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German Democratic Republic (GDR)

The GDR was a dictatorship which was strongly shaped by Soviet influence and example and which understood itself as a “real” socialist state. The effects of Soviet dominance were immediate during the era of the Soviet Occupation Zone, but they persisted in a covert form until the end of the GDR in the Peaceful Revolution of 1989–90. The structure of the GDR was defined by the rule of the state party, the Socialist Unity Party (SED), the institutions of which were mirrored in a parallel state structure. Apart from the SED, four other parties and several mass organizations participated pro forma in political rule, though without achieving any real influence, a state that was characteristic for the supposed dictatorship of workers and peasants in the GDR. SED policy was also influenced by the existence of a divided (nation) state, i.e. the GDR had the economically more prosperous Federal Republic of Germany as a neighbor, and by forced militarization. Alongside the apparatus of the state party, the most important instrument of power was the State Security Service (the so-called Stasi), with its network of official and unofficial collaborators, in other words, spies. The Stasi methods varied from initial brutal repression to, eventually, “extensive surveillance” and the “infiltration” of groups of perceived opponents. These included groups which represented a form of cultural opposition and counterculture in their many forms.¹

Under the SED dictatorship, oppositional behavior included fundamental political resistance, the reform-oriented opposition, dissidence, and refusal to participate in conventional social life.² Form of cultural opposition and counterculture ranged between opposition and dissidence. In addition to the State Security Service, the mechanism of political repression spanned a broad spectrum of societal fields, from the judiciary to the “People’s Police,” which was committed to safeguarding the dictatorship.

1 As an example of the extremely abundant literature on the topic of the State Security Service, see Gieseke, *Mielke-Konzern*. For an overview of the relevant literature, see Eckert, *SED-Diktatur und Erinnerungsarbeit*. Also available in the form of an online edition: Archiv Bürgerbewegung, *27 Jahre Erinnerungsarbeit im vereinten Deutschland*.

2 Eckert, *Revolution in Potsdam*.

Cultural Policy of the GDR and its Discontents³

The cultural policy of the SED dictatorship served to execute a “socialist cultural revolution” that was intended to encompass all spheres of society with the goal of reshaping it on the path to the establishment of a communist social order.⁴ The SED intended to plan and cultivate a “socialist culture” in close interaction with the development of society as a whole. This comprehensive task was aligned with the stages of the development of a “real” socialist system, and it was always shaped by the strategic goals of the state party. The latter claimed “socialist national culture” for itself, maintaining that it was the legitimate heir to all the democratic and humanist traditions in German history. Despite brief phases of limited artistic freedom, the SED’s cultural policy was always also shaped by repression and censorship.

The first stage in SED cultural policy in the period between 1946 and 1951 was characterized by superficial “denazification” in an attempt to connect with the humanist cultural traditions of the German middle-class, to win over the bourgeois intelligentsia through various benefits, and integrate elements of Soviet and Russian culture. The actual “socialist cultural revolution” commenced in 1951 with the centralization of all art production. At the same time, a campaign was launched against “formalism” in art and literature and for “socialist realism.” The Ministry of Culture, which was founded in January 1954, served to enforce this policy, which also affected prominent artists. However, they were able to defend themselves against it, at least to some extent.

In the mid-1950s, repression intensified against critical anti-Stalinist intellectuals like Ernst Bloch, Walter Janka, Gustav Just, and Wolfgang Harich, who were not spared politically motivated imprisonment. At the two Bitterfeld Conferences of 1959 and 1964, the SED stressed the necessity of raising the “cultural level” of the workers, encouraging artistic creation by the people, and furthering connections to the “scientific-technical revolution.” This flattened artistic aspiration and led to disputes about the critical function of art. At the same time, this implied the creation of a very broad field of cultural institutions in order to bring culture “to the masses.” Mass organizations, such as the *Kulturbund* (Cultural Association), professional organizations of artists, designated state institutions, and the trade unions not only organized a wide variety of cultural events but also provided a space for cultural activities by both professionals and “ordinary” people.

The professional organizations of artists (Writers’ Association of the GDR, est. 1950; Association of Fine Artists of the GDR, est. 1950; Association of Composers and Musicologists of the GDR, est. 1951) were also important

³ The supchapters on culture and dissent were written by Rainer Eckert.

⁴ Kersten and Kleinschmid, “Kulturpolitik,” 767–75. Also see the last summary to be published in the GDR: Böhme *Kulturpolitik der SED*, 561–65.

instruments of control. They provided official ideological guidance, and they organized access to material support and the publication, staging, or display of an artist's work. Life as an independent artist was officially possible only if one was member of such an organization, and artists who violated ideological norms could be excluded. Another factor which motivated artists to comply with state policies was the importance of commissions for art works by state institutions, mass organizations, and companies.

