

**GRAFFITI ON THE WALL:
Reading History Through News Media:
The role of news media in historical crises, in the case
of the collapse of the Eastern bloc in Europe 1989.**

Thesis submitted by

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FRONTISPIECE

What is news?

“Journalism – especially political journalism – is often akin to having the best seat in the grandstand. You get to watch, abuse, dissect and pontificate, safe in the knowledge you’ll never have to pull on a jumper and cop a tackle.” Matt Price, “Journalists under fire from Senate inquiry”, The Australian – Media, 9-15.5.02

“Nobody knows what news is important until a hundred years afterwards.” Friedrich Nietzsche

Social movements

*“And the words that are used
For to get the ship confused
Will not be understood as they’re spoken.
For the chains of the sea
Will have busted in the night
And will be buried at the bottom of the ocean...
... And the ship’s wise men
Will remind you once again
That the whole wide world is watchin’.”* Bob Dylan, “When the Ship Comes In”

“Collective action ... can offer even resource-poor groups opportunities ... and it can pry open institutional barriers through which their demands an pour.” Sidney Tarrow

“We can’t continue with this anarchist democracy, with everything based on good will and working twenty-two hours a day. We shall have to change into a proper, organised political force.” Jan Urban, Civic Forum, Prague, December 1989

Change in Europe

“What would things have been like if ... during periods of mass arrests ... people had not simply sat there in their lairs, paling with terror at every bang on the downstairs door and every step on the staircase, but had understood they had nothing left to lose and had boldly set up in the downstairs hall an ambush of half a dozen people?” Alexander Solzhenitsyn, Gulag Archipelago

“Communism was overthrown by life, by thought, by human dignity.” Vaclav Havel, 1992

“Wer sind ein Volk.” Leipzig 18.12.89

“If Europe were once again united in the sharing of its common heritage, there would be no limit to the happiness, to the prosperity and glory which its three or four hundred million people would enjoy... We must build a kind of United States of Europe.” Winston Churchill, Zurich, September 1946

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Photograph 1 Previous page; breach of the Berlin Wall (AAP)

Photograph 2 Scene at West German Embassy, Prague
2.10.89

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ABSTRACT

The thesis reviews the engagement of news media in the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe in 1989, most vividly represented by the opening of the Berlin Wall. It uses field observations of the author as a journalist of the time, extensive interviews with other news correspondents, a review of historical writing on the period, and an exhaustive review of the coverage given by six major news outlets. The work sees the change in Europe being driven by mass social movements, but also examines conventional, institutional politics at work, and describes the engagement of news media in the historical situation as it unfolds. It determines that the daily coverage by leading Western news media judged in terms of accuracy and perspective was successful, validated by later evaluations. It is informed by theoretical writing on mass social movements and on journalistic news values. It concludes by suggesting that the approach followed, a review of history from the perspective of news media of the day, could be applied to many other situations.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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Newspaper coverage in The Australian, The International Herald Tribune, The Times and The Manchester Guardian Weekly

Number of news reports and features on the topics listed

Table 2	Collapse of the Eastern Bloc June 1989 – January 1990 incl.
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Coverage of ABC Radio and Television, News and Current Affairs

Number of news and current affairs reports identified in survey

STATEMENT OF SOURCES

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in any form for another degree or diploma at any university or other institution of tertiary education. Information derived from the published or unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and a list of references is given.

Signature

Date

PREFACE

The idea of conducting this study occurred to me at some point while working in eastern Europe in 1989, in the street, probably in East Berlin. It was obvious to all that an historical change was under way, moving towards outcomes we could not imagine. It was obvious also that journalists had an invaluable vantage point for seeing and understanding what took place. Their vulnerability, obviousness as a group often wielding bulky equipment, and exposure to harm, could be traded against the fact of their being valued by many as witnesses and neutrals, their ability to expose misdeeds to public view, their officially protected status in many situations, and unlike protestors, police or other actual protagonists, their licence to leave the scene or drift into the background at any time. It could be considered also that the significance of the journalists' presence had intensified over the preceding few decades, as the number of foreign correspondents in the field had increased, and new technologies – especially satellites and advanced telephony- meant their surveillance and output was more pervasive, rapid and immune to most forms of control.

