From Skinhead-Subculture to Radical Right Movement: The Development of a 'National Opposition' in East Germany

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Abstract

As the regime collapsed in 1989/90, it became clear that an extreme right movement had already developed in East Germany. Its origins and development have been variously interpreted as, first, an outcome of the conditions the GDR, second, a result of the Wende, the great change, and third, an outcome of the unification process. This article integrates all three interpretations. It shows how a heterogeneous, politically diffuse skinhead milieu arose as the first extreme right cliques began to develop in the GDR; how, at the time of the Wende, it acquired a radically nationalistic political orientation; and how it became part of a pan-German 'national opposition' in the reunited Germany.

Over the two decades since the fall of the Berlin Wall, extreme right, radically nationalistic and neo-Nazi parties, movements and subcultures have sprung up all over Eastern Europe – in the east, the south-east and the centre.[1] Political historians have not yet fully elucidated the causes of these trends, how far they were favoured or limited by circumstances, and what wider perspectives they discovered for themselves, nor have they yet established the distinguishing characteristics of a specifically (*sui generis*) eastern European extreme-right movement through precise comparisons with equivalent movements in Western Europe and/or the USA.[2] Recent research shows that earlier theoretical models do not fit very well with the empirical evidence,

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[1] For an overview see Sabrina P. Ramet, ed., *The Radical Right in Central and Eastern Europe since 1989* (University Park, PA, 1999); Cas Mudde, ed., *Racist Extremism in Central and Eastern Europe* (London/New York, 2005); and the essays on the theme of 'Rechtsradikalismus in Transformationsgesellschaften' in *Osteuropa*, 52 (2002), fascicules 3, 5, 7 and 8.

[2] See, for example, Klaus von Beyme, 'Rechtsextremismus in Osteuropa', in Jürgen W. Falter, Hans-Gerd Jaschke and Jürgen R. Winkler, eds, *Rechtsextremismus: Ergebnisse und Perspektiven* (Opladen,

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and attempts at classifying or creating a taxonomy for relevant developments in eastern Europe have not found general acceptance. There is agreement among most scholars that the available empirical evidence is quite insufficient, and among many observers that although circumstances may appear to favour the growth of extreme-right activism in most eastern European countries, it has not gained as much public support as one would have expected: why has the extreme right had so little electoral success, even in comparison with its position in Western Europe? Another question yet to be resolved by comparative researchers is how extreme-right subcultures turn into extreme-right movements. The available data are heterogeneous and frequently insufficient, and this is one reason why research into extreme-right activism in Eastern Europe is still largely confined to extreme- and radical-right political parties, of which some have fielded electoral candidates while others have not.[3]

In the present state of research it is difficult to identify common threads in the development of extreme-right potential in post-communist societies which might lead to the construction of a typology. The best approach, therefore, is to concentrate on individual case studies. If we do not wish to confine ourselves to the current state of affairs, we need to analyse the emergence and development of extreme-right currents as a historical process that we may eventually come to understand.

In this light, rightist extremism in East Germany appears to be a promising subject. Its development is relatively well documented. The extreme-right potential of the 'new *Länder*' was, for many years, notoriously productive of 'movements', but not of parties or traditional organisational forms – at least, not in the first decade after 1989, and not in comparison with the 'old *Bundesländer*'.[4] On the other hand, East Germany resists comparison with, and inclusion among, the transforming societies of post-communist eastern Europe. Rightist extremism in East Germany has particular traditions, and follows particular paths, that hark back to Germany's Nazi past. As a result, the parameters of radical nationalism in East Germany are completely different from those to be found in other eastern European countries. A further complication

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1996), 423–42; Cas Mudde, 'Extreme-Right Parties in Eastern Europe', *Patterns of Prejudice,* 34 (2000), 5–27; Mudde 'Central and Eastern Europe', in Mudde, *Racist Extremism*, 267–85; József Bayer, 'Rechtspopulismus und Rechtsextremismus in Ostmitteleuropa', *Österreichische Zeitschrift für Politikwissenschaft,* 31 (2002), 265–80; Timm Beichelt and Michael Minkenberg, 'Rechtsradikalismus in Transformationsgesellschaften: Entstehungsbedingungen und Erklärungsmodell', *Osteuropa,* 52 (2002), 247–62; Michael Minkenberg, 'The Radical Right in Postsocialist Central and Eastern Europe: Comparative Observations and Interpretations', *East European Politics and Societies,* 16 (2002), 335–62.

[3] See, for example, Volker Weichsel, 'Rechtsradikalismus in Osteuropa – ein Phänomen *sui generis*?', *Osteuropa,* 52 (2002), 612–20; Dieter Segert, 'Viel weniger Rechtsradikalismus, als zu erwarten wäre: Kritische Anmerkungen zu einem interessanten Vergleich', ibid., 621–5; Cas Mudde, 'Warum ist der Rechtsradikalismus in Osteuropa so *schwach*?', ibid., 626–30; Timm Beichelt and Michael Minkenberg, 'Rechtsradikalismus in Osteuropa: Bilanz einer Debatte', ibid., 1056–62; Roger Griffin, Werner Loh and Andreas Umland, eds, *Fascism Past and Present, West and East: An International Debate on Concepts and Cases in the Comparative Study of the Extreme Right* (Stuttgart, 2006).

[4] Cf. Armin Pfahl-Traughber, *Rechtsextremismus: Eine kritische Bestandsaufnahme nach der Wiedervereinigung* (Bonn, 1993), 228ff.; Richard Stöss, 'Rechtsextremismus in einer geteilten politischen Kultur', in Oskar Niedermayer and Klaus von Beyme, eds, *Politische Kultur in Ost- und Westdeutschland* (Berlin, 1994), 105–39; Stöss, *Rechtsextremismus im vereinten Deutschland* (Berlin, 3rd edn 2000).

is the complex history of German–German relationships in a divided country, which in turn influenced the emergence of rightist extremism in East Germany. As a final factor, while East Germany underwent a transformation, it was not the typical transformation of an ex-socialist society, because in East Germany the transformation was modified and overlain by the process of German unification. For all these reasons, East Germany can be treated as a special case, scarcely comparable to other countries of eastern Europe.[5]

There are three broad approaches to examining the emergence of a fundamental, radical nationalist opposition in East Germany. The extreme-right camp can be understood as, first, a relic of the German Democratic Republic (GDR), second, a consequence of the *Wende*, and third, a specifically German phenomenon affecting both 'Germanys'. This examination of the emergence and spread of extreme-rightism in East Germany will show that polarised theories as to its origins, so prevalent in current German research,[6] are unhelpful. Instead of polarising, I shall attempt to construct a framework for an integrated interpretation.

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[5] It might be interesting to compare East Germany with Hungary, where, first, radical nationalism was strongly influenced (though less so than in Germany) by Hungary's status as an erstwhile World War II ally of Nazi Germany and Fascist Italy, second, a comparatively large number of radical nationalists emigrated to the West, possibly creating an equivalent to rightist extremism in the FDR; and third, what emerged first was not so much a system of sustained party political allegiances as a broad subculture which readily merged with the skinhead subculture that had arisen within socialist society. On Hungary see Laszlo Karsai, 'The Radical Right in Hungary', in Ramet, ed., *The Radical Right*, 133–46; Gâbor Bernáth, Gábor Miklósi and Cas Mudde, 'Hungary', in Mudde, *Racist Extremism*, 80–100; Melani Barlai and Florian Hartleb, 'Länderporträt: Ungarn', *Jahrbuch Extremismus and Demokratie,* 20 (2008), 215–34; Magdalena Marsovszky, 'Ethnizität, völkisches Denken und Antisemitismus im Ungarn der Gegenwart', in Gideon Botsch, Christoph Kopke, Lars Rensmann and Julius H. Schoeps, eds, *Politik des Hasses: Antisemitismus und radikale Rechte in Europa* (Hildesheim etc., 2010), 391–406.