In the wake of the construction of the Berlin Wall (1961), many artists in the GDR hoped that the political situation inside the country would relax and they would enjoy more cultural freedom. Many believed that now there would be space to criticize "real socialism."⁵ In addition, the "beat wave" hit the GDR. However, the SED described the fans of beat subculture as "bums" and resorted to political repression, going so far as to cut off long hair forcibly in operations conducted by the People's Police. On October 31, 1965, almost 600 young people in the center of Leipzig protested against the banning of popular beat bands. The police used truncheons, dogs, and water cannons to disperse the crowds. The protestors who were arrested were subsequently condemned to several weeks of "labor education" in opencast lignite mines.

The "beat rebellion" was one of the reasons why the SED put an end to all critical cultural tendencies at its eleventh plenary session in December 1965. The state party banned books and films and restricted work opportunities for non-conformist artists. But things did not end there, and the SED persisted on its zigzag course, with party leader Erich Honecker proclaiming at the Eight Party Congress in 1971 that art and literature should not be subject to "taboos" as long as artists did not lose sight of the goal of gradual transition to communism. Based on Marxism-Leninism, the focus would remain on the advancement of national culture and "socialist workers' culture."

Most likely influenced by the Helsinki Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe in 1975 and its final accords and by the emergence of "Eurocommunism," the SED tried to continue its "liberal course" and take charge of the entire German "cultural legacy." This ended abruptly with the expulsion of the writer Reiner Kunze from the writers' association and the expatriation of singer and songwriter Wolf Biermann on November 16, 1976 following an authorized concert in Cologne.⁶ Biermann was the son of a Jewish father murdered in Auschwitz; he had pledged his allegiance to communism and the GDR, while sharply criticizing the state. The SED leadership was surprised by the response to his expatriation: a wave of solidarity led first and foremost by young East Germans, and also by prominent artists and writers. The subsequent campaign initiated by the SED to build support for the deci-

5 Lindner, *Steine des Anstoßes*, 156.

6 Literature on this topic alone is extremely comprehensive. See Biermann's recent: *Warte nicht auf bessere Zeiten*. Only a few closely selected publications on this and further topics in relation to counterculture can be mentioned within the framework of this article.

sion appeared helpless, and measures such as the political arrest of young poets and musicians like Jürgen Fuchs, Christian Kunert, and Gerulf Pannach, who were later deported to West Germany, brought the protests to an end that was superficial at most. The SED had lost its political legitimacy, at least in cultural policy, and an increasing number of leading artists left the country or were granted long-term residence visas for the West. Many were to contribute significantly to cultural life in the Federal Republic.⁷

After 1976, the GDR's "official cultural landscape" threatened to dry up, although the eighth Art Exhibition in Dresden in 1977–78 at least allowed a degree of criticism in the fine arts. Nevertheless, it was impossible to reassert the "cultural standing" of the SED leadership. "Counterculture" was coming into its prime, especially the activities of young "alternative artists."

The disputes over "high culture" moved from the "formalism debate" over the course of action against intellectual critics in the SED to the defamation of individual artists. Writers such as Stefan Heym, Erich Loest, Heiner Müller, Rolf Schneider, Klaus Schlesinger, Christa Wolf, and Gerhard Zwerenz came under pressure. Prominent artists like Bernhard Heisig, Werner Tübke, and Wolfgang Mattheuer, whose sculpture "The Stride of a Century" was the most prized exhibit in the GDR's final Art Exhibition in 1987–88, were also drawn into these conflicts. Despite the attacks, these representatives of "high culture" remained privileged and, unlike most of their compatriots, were able to travel to the West and publish or show their work there and were protected by their international reputation. This was a successful and favoured group with its own lifestyle, the bohemian entourage of the "Berliner Ensemble," which spent long nights in East Berlin's "Pressecafé" and the "Möve" artists' club.⁸ It had nothing to do with the subcultural fringe groups and their anti-Stalinist attitude, who were fighting for freedom and to overcome their alienation from conventional GDR society.

Counterculture

The overwhelmingly young representatives of the alternative counterculture, on the other hand, faced a very different situation. As in most authoritarian societies, they had to struggle with the fact that any departure from state-approved art and any independent initiatives in the cultural sphere were perceived by the dictatorship as a threat to the system and were tackled with the use of means of control and repression. The SED and the secret police were unable to grasp the alternative concepts of the counterculture as anything other than "hostile and negative" and controlled by the West, thus assigning them to a spectrum ranging from resistance to opposition. Especially in some of the

⁷ On German-German cultural relations see the contributions in Lindner, *Mauersprünge*.