My own position was particularly advantageous because it permitted, more often required attendance at almost all of the major events as the crisis unfolded. As European Correspondent of the Australian ABC based in a single-correspondent office at the European Commission in Brussels, I was designated to maintain a cover of continental Europe, together with journalists at a bureau in London. The Corporation's editorial managers emphasised direct gathering in the field "by our own correspondents". Unlike other organisations such as the BBC there was no network of correspondents in Europe to pick up the story in different locations, so it fell to the European Correspondent to follow the action from place to place. Though several correspondents from different organisations each appeared at many places and had access to excellent information on the rest, few individuals had occasion personally to make the full tour of events in this way.

The work was constant and preoccupying; it was no time to approach questions which I was putting to myself: What is being done or undone in terms of ongoing relations within the human family, and what is the full significance of these historic events? What difference will be made by having this enormous presence on the part of news media, and the coverage they produce? In other terms: What manner of event is being witnessed? What does it show about

how the news media work? What place does the news media have in the formation of the outcomes? The journalistic work done at the time was in effect a first stage of field work for the project to follow. Looking for answers then required systematic research and writing . The thesis presented here is the main outcome.

SYNOPSIS

The collapse of communism in Eastern Europe was a pivotal event in contemporary history, re-shaping the balance of international power and the freedoms and prospects of the populations of several countries. It was a dramatic political transformation from the time when, a few years before, nearly all the communist regimes were imagined as being entrenched, with hopes of change seeming to be an illusion. However under the force of mass social movements, after a short period of crisis, the old orders were overthrown and much more democratic regimes were born. Further sweeping changes were anticipated as a consequence, through German reunification and the integration of European states.

This transformation was a test for international news media in terms of accuracy and perspective. The reporting of change and crisis, and of social movements when the power situation is fluid and uncertain, is much more complex than reporting institutional leaders' statements and activities during times of stability. Moreover the news media were not only reporting events, but were implicated in their development, as the intensity of international attention affected the actions and strategies of the participants.

This thesis studies the reporting of developments among the elite Western news media. It does so through an intensive and comprehensive review of news content in six media outlets over the most crucial, six-month period, which begins in August 1989, encompasses the fall of the Berlin Wall and finishes with the preparations for German reunification. It does so also through in-depth interviews with 23 journalists who covered these events, and through participant observation, based on the author's own experiences as a journalist at that time.

The study finds that news reporting provided a reliable guide to the unfolding events. That is checked against histories written since, which have tended to confirm the main themes of the coverage provided on the day by the international media. The reporters faced major tasks but none felt they lived under pressure from home desks or other sources to distort their account of events. They found that relations with the emerging social movements were mutually beneficial,

though still needing to be balanced with attention to conventional politics. On the whole the journalists were able to trust their own judgments about the significance of breaking news, and overall these judgments were vindicated.

The study also finds that the media reporting interacted with the developing crises in the countries under study. The intense international publicity emboldened and galvanized the mass social movements. It provided them with an extemporised resource for mobilising support. While the mass social movements are identified as fundamental in bringing on change, main factors in institutional politics, notably the attempted Soviet reform program under Gorbachev, are also explained in this study – and the connections with journalistic activity are examined.

While the rhythm of news coverage was generally appropriate, reflecting the substantial importance of developments, there were strengths and weaknesses. The panel of journalists, with the support of outside material evidence, (the verdict of more orthodox histories; their own reportage checked after a decade), can point to successes. These would include fast and adroit appreciation of the potential impact of the East German government's decision to begin opening its frontiers. On the other hand there are perceived lapses. For instance wildly distorted information about the December violence in Romania got into the coverage; and German journalists have reproached themselves over compliant treatment of government promises of a “blooming” economic future, as a result of rapid reunifications.

With more than a decade's perspective, histories since the fall of communism have generally vindicated the contemporary accounts given by quality international media. “Tabloid” media have not been studied here, but it is suggested they should not be wholly excluded from these positive findings as journalism across the board has many shared qualities.

Theoretical writing is consulted on both the phenomenon of mass social movement and the conventional news values self-consciously referred to by journalists as representing principles underpinning their work.

