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# The Failure of East German Antifascism: Some Ironies of History as Politics [1991]

Konrad H. Jarausch\*

**Abstract:** »Das Versagen des Antifaschismus: Zur Ironie von Geschichte als Politik in der DDR«. The overthrow of Communism through the “peaceful revolution” during 1989/90 raised the question of what to do with its ideological justification of “anti-fascism.” Ironically some self-critical GDR intellectuals like Christa Wolf had already argued that what had begun as a rigorous effort to repudiate National Socialism had turned into a legitimization of a new SED-dictatorship. Written during the exciting process of German unification, this essay attempted a preliminary assessment of the role of East German historians within the SED-regime: On the one hand their scholarly efforts had become more complex and convincing during the 1980s, leading to growing recognition from abroad. But on the other hand, these scholars also showed a failure of political nerve by not drawing the practical consequences from their empirical and methodological advances. Based on discussions with East German colleagues, this essay sought to resolve the paradox of their intellectual contribution and political inaction.

**Keywords:** peaceful revolution, anti-fascism, GDR intellectuals, East German historians, SED dictatorship.

In overturning the SED regime, the civic revolutionaries of 1989 also repudiated the GDR’s conception history. Restive writers like Helga Königsdorf warned that “the abuse of an imposed anti-Fascism” had ultimately “threatened to produce a new Fascism.” But other intellectuals like Rudolf Frey continued to cling to their Communist beliefs: “In our country, this anti-Fascism has contributed to eradicating the roots of the brown plague and to barring the rise of neo-Fascism, a few exceptions notwithstanding.”<sup>1</sup> In East Germany’s ideologized discourse, such debates about fascism were never just about the past but also about the present. As one of the first to expose Nazi collaboration in *Kindheitsmuster*, the novelist Christa Wolf warned that public indoctrination

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<sup>1</sup> Helga Königsdorf, “Der Partei eine Chance geben,” *Neues Deutschland*, 22 November 1989; and Rudolf Frey’s letter to the editor, *ibid.*, 6 December 1989.

with a certain view of history by “a small group of anti-Fascists which ruled the country” had nefarious consequences. These “‘victors of history’ ceased to engage their real past as collaborators, dupes or believers during the Nazi period.” Their silence, based on a bad conscience, “made them unsuitable for resisting Stalinist structures and patterns of thought, which for a long time were deemed a touchstone of ‘partisanship’ and ‘loyalty.’”<sup>2</sup> In supreme irony, critics argued that the proud antifascist legacy helped legitimize a new kind of unfreedom in the GDR.

As the guardians of the moral flame, East German historians of the Third Reich played a special but problematic role. In their public statements, they upheld antifascism as a non-communist justification for the independence of the GDR and as cement for the progressive consensus, ranging from proletarian underground to bourgeois resistance. In their academic research they sought to uncover the economic and political mechanisms behind the Nazi dictatorship so as to prevent its recurrence. However, these related efforts were hampered by a narrow ideological definition of National Socialism as fascism, characterized as state monopoly capitalism. According to the representative eight-volume history of the German labor movement of the 1960s, the NSDAP was “the party which best represented the class interests of the most reactionary groups of German finance capital and other backward circles.” National Socialism was the logical outcome of the crisis of capitalist monopolies that pushed German imperialism into war in order “to break the power of the working class and the KPD more effectively.”<sup>3</sup> Since it clearly identified the class enemy while absolving the majority of the population of Nazi complicity, the Comintern concept of fascism proved to be a captivating slogan for political struggle. But unceasing repetition could not make *stamokap* formulas into subtle academic analysis, while their inherent oversimplification gradually eroded their ethical force.

Opposed to the political uses of antifascism, western scholars were slow to shift from anticommunist polemics to serious analysis of East German contributions. The growing maturation of GDR research began to attract the attention of West German specialists only in the late 1970s. In his Erlangen dissertation, Günter Heydemann stressed SED direction of research, but also traced the increasing methodological sophistication and topical differentiation of GDR

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<sup>2</sup> Christa Wolf, *Kindheitsmuster* (Darmstadt: Luchterhand, 1976); and “Das haben wir nicht gelernt,” *Wochenpost*, No. 43, reprinted in taz, ed., *DDR Journal zur Novemberrevolution* (Berlin: taz, 1989), 21f.

<sup>3</sup> Institut für Marxismus-Leninismus, ed., *Vom Januar 1933 bis Mai 1945*, vol. 5 of *Geschichte der Deutschen Arbeiterbewegung* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1966), 9ff. For western theories of fascism as the overarching concept of various radical right-wing movements see Walter Laqueur, ed., *Fascism: A Reader's Guide* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976).

scholarship.<sup>4</sup> In the United States, the emigre Andreas Dorpalen compiled a comprehensive and “critical, although by no means hostile, assessment of GDR interpretations in terms of international scholarship.” Published after his death in 1985, this massive volume interrogated the uniform and stable *Geschichtsbild* presented by East German historians from a radical democratic perspective.<sup>5</sup> Interested in social history and methodological innovation, the historiography specialist Georg G. Iggers presented a more positive reading of East German accomplishments in several essays. In order to make its achievements known, he prepared an anthology on GDR social history “not primarily as examples of Marxist historiography but as new approaches which deserve attention abroad.”<sup>6</sup> In contrast, the bulk of western historians generally ignored East German scholarship, clinging to outdated preconceptions that no longer corresponded to the increasing differentiation of Marxist historiography.<sup>7</sup>

The fall of bureaucratic socialism threw antifascist scholarship into an ideological and institutional crisis. Fixated upon the Nazi menace in the past, most GDR historians failed to criticize the threat of Erich Honecker’s police state in the present.<sup>8</sup> Since totalitarianism theory smacked of crude Cold War polemics, they only rarely recognized the symptomatic resemblance of brown and red repression and were reluctant to transfer their anti-Hitler commitment into anti-Stalinist protest.<sup>9</sup> With journalists taking the lead in exposing the dirty secrets in the GDR’s past, historians as former collaborators lost public credibility.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> Günter Heydemann, *Geschichtswissenschaft im geteilten Deutschland, Entwicklungsgeschichte, Organisationsstruktur, Funktionen, Theorie- und Methodenprobleme in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und in der DDR* (Frankfurt: Lang, 1980), 171ff.

<sup>5</sup> Andreas Dorpalen, *German History in Marxist Perspective: The East German Approach* (Detroit: Wayne State University Press, 1985), with an introductory essay by Georg G. Iggers and bibliographic appendixes by Evan Bukey, 11ff.