⁸ Voigt, *Stierblutjahre*.

GDR's big cities, the counterculture consisted of free galleries, writers, *samizdat* publications, independent artists, "subcultural" musicians, and "hitchhikers." The independent art scene developed noticeably from the beginning of the 1970s, while a new generation embarked on other paths in the mid-1980s.

At least 43 private and independent galleries were involved in exploring self-determination, for instance through happenings, concerts, parties, and video performances, without assuming any explicitly (political) oppositional character.⁹ These galleries included, for example, Eigen + Art, which was run by Gerd Harry [Judy] Lybke und Thorsten Schilling in Leipzig from 1983,¹⁰ in East Berlin Jürgen Schweinebraden's EP Galerie,¹¹ the Ateliergalerie run by Hans Scheib, and from 1978 the Literarisches Salon, which was run by Ekkehard [Ekke] Maaß.¹² The same applied to the interactions of music, gestural painting, dance, and pantomime. Subcultural writers also met at various other locations, like in private apartments such as that of Gerd and Ulrike Poppe. This was a loose, solidarity-based community that refused to recognize social norms and cultivated an independent, non-conformist lifestyle. Here, the "scene" based in the East Berlin district of Prenzlauer Berg played a special role.¹³ Among the influential subcultural writers were Thomas Brasch, Adolf Endler, Elke Erb, Siegmund Faust, Wolfgang Hilbig, Gert Neumann, Lutz Rathenow, Andreas Reimann, Rüdiger Rosenthal, and Ulrich Schacht. The State Security Service classified these goings-on as early forms of "underground political activity" that demanded "extensive" monitoring and "infiltration."

Following Biermann's expatriation, self-published magazines, booklets, and art books represented an important means of creating a public space, albeit limited, for a new critical generation.¹⁴ Thus, the independent publishing scene, *samizdat*, initiated by East European dissidents can be divided into more strongly politically and ecologically oriented publications on the one hand and literary and art magazines on the other. In addition, there was an immense array of flyers and one-time publications, as well as texts copied by hand or typewriter. These publications were exchanged at platforms ranging from events in premises connected to the Protestant parishes, where in fact many writings emerged as church literature, to the meetings of various peace, environmental protection, and human rights groups. Here, structures developed that would help overcome the system in the long term. After all, there were independent publishers in the GDR, such as Radix-Verlag (Radix publishing house) and the Umwelt-Bibliothek (Environment library), around 40 *samizdat* art magazines, some 40 political journals like "Grenzfall" (Border case), "radix-Blätter" (radix pages), "KONTEXT" (Context), "Umweltblätter"

9 Fiedler, *Kunst im Korridor*.

10 Eckert, *Opposition, Widerstand und Revolution*, 181–86.

11 Schweinebraden, *Die Vergangenheit der Gegenwart*.

12 Böhlig, *sprachzeiten: Der literarische Salon von Ekke Maaß*.

13 Endler, *Tarzan am Prenzlauer Berg*.

14 Kowalczyk, *Freiheit und Öffentlichkeit*, 7.

(Environment pages), and “*Arche Nova*” (Ark nova), as well as underground music labels and theatre performances, above all in Dresden, Halle (Saale), Leipzig, and East Berlin. Flyers and covert texts produced in the Federal Republic or West Berlin and smuggled into the GDR had already played a role in the 1950s. In addition, literary “contraband” was imported, especially from Poland and Hungary.¹⁵

Alongside the sphere of the “official” fine arts, numerous painters in the GDR belonged to the “counterculture.”¹⁶ Many of them were persecuted by the dictatorship and frequently left the GDR for the West or had their “ransom” paid by the Federal Republic, for instance Dresden-based A. R. Penk (whose real name was Ralf Winkler), Georg Baselitz, Jürgen Böttcher-Strawalde, Gerhard Richter, and the Leipzig painter Sieghard Pohl. Moreover, East Berlin artist Cornelia Schleime, who attracted attention with artistic forms of expression such as performance, small-format film, and punk music also belonged to this group. In contrast, Gabriele Stötzer held her ground in her home region of Thuringia, despite having to endure intense repression.

An independent jazz scene had already formed in the 1950s.¹⁷ Later, the “Klaus Renft Combo,” which was founded in 1958 and intermittently known as “The Butlers,” was of special significance to the rock scene.¹⁸ Like other independent music groups, the formation was constantly subject to repression, and it was finally dissolved in 1975. In order to enable these kinds of measures against the rock ‘n’ roll scene, the SED justice system introduced the offence of “rowdyism” already in the mid-1950s.