In the comparative section bringing together the elements of observation study, interviews, review of historical writing, and review of media contents, news media are seen as having been ubiquitous in the crisis, working autonomously close to the centre of events. An argument is then made that in general, future historical crises may be studied effectively from the

perspective of news media. It is posited that media resources - organisations, professional cadre, archived products- have been made especially potent by advanced communication and research technology. Using this study of the Eastern Europe crisis as the lead example, a framework or model is proposed whereby such events can be understood by reconstructing the news media's handling of them.

CHAPTER ONE:
INTRODUCTION

PREAMBLE

The collapse of the Eastern bloc in Europe from mid-1988 to mid-1990, with the opening of the Berlin Wall on 9 November 1989 as its central symbolic event, was universally recognised as an important crisis in history; a development that would reshape political, social and economic relations in the Eastern bloc states, fundamentally change the lives of their populations, and rearrange world geo-political circumstances. International mass media were extensively and prominently involved in this process of collapse. Their news services particularly, not only gave heavy coverage to unfolding events, but themselves became a very evident part of the picture. The heavy media presence in Eastern Europe may have been very significant and become an indicator of trends for a future in which global public media will be ubiquitous. The opening and demolition of the Berlin Wall especially was an historical turning point with all the elements of crisis – of high risk, danger, opportunity, high stakes, the need for decisions under pressure, uncertainty over who would turn out to be the deciding players, a short time frame for a plethora of events, and always, up to the last moments, uncertainty over what outcomes would arrive. As such it ranks among the leading news events of the 20th Century, being central in the reporting of the collapse of the Eastern bloc and so foreshadowing the end of the Soviet Union a little over two years later. It was a memorable “world audience live” television spectacle; the images have been heavily used as signatures for network promotions and retrospective documentaries celebrating the millennium.

This thesis asserts the phenomena of news media – particularly the activities of their personnel in the field, and their publications – were integral to the historical development that occurred. While it firmly agrees that news media did not cause or provoke the crisis, or even guide its course in some way, it starts with a reasonable observation that the crisis as it was experienced would not have been the same without the massive engagement of these media. It proposes that such crises can be understood by viewing them from the perspective of the news media, which is to say, from the special vantage point enjoyed by the media organisations and practitioners who worked on the coverage – including the writer who was present as a correspondent with Australian radio. Noting the pervasive mass public interest

and participation around the central event of the Wall's opening, and other instances of mass involvement in the forcing of communist governments from power, for instance in Czechoslovakia, Poland and also Romania, it records an investigation of what took place, as a mass social movement. The assumption is put forward that certain historical crises on a grand scale, in essential ways may be understood as political events of a cultural or social kind - with the fall of communism in Eastern Europe as a case in point. The study does recognise other fundamental causes, especially economic causes, and will not repudiate other ways of investigating what happened. At the same time it does proceed to follow its own course, to examine the developments of 1989 as a social movement, and especially to review the process as comprehended by news media, with advice from a sample group of witnesses from the news media who were involved.

It concentrates on the so-called Central East European states, which at the time were constituted as Czechoslovakia, the German Democratic Republic (GDR), Hungary and Poland. That is because the situation in those countries is most amenable to a study of this scale, being relatively settled at the time of writing, and with information coming available from diverse known sources. They have moved effectively toward full integration into the economic and security structures of Western Europe. A gap exists between those countries and the Balkan states, which were also caught up in the chain reaction which saw the communist governments lose power, but which have been experiencing far more severe economic problems and on-going ethnic conflicts, including the wars in former Yugoslavia. With these factors creating problems with information the Balkans region generally is given minor attention in this study. In terms of direct field experience the writer worked on news coverage of the crisis in all of the Central East European states, but, excluding Greece, only Romania in the Balkans.

The perspectives and perceptions of the main actors in this analysis – members of broad publics involved in mass protests or mass celebrations, political figures, and the media practitioners – are to be taken into account. To that end the literature of social movement theory is consulted and the shared professional values of the journalists who worked through the events under review, are analysed, while their assessments are considered. There are implications here for understanding the ways generally that news media function. Information produced by this investigation is formulated as a paradigm of functions of journalism, which may in turn be developed into a general model or template for examining

other historical situations.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

