruled by “career communists”.

The sovereignty crisis⁴¹ in 1988 and 1989 shows the problem of the real-existing socialism. The conservative regime not only fails to win mass support but also leaves the GDR falling behind the reforming waves of other socialist nations, especially after Gorbachev has launched *Glasnost* and *Perestroika*. For example, Erich Mielke, the arguably most enigmatic and powerful member of the SED politburo, as the head of the State Security Ministry (Stasi) is even publicly scorned by dissidents in the GDR Parliament [Volkskammer].

When Mielke address the Parliament on November 13, 1989, that his colleagues are sons and daughters of the working class who have extraordinarily high contact with the people, the delegates sitting in the conference hall unprecedentedly respond to him with ridiculing waves of laughter. Such sarcasm is undoubtedly unexpected in the *Volkskammer* since the rubber-stamp parliament, in its 40 years of history, has only witnessed disciplined applause and carefully crafted solidarity. As Mielke’s face turns brown and his voice rises up, the head of Stasi almost apologetically says to the audience: “But I love you all, all people! I firmly sticks into this love” [Ich liebe Euch doch alle, alle Menschen! Ich setze mich dafür ein!].⁴² The humble attitude of Mielke comically causes fiercer ridicule as louder peals of laughter to resonate in the congress hall. Mielke’s embarrassment, in the first place, reflects the failure of the party-state to maintain its political connection with the people. The influence of the party and the once taken-for-granted unity between the party as the core and the masses as the surrounding circle have been shaken by

⁴¹ See in Introduction

⁴² DRA- from “11. Tagung der 9.Volkskammer der DDR”, 13.11.1989

the hegemonic crisis of the party. The seemingly childish behavior of Mielke also symbolizes the party's failure to reproduce and sustain the knowledge of socialism.⁴³ This anecdote reflects the hopeless bankruptcy of Honecker's real-existing socialism. For dissidents and many citizens of the GDR, the Stalinist socialist virtuality is nothing more than banal officialese.

The conservative regime adopts the strategy of disavowal and demonization to handle its conflicts with the masses. Instead of joining dialogues with the masses, the party-state under Honecker demonizes the protestors and refugees with an all-encompassing title of "rivals of socialism". In August 1989, the central committee holds a conference in the absence of Honecker to discuss the political unrest, in which one committee member, Genosse Kleßer, says: "We must counter the sneaky attacks from the enemy more. The enemy finds new things every day. We must still attack harsher." A female comrade agrees: "We must bring the party into stronger offensives. The First Secretary (Honecker) would have said so." Another member replies: "Good communists need our support. There are many socialist concepts. We have ours, and it is successful. We firmly hold it."⁴⁴ All participants of the discussion unanimously agree that the refugee crisis is not a problem within the socialist system but a sneaky attack executed by foreign powers and traitors. Finally, Genosse Axen cites a famous quotation from Honecker to summarize the discussion: "*Bei aller Einschätzung des Positiven in der internationalen Entwicklung darf es keine Euphorie geben.*" (Despite all estimations of the positive international developments, there must be no euphoria.)⁴⁵

The party's judgment of the political situation is utterly wrong. It is not because the party has been kept from knowing the truth but rather because it intentionally chooses to disavow the verity. Demonizing protestors and refugees as "rivals of socialism" removes the moral and legal

⁴³ Glaeser, *Political Epistemics*, 20

⁴⁴ BArch DY 30/77, Gespräch ins Honneckers ZK, 8,89

⁴⁵ Ibid, 29

obstacles of the police forces to adopt harsh methods of repression. The party apparently knows that these protestors are not rivals of socialism but proponents of socialist reforms. For example, before Egon Krenz officially inherits the party leadership from Erich Honecker, he has already set to meet delegates from the largest opposition group — *Neues Forum* — in the hope of seeking cooperation. On October 2, 1989, Kurt Hager (the chief ideologue serving in both the politburos of Erich Honecker and Egon Krenz) reports to Krenz his agreement with the delegate of *Neues Forum*, Professor. Reich, who is also a standing member of the GDR Academy of Science. The report shows eight consensuses between the party and *Neues Forum*:

1. Firm position to hold socialism as the foundation of our societal and national order;
2. More transparency and freedom in elections;
3. Open discussions on the growing social issues in the press;
4. More freedom in movements and logistics in the management of travels to the Federal Republic of Germany and other capitalist countries;
5. Permanent foreign travel and illegal departure from GDR are not allowed. The GDR must state it here;
6. “Reunification” is, for the time being, not the topic for *Neues Forum*. Discussions on this topic are detrimental to positive development;
7. Far-right and neo-fascist developments in the Federal Republic of Germany are serious dangers. Power-greed of the Federal Republic and its growing strength raise concerns about their consequent influences on the GDR;
8. Economic quality of GDR must better reflect its taking care of the people.⁴⁶

The consensuses above demonstrate a convincing, if not indisputable, picture that opposition groups like *Neues Forum* are not the foreign-sponsored enemies of socialism. In contrast to the Central Committee’s discussion in August, oppositions like *Neues Forum* do not seek to undermine socialism but rather to strengthen it from the capitalist aggressions. To the great disappointment of protestors, the party does not approve of their suggestions. The headline of the party-newspaper *Junge Welt* ruthlessly attacks the protesters at St. Nicolai Church [Nikolaikirche] of Leipzig in September: “These are anti-state actions against the GDR. The call ‘Away with the

⁴⁶ BArch DY 30/IV/2/2.039/113, Mitteilung der Zentralen Revisionskommission der SED, Brief an Egon Krenz, 2,10,1989

Wall' [Weg der Mauer] is the slander of millions of people.” The article concludes with an appreciation of the military-police forces: “Thanks, Comrade, for your vigilance.”⁴⁷ It should be noted that anti-socialist agendas also emerge in the rally on the same day. Among protestors calling for “Away with the Wall,” some dissidents also call for “Away with Communism” [Weg der Kommunismus]. Nevertheless, pro-socialist agendas still occupy the mainstream before the opening of the Berlin Wall. For example, on October 19, protesters at St. Nicolai Church hold mottos such as “Press Freedom,” “Reforming the Election System,” and “The Leading Role of the People” ...⁴⁸ In general, the East German working-class demonstrators try to use their nominal power to push the regime to reform. The working class develops an instrumental relationship with the official cult of the proletariat (the GDR as the state of workers and peasants) to push for improvements in their working and living conditions.⁴⁹

It seems that the conservative and dogmatic leadership headed by Erich Honecker holds the heaviest responsibility for the failure of socialism. Honecker himself remains reluctant to change until the end of his political career. On October 7, 1989, the 40th Anniversary of the German Democratic Republic, Honecker, standing beside Gorbachev, resolutely speaks to the world press:

“The battle-proven and historically tested enterprise of our party — the unification of economics and social politics — would be renewed and continued. Hopes counting on reforms in the direction of bourgeois democracy and capitalism, however, are built on sands. The GDR holds fast to basic values of socialism.”⁵⁰

Honecker’s statement reiterates the stance of the party leadership: there is no difference between “reforms of socialism” and “revolts against socialism.” Reactionary as the statement sounds, it does reveal a structural “truth” of GDR socialism that as self-standing and self-fulfilling

⁴⁷ *Junge Welt*, Organ des Zentralrats der FDJ, 6. September 1989

⁴⁸ Paul Jackson, *DDR- Das Ende eines Staates*, (Manchester and New York, Manchester University Press, 1994), 94

⁴⁹ Dorothee Wierling, “Work, Workers, and Politics in the German Democratic Republic”, 59

⁵⁰ *Aktuelle Kamera*, 07.10.1989, (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=7hgHrD00jas>)

immanence, socialism does not have a partial existence. Real-existing socialism as a totality consciously laid out by the party dictatorship has no other choice but to keep excluding alternatives even if they are friendly to socialism.

The socialist totality, the self-claimed only truth that negates all others, can either exist in its fullness or cease to exist. This monolithic interpretation of history is the result of the Hegelian and Marxian tradition that history has a definite end which is manifested by either the absolute spirit or the greatest abundance of material production. In this vein, political and philosophical imaginations that are unfit for the prescribed pathway of history are considered as bitter fantasies or reactionary ideologies. Moreover, as Arendt points out, there would be nothing left for men to do after history has reached its Hegelian and Marxian ends except perpetually rethinking the historical process which has been completed.⁵¹ Socialism's claim of "what history is all about" requires a total commitment to the cause of socialism. The socialist immanence, for the "true communists" [echte Kommunisten], turns the political materiality into an aesthetic sacrosanctity like Heidegger's concept of the "temple-work", in which the political-military destiny of the people is determined.⁵²

Socialist Immanence is all or nothing. This seemingly radical explanation is perhaps also the result of GDR's historical specificity that its sovereign power has only one justification — the dictatorship of the party. The reason is obvious: the GDR is not the sole representation of German sovereignty.⁵³ Unlike most other socialist nations (probably with the exception of North Korea), the German Democratic Republic as a sovereign state of Germany is constantly threatened by the

⁵¹ Hannah Arendt, *Lectures on Kant's Political Philosophy*, Ronald Beiner edited, (The University of Chicago Press, 1992), 59

⁵² Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans Albert Hofstadter, (New York, 1971), 41

