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**EAST GERMANY IN SEARCH OF A VOICE**

This article examines some attempts in the post-unification period by left-wing critical intellectuals, many of whom were prominent in the old GDR opposition movements, to give a convincing account of what East Germany could bring to a united Germany. These discussions are essentially attempts to refute the arguments summed up in Kurt Sontheimer's bald assertion that East Germany has nothing to bring to a united Germany but "Land und Leute." The discussions are of lasting significance because they mark a shift away from some early and hasty attempts to define what East Germany might bring into a united Germany and towards a more realistic assessment of what it meant to be a citizen of the GDR.

There have been many dead ends in the debate about what East Germany could offer a united Germany. Arguments in favor of elements of the GDR's social system, or appeals to the "antifascist heritage" of the GDR tended to crumble in the face of closer scrutiny. Another not particularly productive line of thought is familiar from pre-1989 days. GDR dissidents were in the habit of sharpening their attack on the SED's brand of socialism by putting it on a par with Western capitalism: Robert Havemann saw East Germany struggling to follow capitalism at the very time when the capitalist order was revealing itself as inadequate. Rudolf Bahro argued that the social structure of East Germany was essentially the same as that of a capitalist country, and Christa Wolf had not distinguished between East and West when apportioning blame for the arms race. This Gleichsetzung has now been revived and inverted, with the situation of East Germans in post-unification Germany being put on a par with their situation in the GDR. The idea that conditions of life for East Germans in the united Germany have justifiably evoked the same defensive response as the conditions of life under the SED is taken up by Jens Reich who writes of East Germans' revolt against "unsere zweite Objek-

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Similarly, Heiko Lietz of Bündnis 90 writes: "Der Verlust der politischen Freiheiten in früheren Zeiten ist heute bei vielen ausgetauscht worden mit dem zunehmenden Verlust sozialer Sicherheit. Der einen Fremdbestimmung entronnen, finden wir uns - wenn auch nicht ganz ohne eigenes Verschulden - in einer neuen Fremdbestimmung wieder, die an Gnadenlosigkeit der vorherigen kaum nachsteht, sie an verschiedenen Stellen gar noch überbietet."\(^5\) (Public opinion surveys suggest incidentally that the majority of East Germans do not share this view: 62 percent considered the opportunities for "politische Mitwirkung" one year after German unification were good or better than before.\(^6\)

It may be, as Sigrid Meuschel has argued, that the East German population is experiencing German unification essentially as an "occupation."\(^7\) Others have referred to it as a colonization. But those who were left-wing dissidents in the GDR run the risk of further marginalizing themselves when they take the often chaotic reality of integration as sufficient justification for indiscriminately transferring their old critique of the SED to the Federal government.

Stefan Heym expresses not only the bitterness of East German intellectuals who played a prominent role in the events of late 1989 but also a reluctance to consider what new role intellectuals might assume in the very different circumstances of a united Germany. He detects a campaign to discredit those East German intellectuals who stayed in the GDR and spoke the truth whenever they could. They were closely bound to the people who demonstrated on the Alexanderplatz, but today they are criticised as cowards who actually lent the old GDR regime an aura of respectability by staying in the country. Now that the GDR no longer exists it has been decided that these intellectuals were also no geniuses. While there is much to support Heym's assertion that there is a campaign against East German writers, his conclusion shows a clear wish to continue in the old role of the GDR critical intellectual and a failure to acknowledge any new opportunities for the population to participate in political processes in the united Germany: for Heym hauling down from their pedestals the few intellectuals who were still respected by the population is a way of leaving those at the bottom of society completely without figures they can trust to articulate their concerns. He asserts that

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