<sup>6</sup> Iggers, “Einige Aspekte neuer Arbeiten in der DDR über die neuere Deutsche Geschichte,” *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 14 (1988): 542ff; and “Introduction,” to the volume on *Social History in the GDR* (New York: Berg Publishers, 1991).

<sup>7</sup> George Verbeeck, “Kontinuität und Wandel im DDR-Geschichtsbild,” *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte*, B11/90, 9 March 1990, 30-42. For discouraging examples see the cursory comments of Dietrich Staritz, “Zur Geschichte der DDR,” and Rudolf Vierhaus, “Geschichtsbewusstsein Deutschland,” in Werner Weidenfeld, ed., *Deutschland-Handbuch. Eine doppelte Bilanz, 1949-1989* (Bonn: Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, 1989), 69ff and 86ff.

<sup>8</sup> For first English language narratives cf. T.G. Ash, *The Magic Lantern* (New York: Random House, 1990), and Elizabeth Pond, *After the Wall* (New York, 1990).

<sup>9</sup> See the autobiographical reflection by Vincent von Wroblewsky, “Die Lüge zur Weltordnung gemacht...” *Temps modernes*, spring 1990; and Ulf Kalkreuth interview with Werner Bramke, “Widerstand gegen die Widerständler,” *UZ: Universitätszeitung ... Karl Marx Universität*, 1 December 1989.

<sup>10</sup> Hermann Weber, “Die DDR – ‘Geschichtswissenschaft im Umbruch?’ Aufgaben der Historiker bei der Bewältigung der stalinistischen Vergangenheit,” *Deutschland-Archiv*, summer 1990. The last SED-PDS attempt to raise the neofascist specter as a rallying cry

Just when the removal of political control created opportunities for democratic departures, the renewal of the tainted discipline was threatened by fiscal constraints. Resentment of former victims and envy of some western colleagues endangered the survival of history's institutional bases and research privileges.<sup>11</sup> In this perilous transition, outside observers can provide perspective by raising some crucial questions: How did GDR scholarship evolve in the half-century after Hitler's fall? What are the peculiar strengths and weaknesses of the Marxist view of fascism? Which political tendencies does the development of East German historiography of the Third Reich mirror? What are the lessons of a truncated antifascism for the reconstruction of the historical discipline?

A promising starting point for an analysis of GDR writing on fascism is the self-representation of East German scholars, presented in their papers at the 1987 and 1989 IREX conferences.<sup>12</sup> While emphases differ somewhat among authors, there is general agreement on periodization, such as the existence of an initial antifascist phase after the collapse of the Third Reich. With liberation by the Red Army, survivors of the resistance and anti-Nazi intellectuals in the East embarked on a political crusade to wean the population from Hitler's influence. Based on personal testimony as well as public commemoration, this antifascist consensus cut across class divisions and ideological lines and was remarkably successful in changing public rhetoric. Initial explanations of the catastrophe stressed German responsibility for the outbreak of the Second World War, the societal roots of fascist imperialism in the greed of the ruling classes as well as the ideological dynamics of antibolshevism and anti-Semitism. To justify radical domestic change, communist politicians like Walter Ulbricht castigated the alliance of the former elites such as Junkers and generals with the Nazis.<sup>13</sup> With the rise of the SED dictatorship, the spectrum of opinion narrowed, and scholars considered as bourgeois voices were increasingly purged from the historical profession. While antifascism was central to the self-definition of the

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failed when the violation of the Soviet Treptow memorial was attributed to the infamous secret police (Stasi).

<sup>11</sup> Harm Klüeting, "Parteilichkeit war wichtiger als Objektivität," *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 17 March 1990; and Wolfgang J. Mommsen, "Hilfe statt Beckmesserei: Die deutschen Historiker zur Lage der Geschichtswissenschaft in der DDR," *ibid.*, 13 July 1990. Cf. also Wolfgang Küttler et al., "Antwort auf die Fragen an die außeruniversitären Forschungseinrichtungen der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik," (MS, Berlin, 1990).

<sup>12</sup> For typical self-descriptions see Rolf Richter's paper on "Der deutsche Faschismus – Ergebnisse und Probleme seiner Erforschung," at the November 1987 IREX conference, as well as his essay "Faschistischer Terror und antifaschistischer Widerstand in der Historiographie der DDR," in Kurt Pätzold, ed., *Deutscher Faschismus – Terror und Widerstand* (Berlin: Akademie für Gesellschaftswissenschaften beim ZK der SED, 1989). Cf. Joachim Lehmann, "Views of Fascism in the GDR," lecture at the University of North Carolina, 17 October 1989.

<sup>13</sup> Walter Ulbricht, *Der faschistische deutsche Imperialismus (1933-1945)* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1956), 3rd ed. of *Die Legende vom deutschen Sozialismus*, (1945).

emerging GDR, it was instrumentalized from the start to justify the rule of the new communist elite. Pedagogical rather than scholarly, these early efforts were focused on “remembering, collecting, preserving, transmitting, representing and enlightening.”<sup>14</sup>

Propelled by the ideological hostility of the Cold War, the second phase of antifascist historiography centered on refining the theory of state-monopoly-capitalism. The 1935 Comintern definition called fascism “the overt terrorist domination of the most reactionary, the most chauvinistic, and the most imperialistic elements of German finance capital.” According to GDR historians, the crisis of capitalism leads to monopolistic forms of production, the collapse of which eventually produces revolution. Hitler’s charisma and the NSDAP’s mass following were only the popular instruments of the ruling circles in their desire for the suppression of the revolutionary labor movement through imperialist aggrandizement. Relativizing the specificity of the Nazi phenomenon by embedding it in a critique of capitalism made antifascism an ideological weapon against bourgeois remnants within and neofascist dangers from without.<sup>15</sup> This view posed fruitful questions about

the relationship between economics and politics in a Fascist dictatorship, the completion of state-monopoly capitalism, the specific role of Fascist state power, the character and function of Fascist movements, of neo-Fascism and last but not least the anti-Fascist resistance struggle.

But the apodictic primacy of economics tended to deny the Nazi political movement any independence and interpreted Hitler’s actions as executing the demands of monopolists, even when evidence suggests an opposite relationship. During the 1950s GDR production was dedicated to an ideological critique of “bourgeois” conceptions and to efforts at laying the foundations for research in source collections and syntheses.<sup>16</sup>

With the ideological underpinnings in place, East German historians created a new disciplinary infrastructure during the 1960s. For the sake of publication in the party-controlled media such as the *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, scholars had to base their conclusions on the perspective of “historical materialism.” Seemingly unaware of any contradiction, GDR historiography

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<sup>14</sup> Richter, “On Some Aspects of Recent Historiography in the GDR About Fascist Terror and Anti-Fascism” paper at the 1989 IREX conference. Cf. also Christina von Buxhoeveden, *Geschichtswissenschaft und Politik in der DDR. Das Problem der Periodisierung* (Cologne: Wissenschaft und Politik, 1980), 229ff.