The struggle against “rowdyism” was also directed against street gangs of working-class youth whose subcultural existence in the big urban centres was connected to particular locations, such as the “Clara Zetkin” park in Leipzig or the “Staudenhof” housing block in Potsdam. In a certain sense, beat fans assumed the legacy of these groups, a legacy which was then continued, beginning in the end of the 1970s, by punks and heavy metal followers, as well as skinheads.¹⁹ The members of these groups met mostly in parks, cinemas, around waste containers, at swimming pools or in certain streets. Their bands rehearsed in cellars, garages and private apartments or in rooms belonging to Protestant youth groups in particular. In the 1980s, cross-connections developed between punks, the “long-haired” disciples of beat, squatters, the alternative art scene, and politically oriented groups. Young people began to use public action to urge for political reform. Alongside punk, other music forms and events played an important role, such as the “blues masses” organ-

15 Lokatis and Sonntag, *Heimliche Leser in der DDR*.

16 See the most recent summary: Lindner, *Nähe und Distanz*.

17 On jazz, see: Bratfisch, *Freie Töne*.

18 See Stiftung Haus der Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, *Jugend und Musik in Deutschland*.

19 Galenza, Havemeister. *Wir wollen immer artig sein ...* This collection of essays also includes a chapter on skinheads in the GDR.

ized in Protestant churches in East Berlin between 1979 and 1986 by theologians like Rainer Eppelmann for as many as 9,000 participants.²⁰ As of 1983, punk bands were also allowed to perform at these venues. The young people who streamed to the “blues masses” from across the entire GDR were retaliating against ossified life in the dictatorship by creating their own ways of life. They thus achieved considerable political magnetism. For them, the “event” was more important than structure.

In the GDR’s later phase, breakdance began part of the alternative music culture. Western underground pop was the model for all these groups. LPs and cassettes were smuggled into the GDR, also from Poland and Hungary, and they were reproduced. The huge enthusiasm for rock culminated in the celebrated concerts by Udo Lindenberg in 1983 and the concerts held between 1987 and 1988 in East Berlin by world-famous stars such as Bob Dylan und Bruce Springsteen, whose open-air performance drew in 170,000 fans. In contrast, the party youth organisation’s *Free German Youth* (Freie Deutsche Jugend, FDJ) own folk music movement, Singebewegung (Singing movement) and the folk music group Oktoberklub, which had the support of the FDJ, very clearly met with less interest, although there were grey zones between such officially authorized youth music and countercultural currents. As late as 1985, the SED imposed a work ban on the oppositional songwriter Stephan Krawczyk. He was arrested in 1988 and was deported against his will to West Germany. East German rock musicians and singer-songwriters subsequently played a role in the Peaceful Revolution when around 50 of them demanded the democratization of the GDR in the “rocker resolution” of September 18, 1989.

Two of the main authors of the so-called “rocker resolution,” the singers Hans-Eckardt Wenzel and Steffen Mensching, also exemplify ironic strategies in the clash with official culture: the “clowns” Wenzel and Mensching presented a surreal image of the GDR on stage; in similar fashion, mail art artists produced ironic postcards, while the “hitchhikers” longed for spaces of autonomy.²¹ The “hitchhikers,” who also called themselves “Kunden” (customers) or “Bluesers,” had long hair and wore jeans, parkas, sandals, or light climbing shoes. On weekends, they travelled the whole of the GDR, always looking out for concerts by their favourite bands. Popular events included festivals, the Wasungen carnival, the annual onion market in Weimar, and the tree blossom festival in Werder on the Havel. They held wild orgies in inns in remote villages and hamlets; they binged and made love. Any nonsense was permitted if it annoyed the “squares” and promoted excess as a form of self-assertion. Summers were marked by a compulsory hitch-hiking tour to the Bulgarian Black Sea coast. They made especially daring use of their travel visas for Romania to hitchhike as far as the Caucasus or as far as the Soviet-Chinese border.

²⁰ Moldt, *Zwischen Hass und Hoffnung*, 14.

²¹ Rauhut and Kochan, *Bye bye, Lübben City*.

The counterculture scene emerged during the 1980s in the old town centres of cities like Dresden, Jena, Leipzig, and East Berlin, often in connection with informal living arrangements and squatting.²² Apart from the groups mentioned above, the “scene” included “alternative anti-fascists,” radical football fans, goths and skinheads. The “Antifa” groups formed after a skinhead group attacked a concert in East Berlin’s Zion Church on October 17, 1987. Based mainly in Dresden and Potsdam, the “Antifa” warned of the increasing influence of neo-Nazis, yet were eventually brutally persecuted by the state, after it turned out that the official structures would not tolerate alternative antifascist activism. Opposition cafés and inns like the Café Heider in Potsdam, the Fengler and the Café Burger in East Berlin, and the Angereck in Erfurt played a special role for the counterculture.