⁵³ Dorothee Wierling, "Work, Workers, and Politics in the German Democratic Republic", *International Labor and Working-Class History*, No. 50, Labor under Communist Regimes (Cambridge University Press, Fall, 1996), pp. 45

Federal Republic. Sovereign power as a process of inclusive exclusion in Germany is not exclusive to the GDR since the Federal Basic Law automatically grants West German citizenship to every East German who steps into its territory. It is assumed that once the dictatorship of the party is removed, the existence of the socialist republic would immediately become frail. The massive number of East German immigrants to the west before the erection of the border wall and after the wall's downfall proves that four decades of separation is not enough to cultivate a separate East German national consciousness. The party has clear knowledge of its fragile sovereign power. A highly confidential [Stern Geheim] file in Ulbricht's Politburo about the historical lessons for the party from the 1953 Labor Uprising reveals:

“From January 1951 to April 1953, 477.000 citizens of the GDR fled to the Federal Republic. Among these defectors, 120.000 of them fled during the mere four months of 1953. The future political and economic situation of GDR and the situation of whole Germany (including BRD) must, at any period, be determined and carried by the strict SED leadership which is to be further strengthened.”⁵⁴

Borrowing the Heideggerian metaphors of the “earth” [Erde] and “world” [Welt]⁵⁵, the GDR is a “world” that lacks the “earth” to support, conceal, and subsume it. Though enlightening in theory, the Socialist Immanence is a self-propelled impulse of social change that finds no ground to rest upon because the population is not on the side of the party. The end of the dictatorial power of the party would manifest the total demise of the Socialist Immanence because the opening-up of pro-socialist alternatives comes side by side with anti-socialist alternatives. The opening of the former clears the path for the arrival of the latter.

⁵⁴ BArch, DY 30 / 3295, Über die Maßnahmen zur Gesundung der politischen Lage in der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, 3.4 Juni 1953, 3-9

⁵⁵ Martin Heidegger, *Poetry, Language, Thought*, trans Albert Hofstadter, (New York, 1971), 41-61; Heidegger explains the Earth as the force of concealment and sheltering, it withholds the happenings of the world and supports them. By contrast, the World is a force of enlightenment, and a totalizing thrust of clearing. Politics, as a “temple-work”, for Heidegger is founded through the tension between the Earth and the World.

Moreover, the change of regimes in Poland and Hungary has already proved that the “alternatives of socialism” are immediately followed by “alternatives to socialism.” The opposition forces in Poland and Hungary all initially act under the principles of working-class solidarity but ultimately, once they ascend to power, begin to break away from the Marxist-Leninist ideologies. Compared with Poland and Hungary, oppositions in East Germany lack leading figures and homogeneous objectives. The lack of prominent figures and unified organizations makes the protests in East Germany even more spontaneous and unpredictable.

The party-state is threatened by the claim of the Federal Republic to represent the sovereignty of all Germans living in both east and west. The broadcast of the flagship TV program of SED, *Aktuelle Kamera*, on October 4, 1989, reveals the party’s concerns over the potential collusion between domestic oppositions and the Federal Republic:

The old doctrine according to which the Federal Republic has the right to represent all Germans as if there were no citizenships of the second German state, the GDR, is the real attack on the postwar European borders and the peaceful co-existence between two German states. The action of Bonn (accepting GDR refugees) is a campaign with the aim of undermining the GDR citizenship and international laws of the Vienna Convention in which states only have the right to represent the interests of their own citizens.⁵⁶

For the same concern, the Central Committee on the same day tries to disassociate the dissidents who defected to the West German embassies in Hungary from the influence of West Germany by promising them impunity and chances of applying for legal immigration if they would come back to the GDR.⁵⁷ The party’s fear about the convergence of domestic opposition and Western influence is not out of no reason. At this time being, on October 4, 1989, the first massive Monday Demonstration [Montagsdemonstration] in Leipzig would take place in 5 days. In two weeks, the party leadership would be transferred from Erich Honecker to Egon Krenz, and in five weeks, the

⁵⁶ *Aktuelle Kamera*, 04.10.1989, (<https://youtu.be/sGTukd1thgk>)

⁵⁷ BArch, DY 30/J IV 2/2/2350, Sitzung des Politburo am 4. Oktober 1989

Berlin Wall would be open. Exactly one year after, on October 3, 1990, Germany became reunified as the Federal Republic, and the Basic Law extended to the east.

Leaving the contents of “alternative socialism” apart, the mere form of opposition — rallying on the streets instead of negotiating through the official channels at the National Front [Nationale Front]⁵⁸ — has already led to an almost irreconcilable conflict with the Socialist Immanence prescribed by the SED since it has broken away from the socialist social symmetry. George Simmel argues in *Sociological Aesthetics* that symmetrical organizations facilitate the ruling of many from a single point. Symmetry, with its internal equilibration and unity, represents the harmonic relationship of all parts to one unified core and the unlimited expression of the will of autocratic states.⁵⁹

Socialism embodies a sociological symmetry since it expresses an idea that society as a whole should become a work of art in which every single element attains its meaning by their functionalities to the wholeness. In socialism, unified plans directed by the autocratic state rationally determine the harmonic productions rather than let them be troubled with the rhapsodic haphazardness.⁶⁰ Honecker’s insistence on the “unification between economics and social politics” precisely epitomizes the social symmetry in GDR. The Central Committee and the Politburo of the Socialist Unity Party, as the core organ, holistically dictates and engineers the GDR as a transcendental power over Germany’s fascist and nationalist past. Political activities in GDR are symmetrically ordered by the party to the extent that the Central Committee, in the weekly conferences, discusses not only the “high-politics” such as economic plans for the next five years

⁵⁸ The National Front exercises a nominal power as the union of block parties [Blockpartei] and other civil associations to represent the diverse strata of the populations of GDR. While the National Front occupies votes and delegations in the parliament, the People’s Chamber [Volkskammer], must follow the leadership of SED.

⁵⁹ George Simmel, *Sociological Aesthetics — Essays on Art and Aesthetics*, Austin Harrington, trans, (EBSO Publishing, 2020), 100

⁶⁰ Ibid, 101

but also the specific number of “edible potatoes” [Speisekartoffeln] to be delivered to the Soviet Union.⁶¹ By contrast, the citizen movements, whether pro-socialism or anti-socialism, represent an asymmetrical politics. Instead of unifying the political temporality with socialism’s eternal apotheosis, the mass rallies demonstrate an asymmetrical, inconsistent, and spontaneous happening of political desires that cannot be properly grasped by the forms set by the party. The emergence of “alternatives of socialism” converges with anti-socialist influences into an asymmetrical perspective of social change. The asymmetrical perspective, regardless of the content, represents a new political form incompatible with the Socialist Immanence of the party-state. As Egon Krenz, the soon-to-be Secretary-General of SED, makes it clear in his speech to the public before the 40th Anniversary:

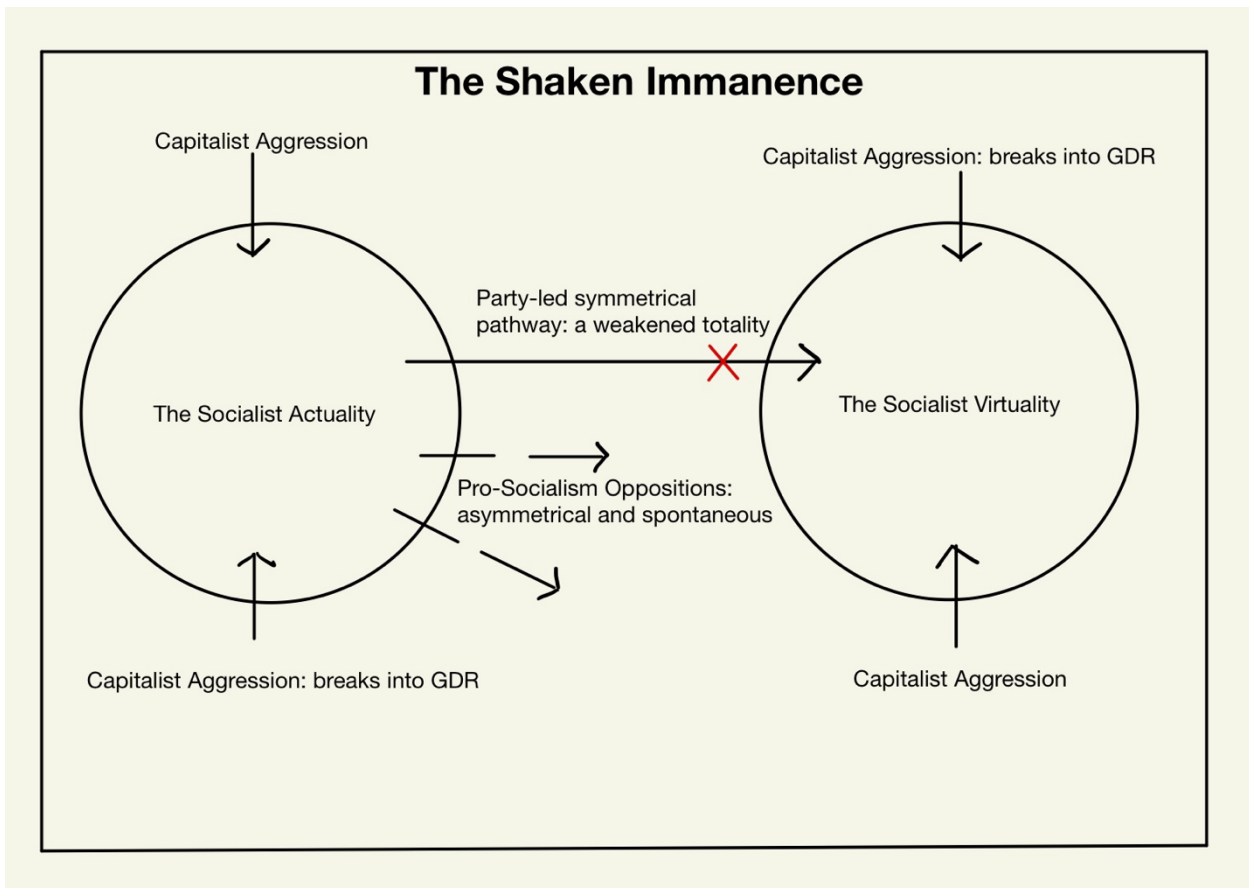
“We have all the necessary forms and forums within the socialist democracy. We welcome you to unrestrictedly use these mechanisms. But we also openly declare that we are against the proposals and demonstrations behind which there is the intention to mislead the people and change the constitutional foundations of the state.”⁶²