<sup>15</sup> Pierre Aycoberry, *The Nazi Question: An Essay on the Interpretations of National Socialism, 1922-1975* (New York: Panther Books, 1981), 119ff, 125ff. For the breakup of the unified German historical profession see Winfried Schulze, *Deutsche Geschichtswissenschaft nach 1945* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1989), 183ff.

<sup>16</sup> See the polemical self-justification of Gerhard Lozek, “Faschismus,” in Lozek, et al., eds., *Kritik der bürgerlichen Geschichtsschreibung* (Frankfurt: Verlag Marxistische Blätter, 1980), 4th rev. ed. This volume was first published in 1970 as *Unbewältigte Vergangenheit*, but still breathes the spirit of the Cold War. Cf. Dorpalen, *German History*, 393ff.

was unabashedly partisan, dedicated to objective science in the service of the proletariat rather than to subjective relativism. Eventually the few older Marxists trained a new generation of GDR historians which achieved such a monopoly over the discipline that they could dispense with bourgeois remnants and Socialist dissidents. The institutional center of scholarship shifted from the six East German universities to the Academy of Sciences, and the SED expanded its own research establishments in the party academy and the Institute for Marxism-Leninism. As part of the planned economy, historical efforts were directed towards particular priorities, initially by the party and later by a thirty-two-member commission of scholars.<sup>17</sup> In contrast to western individualism, GDR research remained a collective enterprise, aimed at the production of authoritative textbooks on the First World War or the Third Reich in the multi-volume *Lehrbuch der deutschen Geschichte*. Since access to western archives required scarce valuta, GDR historians concentrated on mining the domestic records of the Central German Archives in Potsdam or the Prussian papers at Merseburg. Combining orthodoxy with greater factual detail, their voices began to be heard at international conferences and their monographic contributions started to approach western professional standards.<sup>18</sup>

During the later 1970s, the emphasis of Marxist scholarship shifted from extolling the antifascist tradition to a broader appreciation of the German heritage. Enshrined in the Museum of German History in the *Zeughaus* in East Berlin, the initial GDR approach had focused on fashioning a progressive pedigree, beginning with the Peasants' War, skipping to the revolution of 1848, fastening upon the rise of the labor movement, and culminating in the foundation of the Communist Party (KPD).<sup>19</sup> Whatever did not belong to this forward-looking tradition was denounced as reactionary, in a conscious attempt at claiming everything democratic for the East and associating everything reactionary with the West. With growing self-assurance, a wider recognition of the German heritage emerged, willing to acknowledge the problematic legacies of the Reformation, Prussia, and unification in their entirety.<sup>20</sup> Somewhat to the chagrin of orthodox communists, this *Erbe und Tradition* view produced wide-ranging biographies of controversial individuals such as Martin Luther, Frede-

<sup>17</sup> Iggers, "Introduction," passim; and Dorpalen, *German History*, 23ff.

<sup>18</sup> See for instance, Fritz Klein et al., *Deutschland im Ersten Weltkrieg* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1968), 3 vols.; and E. Paterna et al., *Deutschland von 1933 bis 1939* (Berlin: Deutscher Verlag der Wissenschaften, 1969), the Third Reich volume in *Lehrbuch der Deutschen Geschichte*. The latter still interprets the Third Reich as a creature of finance capital. See pp. 47-53, 348f.

<sup>19</sup> Wolfgang Herbst and Kurt Wernicke, *Museum für Deutsche Geschichte* (Berlin: Berlin Information, 1987), 3d rev. ed.

<sup>20</sup> Richter, "Some Aspects of Recent Historiography," 4f. Cf. Küttler and Hans Schleier, "Die Erbe-Konzeption und der Platz preussischer Geschichte in der DDR-Geschichtswissenschaft," *German Studies Review* 6 (1983): 535-58; and Walter Schmidt, "Erbe und Tradition in der Diskussion der DDR-Historiker" (MS, Berlin, 1988).

rick the Great, or Otto von Bismarck.<sup>21</sup> At the same time, the methodological approaches of East German historians slowly broadened to include social history. Tired of abstract generalization about class conflict, younger people wanted to find out concrete details about everyday lives of their parents and raised questions about their complicity with Nazi rule. Spurred by economic historians and ethnologists, Third Reich specialists began to elaborate a more comprehensive picture of the fascist experience.<sup>22</sup> Due to a broadened definition of antifascism, such previously neglected topics as the bourgeois resistance and the persecution of Jews slowly began to come into view.<sup>23</sup>

A largely self-inflicted stereotype, prevalent in the West, renders an assessment of the accomplishments of antifascist historiography difficult. The ideological partisanship of East German authors made it appear as if the role of research were confirmatory, illustrating preconceptions rather than challenging them. The public pedagogical stance of GDR colleagues in building socialist consciousness sometimes seemed to produce statements verging on outright propaganda.<sup>24</sup> The economic determinism of many Marxist writings, e.g., regarding industrial support for Hitler's seizure of power, also occasionally outran actual documentation.<sup>25</sup> The facelessness of collective production tended to obscure the contribution of individual scholarly discovery and responsibility. The formulaic nature of many generalizations produced a colorless tone and detracted from more differentiated detail analyses. Finally, the suppression of internal debates in print and the presentation of a uniform front to the outside made for an impression of grey uniformity and stability. Ritualized references to the "principles of historical materialism" reinforced negative preconceptions among non-Marxists – much to the chagrin of GDR historians who felt belittled and misunderstood. For the sake of a dispassionate judgment, western analyses of East German conceptions of fascism need to transcend such surface appear-

<sup>21</sup> Ernst Engelberg, *Bismarck. Urprenze und Reichsgründer* (Berlin: Siedler Verlag, 1985), xiv, set out "to show the tendencies of historical laws in the actions of men of flesh and blood, with their weaknesses and strengths, even their contradictions, multifaceted like life itself." For an earlier effort cf. Willibald Gutsche, *Aufstieg und Fall eines kaiserlichen Reichskanzlers. Theobald von Bethmann Hollweg, 1856-1921* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1973).

<sup>22</sup> Richter, "Some Aspects of Recent Historiography," 3ff; Iggers, "Introduction," 25ff.