[6] The following may be singled out from a very extensive literature: Christoph Butterwegge and Horst Isola, eds, *Rechtsextremismus im vereinten Deutschland: Randerscheinung oder Gefahr für die Demokratie?* (Berlin, 1990); Frank Schumann, *Glatzen am Alex: Rechtsextremismus in der DDR* (Berlin, 1990); Peter Ködderitzsch and Leo A. Müller, *Rechtsextremismus in der DDR* (Göttingen, 1990); Bernd Siegler, *Auferstanden aus Ruinen . . . Rechtsextremismus in der DDR* (Berlin, 1991); Siegler, 'Rechtsextremismus in der DDR und den neuen Ländern', in Jens Mecklenburg, ed., *Handbuch deutscher Rechtsextremismus* (Berlin, 1996), 616–38; Stephan Massner, *Rechtsextreme Orientierungen unter Ostberliner Jugendlichen: Eine sozialwissenschaftliche Untersuchung* (Berlin, n.d. [ca. 1991]); Thomas Assheuer and Hans Sarkowicz, *Rechtsradikale in Deutschland: Die alte und die neue Rechte*, new updated edn (Munich, 1992, 109ff.); Wolfgang Melzer, in collaboration with Helmut Schröder and Wilfried Schubarth, *Jugend und Politik in Deutschland: Gesellschaftliche Einstellungen, Zukunftsorientierungen und Rechtsextremismus-Potential Jugendlicher in Ost- und Westdeutschland* (Opladen, 1992); Karl-Heinz Heinemann and Wilfried Schubarth, eds, *Der antifaschistische Staat entlässt seine Kinder: Jugend und Rechtsextremismus in Ostdeutschland* (Cologne, 1992); Robert Harnischmacher, ed., *Angriff von rechts: Rechtsextremismus und Neonazismus unter Jugendlichen Ostberlins. Beiträge zur Analyse und Vorschläge zu Gegenmassnahmen* (Rostock and Bornheim-Roisdorf, 1993); Walter Süss, *Zur Wahrnehmung und Interpretation des Rechtsextremismus in der DDR durch das MfS* (Berlin, 3rd edn 2000); Heinrich Sippel and Walter Süss, *Staatssicherheit und Rechtsextremismus* (Bochum, 1994); Heinz Lynen von Berg, 'Rechtsextremismus in Ostdeutschland seit der Wende', in Wolfgang Kowalsky and Wolfgang Schroeder, eds, *Rechtsextremismus: Einführung und Forschungsbilanz* (Opladen, 1994), 103–26; Frank Neubacher, *Jugend und Rechtsextremismus in Ostdeutschland vor und nach der Wende* (Bonn, 1994); Thomas Lillig, *Rechtsextremismus in den neuen Bundeländern: Erklärungsansätze, Einstellungspotentiale und organisatorische Strukturen* (Munich, 1994); Harry Waibel, *Rechtsextremismus in der DDR bis 1989*

I

The organised extreme right, as a political actor, is a radically nationalistic, anti-establishment, fundamentally oppositional movement. It can manifest itself in political parties, in associations, in the media, and in other formal and informal networks. It sees itself as a 'national movement', 'national camp' or 'national resistance'. In Germany, the movement prefers to call itself the 'national opposition'.

No such 'national opposition' existed in the former GDR, because its political system excluded all (legal) political opposition: 'There is no objective social or political basis for an opposition in socialist states'.[7] In 1948 the German National Democratic Party (Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschlands, NDPD) was set up, as an initiative of the Socialist Unity Party (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands, SED), in an attempt to integrate 'nationalist' politico-social forces – including ex-Nazis – into the GDR's political system. The NDPD was in no sense a national opposition; rather it was a political bloc under the aegis of the 'national front':

> The NDPD did a great deal to involve the urban middle classes in the construction of democracy and socialism. It helped its affiliates to cast off the false, inhuman, anti-national teachings of the

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(Cologne, 1996); Bernd Wagner, *Rechtsextremismsus und kulturelle Subversion in den neuen Ländern* (Berlin, 1998); Wagner, 'Rechtsradikale Entwicklungen in Ostdeutschland: Historische und aktuelle Aspekte', *Osteuropa,* 52 (2002), 305–19; Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz (Federal Constitutional Office), *Ein Jahrzehnt rechtsextremistischer Politik: Strukturdaten – Ideologie – Agitation – Perspektiven 1990–2001*, available at *www.extremismus.com/vs/rex9.htm* (last visited 25 June 2012); Stöss, *Rechtsextremismus im vereinten Deutschland*; Norbert Madloch, 'Rechtsextremismus in Deutschland nach dem Ende des Hitlerfaschismus', in Klaus Kinner and Rolf Richter, eds, *Rechtsextremismus und Antifaschismus: Historische und aktuelle Dimensionen* (Berlin, 2000), 57–214; Jan C. Behrends, Dennis Kuck and Patrice G. Poutrus, 'Thesenpapier: Historische Ursachen der Fremdenfeindlichkeit in den Neuen Bundesländern' (2000), in Jan C. Behrends, Thomas Lindenberger and Patrice G. Poutrus, eds, *Fremde und Fremdsein in der DDR: Zu historischen Ursachen der Fremdenfeindlichkeit in Ostdeutschland* (Berlin, 2003), 327–33; Hans-Gerd Jaschke, Birgit Rätsch and Yury Winterberg, *Nach Hitler: Radikale Rechte rüsten auf* (Munich, 2001); Hajo Funke, *Paranoia und Politik: Rechtsextremismus in der Berliner Republik* (Berlin, 2002); Britta Bugiel, *Rechtsextremismus Jugendlicher in der DDR und in den neuen Bundesländern von 1982 bis 1998* (Münster etc., 2002); Bernd Eisenfeld, 'Rechtsextremismus in der DDR – Ursachen und Folgen', in Manfred Agethen, Eckhard Jesse and Erhardt Neubert, eds, *Der missbrauchte Antifaschismus: DDR-Staatsdoktrin und Lebenslüge der Linken* (Freiburg im Breisgau, Basel, Vienna, 2002), 221–36; Jürgen Danyel, 'Spätfolgen? Der ostdeutsche Rechtsextremismus als Hypothek der DDR-Vergangenheitspolitik und Erinnerungskultur', in Behrends et al., *Fremde*, 23–40; Klaus Christoph, 'Bedingungen für den Rechtsradikalismus in Ostdeutschland nach 1989', in Joachim Perels, ed., *Der Rechtsradikalismus – ein Randphänomen? Kritische Analysen* (Hanover, 2003), 53–66; Klaus Schroeder, *Rechtsextremismus und Jugendgewalt in Deutschland: Ein Ost–West-Vergleich* (Paderborn etc., 2004); Christoph Kopke, 'Die "nationale Bewegung" in Brandenburg: Rechtsextreme Parteien, Wahlvereine, Verbände und Vereinigungen seit 1990', in Julius H. Schoeps, Gideon Botsch, Christoph Kopke and Lars Rensmann, eds, *Rechtsextremismus in Brandenburg: Handbuch für Analyse, Prävention und Intervention* (Berlin, 2007), 69–89.

[7] *Kleines Politisches Wörterbuch*, new edn 1988 (7th fully rev. edn, Berlin, 1988), 707; see also *Der Staat im politischen System der DDR*, produced by an authors' collective directed by Wolfgang Weichelt (Berlin, 1986), 163; *Marxistisch-leninistische Staats- und Rechtstheorie: Lehrbuch*, 3rd edn (Berlin, 1980); Klaus von Beyme and Robert von Daniels, 'Opposition', in *Sowjetsystem und demokratische Gesellschaft: Eine vergleichende Enzyklopädie*, vol. 4: *Lenin bis Periodisierung* (Freiburg, Basel, Vienna, 1971), 958–92; *DDR Handbuch*, ed. Bundesministerium für innerdeutsche Beziehungen (Federal Ministry for Inter–German Relationships), vol. 2: M-Z (3rd edn, Cologne 1985), 954–6.

> Hitler regime and embrace progressive, patriotic traditions, and so persuaded them to contribute actively to the establishment of the GDR . . . The NDPD, originally a democratic anti-fascist party or democratic party of the German middle classes, developed into a party with 'Socialism' emblazoned on its banner.[8]

Of all the opposition groups in the GDR – some tacitly permitted, others clandestine and/or persecuted – none engaged so substantially with the 'national question' as to develop a nationalist agenda.[9] The opposition may have included people with national or even nationalistic sentiments, but no autonomous nationalistic agenda existed prior to the opening of the border between the two Germanys on 9 November 1989.

Throughout the lifetime of the GDR there were isolated groups of people who admired Hitler and idealised National Socialism.[10] Up to the 1980s they were persecuted by the full forces of the state and never had the chance to constitute a 'national opposition'. Nonetheless it appears that the GDR always contained a substantial extreme-rightist element – which, ironically, often coincided in part with the regime's own energetically fostered preferences: authoritarianism, orderliness, and a range of 'secondary virtues'.[11] Other characteristics, however, ran directly counter to the regime's preferences, or were considered to be 'perverse' (*eigensinnig*).[12] Some GDR citizens even evinced attitudes and behaviour that smacked of 'group-focused enmity'.[13] There were frequent outbreaks of xenophobia and racism against both non-white GDR citizens and foreigners. There were many foreigners living more or less permanently in the GDR, including Russian military personnel, students and contract workers from 'fraternal socialist states' in the Third World, particularly Vietnam, Angola and Cuba. As most of them lived in Red Army barracks, or in special accommodation or student hostels, they had little sustained contact with the

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[8] Deutsches Institut für Zeitgeschichte (German Institute for Contemporary History) in association with the GDR State Publishing Agency, ed., *Handbuch der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik* (Berlin, 1964), 106–7; cf. *DDR-Handbuch*, 927; Norbert Podewin, 'Blockpolitik', in Andreas Herbst, Gerd-Rüdiger Stephan and Jürgen Winkler, eds, *Die SED. Geschichte – Organisation – Politik: Ein Handbuch* (Berlin, 1997), 332–44.