In the 1980s, there was frequent contact between alternative culture and independent environmental, peace, ecological, women’s rights, and human rights groups, mostly in the setting of Protestant churches. Although many critical young artists left the GDR for the West, others intensified their efforts to generate a “second culture.” They committed themselves to politics and sought limited public attention, for example in the East Berlin youth club, “Die Box” (The box). At the same time, the secret police increased its (by all measures successful) efforts to “infiltrate” the alternative scene. To this end, it deployed a whole army of spies. Though permeated by informers, alternative culture remained active at its core, and though its response to the State Security Service was marked by a degree of fear, it also answered with disdain. The fact that spies Sascha Anderson and Rainer Schedlinski were shaping the “scene” in East Berlin’s Prenzlauer Berg did nothing to change this. Another crucial factor for East German counterculture was that support for subcultural activities from the Federal Republic and West Berlin remained relatively marginal. Contacts with the West, and especially with the media, were highly controversial among the groups themselves, though they did provide some protection, especially in East Berlin.

The Assessment of GDR History and Sources for its Study after 1989 in the Collections of the COURAGE Project

Over the course of its existence, the German communist dictatorship was shaped not only by force and oppression, but also by resistance, opposition, and dissidence.²³ After the Peaceful Revolution and reunification, interest in artistic creation as part of this resistance, opposition, and dissidence initially focused on “high culture,” i.e. the “wars of the Diadochi” between intellectuals within the state party, and only then on counterculture. Some of the activ-

²² Ahrends, *Damals im Café Heider*.

²³ For a general overview, see Veen, *Lexikon Opposition und Widerstand*.

ists at the forefront of alternative culture in the SED dictatorship today no longer play any role or have settled on the periphery of society. Others have been able to assert themselves on the art scene in reunified Germany. Sporadically, bitter discussions have broken out about the significance of “official culture” and of the “counterculture” in reunified Germany, and likewise about the position of East German artists. The debate about the evaluation of art in the GDR escalated in connection with major exhibitions of fine arts in the GDR held in Berlin, Dresden, Potsdam, and Weimar. It is to be hoped that East German art will be recognized in the future as an essential part of German national culture and Western culture.

Furthermore, apart from initiatives aiming at reconciliation and memorialization of victims of the communist regime, the preservation of the built environment of communism and its monuments received a great deal of attention. Research on different post-socialist countries, including the former GDR, has highlighted the contentious nature of debates about the material heritage of state socialism, with wildly diverging approaches, ranging from calls to abandon it to attempts to preserve or re-appropriate it.²⁴ Yet there is no consensus on the question of how to deal with the legacy of the socialist regimes, nor, indeed, on the question of what precisely falls into the ambiguous category of “socialist heritage.”²⁵ One important question concerns the preservation of the legacy of subversion, dissent, and opposition, which very often is less visible than, for example, the architectural heritage of state socialism.

The collections described in the COURAGE Registry aim to capture a diverse and complex perspective on the legacy of various forms of cultural opposition and dissidence in the GDR and thus to cover a gap when addressing the material legacy from socialism. The collections described are a selection which provides a general understanding of this complex phenomenon, and not an exhaustive or comprehensive undertaking. Neither are they representative in a quantitative way. Cultural opposition in the GDR was broad and diverse, and a wide array of efforts have been made to collect and document it.²⁶ Thus, only a selection of this rich and varied heritage could be described by COURAGE. For this reason, our approach was typological: we wanted to present examples which highlight the great variety of actors and institutions involved in the process of collecting and preserving the legacy of cultural opposition. At the same time, we wanted to describe collections that document different forms, media, and genres of opposition. This also allowed us to address different social, political, and cultural contexts from which such

24 See Leach, *Architecture and Revolution*; Klaic, *Communist cultural production*; Jason, *Preservation and National Belonging*; Tomaszewski, *Zwischen Ideologie, Politik und Kunst*; Gamboni, *Die Zerstörung kommunistischer Denkmäler*.

25 Demeter, “Regime Change and Cultural Heritage Protection.”

26 Rainer Eckert’s bibliography of sources on opposition, resistance, and political oppression in the GDR includes more than 8,000 titles. See: <https://www.archiv-buergerbewegung.de/datenbank-bibliografie>. Accessed September 27, 2018.

collections emerged and in which they existed and acquired shifting meanings and functions over time. The collections highlight the dynamics of cultural life under the communist regime, its shifting borders, and the often blurred lines between official and non-official engagement, refusal, co-option, and opposition. Ultimately, the selection of the collections for the GDR was motivated by the main objectives of the COURAGE project, namely, to document the diversity and wealth of cultural opposition in state socialist countries and to present their significance following the events of 1989.