Krenz’s statement reflects the position of the party leadership. It cannot tolerate the asymmetrical forms of political activity even if the content of these actions is friendly to socialism. The party fears uncertainties just like the dreamer fears alarms. They know that even the slightest incongruous sound, once breach into socialist immanence, would have the potential to break the dreams. The leadership worries that these uncertain mass rallies would one day turn into violent revolutionary forces to overthrow them.

⁶¹ BArch DY 30 /J IV2/2/2349, Protokoll Nr. 40/89 Sitzung des Politbüros am 3. Oktober 1989, “Lieferung von Speisekartoffeln in die UdSSR”; On October 3, 1989, the Central Committee meets to discuss the high politics such as Gorbachev’s imminent visit to Berlin and the detailed processes and equipments of sending 150,000 tons of potato dishes to the Soviet Union.

⁶² BArch DY 30/IV 2/2.039/316, Erklärung des Politbüros des Zentralkomitees der Sozialistischen Einheitspartei Deutschlands, 8,10,1989; 5

The asymmetrical demonstrations and protests have already breached the line of the party. Their actions of not cooperating with the party-sponsored organs but rallying on the street shows the structural hostility between the party and the opposition. Compared with the ideal shape of the Socialist Immanence (See in Introduction), the shaken Immanence at the 40th Anniversary demonstrates the incapability of the party-state to retain the monolithic actualization process. The symmetrical apparatus founded by the party-state has been challenged by the asymmetrical oppositions claiming to represent new directions of socialism. These new directions, though still adhere to the basic frameworks of Marxism-Leninism, develop into spontaneous, disunited, and perhaps unpredictable directions. Capitalist aggression will soon breach into both the socialist actuality and the virtuality with the downfall of the Berlin Wall as the semiotic sovereignty of the of GDR.



The above graph of “the shaken immanence” explains the structural conflict between oppositions and the party-state. While the party defines socialism as a conclusive project that links the present to the future by a monolithic line, oppositions advocate for sporadic and spontaneous proposals wherein the dissidents disproportionately focus on the immediate and ostensible changes. Whether there is socialist virtuality in the reform plans of oppositions is questionable. No matter how friendly and loyal the oppositions are to Marxism and socialism, their premises of democratic socialism and citizen participation run at odds with the party dictatorship.

Chapter Two: The Destituent Sovereignty

On October 18, 1989, the SED leadership is transferred from the ailing Honecker to Egon Krenz, the pre-appointed protégée of Honecker. Erich Honecker's deteriorating health condition could be one of the reasons explaining the non-responsive attitudes of the party toward the dissidents.⁶³ He has been diagnosed with liver cancer and will soon receive an operation. The transition of leadership does not stabilize the political unrest. For many, Egon Krenz is the symbol of Stalinism than democratic reforms. This chapter argues that the short-lived leadership of Egon Krenz⁶⁴ is neither a reforming regime nor a conservative continuation of Honecker. Instead, the SED led by Egon Krenz turn into a "reform-minded" party without actually reforming. In other words, the leadership of the party becomes more contemplative than active. The intended reform begins with a process of mediation and is expected to complete with the inclusion of the opposition. The leadership first tries to mediate its conflicts with the oppositions and gradually seeks to subsume the friendly oppositions within the party institutions. The bottom line of all reform intentions is not to renounce the leading role of the party and the socialist apparatus of the republic.

However, the new leadership underestimates the speed of growing discontent. While Krenz is still embedded in bureaucratic formalism and tries to mitigate the conflicts by conducting inner-party reflections and self-criticism, the actual situation grows increasingly out of control. On the one hand, as the protégée of Honecker, Krenz lacks the charisma to convince the growing number of dissidents. On the other hand, unlike hardline Stalinists of the party, Krenz seriously tries to find a peaceful solution to the boiling crisis and consequently refuses to take the timely harsh

⁶³ Egon Krenz, *Gefängnis Notizen*, 52-53; in Krenz's memoir, he speaks about Honecker's poor health condition and accuses other party cadres who refuse to help Honecker during his hospitalization in Moscow and imprisonment in the Morabit prison.

⁶⁴ The leadership of Egon Krenz only lasts for little more than one month. On October 18, he is voted to replace Honecker as the Secretary General, and on December 3 he is forced to resign.

method to repress dissidents. The discrepancy between Krenz's reform intention and his inaction of reform leads to an unachievable mission as the party both insist on the leading role and hopes to establish political trust with the opposition. The ambivalent and indecisive leadership, in the end, turns the sovereign power of the party destituent. On November 9, 1989, when the Politburo member Günter Schabowski mistakenly speaks to the international press that foreign travel to West Germany and other non-socialist nations would become legal immediately, the actual document is still not put into effect and would not allow unapplied foreign travel even if it been enacted. Starting from November 9, the sovereign power of the party becomes destituent. The choice of the leadership not to restore the Berlin Wall through military actions renounces the last defense of the Socialist Immanence — the exclusion of alternatives by force.

The tragedy of the "reform-minded" leadership is precisely its reform mind rather than actions. As Egon Krenz recalls: "*Die Geschichte hat die Reformabsichten der veränderten DDR-Führung nicht mehr angenommen.*"⁶⁵(History has no longer accepted the reform intentions of the changed GDR leadership.) The socialist republic, at the decisive moment to determine its fate, while displaying a genuine attitude of accepting diverse critiques, takes only parsimonious actions to reform. The reform intentions in the end only leave a potentiality, a destituent power that lacks clear-cut judgments. For example, the possibility of establishing a socialist market economy, which is constantly proposed by some oppositions, remains an undecided topic for the party until the fall of the Berlin Wall. In fact, archives of this time period show that the party leadership barely discuss economic reforms in the conferences of the Politburo and the Central Committee. Most of the discussions within the party leadership focus on political control and ideological works.

⁶⁵ Egon Krenz, *Briefe und Zeugnisse*, (Berlin, Verlag Neues Leben, 2000), 15

The formation of the “contemplative leadership” and the destituent sovereignty could be first explained by the party’s incapability to create new theories to redefine socialism. Throughout the one and half months of its existence, Krenz’s leadership neither officially adopts the political rhetorics of Gorbachev’s *Glasnost* and *Perestroika*, nor borrows from Deng Xiao’s economic Reform and Opening-Up. The party leadership itself does not even know which specific directions it would undertake. The party’s ambivalence can be explained by the personal background of Egon Krenz as a functionalist bureaucrat who lacks the charisma and stamina to make correct judgments in the midst of chaos.

However, apart from the personal reasons of the political elites of SED, it should be noted that the failure of the reform-minded SED is at the same time spontaneous. When historians call the reform attempts of SED failures, they reach this judgment because history has proved that once the Berlin Wall was open, Egon Krenz and his fellow members of the Politburo soon resigned and were, later on, ostracized from the PDS (Party of Democratic Socialism). But we should also bear in mind that the fall of the Berlin Wall itself is a totally unexpected incident that even the most radical dissidents of the GDR could not anticipate for certain. Spontaneity, the antithesis of totality, perhaps could best explain the destitution of SED and socialism. Logics and statistics could only predict the likelihood of the wall’s opening but do not justify its almost immediate and farcical happening. The essential rival to the party-led socialism is not domestic dissidents or the West German government but history’s own spontaneity. It takes all the vigilant endeavors of the party to maintain the monolithic Socialist Immanence for four decades, yet one single mistake in a press conference demolishes the seemingly unbreakable fortress overnight. Compared with the demise of the German Empire and the Weimar Republic, the collapse of the German Democratic Republic

almost seems like a historical miracle, a pure happening with an incredible speed that is seen unpredicted both from within and without the party.⁶⁶

On October 18, 1989, the Socialist Unity Party (SED) undergoes its second transfer of leadership. The last time to change the leader was still in 1971, with the demotion of Walter Ulbricht and the ascendancy of Erich Honecker. From the official perspective, every transition of power shows the unity of the party and the solid comradeship between the old and new leaders. Among anything else, the paramount job of power transition is to continue developing the enterprise of socialism. Nevertheless, unlike Honecker's reluctance to recognize the crisis of socialism, Krenz shows an attitude to bring change as he uses the title "We will bring a change" [Wir werden eine Wende einleiten] in the first section of the inauguration speech.⁶⁷ But for him, the most urgent mission is not to bring about immediate reform policies but how to identify the crisis. Krenz says in the speech:

"The first prerequisite for this (change) is a real assessment of the situation. It is clear that in recent months we have not correctly analyzed the social developments in our country in their nature and have not drawn correct conclusions in time. With today's meeting, we will bring a change. We will, above anything else, regain the political and ideological offensive."⁶⁸

Two problems can be derived from Krenz's statement. First, the party leadership has no concrete plans to change but only a "changed mind". When Krenz says that the first prerequisite is to assess the situation, he also reveals the fact that the party has, up to the moment, no clear knowledge about the political situation. As a conscious-driven model of social transformation, the GDR socialism could not function properly without the clear guidance of the party. The lack of knowledge inside the leadership is also revealed by another discussion in the Politburo in which district leaders of SED report to Berlin on the political developments in their cities. This discussion

⁶⁶ Glaser, *Political Epistemics*, 527

⁶⁷ BArch DY 30 /IV 2/2.039/88, Rede von Egon Krenz am 18. Oktober 1989, 2

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 3

takes place on October 31, two weeks after Krenz's inauguration speech. The Politburo asks district leaders to reflect on the political situations and public reactions regarding the transfer of leadership. Among the reports submitted to Berlin, some district leaderships take a more humane stance and plan to establish dialogs with friendly oppositions. For example, Hans Modrow, the party secretary in Dresden who later on become the State President of GDR, reports to Politburo that the *Neues Forum* should be treated differently from the church because they only plan to monitor the party leadership but not challenge it. He further emphasizes the urgency of renewal by criticizing that the party's self-embellishment has caused many members to withdraw from the party.⁶⁹ By contrast, hardline Stalinists advocate for using harsh methods to repress the social democratic movements. The party Secretary of Potsdam, Günther Jahn, even threatens to extinguish any social developments that attempt to go independent from the party. He states in the report: "All appearances of the formation of independent unions or "Forum" should be suffocated into germs."⁷⁰ Most of the local secretaries reflect no political orientations in their reports. Instead, they report with functionalist disinterestedness that makes no assertive judgments but only objectively reflects the specific works they have done in the past two weeks, such as "meeting representatives of the Protestant church" or "the progress to fulfill the economic plan."⁷¹ District Secretaries of Rostock, Suhl, and Wismut (the uranium mining district) belong to this category. It can be inferred that the new leadership does not bring structural changes to the bureaucratic work-actions [Werkstätigkeit] between the central and the local functionaries. The Stalinist top-down hierarchy continues in the new leadership. These reports also reflect the chaos inside the party. The entire SED leadership, both local and central, could not reach a consensus and a unified plan.

⁶⁹ BArch DY 30/J IV 2/2/2356, Protokoll Nr. 47/89, Sitzung des Politbüros am 31. Oktober, 1989, 5-6

⁷⁰ Ibid., 10

⁷¹ Ibid., 11-16

Let us now move back to Krenz's inauguration speech on October 18. His statement, "We will regain the political and ideological offensive," triggers enormous skepticism and frustrations among the public. What does it mean to regain the offensive? For many GDR protestors and international observers at the time, initiating an offensive has the potential of leading to the "Chinese Solution," which had just taken place a few months ago. Skepticism skyrockets following his speech, especially because many people believe that the regime has already signed a "Shooting Order" [Schießbefehl].⁷² The West German journal *Der Spiegel* publishes a rather fierce critique of Egon Krenz's speech. The article cites Wolf Biermann, a dissident singer who emigrated to West Berlin, and condemns Krenz's inglorious records, such as defending the Chinese Communist Party's massacre of students in Beijing during his visit to China in September 1989. The article goes on to criticize the vocabulary in Krenz's speech. *Der Spiegel* chooses the adjective "treacherous" to describe the vocabulary in speech. The party jargon and the constant usage of conjunctions like "but" and "if" following the desire for reform undermines the validity of Krenz's words.⁷³ Moreover, Krenz's reputation is further vitiated by his participation in the fraudulent communal elections on May 7, 1989. Krenz falsely announces the SED candidate has won 98% of the votes, albeit the fact that civil organizations and human rights groups have counted the votes to be much less than the official number.⁷⁴

Amid mistrusts and doubts, the question is: does the new leadership headed by Egon Krenz ever develop any plan to reorient socialism into a democratic future at all? It should be noted that the term *Glasnost* and *Perestroika* barely occur in the archives of the party. Whether in the confidential meeting records of the Central Committee or the speeches of leaders in the Politburo

⁷² Krenz, *Gefängnis Notizen*, 42

⁷³ *Der Spiegel*, Nr. 43 / 22.10.1989, Egon Krenz— ein Reformier?

⁷⁴ *Ibid*

and Volkskammer, party cadres of SED seldom adopt *Glasnost* and *Perestroika* as their reference. It seems that these two words have become a political taboo in the eyes of politburo members even after Egon Krenz has replaced Honecker.

The answer to the question of whether the SED politburo has any plans to reform socialism is both yes and no. First, Egon Krenz does reveal a seemingly sincere attitude to initiate a change under the socialist institutions. His rhetoric of “regain offensive” does not mean as much to repress the oppositions as to seek a shared space with oppositions without giving up the party’s leadership. Unlike the concept of “offensive” in Politburo a few months ago when discussing the refugee crisis, “offensive” here refers not only to repressing the opposition through repressive methods but also to an active “spirit” [Geist]⁷⁵ of seeking cooperation. This spirit is manifested by a relatively eclectic mentality that recognizes the voices of “non-socialist” factors and their existence in the upcoming reform. The Protestant church, for example, for Krenz, is no longer a potential threat but a cooperation partner in the reform. His statement “*Uns verbindet mehr als uns trennt*” [We are more bounded than divided] best captures the open mentality of the new leadership.⁷⁶

However, contrary to the “offensive” spirit of reform, the concrete actions undertaken by the party focus more on the process of “mediation” and the assertive thrust of “domination”. Mediation, in contrast to direct domination, means to tolerate more critiques and incorporate some oppositions on the basis of not renouncing monolithic Socialist Immanence. Ontologically, mediation policies still insist on the leading role of the SED. But the major difference between mediation and direct domination is that the former practice seeks no direct confrontation but to gradually subsume the alternatives within the party apparatus. By comparison, while domination

⁷⁵ I call it a spirit here because the word “offensive” only displays a sensuous consciousness that is unfollowed by material actions

⁷⁶ BArch DY 30 /IV 2/2.039/88, Rede von Egon Krenz am 18. Oktober 1989, 4

achieves totality through the exclusion of alternatives, mediation archives the same end by subsuming the rivals. The party, therefore, tries to mediate its boiling antagonism with the opposition. For the sake of preventing the radicalization of conflicts, Krenz declares to the public:

“The wide development of socialist democracy should not be misunderstood by anyone as the excuse for irresponsible behaviors such as violence and destruction. To these behaviors, there can be only one answer: securing the peace and order of the workers and citizens and of the values created and shared by all of us.”⁷⁷

In order to mediate the party’s relation with the people, hearing the people’s opinions — *Meinung anzuhören* — becomes the most urgent task. Krenz’s politburo soon ordered party officials at different levels to collect the opinions of the people. The new central committee also conducts self-criticism: “Since long times the party officials and state leaders have only attempted to answer to their superiors while ignoring the concerns of the worker.”⁷⁸ In the first week of November, the politburo finally issued some concrete reform policies. These changes include:

1. The continuous ensuring of stable and assortment-oriented offers in stores;
2. The broader supplies of high-quality consumer goods;
3. The reduction of waiting time for PKW-Neubestellungen;⁷⁹
4. Honest analysis and the exposure of the mistakes made by the party in the last few years;
5. Enforcement of a citizen-oriented representation in the parliaments and state organs regarding the problem of the people;
6. Establishment of regulations that creates additional possibilities for foreign travel in non-socialist countries and socialist countries;
7. Further arrangement of the honest and life-oriented media politics that represents the interest and needs of the people;
8. Abolishment of all privileges and benefits of the party leadership — and those of state functionaries and their dependents at all levels;
9. The Central Committee would later on collectively decide whether to abolish the Inter-shops.⁸⁰
10. The reform must not turn into a “tactical maneuver” [taktischer Schachzug] to pacify the people.⁸¹

⁷⁷ Ibid., 6

⁷⁸ BArch DY 30/87, Über die Reaktionen der Bevölkerung auf die 9. Tagung, 11.89

⁷⁹ PKW is the official name of the renounced East German household car “Trabant.” While the price of the car is affordable for the well-to-do working-class families of GDR, the usual waiting time for the delivery of Trabant is long. It even takes people a whole decade to wait for the delivery.

⁸⁰ The Inter-shop is the privilege store in GDR and other European socialist countries, where imported western products are sold with foreign currencies. These kinds of shops, in most cases, are only affordable for the higher-ranking cadres of the party and citizens who have relatives in West Germany.