[9] But cf. Andreas H. Apelt, *Die Opposition in der DDR und die deutsche Frage 1989/90* (Berlin, 2009).

[10] Waibel, *Rechtsextremismus*, 25ff.; Ködderitzsch and Müller, *Rechtsextremismus*, 11ff.; Siegler, *Auferstanden*, 85ff. and passim; Neubacher, *Jugend*, 28ff.; Bugiel, *Rechtsextremismus Jugendlicher*, 98ff.

[11] See, for example, Siegler, *Auferstanden*, 74ff.; Wolfgang Frindte, 'Sozialpsychologische Anmerkungen zur Entwicklung rechtsradikaler Tendenzen in der DDR', in Butterwegge and Isola, *Rechtsextremismus*, 88–96; Massner, *Rechtsextreme Orientierungen*, 35ff. and passim; Heinemann and Schubarth, *Der antifaschistische Staat*; Waibel, *Rechtsextremismus*, 179ff. and 188ff.; Bugiel, *Rechtsextremismus Jugendlicher*, 111ff.

[12] Alf Lüdtke, 'Eigensinn', in Stefan Jordan, ed., *Lexikon Geschichtswissenschaft. Hundert Grundbegriffe* (Stuttgart, 2002), 64–7; Thomas Lindenberger, ed., *Herrschaft und Eigen-Sinn in der Diktatur: Studien zur Gesellschaftsgeschichte der DDR* (Berlin, 1999).

[13] Wilhelm Heitmeyer, 'Gruppenbezogene Menschenfeindlichkeit: Die theoretische Konzeption und erste empirische Ergebnisse', in Heitmeyer, ed., *Deutsche Zustände* 1 (2002), 15–34.

German population.[14] Anti-Semitism manifested itself in graffiti and the vandalising of Jewish cemeteries.[15]

From about 1975, new pressures began to erode the political and cultural structure of the GDR, creating a more favourable climate for the emergence of an autonomous youth subculture with extreme-right tendencies. In the early 1980s this subculture crystallised into a skinhead milieu encompassing a few gangs of football fans and hooligans. Looking back on this period, the Leipzig juridical and criminal sociologist Wolfgang Brück observed that 'in a way it foreshadowed the crisis that was soon to hit the entire social structure'.[16]

In retrospect, the history of the GDR's skinhead subculture can be divided into three phases: initially, incubation, as violent youths banded together in skinhead cliques; next, increasing confrontation with the state; and finally, the forging of personal links among rightist extremists, loosely associated with the skinhead movement, which subsequently became politicised and evolved into a 'national opposition'. The turning point in the politicisation of the skinhead scene can be located in October 1987, when a rock concert in East Berlin's Zion church, attended by punks and other opposition elements, was attacked by 25–30 skinheads (or 'skins') and Berlin FC fans. The skins instantly became the focus of intense public attention in both Germanys. They were prosecuted and severely punished, and this was followed by a general surge of repression which provoked ambivalent reactions. Many skins gave up their characteristic gear, but the radicalisation and politicisation of the hard core continued unimpeded, and was even stepped up.[17]

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[14] See, for example, *Jugend und Rechtsextremismus in Berlin-Ost: Fakten und Gegenstrategien*, ed. Magistratsverwaltung für Jugend, Familie und Sport (Municipal Administration for Young People, Families and Sport) (Berlin, n.d.), 76–81; Irene Runge, *Ausland DDR: Fremdenhass* (Berlin, 1990); Massner, *Rechtsextreme Orientierungen*, 30ff.; Siegler, *Auferstanden*, 138ff.; Ines Schmidt, 'Ausländer in der DDR – Ihre Erfahrungen vor und nach der "Wende"', in Heinemann and Schubarth, *Der antifaschistische Staat*, 64–76; Walter Friedrich and the Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, eds, *Ausländerfeindlichkeit und rechtsextreme Orientierungen bei der ostdeutschen Jugend* (Leipzig, 1992); Waibel, *Rechtsextremismus*, 119ff.; Bugiel, *Rechtsextremismus Jugendlicher*, 83ff.; Behrends et al., *Fremde* (see also bibliography compiled by Christoph Kalter and Marcel Streng, 339–72); overview in Sandra Gruner-Domić, 'Vietnamesische, mosambikanische und kubanische Arbeitswanderer in der DDR seit den 1970er Jahren', in Klaus J. Bade, Pieter C. Emmer, Leo Lucassen and Jochem Oltmer, eds, *Enzyklopädie Migration in Europa: Vom 17. Jahrhundert bis zur Gegenwart* (Paderborn etc., 2nd edn 2008), 1078–81.

[15] See, for example, Siegler, *Auferstanden*, 120ff.; Rainer Zilkenat, 'Antisemitismus in den neuen Bundesländern: Ursachen, Erscheinungsformen, Gegenstrategien', in Harnischmacher, *Angriff*, 167–85; Olaf Groehler and Mario Kessler, *Die SED-Politik, der Antifaschismus und die Juden in der SBZ und der frühen DDR* (Berlin, 1995); Waibel, *Rechtsextremismus*, 68ff., 197ff.; Bugiel, *Rechtsextremismus Jugendlicher*, 103ff.; Monika Schmidt, *Schändungen jüdischer Friedhöfe in der DDR: Eine Dokumentation* (Berlin, 2007).

[16] Wolfgang Brück, 'Skinheads als Vorboten der Systemkrise: Die Entwicklung des Skinhead-Phänomens bis zum Untergang der DDR', in Heinemann and Schubarth, *Der antifaschistische Staat*, 37–46, 39; Brück, 'Studie über Erkenntnisse der Kriminalpolizei zu neofaschistischen Aktivitäten in der DDR [Nov. 1989]', in Kinner and Richter, *Rechtsextremismus*, 273–93; Siegler, *Auferstanden*; Süss, *Zur Wahrnehmung*; Pfahl-Traughber, *Rechtsextremismus*, 150ff.; Norbert Madloch, 'Zur Entwicklung des Rechtsextremismus in der DDR und in Ostdeutschland von den siebziger Jahren bis Ende 1990', in Harnischmacher, *Angriff*, 53–73; Bernd Wagner, 'Extreme in Rechts: Die DDR als Stufe zum Heute', ibid., 117–24; Neubacher, *Jugend*, 28ff.; Christian Dornbusch and Jan Raabe, '20 Jahre RechtsRock: Vom Skinhead-Rock zur Alltagskultur', in Dornbusch and Raabe, eds, *RechtsRock: Bestandsaufnahme und Gegenstrategien* (Münster, 2002), 19–50, (pp. 32ff.); Bugiel, *Rechtsextremismus Jugendlicher*, 130ff.; Klaus Farin and Eberhard Seidel-Pielen, *Skinheads* (Munich, 1993); Jörg Welzer, 'Skinheads, Naziskins und rechte Subkultur', in Mecklenburg, *Handbuch Deutscher Rechtsextremismus*, 782–91. It remains an open question why no other country in pre-1989 eastern Europe (with the exception of Hungary, see Bernáth et al., 'Hungary', 87) developed a dynamic skinhead movement.

Brück, drawing on research by the Leipzig Central Institute for Youth Research (Leipziger Zentralinstitut für Jugendforschung), identifies five groups that fed into the skinhead milieu: frustrated 'normal young people', the main constituent; potentially violent football fans, who had affinities with both the skins and the 'normals'; punks moving over to the skinhead scene; youths who became skinheads after performing their military service; and ex-convicts.[18]

As indicated by this range of 'scene joiners', the skinheads were a heterogeneous[19] milieu, with a fondness for ritual displays of manliness and an inclination towards violence; they could be identified by their favourite styles and their particular youth codes. They were less interested in music than Western skins. Few bands were founded in the GDR, and these not until 1988, when Brutal Haie (Brutal Shark) appeared in Erfurt and Pitbull in Meerane.[20] They had no extensive infrastructures in the form of permanent venues, shops, messaging services, labels, fanzines and so on.