<sup>23</sup> Richter, "Faschistischer Terror," 17ff; Bramke, "Carl Goerdeler: Dealing with a Controversial Resistance Fighter," paper at the 1989 IREX conference; and Pätzold, *Verfolgung, Vertreibung, Vernichtung. Dokumente des faschistischen Antisemitismus 1933 bis 1942* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1984) was the first paperback on the holocaust in the GDR.

<sup>24</sup> Waltrand Falk, "Vorwort," to "Nie Wieder Faschismus und Krieg! Die Mahnung der faschistischen Bücherverbrennung am 10. Mai 1933," *Berichte der Gesellschaftswissenschaftlichen Fakultät der Humboldt Universität*, 1983, No. 5, 3ff.

<sup>25</sup> Debate between Henry A. Turner and Kurt Gossweiler at the 1987 IREX conference, based upon their writings on *German Big Business and the Rise of Hitler* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), versus *Grossbanken, Industriemonopole, Staat. Ökonomie und Politik des staatsmonopolistischen Kapitalismus in Deutschland 1914-1932* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1971). See also Dorpalen, *German History*, 46ff.



ances and delve more deeply into the strengths and weaknesses of the actual historical writing which is surprisingly unknown in the outside world.

In highlighting areas of particular concern, GDR scholars created a somewhat stylized picture of the Third Reich. Shifting attention away from Hitler's charisma, they saw Nazi rule as the triumph of industrial and financial capitalists, representing "a new form of social and state-monopolist holding organization of the entire ruling system." In the countryside, NS propaganda and terror combined to suppress the rural proletariat, but economic forces undercut reagrarianization through the flight of laborers. In the cities, "the economic policy of the NS-regime aimed at the coordination of all forces for the preparation of an imperialist war, which was to secure Germany's predominance in Europe and in the world."<sup>26</sup> In discussions of the resistance, "scholarly interest focused on the anti-Fascists and their mainstay, the minority of the proletariat which made no concessions to Fascism" rather than on the effects of demagoguery and terror on the working class. The outbreak of the war was attributed to the aggressive designs of the monopoly capitalists in Germany and the West, glossing over Stalin's maneuvering.<sup>27</sup> The initial victories of the Wehrmacht were interpreted as the realization of German imperialist plans with much attention to the economic despoliation of the vanquished. The strategic discussion focused on the battle with the Soviet Union, in which the first socialist state proved victorious as a superior social system even after the desperate NS escalation to total war. GDR historians have produced a dialectical image of the fascist experience with the monopoly-controlled Nazi terror resisted by heroic Communists.<sup>28</sup>

According to most western specialists, this image is seriously incomplete. Axiomatic assertions that the Nazi party was the executive organ of the bourgeoisie have been difficult to document. Anglo-American scholars claim that the widespread mass support of the Nazis was not just a result of manipulation but also a genuine expression of the political feelings of the "masses," be they petit bourgeois or proletarian. Important intermediary groups such as professionals simply fall through the grid of Marxist class analysis – a somewhat surprising neglect, since historians themselves might be considered part of this

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<sup>26</sup> See papers by Manfred Weissbecker, "Faschistische Organisationen in Deutschland und ihre Bedeutung für das Herrschaftssystem"; Joachim Lehmann, "Der 'bodenständige Landarbeiter.' Zielstellung und Ergebnis Faschistischer Landarbeiterpolitik in Deutschland 1933 bis 1939"; and Bramke, "Veränderungen in der Wirtschafts- und Sozialstruktur Sachsens, 1933-1945. Zum Problem von Regionalismus und Zentralismus während der faschistischen Herrschaft in Deutschland," all at the 1987 US-GDR colloquium.

<sup>27</sup> Pätzold, "Arbeiterklasse und Faschismus in Deutschland, 1933-1939," paper at the 1987 US-GDR colloquium and public lecture on the outbreak of the Second World War in Princeton, May 1989.

<sup>28</sup> Paterna et al., *Deutsche Geschichte*, passim; and Dorpalen, *German History*, 399-464. Cf. also the multivolume set on *Deutschland im Zweiten Weltkrieg*.

stratum!<sup>29</sup> Western scholars agree that the resistance was not just a communist monopoly, but rather a broader social process of daily non-compliance, involving the churches, the generals, and old elites. In contrast to reluctant GDR references to the persecution of the Jews as result of material envy and mass manipulation, the holocaust raises troubling general questions, since it demonstrates that race hatred can supercede class struggle. The SS terror system required considerable mass collaboration in denunciations, since Nazi leaders preferred voluntary support when they could generate it.<sup>30</sup> In countless particular cases western scholars have been able to point out that the ideologized Marxist conception oversimplifies crucial contradictions of the German past.

While rejecting outside criticism, GDR historians began to deal with the Nazi regime in a more empirical and complex fashion during the last decade. Somewhat hesitatingly, a few East German scholars took advantage of the climate of detente in order to elaborate a richer and more differentiated picture of the Third Reich. Their methodological approach started to shift from the history of Marxist-Leninist ideas and analysis of class politics to investigations of social formations and the scrutiny of everyday lives.<sup>31</sup> From the mid-1980s on, a careful discussion of "gaps of knowledge" began to pinpoint the shortcomings of the fascism formulas and to argue for a more subtle approach that would use Marxist ideology as a generalized perspective rather than as a set of authoritative statements about the past. In consequence of such momentum, old themes such as the role of the NSDAP were rethought while new topics such as the bourgeois opposition or the persecution of Jews became feasible. During the last half decade, resistance specialists started to acknowledge "deficits in the research of motivations for behavior during the dictatorship in general" and demanded a "more and more factual style."<sup>32</sup> In line with greater frankness in discussing the holocaust, GDR historians admitted that for racial reasons "no group was hit [as] hard as the Jews."<sup>33</sup> Although after 1985 such rethinking

<sup>29</sup> See the strictures in Dietrich Orlow, "Neuere Forschungen zur Geschichte des Nationalsozialismus im englischen Sprachraum"; William S. Allen, "Voting Behavior and Public Opinion in the Rise, Consolidation and Dynamics of the Nazi Regime, 1930-1939"; and Jarausch, "'Germanizing' the Professions: Lawyers, Teachers and Engineers, 1933-1939," all presented as papers at the US-GDR Colloquium in November 1987.

<sup>30</sup> See Sybil Milton, "The Context of the Holocaust" *German Studies Review* 13 (May 1990): 269-83; and Robert Gellately, "Rethinking the Nazi Terror System: A Historiographical Analysis," *ibid.* 14 (February 1991): 23-38; as well as the papers by C. Koonz on the eugenics struggle and Thomas Childers on propaganda at the 1989 US-GDR Colloquium.