⁸¹ BArch DY 30/87, Über die Reaktionen der Bevölkerung auf die 9. Tagung, 11.89; Note: the 10th decree is not initially written in the same format as the announcement of the Central Committee. But at the beginning of the announcement, the Central Committee explained that many people mistakenly interpreted the party's reform intentions as “tactical maneuvers” to pacify the public. In other words, the party does not consider its reform intentions as “tactical maneuvers.”

It should be argued that the new leadership could have succeeded in bringing a change if all the above policies had been enacted. The last policy— not to initiate a “tactical maneuver”— even suggests that the party leadership has a sincere attitude to change the political situation for the better. It might imply that the future reforms could be “strategical” and “fundamental”; at least, they would not be satisfied with temporal improvements.

Compared with the first step, “mediation,” the second phase of reform — incorporation— is totally unsuccessful as the size and frequency of mass rallies continue to grow. The party has no clues about the ultimate goals and the urgent demands of its citizens. Many officers of the Stasi have testified, that the peaceful revolution in GDR was bloodless because the party was clueless.⁸² The same cluelessness also exists in the party’s incapability to handle its future share of sovereign power with the opposition. The party essentially lacks the determination to directly respond to the call that requests the party to abandon its monolithic socialism. The Alliance of Socialist Workers, one of the paramount socialist oppositions, on October 20, publish their political proclamation — “*Crush the SED Bureaucracy! Build up the Worker’s Council*”. [Stürzt die SED-Bürokratie! Baut Arbeiterräte auf!]. In this letter, the worker’s alliance declares four political demands on the party leadership: “Freedom of Demonstration and Organization”; “Freedom of Speech and Press”; “Approval of all workers’ parties to participate in free elections”; “Abolishment of the privileges for the functionaries of the state, party, and factory bureaucracies.”⁸³ The Alliance of Socialist Workers even accuses the Stalinist bureaucracy as traitors of the working class. For them, the erection of the Berlin Wall means the restoration of capitalist exploitation in the GDR, with the SED party becoming the giant capitalist. Compared with the radical demands of the worker’s

⁸² Glaeser, *Political Epistemics*, 55

⁸³ *Neue Arbeiterpresse*, “Stürzt die SED-Bürokratie! Baut Arbeiterräte auf!”, 20.10.1989

alliance, the mediation policies of the party are simply too weak and mild to regain political trust. Whereas the worker's alliance asks for free election and free media, the SED could only provide them with vague and indeterminate primroses such as "establishing citizen-oriented representations in the government" or "developing life-oriented media to satisfy the interest of the people." The party lacks assertive judgments to determine the specific actions to be done. After all, to establish a "citizen-oriented representation" means the party can still maintain its leading role but a "democratic election" would inevitably force the party to give up its dictatorship. In fact, the first time of the party to declare its breakaway from Stalinism and dictatorship is on December 8 of the year, after the fall of the Berlin Wall and the resignation of the entire politburo of Egon Krenz.⁸⁴

If Marxism-Leninism as a social science is about constructing and engineering socialism based on certain "scientific" theories, it inextricably requires a constituent power capable of despotically eradicating the alternatives so that the truly scientific theory would lead the course of history. However, the SED leadership in the months of October and November, although still in charge of all the state organs such as the army and police force, becomes reluctant to dictation and instead prefers contemplation and mediation. Instead of navigating the peregrination of socialism in a particular direction, the reform-minded leadership lacks the consciousness and theory to lead. However, this is not to say that no reform theories have ever been developed by the party-state. Rather, early in the Spring of 1989, the academic circle of the SED has already proposed to the leadership a fairly systematic plan of socialist renewal — *The Project of Modern Socialism, 53 Thesis* [Projekt Moderner Sozialismus, 53 Thesen]. In this project, twenty intellectuals of Humboldt University admit that stagnation and social crisis have already occurred in socialist

⁸⁴ BArch DY 30/IV 2/2.039/316, Zum historischen Selbstverständnis der sich erneuernden SED, 8.12.1989

nations, including the GDR. They also correctly conclude that the primary cause of the social crisis is the deformation of the bureaucratic administrations of the party. These intellectuals advocate for establishing a decentralized and democratic planned economy in the GDR aided by microelectronic technologies.⁸⁵ Although the proposal rejects the implementation of western parliamentary democracies in the GDR, it does suggest creating a pluralistic party-democracy that balances economic decentralization and socialist central planning.⁸⁶ The hope is that the development of communication technology and automation would allow the planned economy to more flexibly accommodate the individual demands of the citizens. The project seems to suggest technological social planning with democratic participation. Unfortunately, the top leadership has ignored this innovative and, by all means, politically trustworthy project. When the project was first published in April 1989, it was immediately banned by the party censorship. Even after the reform-minded regime inherits the leadership, it still reveals no intention to adopt this plan. The party leadership rejects and fears to change even if its own cadres raise the proposals.

Inoperativity also means the party rejects to take violent solutions to the sovereignty crisis. The leaders of SED become afraid of the uncertain consequences of violence. Contrary to the rumors and worries about the “Chinese Solution,” the SED leadership actually had repeatedly forbid the army and police forces to use shooting weapons against the protestors. In 1997, Krenz’s defense lawyer appealed to the Berlin district court that, as the Secretary of SED, he had on October 13, October 24, October 27, November 9, and 10 of 1989, commanded the security organs of SED not to use violence and shooting weapon against the demonstrators.⁸⁷ Because of the

⁸⁵ Susi Möbbeck, Fiete Saß, Birgit Zoerner, *Projekt Moderner Sozialismus — 53 Thesen*, (<https://www.spw.de/data/53thesen.pdf>), 26-53

⁸⁶ Rainer Land, “Eine demokratische DDR? Das Projekt "Moderner Sozialismus", 04.03.2010, (<https://www.bpb.de/shop/zeitschriften/apuz/32885/eine-demokratische-ddr-das-projekt-moderner-sozialismus/>)

⁸⁷ Landgericht Berlin, Geschäftsnummer: (527) 25/2 Js20/92 Ks (1/95), as cited in *Gefängnis Notizen*, Egon Krenz, (Verlag das Neue Berlin, 2009), 47-49

inoperativity of the regime to either reform or repress, we can only imagine and speculate what the “reformed” East German Socialism would be from the interview and memoirs of the erstwhile leadership. Egon Krenz speaks in a recent interview that he was seriously “instructed” by the Chinese premier, Deng Xiaoping, during his visit to Beijing in September 1989. He says: “Deng said to me that the People’s Republic of China is the elder sibling of the GDR. The conversation with him was very, very, very instructive for me.” [Es war sehr sehr sehr lehrreich für mich]⁸⁸

Critiquing the inoperativity of the party leadership does not mean the reform proposals would lead to success had they been adopted by the leadership. Instead, the reform proposals of both party reformers and socialist oppositions have failed to make correct judgments on the republic’s actual crisis. For one thing, most socialist reform proposals have underestimated the difficulties of economic reform. The economic third-way is ambivalent about the future economic structures. The so-called third ways in China and Yugoslavia have to make a distribution between the market economy and planned economy. But the specific procedures of redistribution is a rather difficult question that has a high possibility of resulting in failures. The GDR at the time, unfortunately, lacks both the necessary experience with the market and sufficient capital to renovate its aged machines. Almost none of these proposals have considered the question that how the GDR industrial goods would compete with both the Asian (cheaper labor power and bigger market) and Western European (higher technological value) counterparts. It seems reunification with West Germany is the most convenient and safest economic policy.⁸⁹ Moreover, although the imagination of third-way socialism sounds to be theoretical progress from both Stalinism and capitalism, such a utopian fantasy does not necessarily reflect the actual opinions of the people.

⁸⁸ Egon Krenz Interview auf TV Berlin, Der 9. November 89, Ein Interview-Film, (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=9r4AZDUnyoE>)

⁸⁹ Dieter Grosser, Stephan Bierling, Friedrich Kurz, *Die sieben Mythen der Wiedervereinigung: Fakten und Analysen zu einem Prozess ohne Alternative*, (Ehrenwirth Verlag, München: 1991), 115-116

The Volkskammer election result in March 1990 soon reveals that socialist oppositions — *Bündnis 90*⁹⁰— only wins 2.9% of the total votes.⁹¹ As historian Martin Sabrow concludes: “The reform forces have shrined into a narrative framework in which the fantasies of democratic socialism became unrealistic and lost contacts with the people.”⁹²

But all these problems would not lead to the conclusion that socialist reforms have no chance of success at all. At least, the problems mentioned above are not the reasons for such a rapid downfall of socialism. Had the SED leadership been given more time, it could have the potential to either break away from the monolithic socialism or be replaced by democratic socialist parties such as the Alliance for Socialist Workers and its own future variant, the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS). The party might be able to incorporate its own reform agendas with the asymmetrical protests of the population and consequently synthesize a unified socialist pathway that is still able to connect the republic’s actuality with future virtuality. If this is to be achieved, then socialism might not necessarily fail. Moreover, at the very least, had the Berlin Wall been voluntarily opened by the party-state step by step, the situation would have been drastically different because such a way of opening the border would normalize and neutralize the process without inciting many upheavals. Actually, the party-state has the intention to gradually open the border. Egon Krenz says that he feels very secure that the GDR would continue to exist even if the wall is opened since the SBZ (Soviet Occupied Zone) and the GDR had already existed for 16 years before the wall was erected.⁹³

⁹⁰ *Bündnis 90* is the collation of many socialist opposition groups, including *Neues Forum*, *Demokratie Jetzt*, and *Initiative Frieden und Menschenrechte*

⁹¹ Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, *Die erste und letzte freie Wahl in der DDR*, 17.03.2020, (<https://www.bpb.de/kurz-knapp/hintergrund-aktuell/202873/die-erste-und-letzte-freie-wahl-in-der-ddr/>)

⁹² Martin Sabrow, “Mythos 1989 Rückblick auf ein historisches Jahr. Wem gehört die Friedliche Revolution?“, Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 28.11.2019, (<https://www.bpb.de/themen/deutschlandarchiv/300737/mythos-1989/#footnote-reference-38>)

⁹³ Ibid.