Although skinheads were generally perceived as 'right-wing' or 'fascist', the scene as a whole had no political agenda. It was not until the mid-1980s that some more coherent groups emerged with a greater interest in politics. Cliques and groups increasingly preferred names that evoked National Socialism or its racist nationalist (*völkisch*) precursors.

The best-documented groups are the Berlin-based ones, which had a significant impact on both events and attitudes.[21] The 'Lichtenberg Front' was founded in 1986; some of its members came from loyal households and had belonged to the fan club of the Berliner Fußballclub Dynamo (BFC Dynamo), the 'Stasi-club'. In 1988 it renamed itself 'The 30 January Movement', evoking the Nazi takeover of power in 1933. This group was involved in high-profile actions such as the 1987 attack on the Zion church and the vandalising of the Jewish cemetery at Schönhauser Allee in 1988.

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[17] Ködderitzsch and Müller, *Rechtsextremismus*, 15–16; Informations-Dienst-Archiv, Internationaal Instituut voor Sociale Geschiedenis, ed., *Drahtzieher im Braunen Netz: Der Wiederaufbau der NSDAP* (Berlin and Amsterdam, n.d. [1992]); Siegler, *Auferstanden*, 61ff.; Süss, *Zur Wahrnehmung*, 17ff. and passim; Madloch, 'Zur Entwicklung', 55; Bernd Holthusen and Michael Jänecke, *Rechtsextremismus in Berlin: Aktuelle Erscheinungsformen, Ursachen, Gegenmassnahmen* (Marburg, 1994), 35–6; Waibel, *Rechtsextremismus*, 56ff.

[18] Brück, 'Skinheads', 44–5.

[19] *Studie über Erkenntnisse*, 278ff.; Gunhild Korfes, '"Seitdem habe ich einen dermassenen Hass". Rechtsextremistische Jugendliche vor und nach der "Wende" – exemplarische Biographien', in Heinemann and Schubarth, *Der antifaschistische Staat*, 47–63 (48–9); Madloch, 'Anhang A: Rechtsextremismus in der Endphase der DDR und nach der Vereinigung von DDR und Bundesrepublik Deutschland – Chronologie', in Harnischmacher, *Angriff*, 203–53 (pp. 211–12).

[20] Dornbusch and Raabe, *20 Jahre RechtsRock*, fn. 61, 47.

[21] Ködderitzsch and Müller, *Rechtsextremismus*; Siegler, *Auferstanden*; Siegler, 'Rechtsextremismus'; Brück, 'Skinheads'; Korfes, 'Seitdem'; Holthusen and Jänecke, *Rechtsextremismus*, 33ff.; Bugiel, *Rechtsextremismus Jugendlicher*.

In 1989/90 some members of the group emerged from youth custody and prison to form the core of the GDR's first extreme-right party, the National Alternative.[22]

Another group, the Vandals, originally had more affinities with rockers than with skinheads. In August 1988 a status report for the Berlin section of the State Security Service mentioned an 'Anal Gang', a supra-regional group which consisted 'largely of rowdy supporters of the Berlin Football Club'.[23] This gang was probably the forerunner of the Vandals, which at that time called itself 'The Vandals, an Aryogermanic Action Group'. In the early 1990s it was an important constituent of the emerging national opposition, concentrating chiefly on 'right-wing rock' (*rechtsrock*) activities.

It was not only in the GDR capital that the skinhead milieu spawned extreme-right cliques: they also appeared in provincial capitals, other cities and – though not until the final phase – in small and medium-sized towns. Another significant influence was the circle surrounding the Hübner brothers in Cottbus. In the mid-1980s Peter Hübner had attempted to form a *Wehrsportgruppe* (literally an 'armed sports group'); his brother Frank was arrested for making illegal contacts with ultra-conservative circles in the Federal Republic. The FRG got them both freed – at a price – and they later helped set up extreme-right parties in the reunited Germany.[24]

The available sources provide comparatively reliable dates for the rise of skinhead and 'fascist' tendencies in the last years of the GDR. In the mid-1980s the Criminal Police (Kripo) kept a register of about 1500 youths with extreme-rightist tendencies; the Ministry for State Security (MfS) recorded some 800 individuals in 36 groups. On 1 October 1988 the Stasi had over 1067 skinheads on its lists, very unevenly distributed through the regions: more than half were concentrated in the Berlin and Potsdam areas (447 and 120 respectively); the other regions yielded fewer than 100 between them (Leipzig 88, Frankfurt an der Oder 82).[25] Based on questions put to a representative sample (3000 individuals), youth researchers in Leipzig estimated the proportion of potential skinhead sympathisers among young people at around 4%, though about 30% expressed some sympathy for them and saw them as victims of circumstances. About 2% claimed full commitment. As before, the fulcrum was Berlin, where this proportion rose to 6%.[26] Bernd Wagner, a former high official in the Kripo and sometime head of the State Protection Department in the joint Criminal Investigation Office of the five new federal *Länder*, reckons that in the late 1980s there were about 5000 extreme-right militants in the GDR, plus about 10,000 sympathisers.[27]

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[22] Korfes, 'Seitdem'; ID-Archiv, ed., *Drahtzieher*, esp. 80ff.; Ingo Hasselbach and Winfried Bonengel, *Die Abrechnung: Ein Neonazi steigt aus* (Berlin and Weimar, 1993); Siegler, *Auferstanden*, 47 and passim; Siegler, 'Rechtsextremismus'; Bugiel, *Rechtsextremismus Jugendlicher*.

[23] Cited in Süss, *Zur Wahrnehmung*, 98.

[24] ID-Archiv, ed., *Drahtzieher*, 72; Mecklenburg, ed., *Handbuch deutscher Rechtsextremismus*, 473–4.

[25] Süss, *Zur Wahrnehmung*, 106.

[26] Brück, 'Skinheads', 41–2.

[27] Frank Jansen, 'Rechtsextremismus: Auch in der DDR nicht zu übersehen', *Der Tagesspiegel*, 21 Sept. 2000.

Researchers broadly agree that 'It was not infiltration from the "other side" (often referred to as the "spillover effect") that perpetuated rightist extremism, but rather the identity crisis and subsequent self-destruction of the system'.[28] We should not, however, overlook the effects of Western influence and German-to-German contacts. Like other youth subcultures, GDR skinheads participated in world-wide youth trends and fashions; clearly the influence was – at least to begin with – unidirectional, from West to East. 'Scenes' like this developed their own dynamic in 'socialist societies', but with much imitation of Western models. West German models also influenced the politicisation of skinheads and helped to channel radically nationalistic and pro-Nazi youths into the skinhead milieu.[29]

Germany's first explicitly extreme-right skinhead rock band was West Berlin's 'Kraft durch Froide', led by the local 'Nationalistic Front' (NF) leader Andreas Pohl.[30] Pohl had had contacts with East Berlin football fans and skinheads as far back as the early 1980s. The NF members' magazine *Klartext* reports a visit to 'comrades' in Frankfurt an der Oder,[31] and it appears that contacts via the interface between the two Berlins existed even earlier. Similar contacts were allegedly made by a neo-Nazi group which came to light around Oranienburg shortly after the attack on the Zion church, but seems to have been active for three years prior to this.[32] After the attack Pohl was apparently refused permission to visit the GDR, but other NF members regularly crossed the frontier.

These West–East contacts became public knowledge when neo-Nazis from West Berlin participated in the 1987 attack on the Zion church. The East Berlin participants included a leading BFC Dynamo hooligan who later left the GDR and settled in the congenial milieu of West Berlin's NF. In April 1989 – the centenary of Hitler's birth – he arranged a meeting of some forty East and West German skinheads in the transit zone between West Berlin and the territory of the Federal Republic. The MfS got wind of the plan, and infiltrated the scene so effectively that the idea had to be given up. It is not impossible that the NF official concerned was also the informant, because rumours that he was an MfS agent continued to circulate into the 1990s.[33]

In contrast, the larger extreme-right parties – the NPD (Nationaldemokratische Partei Deutschland, or National Democratic Party of Germany, not to be confused with the GDR party mentioned above), Republicans and German People's Party (Deutsche Volksunion, DVU) – do not seem to have maintained stable contacts with the GDR. This extreme-right milieu was almost entirely restricted to teenagers and young men. The 'SS-Division Walter Krüger', based in Wolgast (a town in

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[28] Brück, 'Skinheads', 37.

[29] Dornbusch and Raabe, *20 Jahre RechtsRock*, 23ff.

[30] Mecklenburg, ed., *Handbuch deutscher Rechtsextremismus*, 508–9; Dornbusch and Raabe, *20 Jahre RechtsRock*, 29ff.