<sup>31</sup> Richter, "On Some Aspects of Recent Historiography," and Iggers, "Introduction," *passim*. Cf. also the conference papers of the two meetings for more detailed examples.

<sup>32</sup> Bramke, "Der antifaschistische Widerstand in der Geschichtsschreibung der DDR in den achtziger Jahren. Forschungsstand und Probleme," *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* 28 (1988): 23ff., is a revealing summary by an innovative scholar.

<sup>33</sup> Pätzold, "Faschistische Gewalt gegen Juden. Thesenhafter Überblick," in *Deutscher Faschismus*, 45ff. Cf. also his and Irene Runge's volume on *Pogromnacht 1938* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1988).

created increasing tensions between scholarship and politics, before November 1989 internal discussions carefully modified rather than challenged the basic antifascist consensus.

In spite of growing sophistication, GDR scholarship was eventually undone by its political blinders. According to the Leipzig historian Werner Bramke, “research and representation of anti-Fascism always had a special, almost constitutive importance for the historical thinking of the GDR.” The Marxist approach basically suggested that the East German state was the result of lawlike historical development, superceding fascist capitalism by communist socialism. Many of the GDR founders were resistance fighters like Erich Honecker, allowing the SED to base its leadership claim on their uncompromising opposition to the Nazis.<sup>34</sup> The formerly bourgeois parties were forced to cooperate in the “national front” so as to prevent the resurgence of fascism. At the same time, many GDR intellectuals enthusiastically embraced the antifascist credo, and their literary popularizations provided a broader humanist legitimacy for the embattled regime.<sup>35</sup> While its special role guaranteed a wider audience, Third Reich historiography nonetheless suffered from the general deformations of historical research in East Germany. Strict state supervision not only dictated research agendas but explicit and implicit censorship also established limits of interpretation. Methodologically, the economic determinism of Marxist ideology prescribed an objectivist structuralism that underestimated subjective and cultural considerations. Despite much gradual differentiation, such politically determined blind spots, uncorrected by historical criticism, hampered not only East German scholarship but also the legitimacy of the state.<sup>36</sup>

In the conception of “Fascism [a]s a past which never ends,” Soviet considerations played a major part. Due to the heavy Russian losses in the anti-Hitler war, textbooks celebrated the role of the Red Army in conquering Berlin and liberating Germany with great enthusiasm. Popular monument such as the Soviet army museum at the Karlshorst commandantura, where the Wehrmacht surrendered, kept this memory alive.<sup>37</sup> During the 1950s the history of the German labor movement was rewritten in order to celebrate the leading role of comrade Stalin – a painful exercise in the country of Marx and Engels which was later attenuated but never completely rescinded. Although they knew of its existence, GDR scholars could not mention the secret appendix to the Ribbentrop-Molotov pact when discussing the outbreak of the Second World War, so as not to offend the big brother in the East. A combination of victor’s asser-

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<sup>34</sup> Bramke, “Der antifaschistische Widerstand,” 23ff.

<sup>35</sup> David Childs, *The GDR: Moscow’s Ally* (London, 1983); and H. Krisch, *The GDR: The Search for Identity* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1985), 137ff.

<sup>36</sup> Lehmann, “Views of Fascism in the German Democratic Republic,” (public lecture, Chapel Hill, 17 October 1989).

<sup>37</sup> See the honors thesis by Kristin Garner, comparing East and West German history textbooks in the 1950s and 1980s (Chapel Hill, 1990).

tiveness and archival disorganization also made it impossible for East German historians to ascertain exactly which documents the Russians had removed in 1945, or to consult them.<sup>38</sup> Ironically, with the arrival of glasnost in 1985, the direction of Soviet influence gradually reversed, now actually impelling greater candor. In response to threatening disclosures about the Stalinism of the KPD, Honecker stopped the publication of the German-language edition of the Russian journal *Sputnik*, thereby losing credit with their own intellectuals. While fear of the Soviet constraint prevented open discussion for decades, in the end Gorbachev's opening hastened both freer historical discussion and the downfall of the SED regime.<sup>39</sup>

The long denial of the procedural resemblance between fascist and Stalinist repression contributed to the discrediting of the East German state. In May 1989, apologists still claimed that "the GDR took its stand" on the personality cult around Stalin "already some decades ago and condemned these crimes" against the German resistance. Though the SED perfunctorily disassociated itself from Stalinism in the late 1950s and 1980s, "it has been a long-standing practice of the SED, intensified these days, to gloss over the Stalinist past by wrapping itself in the banner of its anti-Fascism – all part of the attempt to label itself 'the better Germany.'"<sup>40</sup> The gadfly historian Jürgen Kuczynski alluded to regrettable excesses in his memoirs during the early 1980s. Half a decade later, the former espionage chief Markus Wolf hesitatingly began to bring Stalinist skeletons out of the GDR closet. In 1989, Walter Janka, the onetime director of the prestigious Aufbau publishing house, still had to publish the recollections of his five-year Bautzen imprisonment in the West, before being legally rehabilitated.<sup>41</sup> Even while they began to reject "the insistence on theoretical formulas" of party dogma and to discuss such sensitive topics privately, GDR historians produced no reckoning with communist repression comparable to the indictment by Roy Medvedev in the Soviet Union.<sup>42</sup> Due to

<sup>38</sup> Richter, "Faschistischer Terror und antifaschistischer Widerstand in der Historiographie der DDR," in *Deutscher Faschismus*, 5ff. Cf. Pätzold, lecture on the outbreak of World War II (Princeton, May 1989) and Dorpalen, *German History*, 428ff.

<sup>39</sup> "Hätte es ohne Stalin Hitler gegeben?" *Sputnik* (October 1988): 135ff.

<sup>40</sup> Pike, "National and Historical Problems of Glasnost in the GDR" (MS, Chapel Hill, summer 1988). Cf. also his, "Marxism-Leninism and Literary History in the German Democratic Republic," *Internationales Archiv für Sozialgeschichte der deutschen Literatur* 7 (1982): 148ff; and H. Weber, "Sind alle Opfer rehabilitiert?" *Deutschland Archiv* 21 (1988): 580ff; as well as, "Die deutschen Opfer Stalins," *ibid.* 22 (1989): 407ff.

<sup>41</sup> Jürgen Kuczynski, *Dialog mit meinem Urenkel* (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1983); Markus Wolf, *Die Troika. Geschichte eines nichtgedrehten Films* (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1989); Walter Janka, *Schwierigkeiten mit der Wahrheit* (Reinbek: Rowohlt Taschenbuch, 1989). Cf. the report on his reinstatement in *Die Zeit*, 18 January 1990.