But the unexpected yet complete fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9 is such a theatrical and sensational phenomenon that broadcasts the failure of socialism to the whole world. The unexpected fall of the border and the farcical mistake of Schabowski under press cameras create a historical melodrama wherein the entire world witnesses the political impotence of the party-state. Socialism and the sovereign power of SED are mocked by the spectators both at home and abroad since legitimate sovereign power is contingent on its performance to the spectators. As George Orwell depicts in the short essay *Shooting the Elephant*, the “magical rifle” in the hands of a British soldier secures him from not being laughed at by the colonial subjects in Burma.⁹⁴ The Berlin Wall is the “magical rifle” of GDR socialism. Its dramatic downfall, therefore, signals the destituent sovereignty of SED. East German citizens and protesters now acquire the knowledge that the party no longer has a “magical rifle” that is almighty and unapproachable. The incident declares to the world that the so-called “magical rifle” of socialism is unloaded with bullets and can not shoot at anyone. Starting from November 9, 1989, the party could no longer exclude neither the domestic nor the western alternatives to its socialist immanence. Although the successor of SED, the PDS (Party of Democratic Socialism) led by Hans Modrow, the former district secretary in Dresden, still has one last stand against Bonn’s plan of unification by accession, it lacks the strength to turn the tide of history.

The Wall’s opening reveals another structural weakness of Socialist Immanence — its vulnerability to spontaneity. If Marxism-Leninism expects to explain “what history is all about,” the fall of the Berlin Wall on November 9, 1989, refutes the claims of the totalities of history by showing the world that history is not just a totalizing science but also a pure and spontaneous happening. No single factor led to the wall’s opening. Not even a combination of factors could

⁹⁴ George Orwell, *Shooting the Elephant*, (<https://www.orwellfoundation.com/the-orwell-foundation/orwell/essays-and-other-works/shooting-an-elephant/>)

secure the wall's opening. The event on November 9 highlights the limit of socialism as immanence by exposing its incapacity of representing an absolute fullness. There is at least one utterly unrepresentable singularity laying beyond the circle of socialist immanence yet challenges it — history's spontaneity. According to Hannah Arendt, spontaneity has an innate causality with freedom. For Arendt, the only escape of men from the claims of totality is to act and begin anew. The faculty of men to start anew out of the infinite improbabilities of the world is, by nature, a spontaneous happening. She refers to Kant that freedom disappears when men are known of the ultimate end of their actions. Men as the miracle creator have a most amazing and mysterious talent which is expressed by the normal language as "action." The miracle-creating actions are non-teleological, spontaneous, and unconscious. For Arendt, actions create miracles not because men superstitiously believe in miracles, but because human beings, whether or not they know it, as long as they can act, are capable of achieving, and constantly do achieve, the improbable and unpredictable.⁹⁵ The fall of the Berlin Wall is the unintentional epitome of the blind actions of numerous citizens of the GDR. The fact that no single theory or factor has led to the Wall's downfall proves the power of spontaneous actions. The socialist immanence breaks apart because citizens' asymmetrical and rebellious actions have made the long-frozen politics volatile and unpredictable. In the midst of all these uncertainties and changes, the party-state has gradually lost faith in its once robust state apparatuses and consequently becomes less operative. Finally, at the spontaneous moment of November 9, the miracle reveals itself.

⁹⁵ Hannah Arendt, *The Promise of Politics*, Jerome Kohn edited, (Schocken Books, New York, 2005), 114

Chapter Three: Self-Destruction

One signature motto of protesters during the Monday's Demonstration states: "Whoever lies once is no longer trusted before he breaks with the lies. Even if he speaks totally different now." [*Wer einmal lügt dem glaubt man nicht eh er mit der Lüge bricht. Auch wenn er jetzt ganz anders spricht.*]⁹⁶ This motto reveals the skepticism faced⁹⁶ by the party-state in the winter of 1989. Many East German citizens still have memories of the party's lies to the public. Among them, the most recent one was Egon Krenz's lie that the SED candidates have won 98% of the communal votes in the spring of the year.⁹⁷ For the elder population who lived in GDR during the 1960s, they might even remember the brazen lie told by Walter Ulbricht (the first Secretary General of SED) personally before the erection of the Berlin Wall. On July 30, 1961, two weeks before the wall's construction, Ulbricht personally said during an interview with a British journalist that "There is no such threat to close the border. You see, it depends on the Western powers, not on us. That's right. There's no intention of the SED to close the border."⁹⁸

The suspicion between the party and the population in 1989 could not be simply mitigated by the leadership's indeterminate statements such as "we will bring a change" or "we are more bounded than divided". The party has to establish its political credibility through both concrete and effective actions that could prove the vitality of party-led socialism. Yet, in 1989, the party lacks both the financial capital to boost the economy and charismatic leadership to defend its legitimacy.

What is the legitimacy of the SED leadership? At the basic level, the party should be able to attest to the truth itself has claimed. The party is supposed to prove the superiority of the socialist people's economy [Volkswirtschaft] over the West German bourgeois counterpart. The party

⁹⁶ Hubertus Knabe, *Aufbruch in eine andere DDR*, 21

⁹⁷ *Der Spiegel*, Nr. 43 / 22.10.1989, Egon Krenz— ein Reformier?

⁹⁸ Egon Krenz, *Walter Ulbricht*, (Verlag Neue Berlin, 2006), 331

believes that socialism is capable of offering the people stable and long-lasting prosperity that can be equally shared by everyone. As Egon Krenz himself speaks to the Central Committee on the 40th anniversary:

“We know very well that in the following years there would be many new questions, and from new questions, we will find new answers. As the party prepares for her 12th Congress, it is to be said that socialism is neither a utopia nor an experiment. It originates from the longing of the people for a life that is free from misery, free from poverty, and from violence. It represents a society in which man can dominate his own fate.”⁹⁹

In one word, socialism needs to be consolidated by achievements. But in contrast to Krenz’s faith, the party’s economic and political performance in 1989 cannot attest to its own promises. As mentioned in chapter one, the socialist project since the reign of Erich Honecker has shifted from the upheaval movements of socialist construction to a consumer-oriented polity. The economic growth in the 1970s is achieved largely due to the party’s capability to provide the citizens with better consumer goods and infrastructures. In contrast to the 1970s, the entire decade of the 1980s marks a conspicuous decline in the GDR economy. The decline of the socialist economy can be explained by the foreign loans the GDR owes to western countries especially West Germany. Heavy foreign debt also forces the government to prioritize the export of industrial products rather than satisfy domestic consumption. Additionally, the aging machinery and environmental pollution further exacerbated the GDR economy.¹⁰⁰ Moreover, the economic growth of Asian countries weakens the competitiveness of GDR products in the global market with higher quality and cheaper prices. Even the defense industry of the USSR sometimes chooses to import Japanese machines than those of the GDR to build its high-tech products such as cruisers and submarines.¹⁰¹ A similar decline occurs in the rural communities of GDR as well. For example, in the district of

⁹⁹ *Aktuelle Kamera*, 04.10.1989, (<https://youtu.be/sGTukd1thgk>)

¹⁰⁰ Glaser, *Political Epistemics*, 530

¹⁰¹ James K. Libbey, “CoCom, Comecon, and the Economic Cold War”, *Russian History*, Vol. 37, No. 2 (2010), (<https://www.jstor.org/stable/24664533>) pp. 152

Erfurt (an agricultural district in southern GDR), the annual quantity of milk produced per cow dropped to 2,500 kg in 1987, a figure that is embarrassingly lower than the productivity of the 1960s, which is 3,000 kg.¹⁰²

When it comes to 1989, the party has to admit that it could no longer fulfill the economic goals set by itself. On November 4, 1989, the Department of Planning and Finance [Abeilung für Planung und Finanzen] reports to the politburo about the economic conditions of the republic from the year's start to October. The report states that most of the expected progress is not sufficiently achieved. For example, the predicted increase in national income for 1989 is 4% whereas the achieved level is 3.8%. The expected growth of the net income of the population is 3.5% but the actual progress is 3%. The decline of the economy is directly evident in the shortage of living supplies. In 1989, the supply of fresh vegetables is 2.3% lower than that of the previous year. In the month of October especially, the supply is 4.1% lower than the October of 1988.¹⁰³ It is of critical importance to reiterate that the West German Basic Law still has the legal code that automatically grants any GDR citizen who steps into the territory of the Federal Republic citizenship. This means that those who flee from GDR for better lives in the west would probably not come back after the fall of the wall.