These collections are part of a very broad field of activities devoted to the history of the GDR. Arguably, the history of no other socialist country has received as much attention by researchers and policy-makers as the GDR. This fact, of course, is conditioned by the specific fate of the GDR, which disappeared as an independent country in October 1990. Reunification spurred intensive, contentious, and ongoing debates on how the past of the GDR should be integrated into German history. One popular narrative focuses on the peaceful revolution of 1989, calling it the only successful democratic revolution of Germany. Within this narrative, opposition to the rule of the SED became an important aspect of the history of eventual self-liberation. On the other hand, this made the history of opposition liable to politicization. Against attempts to simplify the history of the GDR, specialized institutions and research centres such as the Centre for Contemporary History Research in Potsdam (*Zentrum für Zeithistorische Forschung, ZZF*) have produced ground-breaking research on its social and cultural history, including questions of dissent, opposition, and counterculture.²⁷

The importance of the GDR as a topic of public debate is also illustrated by the existence of specialized institutions dedicated to the study of its history and the preservation of the documents concerning this history, including documents pertaining to former opposition. The Federal Commissioner for the Stasi Records, established in late 1990, became a model for the safekeeping and securing of the archival holdings of the former secret police for other post-socialist countries.²⁸ It guarantees citizens access to their state security (Stasi) files, supports research, organizes broad public education programs, and oversees the operations of a museum. Another federal institution, the Federal Foundation for the Reappraisal of the SED Dictatorship (*Bundestiftung zur Aufarbeitung der SED-Diktatur*), is assigned by law to support research and education about the GDR. It has its own archive, which also documents opposition (some of the collections are described by COURAGE), has published widely on the GDR, produces materials for educational purposes, organizes exhibitions and various events, and supports projects undertaken by partners. As a consequence of Germany's federal structure, the individual

27 For more on the ZZF, see its website: <http://zzf-potsdam.de/en>. Accessed September 27, 2018.

28 See the website of the commissioner: https://www.bstu.bund.de/EN/PublicEducation/_node.html. Accessed September 27, 2018.

states also support similar activities and institutions. State governments provide financial support for a wide array of non-governmental initiatives. At the same time, there are many private organizations dealing with the history of the GDR and documenting its past. Some of these activities are not supported by the state or even do not seek its support because they are critical of state-driven efforts to reevaluate the history of the GDR.

Given the complex and varied institutional landscape involved in dealing with the GDR past, COURAGE's aim was to cover collections organized by different types of institutions, from federal to local, as well as private initiatives. For this reason, collections differ significantly in terms of size, financing, availability of space and (trained) personnel, and capacity for dissemination and networking.

The collections described in the GDR part of the COURAGE Registry highlight the significance of the material legacy held by various state and private institutions involved in preservation, conservation, research, communication, and political education as part of efforts to foster a more nuanced understanding of the recent past. These initiatives either emerged in the context of the transformation processes after 1989 or were undertaken before the regime fell, while their significance has changed following the end of the SED dictatorship. The non-conformist artist Reinhardt Zabka, who provoked the GDR's cultural bureaucrats, for example, established the Lügenmuseum (Museum of Lies) in the small town of Radebeul.²⁹ It documents the persistence of a non-conformist stance which remains provocative under the democratic system in place today and also faces bureaucratic difficulties.

Consequently, COURAGE documents a broad array of initiatives, ranging from initiatives with the full support of the federal parliament and government to private initiatives, which do not enjoy the recognition of the state. In the following, the collections, their institutional owners, and their main characteristics will be briefly presented.³⁰

An important source of documenting cultural opposition has been provided by the major archives that originate from the (former) state institutions which controlled and organized the cultural scene and kept its actors under observation. This includes, for example, secret police materials which today are held in the archive of the Federal Commissioner for the Records of the State Secret Service of the former GDR.³¹ These materials contain important documents regarding the history of political repression in the GDR and also a vast array of files documenting resistance and opposition to the dictatorship, including dissent and counterculture, from the point of view of the main in-

29 See its website at <http://www.luegenmuseum.de/wb/>. Accessed September 27, 2018.

30 See the array of data in Mählert, *Vademekum DDR-Forschung*.

31 COURAGE Registry, s.v. "Stasi records", by Uwe Sonnenberg, 2018. Accessed: September 27, 2018.

stitution of surveillance and repression.³² Key sources for the study of cultural policy in the GDR and of the SED are found among the materials held in the Federal Archive's GDR department in Berlin. It contains the records of the dictatorship's central state authorities. In connection with culture in the GDR, the collections of the Academy of Arts in Berlin are of particular importance. They contain the legacies of numerous artists and cultural activists, among them major figures of cultural opposition in the GDR. It also contains a unique collection of documents from theatres in the GDR.³³ These documents offer examples of the practices of censorship and the strategies adopted by writers and directors who sought to stage dramas that were, in some way, critical of the regime. For example, they crafted productions of classic works for the theatre in ways that offered implicit (or not so implicit) critical associations with life in the GDR. This collection highlights the persistence of critical stances and the longing for artistic autonomy in the theatre, which was a hugely popular art form in the GDR.