<sup>42</sup> As examples cf. Wolfgang Eichhorn and Küttler, "... dass Vernunft in der Geschichte sei" *Formationsgeschichte und revolutionärer Aufbruch der Menschheit* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1989), 6ff. Cf. Also Küttler, ed., *Max Weber. Rationalisierung und entzauberte Welt* (Leip-

the open debate of Stalin's crimes, such as the purges in Eastern Europe, the double standard of vigorous antifascism and all too timid anti-Stalinism eventually created a crisis of historical credibility which contributed to undermining the SED regime.<sup>43</sup>

The final problem that undercut GDR identity was the unresolved question of national unity and the attraction of the Federal Republic. As long as there was some hope of unification under communist auspices, East German intellectuals saw themselves as the progressive leaders of a "united fatherland," in the later forbidden words of their anthem. As a consequence of the Cold War, emphasis shifted to *Abgrenzung*, symbolized by the Wall, so as to construct a socialist state in the Soviet-controlled remnant of Germany. Contacts between GDR and FRG historians were broken off and the tone of exchanges turned polemical.<sup>44</sup> In the softening climate of Ostpolitik, East German scholars rejected Willy Brandt's adoption of their own formula of "two states and one nation" and asserted that the Bismarckian state had disappeared: "Since the late 40s two independent German states have emerged, the GDR and the FRG, as a result of internal historical developments connected to the world-wide conflict between socialism and capitalism." Based on a separate GDR consciousness, the formula of "a German nation of socialist character" treated German history as a funnel with all prior development leading only to the East German present. In spite of rejecting a common heritage, the vague notion of a "community of historical responsibility" allowed a resumption of contacts such as the conferences with SPD historians.<sup>45</sup> But increasing demands for reunification in the mass demonstrations of 1989-90 showed that this rhetorical resolution of the national problem no longer convinced the silent majority of the GDR citizens longing for prosperity. Though many intellectuals preferred a "third way" between East and West, a separate historiography and polity were left behind in the rush to German unity.<sup>46</sup>

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zig: Reclam, 1989); and H. Schleier, ed., *Karl Lamprecht. Alternative zu Ranke* (Leipzig: Reclam, 1988).

<sup>43</sup> For the Russian case see Anatoli Rybakov's powerful novel, *Children of the Arbat* (Boston: Little Brown, 1988).

<sup>44</sup> See Lozek, et al., eds., *Kritik der bürgerlichen Geschichtsschreibung* (Frankfurt: Verlag Marxistische Blätter, 1980), 4th ed. As background also Schleier, ed., *Geschichte der Geschichtswissenschaft. Grundlinien der bürgerlichen deutschen Geschichtsschreibung und Geschichtstheorien vor 1985* (Potsdam: PH Potsdam, 1983).

<sup>45</sup> See the presentation by the head of the historical section of the East German academy of sciences, Schmidt, "Was ist deutsche Geschichte in der Gegenwart" at the 1988 German Studies Association meeting in Philadelphia and my own comments on it. Cf. Karl Pletsch, "The Socialist Nation of the German Democratic Republic," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 21 (1979): 323ff., and Susanne Miller and Malte Ristan, eds., *Erben deutscher Geschichte* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1988).

<sup>46</sup> Volker Gransow and Jarausch, eds., *Die Deutsche Vereinigung. Dokumente zu Bürgerrevolution, Annäherung und Beitritt* (Cologne: Wissenschaft und Politik, 1991).

The dilemma of GDR historiography is suggestively illustrated in the form of a novella, called *Märkische Forschungen*. With fine irony, Günter de Bruyn in the mid-1970s constructed a plot around the rediscovery of a Jacobin poet of the Mark Brandenburg by a famous literature professor, alluding to the quest for a radical pedigree for the GDR. In another work by Max von Schwedenow, the interest of a local history buff in the same artist leads to a meeting of minds between the well-known scholar and the primary school teacher, with the former inviting the latter to work at his institute. But when the pedagogue thinks he has discovered that their common protagonist did not die in 1813 but rather lived on as reactionary bureaucrat after 1814 under the name von Massow, a conflict becomes inevitable, since presumed fact clashes with the ideological need to create a progressive culture hero. In the decisive meeting, the professor mocks the teacher's discovery as clumsy positivism and "dangerous theses of an amateur-historian which he cannot prove." For the sake of the academic's own book, the awkward findings are barred from print and the radical poet is publicly celebrated as "myth of an exemplary heroic life." When even a conservative West German editor refuses publication, the teacher has no alternative but to return to his village and become a tractor driver, still vainly searching for physical proof of his thesis in the hope that an incontestable fact will somehow convince the academic establishment. The lesson, if there is one, is devastating: "One should not teach someone criticism who cannot keep silent" and "moral victory and suicide are almost synonymous."<sup>47</sup> Deftly told, this tale dramatizes the clash between political needs and imperatives of truth, in which ideology all too often superceded fact.

Within communist constraints, the academic achievement of GDR historians was remarkable. Aided by the historical bent of Marxist ideology, East German scholars rebuilt the institutional structure of research out of the ruins of the Third Reich under more trying circumstances than in the West. Through party control, they succeeded in training a new generation of antifascist historians, firmly anchored in a communist perspective. Often in conscious rejection of western examples, they established a fiercely different historical literature which stressed the monopoly-capitalist nature of fascism. Helped by planning and collective cooperation, this impressive production highlighted some neglected topics of Nazi rule, such as communist resistance, the relations between industrialists and party leaders, the role of the Red Army in the defeat of Hitler, and the like.<sup>48</sup> Somewhat belatedly, East German colleagues began to shift their

<sup>47</sup> Günter de Bruyn, *Märkische Forschungen* (Halle: Mitteldeutscher Verlag, 1978), 5th ed. Needless to say, this allegorical indictment was an underground success in the GDR. Quotations are from pp. 134, 154, and 156.