Nonetheless, the economic decline does not necessarily lead us to the conclusion that socialism is destined to fail. The mission of vanguard parties, according to the principle of Marxism-Leninism, is not to satisfy the population's consumption needs but to lead the currently unconscious and undeveloped proletariats to a better future. The preparation for the future socialist virtuality legitimizes the party's leadership and the consequent economic hardships at the present

¹⁰² George Last, *After the 'Socialist Spring' Collectivization and Economic Transformation in the GDR*, (New York, 2008), 213

¹⁰³ BArch DY 30 /IV 2/2.039/74, Information zur Erfüllung des Volkswirtschaftsplanes 1989 bis Ende Oktober, 7.11.1989

being. This practice of sacrificing the temporary joy for eternal salvation almost sounds like the religious messiah wherein one has to be faithful to the ultimate good and tolerate the current sufferings since they are the necessary sacrifices for salvation. The bright future compensates for today's difficulty. As the flagship newspaper *Neues Deutschland* tries to appeal to the defecting population on November 10:

“We ask you, stay still in your homeland. Stay with us. What can we promise? Not an easy word but valuable life. Not a quick prosperity but the participation in great changes. Help us to build a truly democratic society, which also preserves the vision of democratic socialism.”¹⁰⁴

But to be able to sustain the future-oriented socialist messiah, the party needs to act according to what Max Weber defines as the “ethics of ultimate ends”. A believer of the ethics of ultimate ends bears a self-standing truth-content [Wahrheitsgehalt] into the very words he says and the actions he does. It also includes blindness and sanity that one should act like an omnipotent yet distant Jesus who has all the mana to create miracles out of desperation. Weber especially uses the example of communist revolutionaries to situate the terminology: “If we face the choice either of some more years of war and then revolution, or peace now and no revolution, we choose some more years of war!”¹⁰⁵ To practice the ethics of ultimate ends means that one is only responsible for the truth he believes while everything else can be sacrificed as the necessary costs for the ultimate good. The justice and righteous ends would legitimize all the not-so-correct procedures.

In the case of socialism, the belief in ethics of ultimate ends implies that there is a necessary evil that can be perfectly justified as long as the evil done by the party is for the ultimate good of socialism. This concept of necessary evil, once accepted and practiced by the party-state, designates an overarching explanation for all the existing problems and crises of the republic —

¹⁰⁴ *Neues Deutschland*, 10.11.1989

¹⁰⁵ Max Weber, “Politics as a Vocation” in *From Max Weber: Essays in Sociology*, H.H. Gerth and C. Wright Mills, translated and edited, (New York, 1964), 102

they are the temporal hardships. As Weber humorously argues: “If an action of good intent leads to bad results, then, in the actor's eyes, not him but the world, or the stupidity of other men, or God's will who made them thus, is responsible for the evil.”¹⁰⁶ There are piles of examples to illustrate the necessary evil in the GDR. It could be said by the party that because the aggressions of western powers threaten the sovereignty of our republic, it is consequently justifiable for the party-state to enclose the borders so that we could better defend against imperialism. It is not the evil mind of the party to seal the border but the overall international situation especially the hostility between East and West leaves the party no other choice. In fact, Egon Krenz uses the exact reason to justify the Berlin Wall and Stalinism. He explains that Stalinism was the only possible option for the GDR and USSR because Hitler's aggression in Russia had caused tremendous damage to the economy and industry of Germany and Russia. He also exonerates the responsibility of the shooting at defectors under the Berlin Wall to the overall military confrontation between NATO and the Warsaw Pact.¹⁰⁷ In the same vein, violent methods to preserve the Berlin Wall and to suppress the dissidents can also be justified as necessary evils for the sake of defending socialism had the party followed the principle of ethics of ultimate ends on November 9.

But there is one prerequisite condition for the ethics of ultimate end. Foremost, the party should have created concrete knowledge of the ultimate ends. The party should be able to create a *Weltanschauung* that at least contains an attractive truth-element. The revolutionary enthusiasms during the Bolshevik Revolution and the Spartacus Uprising belong to this category. The ultimate ends during the revolution evoke spectacles in the consciousness of its participants and enable them to experience pleasure through the pain. The sufferings at the present moment, therefore, turn

¹⁰⁶ Ibid, 102

¹⁰⁷ Egon Krenz, *Gefängnis Notizen*, 33

into a painfully pleasant experience, manifesting what Lacan calls the *jouissance*. But when it comes to 1989, the party utterly lacks concrete knowledge of the ultimate ends. It can probably be argued that since Honecker's era when SED begins to build its legitimacy through offering consumer goods and services, it no longer has the imagination to design an ultimate end. Furthermore, as we witness in the "successful" cases of socialism like Russia under Lenin, China under Mao, and Cuba under Fidel, the personified leadership should have a charismatic aura independent from the party bureaucracy. Just by looking at the leader himself, followers of socialism would sense a feeling of miracle and omnipotence. By comparison, the SED never had a charismatic party figure except for the early KPD [Communist Party of Germany] martyrs like Rosa Luxemburg and Karl Liebknecht. From Walter Ulbricht to Erich Honecker and to Egon Krenz, the leadership of SED inextricably ruled the republic more like functionalist bureaucrats than charismatic revolutionaries. While this lack of charisma saves the GDR from the cult of personality, it also disables the state to overcome the existential sovereignty crisis through extra-institutional forces. As Antonio Gramsci postulates in the Hegemonic Theory that at particular historical moments when the traditional parties could not represent the interests of their classes and blocs, the "men of destiny" would ascend to the political arena and claim themselves to represent the general will of the people and to fend off the mortal dangers faced by the society overall.¹⁰⁸ In comparison to the socialist "men of destiny" in Russia, China, and Cuba, the East German leadership in 1989 fails to establish intimate contact with the people. Just like chapter two has discussed, for many citizens of the time, Egon Krenz is a banal bureaucrat representing the party's lies.

¹⁰⁸ Antonio Gramsci, *The Gramsci Reader, Selected Writings 1916-1935*, David Forgacs edited, (New York, 2000), 218-219

The consequent outcome of the ethics of ultimate ends is the quality of being blind. Being blind means, that the believers of the ultimate ends should not be troubled with trivial business and daily routines of politics. Weber explains that leaders in this way cease to be objective and become purely personal self-intoxications. “He(politician) therefore is constantly in danger of becoming an actor as well as taking lightly the responsibility for the outcome of his actions and of being concerned merely with the 'impression' he makes.”¹⁰⁹ This seems to suggest that political activities according to the ethics of ultimate ends are also aesthetic experiences that prioritize the experiential process over the material reality. Blindness to the objectivity and trivial business of everyday life also means that for the believers of the ultimate ends, political actions are not about administration but rulership. The blind vision would consequently reduce the multiplicity of social relationships into a deterministic dichotomy between the friend and the foe. Like what Carl Schmidt describes: “The specific political distinction to which political actions and motives can be reduced is that between friend and enemy.”¹¹⁰

The SED leadership to some degree is blind to the actual political conditions. The overarching mark of “enemies of socialism” [Gegeners des Sozialismus] reduces the relationship between the party-state and the masses into one friend-foe antithesis. Furthermore, socialist politics is also an aesthetic experience. Erich Mielke’s statement “I love you all” and Egon Krenz’s condemnation of Günter Schabowski’s betrayal¹¹¹ suggest that in addition to being objective and scientific, socialism in the GDR also means *ad hominem* and interest-subjective. Believing in the

¹⁰⁹ Weber, “Politics as a Vocation”, 23

¹¹⁰ Carl Schmidt, *The Concept of the Political*, Matthias Konzen and John P. McCormick translated and edited, (Chicago and London, 2007), 75

¹¹¹ Krenz and Schabowski were trailed in court in 1997. Krenz condemned Schabowski that he pretended to be innocent and ignorant of many meetings he participated. He called Schabowski a "renegade socialists" [abtrünnige Sozialisten]; Krenz, *Gefängnis Notizen*, 59

socialist virtuality requires the true socialist to turn blind on certain facts that run into contradiction with their beliefs.

However, the broader international circumstances do not allow the SED to handle the crisis from the perspective of ultimate ends. The party has to instead take the administrative methods to negotiate with the opposition partially because the Soviet leadership has explicitly declared that the Soviet army would not participate in the domestic affairs of Warsaw Pact nations. Starting from the early 1980s, the Soviet Union lost the capacity to prevent the political failure of the Polish regime under the premise of not using military force. Jaruzelskis' military dictatorship marks the last try of Soviet military interventions.¹¹² The withdrawal of Soviet military backing could only be more fateful for the SED leadership because, among all the communist countries in Eastern Europe, the GDR is the only one that owed its whole existence to the Soviet military presence and pure ideological indoctrinations.¹¹³ Unlike Poland, Hungary, or Yugoslavia where local communist guerrillas had voluntarily resisted the Nazi occupation, Germany had virtually no resistance at all until the ultimate defeat. The 1953 Labor Uprising could have already overthrown Ulbricht's regime had there not been the Soviet tanks. Moreover, international and geo-political changes between the communist bloc and the west especially the ongoing de-escalation of conflicts and disarmament prevent the SED leadership to take Schmidt's concept of political methods — rule by violence. Despite the presence of the wall and of the secret police, the GDR is arguably one of the most porous socialist societies in the world. The geographical position of GDR as the border state means that political upheavals that happened here would inevitably be known to the entire

¹¹² Dieter Grosser, Stephan Bierling, Friedrich Kurz, *Die Sieben Mythen der Wiedervereinigung, Fakten und Analysen zu einem Prozeß ohne Alternativ*, (Ehrenwirth Verlag, München, 1991), 22