- **Historical review.** To reproduce a credible account of the collapse of the Eastern bloc in Europe 1989-90, developed from news media reportage, later historical writing and retrospective commentaries by journalists who worked on the coverage.
- **Review of media engagement in the crisis.** Building on the above history, to review the engagement of news media in the collapse of the Eastern bloc, in order to demonstrate relationships between the events and processes, and their representation by news media. This will be specifically in terms of informational content – fact and opinion.
- **Evaluation of the coverage.** To assess the validity of the news media's coverage by matching the outcomes of the above historical review and the review of media coverage. For criteria, this will be judged in terms of how, in content, the media coverage compares with later consensus on historical causes and effects, and in terms of the conventional news values subscribed to by the journalists.
- **General roles of news media in historical crises.** Drawing on the above account of news media involvement in the Eastern bloc crisis, to provide conclusions with evidentiary backing on ways that news media - seen as institutions or organisations, a cadre of professionals, or media products - become engaged more generally in historical situations.
- **Understanding historical situations through study of media operations.** Extrapolating from the investigation, to begin building a framework that will apply knowledge of news media and the study of news media, to assist in understanding crisis situations like the collapse of the Eastern bloc.

RESEARCH PROJECT

The following outlines the organisation of the inquiry and sets out the main assumptions. A review was made of the change in Eastern Europe, using diaries and scripts kept by the writer and texts such as Timothy Garton Ash's The Magic Lantern which provided a timetable and schedule of events. The period under review was set as six months, August 1989 through to and including January 1990. This half-year commenced in the aftermath of

elections in Poland, with negotiations over the formation of a government led by Solidarity. It ended amid headlong preparations for German reunification and parallel arrangements in train for democratic government in the other Eastern bloc states, though not yet Albania or Yugoslavia. The investigation was in the following parts:

Literature review on mass social movement and news values

The experience of the time, reviewed, indicated that the crowds in Eastern Europe, which appeared to impel the change, would need to be understood as best possible. It might be argued that other causes were more important, e.g. underlying economic distress of which the crowd behaviour was a sign. Yet the crowds were plainly important and might provide valuable insights when considered together with the mass media which they attracted. A review of social movement theory from Gamson, Tarrow and others provided a context for investigation of the mass storming of Western frontiers and of the Berlin Wall itself, and the street protests by huge gatherings of private citizens. Framing theory is referred to in this literature, applicable to the perceptions and behaviour of crowds, e.g. Tarrow's "injustice frame" or framing contests between movements and the state described by McAdam and others, and applicable also to the efforts of journalists to understand and represent what they encountered. As to the perceptions of the journalists, conventional liberal news values are the known common language of the Western news media. These are known of and referred to in most discussions about news media by members of the general public as well as by practitioners, e.g. objectivity, fairness, emphasis on accurate reporting of facts. In this investigation news values are examined again, ahead of a scan of diverse other theoretical frameworks. An effort will be made to establish to what degree journalists who worked on the East European story subscribed to such values and might give evidence of having consciously applied them. Part of the rationale for the study was to judge the reportage of 1989 against knowledge and interpretations which had since come to light, with the full value of hindsight and reflection. To that end a short history would be written in a following section using sources produced over more than a decade following 1989.

Interview program

A panel of 23 journalists who worked on the story of the collapse of the Eastern bloc participated in extended interviews for this project. They were asked for their retrospective

judgement on the historical events they witnessed at close quarters, in particular judgments as to the significance of the mass movement featured so prominently in the reportage of the time, and judgments as to the general consequence of the change, represented as it happened, as an historical milestone. The journalists were asked also to reflect on the coverage they had engaged in, to say what bearing it may have had on the progress and outcome of events. There was discussion also about the quality and success of the reportage, carried out in terms of the widely agreed, most familiar conventional news values. Further interviews were conducted with a group of informants holding particular expertise or knowledge relating to aspects of the study, including: Dr Sabine Bergmann-Pohl a Minister in the then German government and former president of the Volkskammer; Dr Reinhard Schafer, Senior Advisor to the German Chancellor; two senior academic researchers, Dominique Moisi from the IFRI at Paris and Prof. David Childs at Nottingham, and a senior *porte parole* officer of the European Commission, Niko Weghter. Most of the interviews were conducted face-to-face during field trips, to the Netherlands and Germany in 1997-98, and to the United Kingdom, France and Belgium in 1999. Two of the interviews were with correspondents who had come to Australia since 1990. Seven journalists and one academic were approached who for different reasons could not take part. The selection of individuals for interview was determined by a number of factors: all of the journalists were employed by news organisations committed to extensive coverage of international news and in the case of German media, committed to exhaustive and reflective coverage of the events under study. The news media outlets reviewed in a following section on media content were selected on the same basis. Some of the individuals concerned had been close colleagues of the writer (viz Downing, Gorman, Meade) or regular contacts (viz Kielinger, Moisi, Weghter). Access to some was obtained on the recommendation of others, and the international liaison office of the German government, Inter Nationes, provided a helpful program of introductions and visits after receiving an outline of the project on hand. The journalists were employed by major news corporations in Australia, France, Germany, the United Kingdom and the United States.