The archives, which emerged from the civic movements have also played an important role in the preservation of documents related to counterculture and dissent. In contrast to the archives originating from former state institutions, these archives focus in particular on documents related to individuals and non-official groups. Hence, they present an important counter-narrative to "official" documents, because they were not directly produced by the peculiar epistemology of a repressive state. One of the most extensive civic-movement collections is the Archive of the GDR Opposition, established and operated by the Robert Havemann Association.³⁴ Furthermore, collections which promote an understanding of the alternative scenes in the GDR have been included in the Archive of the GDR Opposition, for instance the records on the Independent Women's Federation and GrauZone (Grey zone), the documentation center of the non-state women's movement in the GDR. The Robert Havemann Association made a contribution to the Campus of Democracy,³⁵ a project initiated by Roland Jahn, the Federal Commissioner for the Stasi Records. The Campus is developed on the grounds of the headquarters of the former Ministry of State Security.

Further collections described by COURAGE demonstrate the ongoing processes involved in the institutionalization of projects originating from the former opposition in the GDR with the aim of preserving its memory and

32 Information on the archival holdings of this federal institution is provided here: https://www.bstu.bund.de/EN/Archives/InventoryInformation/_node.html. Accessed September 27, 2018.

33 Archive Performing Arts Collection: COURAGE Registry, s.v. "Theatre in the 'Wende' Collection", by Laura Demeter, 2018. Accessed: September 27, 2018. (forthcoming)

34 Archive of the Opposition to the GDR: COURAGE Registry, s.v. "Archive of the GDR-Opposition at the Robert Havemann Society", by Uwe Sonnenberg, 2018. Accessed: September 27, 2018.

35 https://www.bstu.bund.de/SharedDocs/Downloads/DE/jahn_campus.pdf?__blob=publicationFile Accessed: September 27, 2018.

legacy. In the 1990s, these kinds of initiatives created regional clusters, encouraged in part by the rebirth of states with their own governments on the territory of the former GDR after re-unification. Since education and research are for the most part matters of state government, the administrative structure of Germany provided an important framework for the organization of the archives (both state-run and private). Some of the most important regional non-state collections were organized by the Archive of the Civic Movement Leipzig, which focuses on the history of the human rights, peace, and environmental movements in Leipzig.³⁶ This Archive, like other initiatives originating from civic movements, traces its foundation back to the last years of SED rule. The Jena-based Matthias Domaschk Archive for Contemporary History plays a similar role in the preservation of the memory of dissent and opposition in Thüringen.³⁷ The Environmental Library of Großhennersdorf has developed into an important center of knowledge about oppositional movements in Western Saxony.³⁸ Other collections with a regional or local focus, such as the Archive of the Peace and Human Rights Initiative in Leipzig, the Martin Luther King Centre of Nonviolence and Civil Courage Germany – Archive of the Civil Rights Movement of South West Saxony in Werdau and the “ARGUS” environmental group in Potsdam will hopefully be described in the COURAGE Registry in the future.

On the federal level, the institution with the strongest focus on documenting specifically the legacy of opposition in the GDR is the Federal Foundation for the Study of the SED Dictatorship in Berlin.³⁹ Its holdings are constantly growing, for example through the addition of new collections, such as the Archive for Suppressed Literature in the GDR. In addition to this collection, the artistic collection of Roger Loewig and the ongoing project of acquiring the digital photographic collection of Harald Hauswald are described in the COURAGE Registry. In contrast to many of the non-governmental initiatives, this federal institution promotes and is actively financially supporting professional archival preservation with broad educational and dissemination purposes. It also supports, on a project basis, other initiatives or institutions which deal the GDR from a public-history point of view.

In general, the diversity of institutions dealing, in one way or another, with the history of the GDR and its legacy after 1989 is overwhelming. In addition to the abovementioned institutions, which deal exclusively or mainly with GDR history, there are also relevant collections at a variety of other museums, librar-

36 “Civic Movement Archive”: COURAGE Registry, s.v. “Document Collection of the Civic Movement Archive in Leipzig”, by Uwe Sonnenberg, 2018. Accessed: September 27, 2018.