<sup>48</sup> For the most recent volume, cf. D. Eichholtz and Pätzold, eds., *Der Weg in den Krieg. Studien zur Geschichte der Vorkriegsjahre (1935/36 bis 1939)* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1989), esp. the preface.

attention from political and ideological issues to social or cultural questions, exploring the everyday lives of the masses and of the middle strata.<sup>49</sup> Before 1989 GDR research had achieved a growing confidence, acknowledged “the complexity of the objective historical process,” claimed to be based on “lengthy, comprehensive and detailed research,” and invited “scholarly discussion.”<sup>50</sup> When using Marxism as a humanist perspective, East German historiography became capable of dialogue with western scholarship, sometimes serving as a valuable corrective.<sup>51</sup>

Paradoxically, scholarly progress combined with a failure of political nerve. The deafening silence of GDR historians on the dictatorial nature of their own regime resulted less from fear than from an inner blockage, based on faith in the perfectability of the socialist utopia. For many GDR intellectuals, the struggle against Hitler also created a “terrible predicament” which kept their critique in check. Since the founders of the new state were bona fide antifascists, resistance against East German Stalinism “would have meant: resisting the resisters.”<sup>52</sup> In three areas did the reluctance to universalize antifascism into a critique of all oppression prove particularly devastating. By pinning the blame on monopoly capitalists, the Comintern definition of fascism indirectly absolved the majority of the population from confronting its own complicity.<sup>53</sup> The economic reductionism of attributing Hitler’s power to an expropriated bourgeois class did not engage the racial dimension of anti-Semitism and insufficiently inoculated youths against xenophobia. By rejecting all similarities between fascism and Stalinism, GDR historians failed to address the police-state methods of their own version of *Stasinismus* as, one November 1989 poster ironi-

<sup>49</sup> Dorpalen, *German History*, 498ff; Iggers, “Introduction,” passim. Cf. also Thomas Kuczynski, ed., *Wirtschaftsgeschichte und Mathematik. Beiträge zur Anwendung mathematischer, insbesondere statistischer Methoden in der wirtschafts- und sozialhistorischen Forschung* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1985).

<sup>50</sup> Pahl-Rugenstein Verlag, “Vorwort,” to Horst Bartel et al., *Deutsche Geschichte*, vol. 1 (Cologne: Pahl-Rugenstein Verlag, 1982). The Third Reich volume was projected to appear in 1990.

<sup>51</sup> See Pätzold, “Von Verlorenem, Gewonnenem und Erstrebtem oder: Wohin der ‘neue Revisionismus’ steuert,” *Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik* (1986), 1452-63; and “Wo der Weg nach Auschwitz begann. Der deutsche Antisemitismus und der Massenmord an den europäischen Juden,” *ibid.* (1987), 160-72. Cf. Hartmut Zwahr, “Konstitution der Bourgeoisie im Verhältnis zur Arbeiterklasse,” and Wolfgang Jacobeit, “Dorf und dörfliche Bevölkerung Deutschland im bürgerlichen 19. Jahrhundert,” in J. Kocka, ed., *Bürgertum im 19. Jahrhundert* (Munich: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1988), 149ff, 315ff.

<sup>52</sup> Bramke quoted in “Widerstand gegen die Widerständler,” *UZ*, 1 December 1989. Jens-Uwe Heuer, *Demokratie und Sozialismus* (Berlin: Akademie Verlag, 1989) tried to find Leninist foundations for democracy.

<sup>53</sup> For the distinction between the official and actual political cultures of the GDR cf. Christiane Lemke, “Eine politische Doppelkultur. Sozialisation im Zeichen konkurrierender Einflüsse,” in Hans-Georg Wehling, ed., *Politische Kultur in der DDR* (Cologne: Wissenschaft und Politik, 1989).

cally pointed out.<sup>54</sup> In their lack of civic courage to explore the existing latitude, they were neither better nor worse than the GDR population at large. But this conformism had particularly nefarious consequences, since a flawed antifascism was drummed into academics through obligatory Marxist-Leninist instruction and inculcated in pupils through the teaching of history.<sup>55</sup>

Some remnants of antifascism did accelerate the reorientation of historians within the civic revolution of 1989. Inspired by a more genuine anti-Nazi commitment, some opposition intellectuals saw themselves as acting in the resistance tradition, struggling against both Nazi dictatorship and Stalinist repression. "History needs to be thoroughly exposed."<sup>56</sup> In response to public pressure, the Institute for History of the Academy of Sciences endorsed "unsparing, honest and open research into the complete historical heritage, with all its positive and negative accounts" in November 1989. A partial admission of failure, this call for eliminating the "blank spots" in GDR memory authorized a broader debate about the "victims of Stalinism," such as the many German communists who perished in the Soviet Union during the 1930s. Similarly, the history department of the Wilhelm Pieck University in Rostock in a close vote declared that "historical scholarship should no longer be a handmaiden of politics." Reflecting the ethical Marxism of many intellectuals, the historiography specialist Wolfgang Küttler defined the task of the historian in a mixed fashion as "the anti-Fascist struggle, socialist renewal and maintenance of progressive historical thinking of the present generation."<sup>57</sup> By March 1990 many admitted "that historical scholarship... undoubtedly shares some responsibility for the deformation of socialist ideals" and called for "a critical attitude to the past" and "methodological pluralism" as the basis for civic emancipation. While historians "offered no impulses for change," the ever more obvious parallel between 1945 and 1989 did help initiate a self-critical reflection about the discipline's support of the Honecker regime.<sup>58</sup>

<sup>54</sup> Photo of a coffin with the word *Stalinismus*, 1949-1989 in *DDR Journal*, 61; L. Scherzer, "Das letzte Gefecht," *Die Zeit*, 12 January 1990; D. Binder, "As Usual, Germans Can't Agree on What Is German," *New York Times*, 10 December 1989.

<sup>55</sup> S. Poppitz, "Untauglich: Verordnetes Geschichtsbild," *Leipziger Volkszeitung*, 11-12 November 1989, interview with Bramke. Cf. the important study by Lemke, *Die Ursachen des Umbruchs: Politische Sozialisation in der ehemaligen DDR* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1991).

<sup>56</sup> Janka, "Manchmal heißt schweigen so viel wie lügen," in taz, ed., *DDR Journal*, 61; and "Chancen für revolutionäre Erneuerung in der DDR," *Neues Deutschland*, 27 November 1989.

<sup>57</sup> John Gray, "No more distortions, 'blank spots,' East German historians pledge," *Toronto Globe and Mail* (November 1989); Sektion Geschichte der Wilhelm Pieck Universität, "Geschichtswissenschaft darf nicht länger Magd der Politik sein," *Ostsee-Zeitung*, 15 November 1989; and H. Jacobus, "Ohne Antifaschismus keine sozialistische DDR," *Neues Deutschland*, 25-26 November 1989.