¹¹³ Vladimir Tismaneanu, "The Revolutions of 1989: Causes, Meanings, Consequences", *Contemporary European History*, Vol. 18, No. 3, *Revisiting 1989: Causes, Course and Consequences* (Aug, 2009), (<https://www.jstor.org/stable/40542827>), pp 281

world. Had it been in 1956 or 1968 when the East-West antagonism was overwhelming and the Soviet military support was granted, the party-state could have undertaken a “Chinese Solution” to trample at the so-called enemies of socialism with little hesitation. However, when it comes to 1989, the international situation simply makes such a method an impossible option. Egon Krenz personally says to Gorbachev that the Soviet Union has a “fathership” [Vaterschaft] to the continued existence of the GDR. The “father” and the “child” unanimously reach an agreement via telegram that no violence should be taken because otherwise, a civil war would take place in GDR. Krenz recalls:

“The alternative to the wall’s opening is civil war like conflicts that no one with normal human intelligence could be responsible for. In the Autumn of 1989, there were no other possibilities that can solve the extremely complicated border question in the interest of the people. I know very well that the wall’s opening would touch on the interest of the allied countries and the collective decision of Warsaw Pact countries to secure the border would be powerless. But I saw on the night of November 9 no other possibilities.”¹¹⁴

Similarly, an interview with Harald Jaeger, the former border guard on the Berlin Wall who opened the gate after Schabowski delivered the wrong message also reflects that the Wall’s opening was a reluctant but only correct choice. The soldier says to the camera of the Associate Press:

“I had done the most beautiful and most terrible at the same time. The most terrible is that I know the party and state leadership had let me down and that my colleagues didn’t strengthen the measures. And my whole worldview at the time was totally broken. I am not a hero. I had done what was then the only correct thing to do, and everything else was only good for the GDR citizens. I have merit that on that night no blood flowed but only tears of joy and cold sweats. The fact is that it (open the gate) was right and necessary, and exactly at the right time.”¹¹⁵

We notice from the testimonies of Krenz and the border guard that responsibility has prevailed over the belief in ultimate ends. The party and its functionaries in the end could not afford to turn blind to the demands of the population. As the soldier says, the wall’s opening destroys his entire worldview. Shooting at the masses to preserve the ultimate ends is no longer a

¹¹⁴ Egon Krenz, “Anmerkungen zur Öffnung der Berliner Mauer im Herbst 1989”, *Osteuropa* V42.4, (Berliner Wissenschafts-Verlag, Apr 1992), (<https://www.jstor.org/stable/44916324>), pp 369

¹¹⁵ AP Archive, Interview with Border Guard who opened the Berlin Wall, November 9, 2009, (<https://youtu.be/YFnnEqxswG4>)

necessary evil but the purely unjustifiable evil. It can be argued that since Egon Krenz and the reform-minded leadership chose to “hear the voices of the population” [Meinungen der Bevölkerung anzuhören], the SED party-state has already begun to break from the belief in the ultimates ends and instead they become practitioners of the ethics of responsibility. The ethics of responsibility, according to Weber, is typically the trait of civil servants who administrate but do not rule the public. In contrast to the mission of the political leader that can be described with one word — “fight”, the honor of a civil servant is vested in his ability to execute conscientiously the order of the superior authorities, exactly as if the order agreed with his own conviction even if it appears wrong to him.¹¹⁶ As the leadership realizes that its responsibility not to murder outweighs its belief in the socialist virtuality, it consequently follows that the faith in socialism becomes part of the “conventional phraseology of political philistines and banausic technicians.”¹¹⁷ The leadership has become bureaucratic functionaries who could only act according to the prescribed norms and are unable to command and implement their own interpretations of how things should be done. But remember the Weberian term -- ethics of responsibility-- implies that there is supposed to be a superior level to give order to the civil servants. There should be a prince who knows how to fight in the background behind the functionalist bureaucrats.

But unfortunately, in the Winter of 1989, no such fighting prince emerges in East Germany. To put this in a broader context, not only in East Germany but also in most of the communist world there are no blind and fighting princes behind the millions of communist civil servants (with the exception of Romania and China). The result is all the more fortunate for the citizens but fatal for the socialist immanence because, as discussed in chapter one, real-existing socialism requires the capacity of the party-state to eradicate the alternatives and it could only exist in a fullness. Real-

¹¹⁶ Weber, *Politics as Vocation*, 88

¹¹⁷ *Ibid*, 105

existing socialism is all or nothing. And to eradicate the alternatives, the party-state has to undertake the “necessary evil” which in 1989 becomes unnecessary. The erstwhile necessary evil turns into the unjustifiable and unbearable evil that frightens the party. And for this reason, the demise of necessary evil, Marxism-Leninism becomes frail in the end.

Two days before the Federal Chancellor Helmut Kohl announced the Ten-Points-Plan [Zehn-Punkt-Plan], which is considered to be the beginning of reunification, on November 26, 1989, a group of East German writers headed by Christa Wolf published an open letter — *Für unser Land* (For our Country) — to all East German citizens, calling them to support the independent German Democratic Republic.¹¹⁸ The letter, arguably for the first time in the history of GDR, criticizes Stalinism from the official press organ. These authors admit that people are forced to leave their country because the Stalinist party had penetrated its political and economic influences into every sphere of life. Two choices are left for the people. The first is to remain in the GDR and participate in future reforms. “We still have a chance; we still can recollect our anti-fascist and humanistic ideals which we have erstwhile experienced,” says the letter. The second option, which should be avoided, is to count on the help of the Federal Republic and ultimately be annexed by it. Although not mentioning the term “democracy” or “socialist democracy”, this letter suggests that the party has finally changed its position to support the mass rallies and demonstrations as the letter say in the beginning: “The people had through non-violent mass demonstrations enforced the revolutionary renewals that are fulfilled at a breathtaking speed.” This letter soon became an official position of the SED party-state since both Egon Krenz and Hans Modrow signed their names on this open letter. Egon Krenz even writes in his memoir that “this

¹¹⁸ *Für unser Land*, Sächsische Zeitung, Nr. 281, 29.11.1989, 44. Jahrgang, Organ der Bezirksleitung Dresden der SED, (<https://www.ddr89.de/texte/land.html>)

open call is the most important document of the Autumn of 1989 across all party boundaries.”¹¹⁹ The letter finally received 1,167,948 signatures when it comes to the end of the petition on January 23, 1990.¹²⁰ The result shows that at least over one million citizens of East Germany prefer an independent GDR over unification. But unfortunately, the *Volkskammer* election two months later reveals that these one million names do not represent the majority of the people. The pro-unification alliance headed by the East German CDU (Christian Democratic Union) managed to win 40.8 % of the total votes, a percentage that is more than the combined votes of the Social Democratic Party (21.9%) and the newly reformed SED, the Party of Democratic Socialism (16.4%).¹²¹ The choice is not hard to make for East Germans who are not believers in socialism. When there’s an Audi waiting beside my door, why would I still choose to drive a Trabant?

¹¹⁹ Egon Krenz, *Herbst’89*, (Berlin, Verlag Neues Leben, 1999), 79

¹²⁰ *Für unser Land*, Sächsische Zeitung, Nr. 281, 29.11.1989, 44

¹²¹ Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, Die erste und letzte freie Wahl in der DDR, 17.03.2020, (<https://www.bpb.de/kurz-knapp/hintergrund-aktuell/202873/die-erste-und-letzte-freie-wahl-in-der-ddr/>)

Conclusion: Why Immanence?

Why does this essay choose Deleuze's concept of immanence to explain the failure of East German socialism? What difference would this approach make than simply not using the term? The answer is: to explain a tragedy in which one fights against oneself and eventually defeats oneself. Immanence signifies the internal aporia and self-struggles that East German socialism has experienced. The point is to argue that the failure of GDR socialism and its renewal attempts is more than a defeat to external factors such as West Germany or liberal capitalism. The demise of socialism also means the victory of materialistic actuality over the Leninist conscious-driven model of socialism. The party-state in the end could neither attest to its own promises nor preserve its enshrined ultimate ends with violence. The downfall of East German socialism can be explained as a fight in which the socialist virtuality, manifested by the ethics of ultimate ends, runs into a struggle with the actuality, manifested by the ethics of responsibility, and mutually negates one another in the months of October and November.

As immanence, East German socialism could only survive when the exclusive and one-dimensional (always forward) dictatorship of the SED unifies the materialistic actuality and the ideational virtuality. Once the one-dimensional and exceptional power of the party is weakened, socialist immanence falls apart. The virtual and the actual become finally irreconcilable since if the party chooses the virtual end, it then has to commit a now unjustifiable evil. Vice versa, choosing to adhere to the responsibility of not murder would inevitably witness the upsurge of alternatives overtaking the party's sovereign power. The third-way, despite being progressive, could not mitigate the gulf between the virtual and the actual conditions within such a brief period of time.

Time is not on the side of socialism. As mentioned in chapter two, reformers of the party and oppositions could have changed the course had they been given a longer period of time to restructure the economic and political institutions. The incident of November 9 raises the assumption that the self-creating and self-standing totalities like East German socialism are vulnerable to the unconscionable and chaotic spontaneous actions of men. Actions alone create opportunities for freedom.

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