[31] Quoted from a facsimile in ID-Archiv, ed., *Drahtzieher*, 79. This source also provides information on GDR contacts. On the NF see Mecklenburg, ed., *Handbuch deutscher Rechtsextremismus*, 295–7.

[32] Siegler, *Rechtsextremismus*, 616.

[33] ID-Archiv, ed., *Drahtzieher*, 81–2; Waibel, *Rechtsextremismus*, 64.

Mecklenburg), is the only neo-Nazi group of the GDR's last years that seems to have included middle-aged men, including some teachers and civil servants.[34]

The GDR authorities do not seem to have known quite how to react to this.[35] Their perception of the problem was incomplete, and not only with respect to ideology. They never developed a clear counter-strategy, sticking rather to their usual three-pronged reaction: de-politicisation, repression, and integration by targeting sport and leisure activities at the relevant groups. At times the State seems to have simply shut its eyes to the problem. In 1986 NF members from West Berlin reported 'nationalistic' chanting and singing by local fans at a cup tie in East Berlin: 'Our comrades who were present were astonished at how well they knew the old nationalistic battle songs – and at the extraordinary restraint of the East German police!'[36] After the Zion attack, it became more common for participants in similar outrages to be accused of specifically political offences, and to be labelled more clearly as fascists or neo-Nazis – sometimes in public, sometimes internally. Nevertheless reports always foregrounded the element of violence, often de-politicising it into mere rowdyism. The political leadership of the GDR's official youth movement (Freie Deutsche Jugend, FDJ), laid great stress on integration as the first duty of all young GDR citizens. Organisations such as the Sports and Technology Society (Gesellschaft für Sport und Technik, GST) were also called on to support the social integration of skinheads.

In contrast, some opposition elements in the GDR attached great importance to contending with the 'Faschos', as they soon came to be called. Many young people had their attention drawn to contradictions in the system by the authorities' stubborn refusal even to acknowledge the existence of extreme-right viewpoints. The discrepancy between, on the one hand, the anti-fascism inseparable from official doctrine and, on the other hand, the way the Stasi was thought to have winked at extreme-right attacks on other opposition elements[37] engendered a kind of oppositional anti-fascism, often under the aegis of churches, alternative projects or punks. Previous research has largely edited out this oppositional anti-fascism, preferring to label GDR anti-fascism as an 'abuse' of the concept.[38]

II

The opening of Germany's internal frontier on 9 November 1989 caused a seismic shift in the course of events in the GDR. Up to that point, the political process in East Germany had been driven by demands for basic human and civil rights – to travel, speak freely, meet and form associations – and for an end to the SED dictatorship. These demands were now overshadowed by the dynamic of reunification and the great wave of nationalistic fervour that appeared so suddenly in November 1989. What Sigrid Meuschel has termed a '*Wende* within the *Wende*'[39] comes out very clearly in the shifting emphasis of the regular Monday demonstrations in Leipzig.[40] The number of demonstrators rocketed and their character changed; so, even more strikingly, did their demands and slogans. Nationalistic chants, hitherto strictly confined to skinheads and Faschos, became general, and by 20 November the crowds were calling for a 'united German fatherland'.[41] It was not long before Neo-Nazis and skinheads began to show themselves openly.[42] They profited from the unification dynamic itself, since it fostered their radical nationalistic aims; but they also joined the many elements who were actively contributing to that dynamic. Speakers who adhered to the civic agenda, or spoke against reunification, were howled down.[43]

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[34] Ködderitzsch and Müller, *Rechtsextremismus*, 136–7.; Siegler, *Auferstanden*, 65–6; Siegler, 'Rechtsextremismus', 617.

[35] See, for example, Siegler, *Auferstanden*; Heinemann and Schubarth, *Der antifaschistische Staat*; Süss, *Zur Wahrnehmung*.

[36] *Klartext*, 6 (1986), Fasc. 18, 5.

[37] Siegler, *Auferstanden*, 74ff.

[38] See, for example, Antonia Grunenberg, *Antifaschismus – ein deutscher Mythos* (Reinbek bei Hamburg, 1993); Agethen et al., *Der missbrauchte Antifaschismus*.

At the first Monday demonstration of 1990, 'supporters of German unity . . . with their banners and black, red and gold flags were in almost complete control',[44] and when on 22 January opposing punk youths tried to march in the opposite direction along the Ring as a protest against the nationalistic overtones of the demo, they were attacked, hounded through the city centre, and forced to barricade themselves into the university canteen.[45] At this point, if not before, extreme-right marching squads, each with its own flag, banner and followers from the Federal Republic, turned up at the Monday demos in Leipzig and at rallies in other East German cities.[46]

Once the wall came down, such mobilisation encountered new possibilities and new opportunities: the protestors borrowed 'national' and 'patriotic' arguments from West German parties and gave them a local colouring. From the fateful November onwards, radical nationalist and ultra-conservative parties flooded the newly available East German opinion market with massive amounts of propaganda. First in the field were the republicans, who were distributing lavish amounts of publicity material in November itself. Over the next few weeks and months all West Germany's leading extreme-right organisations – from the Republicans to the DVU, and the NPD to the neo-Nazi German Workers' Freedom Party (Freiheitliche Deutsche Arbeiterpartei, FAP) – distributed materials that sometimes evoked a staggeringly enthusiastic response.[47] One of the early activists recalls events at the turn of the year 1989–90:

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[39] Sigrid Meuschel, *Legitimation und Parteiherrschaft in der DDR: Zum Paradox von Stabilität und Revolution in der DDR 1945–1989* (Frankfurt/Main, 1992), 316ff.

[40] Hannes Bahrmann and Christoph Links, *Chronik der Wende: Die DDR zwischen 7. Oktober und 18. Dezember 1989* (Berlin, 1994), 188–9.

[41] Ibid., 122, 144.

[42] Siegler, *Auferstanden*; Siegler, 'Rechtsextremismus', 627.

[43] See, for example, Bahrmann and Links, *Chronik der Wende*, 188.

[44] Hannes Bahrmann and Christoph Links, *Chronik der Wende 2. Stationen der Einheit: Die letzten Monate der DDR* (3rd edn, Berlin, 1995), 43.

[45] Ibid., 76; Siegler, *Auferstanden*; Madloch, *Anhang A*, 220.

[46] Madloch, *Anhang A*, 220ff.

> After the Wall came down, things suddenly started to move very fast. Some individuals who had been under arrest for years were unexpectedly released, and overnight this created a potential for violence in East Germany as rightists realised they were in a position to exploit a hitherto unheard-of freedom.[48]

Towards the year end, a partial amnesty freed about 100 convicted criminals who were at the heart of the Neo-Nazi milieu.[49] On 7 December 1989 a Jewish cemetery in East Berlin was vandalised for the second time;[50] on 28 December vandals struck at the Soviet war memorial in Berlin-Treptow.[51]

The next few weeks saw violent attacks on all the extreme right's favourite targets, with a special focus on groups, housing schemes and cultural projects perceived as 'leftist' or 'alternative left'. Cities affected included Leipzig, Dresden, Halle and in particular Berlin, where after almost every weekly football match hordes of fans, mingling with and sometimes led by Neo-Nazis from both sides of the city, flocked to squatted houses in central Berlin and in the districts of Lichtenberg, Friedrichshain and Prenzlauer Berg. The fount and origin of this violence has been identified as a housing complex just off the Weitlingstrasse in Lichtenberg, which in February 1990 was taken over by Neo-Nazis from the former Lichtenberger Front/30 January Movement in exchange for a house nearby previously squatted by the Neo-Nazis. The Weitlingstrasse house became an important bridgehead for Neo-Nazi structures in the GDR. It was frequented by sympathisers from West Berlin, the FRG, Austria and even outside the German-speaking countries; some stayed for weeks, providing support and training to ideologically committed Lichtenberg Neo-Nazis and participating in violent outrages.[52]

By the spring of 1990, then, the extreme right had successfully mobilised in the GDR, but it had not yet become a 'national opposition' in the GDR: the subculture had not yet evolved into a political movement. East Germany's Neo-Nazis could not yet mobilise *themselves.* As soon as they started planning over and above the narrow limits of small cells or gangs, they were dependent on opportunities provided by others, such as anti-GDR and pro-reunification demonstrations, or football matches. The GDR's extreme right had no autonomous associations and no independent channels of communication: such things were still provided by (or substituted by) the West. This halting progress towards organisational autonomy is perceptible across the whole spectrum of extreme-right activities. Even the highly disciplined NF and Viking Youth have left no clear evidence of their organisational progress at this time.