37 COURAGE Registry, s.v. “Thuringian Archive for Contemporary History ‘Matthias Domaschk’”, by Uwe Sonnenberg, 2018. Accessed: September 27, 2018.

38 COURAGE Registry, s.v. “Archive Citizens Movement of Environmental Library Grosshennersdorf”, by Uwe Sonnenberg, 2018. Accessed: September 27, 2018. (forthcoming)

39 See the registry entry at: COURAGE Registry, s.v. “Federal Foundation for the Reappraisal of the SED Dictatorship”, by Uwe Sonnenberg, 2017. Accessed: September 27, 2018.

ies, and academic institutions. A good example is the collection on Erich Loest, maintained by the Cultural and Environmental Foundation of the Leipzig Area (Kultur- und Umweltstiftung Leipziger Land), and the legacy library of one of the GDR's foremost writers, Heiner Müller, hosted by the Institute for German Literature at the Humboldt University in Berlin.⁴⁰ The aforementioned Academy of Fine Arts in Berlin also belongs in this category; it preserves, for example, documents from the GDR's independent literature and art scene, such as the archive of Jan Faktor and Gino Hahneman, an artist belonging to the LGBT community. Also, museums, such as the German Historical Museum in Berlin, contain artefacts pertaining to cultural resistance in Eastern Germany. In the COURAGE Registry, such collections are often described as ad-hoc collections, because they are not organized as separate collections at these institutions. Only through the act of description were documents in these institutions relating to important events and personalities of cultural opposition brought into a systematic relationship with one another. An example of this is the collection of photographs capturing daily life in the GDR by the photographer Jürgen Nagel, which is part of the photography collection of the German Historical Museum in Berlin.

Thematically, on the one hand, the collections highlight oppositional activities by well-known dissidents and critically minded writers, such as the activities documented by the Archives of Suppressed Literature collection. These collections reveal the persistence of efforts to generate alternative categories of public life, as well as the persistence of state efforts to suppress them. They also make clear that, as is the case in many other countries, the lines between official or tacit acceptance by the authorities and suppression were often blurred. One person could have very different experiences with the state. Many intellectuals skillfully negotiated the official constraints and managed to produce public displays of their critiques of the regime (the theatre documentation of the Academy of Arts is an excellent example of this). The importance of grey zones is also evident in materials on youth cultures. This theme comes up in several collections, it and shows how important the younger generation was both to the state and as a basis for counterculture. Breakdance is a case in point, and it is described as a phenomenon of counterculture in COURAGE: it was not illegal, and break-dancers were not persecuted, but at the same time, it transgressed the official borders of "culture" and, thus, created alternative worlds of meaning. Environmental issues are another example of a field of activism in which the boundaries between official and non-official, accepted and oppositional behavior were very blurred. It comes up in several collections.

The preserved material legacy of the cultural opposition is extremely varied. It encompasses publications, unpublished documents, paintings and photography, video and audio documentation, installations, prints, posters,

40 COURAGE Registry, s.v. "Erich Loest Archive", Jacqueline Nießer, 2018. Accessed: September 27, 2018. (forthcoming); COURAGE Registry, s.v. "Heiner Müller Archive / Transitroom", by Uwe Sonnenberg, 2017. Accessed: September 27, 2018.

samizdat, personal items, and personal diaries. This variety of materials also indicates the complexity and diversity of forms of subversion, alternative artistic forms of creation, and expressions and rituals of opposition. These materials widen our understanding of cultural opposition and of how opposition can be articulated and manifested. They also show how media, ideas, and genres moved between different countries, thus illustrating the transnational and international nature of cultural opposition. The film archive Ex.Oriente.Lux contains many examples of transnational transposition of media and techniques of articulating oppositional attitudes and stances.⁴¹

One of the aims of the COURAGE Registry is to draw attention to actors and phenomenon that to some extent have been eclipsed by iconic personalities and events. It wants to shed equal light on the many grey-zone areas and on lesser known but still important figures. This aim is exemplified by the collection of the painter Roger Loewig, an artist who relocated to West Berlin in 1972 and who continued to be outside of the mainstream in West Germany and only slowly received more recognition after 1989.⁴² The collections described by COURAGE, understood as a selection of a wider and diverse phenomenon to be further explored, powerfully demonstrate the richness of cultural life in the GDR, which went far beyond the predominance of the paradigm of Socialist Realism.

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41 COURAGE Registry, s.v. “Ex.Oriente.Lux - Experimental Film Archive East”, by Jacqueline Nießer, 2018. Accessed: September 27, 2018. (forthcoming)

42 COURAGE Registry, s.v. “Roger Loewig Collection”, by Laura Demeter, 2018. Accessed: September 27, 2018. (forthcoming)

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