<sup>58</sup> "Positionen der Geschichts- und Altertumswissenschaftler der Sektion Geschichte der Wilhelm-Pieck-Universität Rostock," (MS, Rostock, 12 March 1990). Cf. Susanne Rum-



In the transition from an affirmative communist to a critical democratic role, the antifascist legacy no longer provided much guidance. Unwilling to give up power in institutions and journals, unregenerate communists invoked the resistance experience in order to perpetuate PDS rule with only minimal corrections.<sup>59</sup> But *Wendehülse* suddenly changed with the tide, discovering their penchant for German national history and the Prussian tradition from Frederick the Great to Bismarck.<sup>60</sup> Former victims began to speak out against “the speechlessness” of their colleagues, castigating their lack of “civic courage.”<sup>61</sup> Other scholars sincerely struggled to develop their Marxist moorings into a democratic socialist perspective, open to methodological innovation.<sup>62</sup> Not surprisingly, in the meeting of the GDR association of historians, the SED old guard refused to give up its power even to PDS progressives and elected a former apparatchik as chairman.<sup>63</sup> In no uncertain language younger dissidents protested against the “stifling of intellectual freedom by an impalatable stew of lies and half-truths,” calling for a fundamental renewal. Boldly invoking the parallel of the Third Reich, these alternative historians rejected “the instrumentalization of history for the sake of securing the rule” of the SED, and in April 1990 founded an “Independent Association of Historians” in order to overthrow “the old power structures and mentalities.”<sup>64</sup> No wonder that West German reactions to their new eastern colleagues ranged from increased cooperation to

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mel’s interview with Bramke, “Am Ende bin ich ein Relikt der stalinistischen Ära,” *Die Andere Zeitung*, 25 April 1990; and “DDR-Historiker gestehen Versagen ein,” dpa-dispatch in *DAAD-Mitteilungen* 6/90, 18-19.

<sup>59</sup> See the lack of editorial response in *Zeitschrift für Geschichtswissenschaft*, January-June 1990. Cf. Karlen Vesper, “Wie steht es mit Stalinismus in der Geschichte der KPD,” *Neues Deutschland*, 25-26 November 1989, a frank interview with Willy Wimmer of the Institute of Marxism-Leninism.

<sup>60</sup> Iggers, “Discontinuities in Recent East and West German History” (MS, Buffalo, November 1990).

<sup>61</sup> Karlheinz Blaschke, “Akademiker als Pfortner. Wie sich die Geschichtswissenschaft in der DDR umstellt,” *Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung*, 27 June 1990. Cf. also Zwahr’s introduction to “Unternehmer und Lohnarbeiter als Gegenstand dialektischer Sozialgeschichte,” (MS, Leipzig, 1990).

<sup>62</sup> Küttler, “Kontexte und Merkmale eines Paradigmawechsels? Das Jahr 1989 und die Konsequenzen für die Geschichtswissenschaft der DDR” (MS, Berlin, 1990); and Schulz, “Wege und Chancen der Sozialgeschichte in der DDR” (MS, Berlin, 1990). In the meantime the “Historikergesellschaft der DDR” has dissolved itself.

<sup>63</sup> Letter from Iggers to the author, 23 February 1990. Cf. Also Sträter, “In der Zunft der Historiker bewegt sich noch nichts,” *taz*, 9 May 1990; and Schulze, “Die zweigeteilte Geschichte,” *Die Zeit* 7 September 1990.

<sup>64</sup> Armin Mitter and Stefan Wolle, “Aufruf zur Bildung einer Arbeitsgruppe Unabhängiger Historiker in der DDR,” and “Statut des Unabhängigen Historiker-Verbandes der DDR,” 10 January 1990. Cf. Guntolf Herzberg, “Junge Historiker gehen eigene Wege,” *Berliner Zeitung*, 27 April 1990.

calls for a purge. The difficulties of this personal, professional, and political reorientation are bound to bedevil German historians for years to come.<sup>65</sup>

As in earlier incarnations of history as politics, the failure of East German antifascism involved multiple ironies. In contrast to western tendencies to forget and excuse, the GDR started with a clearer public commitment to anti-Nazi values and practices. But ritualized homage to an *antifa* consensus failed to extirpate the roots of fascistoid behavior in the authoritarian collaboration and racism of the majority of the population. The unequivocal partisanship of East German scholars provided initial accounts of the Third Reich with a didactic power which western mystifications about Germany's tragic fate lacked. But historical writing was slow to emancipate itself somewhat from SED dictates and to produce a more complex picture of the multiple ambiguities of the Nazi regime.<sup>66</sup> While the technical competence of scholarship improved, its ethical power vanished, because historians did not publicly draw upon their critique of the Hitlerian past in order to expose related tendencies in a neo-Stalinist present. The "double-drug" of "fear of a hostile environment (including its agents in one's own country) and hope for a coming realm of abundance" silenced internal doubts.<sup>67</sup> While many scholars were uncomfortable with the lacunae (*weisse Flecken*) in the GDR's self-perception, before October 1989 historians did not address Stalinism as a structural characteristic of their system.<sup>68</sup>

Although antifascism was an admirable reaction to the disasters of the Third Reich, its SED instrumentalization kept it from fostering a democratic morality and an incisive scholarship. Only if generalized against every kind of repression and prejudice can the anti-Nazi imperative once again become an ethical basis of a free civic culture. The loss of intellectual bearings in East Germany requires honest reflection about the contribution of scholarship to its deformation. At stake are both the restoration of democratic politics and "the recovery of the dignity of the profession."<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Draft of "Erklärung des Verbandes der Historiker Deutschlands," 6 September 1990; P. Stoop, "Moral und Pragmatismus bei den Säuberungen. Historiker berichten über Umgang mit Nationalsozialisten und Faschisten," *Tagesspiegel*, 30 September 1990; and Mechthild Küpper, "Noch lange keine Hochburg der NS-Forschung," *ibid.*, 11 November 1990.

<sup>66</sup> Schulze, *Deutsche Geschichtswissenschaft nach 1945* (Munich: Oldenbourg, 1989), 302ff.

<sup>67</sup> Wolfgang Ruge, "Den Wurzeln des Stalinismus: Die Doppeldroge," *Sonntag* (1990), No 2.

<sup>68</sup> Ottoman Harbauer interview with Rolf Badstübner and Günter Benser, "Stalinismus in unserer Geschichte," *Berliner Zeitung*, 13-14 January 1990. Cf. Weber, "Die DDR-Geschichtswissenschaft im Umbruch?"

<sup>69</sup> "Aufruf zur Bildung seiner Arbeitsgruppe Unabhängiger Historiker in der DDR." See also Rainer Eckert and Jürgen John, "Vom Argen Weg des Wandels: Über Anpassungs- und Veränderungstendenzen in der DDR-Geschichtswissenschaft," (MS, Berlin, 1990) and the IREX/Hiko conference on "Geschichtswissenschaft in der DDR. Bilanz und Perspektiven," Berlin, 10-11 December 1990.