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[47] Michael Schomers, *Deutschland ganz rechts: Sieben Monate als Republikaner in BRD und DDR* (Cologne, 1990); Peter Ködderitzsch, 'REPUBLIKANER in der ehemaligen DDR', in Butterwegge and Isola, *Rechtsextremismus*, 82–7; Ködderitzsch and Müller, *Rechtsextremismus*, 35ff.; Korfes, 'Seitdem', fn. 4, 63; Bahrmann and Links, *Chronik der Wende*, 143–4 and passim; Siegler, 'Rechtsextremismus', 627; Stöss, *Rechtsextremismus im vereinten Deutschland*, 71–2.

[48] Hasselbach and Bonengel, *Die Abrechnung*, 44.

[49] Bahrmann and Links, *Chronik der Wende*, 177; Siegler, *Auferstanden*; Siegler, 'Rechtsextremismus', 627.

[50] Bahrmann and Links, *Chronik der Wende*, 177.

[51] Bahrmann and Links, *Chronik der Wende 2*, 21. There were rumours that the Stasi set the whole thing up, but this seems very unlikely.

[52] Siegler, *Auferstanden*, 46ff.; Madloch, *Anhang A*, 224, 231; Bugiel, *Rechtsextremismus Jugendlicher*; Hasselbach and Bonengel, *Die Abrechnung*.

If organisational progress was halting, so too was the formation of political parties. The significance of this delay was thrown into sharp focus by the fact that Section 3, paragraph 2 of the GDR's Political Parties Act (passed on 21 February 1990) blocked the formation of such parties. It forbade

> [t]he founding of and activities by parties which pursue Fascist, militaristic or inhumane agendas, profess or disseminate religious, racial or ethnic hatred, discriminate against individuals or groups on the grounds of nationality, political affinity, gender, sexual orientation or physical or mental disability, or attempt to attain their goals by violence or the threat of violence.

This particularly affected the Republicans, whose election victory in (West) Berlin in January 1989 served as a jumping-off point for the extreme right. Party leader Franz Schönhuber proclaimed as early as 27 November 1989 that local organisations had sprung up inside the GDR,[53] but it was not until two months later, on 29 January 1990, that the first local association probably appeared, followed by a few offshoots. They aroused a good deal of interest, particularly among the young, but no political party was founded, owing to the explicit prohibition of rightist activities by the GDR parliament (Volkskammer), spasmodic seizures of propaganda material, and repeated refusals to let in the charismatic Schönhuber. The Volkskammer elections on 18 March 1990 were the next big hurdle, and it could not be overcome: Schönhuber's party, like almost all other extreme right parties, was debarred. Leipzig had spawned an offshoot of the NPD as early as 18 January 1990, under the name 'Central German National Democrats' (Mitteldeutsche Nationaldemokraten); but it, too, was excluded from the Volkskammer elections and prevented from constructing a meaningful party apparatus.

Neo-Nazis operated according to different premises. One cannot comprehend their trajectory in the GDR, and subsequently in the new *Länder*, during and after the *Wende* without reference to the situation in the FRG in the late 1980s. In 1983 the leading Neo-Nazi group, the Aktionsfront Nationaler Sozialisten/Nationale Aktivisten (ANS/NA), was banned, and its leader, Michael Kühnen from Hamburg, was arrested the following year. The Neo-Nazis then split into three camps, one of which, the NF, has already been mentioned as an active organisation of thoroughgoing revolutionaries. The other two attached themselves to the German Workers' Freedom Party (FAP), to which Kühnen's followers resorted after the ANS/NA was banned. The Neo-Nazis split again in 1986 when Kühnen, from his prison, spoke in favour of allowing homosexuals to join the movement. The two sides patched up an agreement in 1989, but Kühnen's opponents regrouped around Friedhelm Busse in the FAP. At the year end, FAP activists began to build up their contacts in the GDR, thanks in particular to their strong presence in the Harz region.[54]

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[53] Madloch, *Anhang A*; Bahrmann and Links, *Chronik der Wende*, 143.

[54] Georg Christians, *'Die Reihen fest geschlossen'. Die FAP: Zu Anatomie und Umfeld einer militant-neofaschistischen Partei in den 80er Jahren* (Marburg, 1990).

After the armistice, Kühnen and his followers decided they must desert the FAP and found new organisations, including the German Alternative (Deutsche Alternative, DA). It was backed by a network that had functioned since the 1970s as an illegal Nazi party, the NSDAP or NSDAP-AO (meaning either *Auslands-organisation*, foreign organisation, or *Aufbau-organisation*, consolidatory organisation), and which now called itself the Like-Minded Companionship of the New Front (Gesinnungsgemeinschaft der Neuen Front, GdNF). After his release in 1988, Kühnen relocated to Langen, near Frankfurt am Main, which housed the headquarters of the Hesse External and Internal Immigrant Reception Centre and thus had a large population of East German refugees. Kühnen correctly assumed that this would be a fertile recruiting ground. Consequently, by the end of the 1980s the Kühnen movement was quite well informed about Neo-Nazi tendencies in the GDR.

In late January and early February 1990 the erstwhile Lichtenberg Front/30 January Movement reinvented itself as the 'National Alternative' under the direct leadership of GdNF activists from West Germany, West Berlin and Austria, most of whom were staying at the NA centre in the Weitlingstrasse. The NA developed into a joint project by Neo-Nazis from East and West Berlin, and served as a recruiting ground for the German Alternative in Berlin. It was the first extreme-right party to be formally registered in the GDR.[55]

Although by the end of December some local DA groups had formed spontaneously in the GDR,[56] it was not until 1990 that detailed planning began for the GdNF's preliminary and party organisation in East Germany. Activists from the GDR were present at a GdNF co-ordination meeting in mid-January to decide on an 'Action Plan East' for inclusion in the internal information sheet *Die Neue Front*. The first objective was to turn the DA into a Neo-Nazi party for the whole of Germany. To circumvent a possible ban, it was decided not to set up a GDR branch but to create a formally independent organisation called DA Central Germany. It was duly set up in Dresden, in the run-up to the Volkskammer elections. Meanwhile, Kühnen supporters in Cottbus, following 'Action Plan East', were poised to set up a substitute organisation, under some inoffensive name, if their organisation was banned as they expected (which it was). This replacement proved unnecessary once Berlin had recognised the NA, which itself served as a substitute for the DA. Very soon West Berlin activists were occupying positions in the fledgling party.[57]

Three days in March 1990[58] can be seen as symptomatic and deserve close examination insofar as they dramatically document the transition to the next phase in the construction of a 'national opposition' covering all of Germany. On 16 March the 'GDR Section' of the DA was set up – in West Berlin, with a West Berlin Neo-Nazi as section leader and an East German sympathiser as his deputy. The next day, 17 March, Michael Kühnen addressed some 150 Neo-Nazis, from both Germanys and Austria, in a pub in Steglitz (West Berlin), culminating in a brief spontaneous demonstration – which would have been unthinkable before this time, given the restrictions imposed by the four Allied powers that controlled the city. On the same day, some skinheads tried to storm a house in the Schönhauser Allee (East). On 18 March, Kühnen's NA supporters in East Berlin joined forces with the neo-Nazi motorcycle gang 'Wotan's People' in West Berlin and the DA (on both sides) to constitute the 'Berlin Block' under the leadership of Frank Lutz, who had participated in the attacks on the Zion church and the Jewish cemetery in the Schönhauser Allee.[59] On the day of the Volkskammer elections the Berlin Neo-Nazis in the GdNF completed their own organisational unification, well ahead of the other extreme-right organisations and indeed the democratic parties.

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[55] Siegler, *Auferstanden*; Madloch, Anhang A; Bugiel, *Rechtsextremismus Jugendlicher*.

[56] Madloch, *Anhang A*.

[57] Siegler, *Auferstanden*, 55ff.; Madloch, *Anhang B*, 257ff.

[58] Holthusen and Jänecke, *Rechtsextremismus*, 158–9; Madloch, *Anhang A*.

III

The Volkskammer elections of 18 March 1990 can be seen as a turning point, completing the political *Wende* in the GDR and ushering in the reunification process. The extreme-right parties were seriously damaged by their exclusion from these elections. In any case they probably would not have much share of the nationalist vote, since it was generally felt that the shortest path to reunification was through the CDU in collaboration with the other members of the Alliance for Germany. If a recommendation from the Local Republican Association of Brandenburg is any guide,[60] extreme-right voters were likely to support the German Social Union (Deutsche Soziale Union, DSU).

At the time, these elections were widely seen as a plebiscite whereby the majority of East Germans called for rapid reunification, and as a manifestation of a conservative middle-class outlook – social, political and cultural – in both Germanys which would not necessarily prove lasting. This gave the extreme-right parties some grounds for hoping that the fateful March decision would be followed by elections for the whole of Germany, to which they would be admitted and through which they could turn national feeling into nationalist votes.

It did not happen that way. Instead, a split appeared in the radical nationalist camp. The electoral hopes and membership of the 'bourgeois' extreme-right political parties and associations were thrust to the margins by the emergence of a Neo-Nazi-type political movement whose members matched their lifestyle to their convictions. As the split widened there was a huge upsurge in violence against 'aliens', 'lefties' and other 'enemies' (*Feindgruppen*).

After the Volkskammer elections and the unification treaty of August 1990, most restrictions on extreme-right parties were removed, enabling them to stand for the local parliament (Landtag) elections in October and the first elections to the first Bundestag of the reunited Germany in early December. The Central German

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[59] Siegler, *Auferstanden*, 56–7; Madloch, *Anhang A*, 226; *Anhang B*, 258.

[60] Madloch, *Anhang A*, 225–6.

National Democrat party was founded a week after the Volkskammer elections.[61] In August it adopted the name of its parent party in the former West Germany, and a few days after the establishment of the new *Länder*, on 7 October 1990, it merged with the NPD. Elections to the local parliaments of the five new *Länder* took place a week later, but the NPD made a poor showing, averaging 0.33% of the vote – and only 0.67% even in their chief stronghold of Saxony. In the Bundestag elections on 2 December they scored only 0.2% of the vote in the new *Länder* – just half the average for the whole country.[62]

The Republicans had high hopes but scored few successes, although the GDR media had devoted a great deal to attention the seats they won in the (West Berlin) chamber of deputies in January 1989, enhancing their popularity in the East. Encouraged by the Monday demonstrations, by the numerous enquiries received by the West German party offices and by numerous applications for membership, the party functionaries assumed that most DSU voters would choose Schönhuber's party.[63] But the Republicans, riven by internal splits and shaken by in-fighting,[64] and accused of parliamentary incompetence and unprofessional conduct in the Berlin chamber, failed to exploit the nationalistic upsurge accompanying reunification. In the Landtag elections the only place where they scored above 1% of the vote was Brandenburg; their average in the new *Länder* (except in Saxony where they stood down in favour of the NPD) was 0.5%. In the Bundestag elections a month later they managed to push the percentage up to 1.5%, scoring highest in Brandenburg and east Berlin, but still below the average of 1.7% for the whole of Germany. In the elections to the united Berlin chamber of deputies on 2 December 1990 (held as the dust was settling after the radical left walkout on 3 October, and after a series of street fights and barricades in Friedrichshain's Mainzer Strasse induced many citizens to seek a law-and-order party), the extreme-right vote in east Berlin reached 1.9% – an increase, but still way below the result for Berlin as a whole.[65] Interestingly enough, even years later, up to the end of the 1990s, voting for the extreme right remained the prerogative of the former FRG *Länder*;[66] it was not until the DVU made its astonishing breakthrough in Sachsen-Anhalt in 1998, and sent its first members to the Brandenburg parliament a year later, that the party gained any significant share of the vote in the East.

Other extreme right parties were equally unsuccessful in the new *Länder* throughout the 1990s. The German People's Union (DVU) poured out propaganda and publicity throughout these vital years, but never got itself properly organised. In 1990 it told its own supporters to vote for the NPD. The DVU did not set up its first local association, in Brandenburg, until March 1991, over a year behind the other extreme-right organisations; it was not until August 1992 that it acquired a presence in all five *Länder*.[67]

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[61] Ibid., 227; Uwe Hoffman, *Die NPD: Entwicklung, Ideologie und Struktur* (Frankfurt/Main, 1999), 249ff.

[62] Madloch, 'Zur Entwicklung', 65; Bugiel, *Rechtsextremismus Jugendlicher.*

[63] Madloch, *Anhang A*, 226f.

[64] Richard Stöss, *Die Republikaner: Woher sie kommen – Was sie wollen – Wer sie wählt – Was zu tun ist* (Cologne, 1990, 47ff.); Hans-Gerd Jaschke, *Die 'Republikaner': Profile einer Rechtsaussen-Partei* (Bonn, 1993), 86ff.

[65] Madloch, 'Zur Entwicklung', 65; Bugiel, *Rechtsextremismus Jugendlicher.*

[66] Stöss, *Rechtsextremismus im vereinten Deutschland.*

The number of extreme-right political parties founded in the GDR, or exported from the GDR, was and remained negligible. A certain interest attaches to the development of the German Social Union, which allied itself with the CDU in the Alliance for Germany and so gained a voice in the last GDR government. At the congress of the Leipzig DSU in late July and August 1990 some prominent DSU members, including both the GDR's DSU ministers, Peter-Michael Diestel (Interior) and Hans-Wilhelm Ebeling (Overseas Aid), left the party in protest at its massive rightward shift and uncertain relationship with the Republicans. The DSU continued to lead a shadowy existence in between the Democrats and the extreme right, but has never made much of a mark.[68]

What was the reason for this poor showing by the extreme-right parties and associations? First and foremost, the insurmountable obstacle of the GDR's Political Parties Act; more important still, the electoral clamour for rapid reunification, which meant voting for Kohl's government, for the Union parties and their East German partners. This enthusiasm seems to have lasted beyond March into the October and December elections, which it again strongly influenced.

Equally important, however, were internal party conditions and basic strategic considerations. Having embraced legality and constitutionality, the extreme-right parties and organisations then faced a dilemma: how to find sympathisers and supporters in the GDR when its people were unused to organising themselves and were cagey about declaring their allegiance to a party that was known to favour Nazi ideology and violence – a fact that undermined the moderate image being peddled by party strategies.

By contrast, the Neo-Nazi NF, GdNF and FAP wooed the electorate for tactical reasons only. They did not shrink from openly proclaiming their adherence to National Socialism and approved, indeed encouraged, displays of violence. They were far more at home with the protean atmosphere of the GDR than the political parties. The characteristics that marked the 'national opposition' in eastern Germany throughout the 1990s, as opposed to the national opposition in the former FRG, go back to this early phase of politicisation and radicalisation: massive (and mass) violence, a relatively fluid organisation and network, and a comparative lack of enthusiasm for organised parties.

Meanwhile the Neo-Nazis enjoyed an unparalleled level of mobilisation, directly linked to the violent mass mobilisations and excesses that spanned the whole year. Anything associated with the Left – meeting places, youth clubs, discos, housing projects, cultural events – in East German towns and cities was systematically trashed, and participants or residents roughly mishandled; foreigners and ethnic minorities were beaten up and bullied, Jewish cemeteries, Soviet war memorials and other monuments vandalised or destroyed; streets, stadiums and other locations were daubed with Nazi slogans and graffiti, all to the ugly music of Nazi chants.[69]

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[67] Bugiel, *Rechtsextremismus Jugendlicher*, 236ff.

[68] Andreas Schulze, 'Deutsche Soziale Union (DSU)', in Frank Decker and Viola Neu, eds, *Handbuch der deutschen Parteien* (Wiesbaden, 2007), 248–50.

Influenced by these events, and faced only with a progressively more insecure, impotent and disintegrating police force (particularly after 3 October), hooligans and football fans became steadily more brutal. From October onward the police took to using firearms and there were some casualties, including a fatality in early November. At this point some football fans and hooligans called for a break with the Neo-Nazis, and hooligans and skinheads declined to support them politically (insofar as they confessed any political allegiance at all). The skinhead milieu was not only an attractive forum for extreme-right agitators, mostly from the West, but also became a lucrative market amidst the infernal triangle of 'violence, profit and propaganda'.[70]

From April 1990, West German Neo-Nazis scoured the GDR for new recruits.[71] Shortly after the Volkskammer elections they began to organise public political demonstrations and proclamations. Most notable among these activists were Kühnen and his circle. On 1 May he held a public meeting in a hall near Erfurt; in early July he appeared at the DA's second party congress in Cottbus, where he was briefly placed under arrest; 150 supporters gathered to hear his speech. (Cottbus counted more DA supporters than any other city excepting Dresden.) About a week later, Kühnen's supporters, some of whom were DA members, built their own memorial alongside the concentration camp memorial site at Sachsenhausen, and staged a tribute to Nazis who had died in Soviet camps. In September, a meeting of the Brandenburg 'Gau', organised by the DA in Lübben, attracted 130 participants, and resolved to reinforce the demonstrations against the Oder-Neisse line border with Poland that the NPD's youth organisation JN (Junge Nationaldemokraten, or Young National Democrats) had been staging for about a month. The Kühnen group's biggest success came when 400 Neo-Nazis marched through Dresden on 20 October 1990, led by Kühnen himself – though he was already looking ill and died six months later. National Remembrance Day in Halbe saw some chilling scenes as about 450 Nazi enthusiasts marched to the Waldfriedhof, one of Germany's biggest war cemeteries, to lay wreaths. This time the Kühnenites were not alone: they were accompanied by squads of the Viking Youth, NF, FAP and Vandals, not to mention NS supporters of all ages and from all parts of Germany. On 1 and 31 December, Neo-Nazis in Guben and Görlitz staged provocative demonstrations against the Oder-Neisse border which the police tried unsuccessfully to prevent.

Neo-Nazi morale was high. A combination of violence, provocation and propaganda had effectively marginalised other youth cultures, indeed all other cultures of whatever description. A small, would-be intellectual group calling itself the 'National Democratic University Alliance', numbering no more than forty individuals in the entire country, coined a new term, 'Liberated Zones'.[72] Shortly after came the first fatality in the reunited Germany: Antonio Amadeo Kiowa, a contract worker from Angola, was beaten to death in Eberswalde by several dozen Nazi skinheads, prominent among them a number of NF supporters. While the *Feindgruppen* had not changed in any essential, the focus of Neo-Nazi thuggery was changing. Bernd Wagner recalls: 'In 1991 there was a change in the victims of these criminal acts: the thugs' "worst enemies" were now foreigners, including Soviet subjects. "Lefties" had evidently become less important'.[73]

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[69] All these details are from Madloch, *Anhang A*.

[70] Gideon Botsch, 'Gewalt, Profit und Propaganda: Konturen des rechtsextremen Musik-Netzwerkes', *Blätter für deutsche und internationale Politik,* 46 (2001), 335–44.

[71] Madloch, *Anhang A*.

On 8 April 1991 the frontier between Germany and Poland was opened to traffic at Frankfurt an der Oder. Neo-Nazis mobilised in protest. Pictures of rioters attacking Polish travellers, buses and HGVs were seen worldwide. Similar attacks on border posts along the Oder-Neisse line continued throughout April. Accommodation used by foreigners, refugees and asylum seekers came increasingly under attack, and six months later an incident in Hoyerswerda was the first pogrom to be widely reported by the reunited German media: an attack on a house used by asylum seekers, driven by 'national opposition' activists but supported by a larger mob. The refugees had to be evacuated.

Thus, under West German leadership the GDR spawned a heterogeneous, mostly youthful, more or less 'rightist' and 'pro-Nazi' youth subculture of skinheads, hooligans and 'faschos' which eventually developed into a politically orientated 'national opposition' – opposing not only the GDR but also the new, democratic, constitutional, and hated Federal Republic of Germany. The GDR's extreme right merged with an all-Germany 'national opposition' that had hitherto existed only in the FRG. It retained its particular characteristics for a good ten years: larger membership, higher mobilisation rates, greater brutality, a looser leadership structure, an underdeveloped elite, and an almost complete lack of organised party-political backing.[74]

Conclusion, and looking ahead

The emergence of radical nationalism in East Germany, first as a movement, and subsequently as a politicised 'national opposition' backed by a 'national camp', is one of the most striking secondary consequences of the historic change that came to Germany in 1989. There were people in the old GDR with extreme-right, authoritarian, pro-Nazi and/or xenophobic attitudes; but there was no way that those people could have formed a national opposition in the GDR.

How did this 'national opposition' arise, take shape and become established? This investigation has led to a somewhat novel answer, reconciling the three positions enunciated at the beginning of this essay. We can now discern four interlocking stages[75] in the development of the 'national opposition'. First, the roots of the 'national opposition' in East Germany can be clearly traced back to the GDR and to tendencies which gradually coalesced and are particularly evident in the skinhead milieu. Second, during the *Wende* (1989/1990) this milieu was politicised, with the first attempts at networking and organisation. Third, during the unification process the extreme-right camp shaped itself into the 'national opposition'. And fourth, in the united Germany the East German scene became part of a 'national opposition' covering the whole country.

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[72] Uta Döring, *Angstzonen: Rechtsdominierte Orte aus medialer und lokaler Perspektive* (Wiesbaden, 2008).

[73] Wagner, *Extreme in Rechts*, 122.

[74] Stöss, *Rechtsextremismus im vereinten Deutschland*.

In this light, it is necessary to reassess the part played by extreme-right influence from West Germany. It was not a simple 'spillover'; nor was there a planned and targeted attempt to steer extreme-right tendencies in the GDR. When the internal border was opened in November 1989 the East German opinion market was massively invaded by West German activists and organisations, feeding the existing demand with new provision and new opportunities. In late 1989 and early 1990, West German Neo-Nazis began to steer the organisation process in East Germany; the extreme-right parties followed suit rather later, in March 1990.

Through the 1990s the two camps merged, quite quickly and relatively smoothly.[76] Individuals and infrastructures crossed the erstwhile border in both directions. The wave of extreme-right mobilisation began to ebb towards the end of 1992. As a largely democratic public opinion took fright, and extreme-right organisations were banned or otherwise repressed, the scope for a 'national opposition' was sharply reduced, while social relationships in the new *Länder* began to settle down. A decade later, however, the fulcrum of the extreme-right movement had shifted to the new *Länder*. A new wave of mobilisation occurred towards the end of the 1990s, including some electoral successes: the DVU gained seats in two of the new local parliaments (Saxony-Anhalt in 1998, Brandenburg in 1999). It kept these seats in Brandenburg in 2004, but after this the voters fell away. The NPD, on the other hand, became steadily more radical through the 1990s, gathering up extreme Neo-Nazis and so securing a relatively stable 4–6% of the vote in the new *Länder*. Not only did it gain seats in two East German local parliaments, it retained them for a second term (Saxony in 2004 and 2009; Mecklenburg-Vorpommern in 2006 and 2011). Some areas of today's Germany have an extreme-right social element that is steadily digging itself in.[77] Top positions in extreme-right parties and organisations are now shared more or less equally between East and West Germans, and there is an upcoming generation of young activists whose socialisation took place after 1989. Although radical nationalism in eastern Germany still retains some strikingly different characteristics, it now makes sense to speak in terms of one 'national opposition' throughout Germany.

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[75] For a similar view see Madloch, 'Zur Entwicklung'; also his *Anhang A* and *Rechtsextremismus in Deutschland*, 63ff. and 146ff.

[76] Pfahl-Traughber, *Rechtsextremismus*; Stöss, *Rechtsextremismus im vereinten Deutschland*; Stöss, *Rechtsextremismus im Wandel* (Berlin, 2007); Bundesamt für Verfassungsschutz, *Ein Jahrzehnt*.

[77] Gideon Botsch, 'Die extreme Rechte als "nationales Lager": "Versäulung" im lebensweltlichen Milieu oder Marsch in die Mitte der Gesellschaft?', in Christoph Kopke, ed., *Die Grenzen der Toleranz: Rechtsextremes Milieu und demokratische Gesellschaft in Brandenburg. Bilanz und Perspektiven* (Potsdam, 2011), 57–82.

De la sous-culture 'skinhead' au mouvement radical de la droite: Le développement d'une 'opposition nationale' en Allemagne de l'Est.

Au moment de l'effondrement du régime en 1989/90, l'extrême-droite se révéla déjà bien développée. On a interprété son origine et sa croissance de différentes façons, premièrement, comme ressortant des conditions de la RDA, et comme résultant, deuxièmement, du Tournant (*die Wende*), et troisièmement, du processus de réunification. L'auteur intègre ces trois interprétations. Il montre le développement, en parallèle avec les premières cliques de l'extrême-droite au sein de la RDA, d'un milieu 'skinhead' hétérogène et politiquement diffus; comment ce milieu, au moment du Tournant, s'est oriente vers un nationalisme radical; et comment il s'intégra a une opposition nationale au sein des deux Allemagnes réunies.

Vom Skinhead-Subkultur zu Rechtsradikalismus: Die Entwicklung einer 'nationalen Opposition' in Ostdeutschland

Beim Sturz des ostdeutschen Regimes in den Jahren 1989/90 wurde deutlich, dass sich in der DDR bereits eine rechtsradikale Bewegung entwickelt hatte. Ihre Ursprünge und Entwicklung wurden bisher verschiedenartig erstens als Folge der Bedingungen in der DDR, zweitens als Ergebnis der Wende oder drittens als Folge des Einigungsprozesses gedeutet. Dieser Artikel vereint alle drei Hypothesen. Er zeigt, wie mit der Entwicklung der ersten rechtsradikalen Cliquen in der DDR ein heterogenes, politisch diffuses Skinheadmilieu entstand, wie dieses sich zum Zeitpunkt der Wende eine radikal nationalistische politische Ausrichtung zu eigen machte und schließlich im vereinten Deutschland Teil einer gesamtdeutschen 'nationalen Opposition' wurde.