The panel did not include journalists from former communist countries because the field of study is the activity of Western news media employing the conventional Western news values. Eastern bloc journalism is referred to at different stages of this account of 1989-90. It includes: a treatment of the liberalisation of Soviet news media, and abusive coverage in Soviet media of nationalist movements in the republics; the involvement of Eastern bloc

news agencies in distributing false atrocity stories in Romania in December 1989; the 1993 critique of Western coverage by the former Hungarian television presenter Janos Horvat; and the adoption of new practices, such as, critical questions put to Gunter Schabowski by East German reporters during the “Berlin wall” media conference on 9.11.89; the determined moves by Czechoslovakian broadcasters to start live telecasts of the mass protests; and the initiatives of Romania television, hosting the National Salvation Front during the first dangerous days then for the first time taking broadcasts from the West.

The rationale for this schedule of interviews itself entails an assumption, that a group of journalists with a background of major responsibility in their field will have such substantial knowledge of the historical settings of the news they have dealt with, and such substantial professional self-knowledge, that on reflection they are able to provide an instructive, authoritative commentary. It is proposed here that this is an aware and knowledgeable professional group, and that it is a particular resource of this writer, adding value to the overall exercise, to be able to establish access, trust and empathy with its members. The journalists interviewed were told that a follow-up questionnaire would be mailed to them to outline the development of ideas for the project and accommodate any further statements they might want to make, upon reflection. This was done at the beginning of 2002 with a small number of responses and little effect on outcomes. Part of the rationale for interviewing journalists was the plain idea that persons skilled in reporting for one purpose, daily news production, could be expected to contribute well for the other purpose of reflecting on documented change. Furthermore, as the intention of the study is to discover more about the mode of operation of mass media, and their actual place in the development of the historical change, it is put forward as reasonable and a mark of thoroughness to go to leading media practitioners who worked on the events and processes in question.

Short history

The interviews provide a first accounting of what took place and the significance of reporting that was done. Later writing is then consulted to discover more, and by comparison to test the information and interpretations provided in the interviews exercise, and this writing is used to construct a short history of the six months’ period in Europe. Texts were found in library searches; in the early stages a survey was made of reviews published in the Times Literary Supplement and the New York Review of Books, for texts appearing during

1997 and 1998; and valuable references were given by interview subjects. Much of the material comes as testimony of the authors, considered and thoroughly researched. It takes in memoirs of Gorbachev and Shevardnadze, Martin Walker's The Cold War, which includes the author's observations as Moscow Correspondent with The Guardian, and five books by Garton Ash, written as events were unfolding or in the immediate aftermath. The latter have been called "journalistic" because the author's gathering method involved observation on the scene, building on scholarship in East European politics. Several other texts include reports on Freedom Forum colloquia in New York, specifically the briefing papers from a conference on "Media and the Post-Cold War World" in 1993 and The Crucial Facts, a criticism of news media by Horvat and Szanto. Similarly A New Germany in a New Europe, Herzog and Gilman editors, was produced from a colloquium at Chicago in 2001. Archie Brown's The Gorbachev Factor is essential in explaining the Soviet linkage; other sources on more peripheral or specialised issues include a set of three books by Stjepan Mestrovic on the Balkan crises; texts on clandestine broadcasting into Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union (including Nelson, Short); and several on European futures, e.g. Gowland et al, The European Mosaic. The outcome of this review of conventional sources and historical writing is an affirmation of the view of the interview panel about the pattern of events, causes and effects of the six months of crisis.

News media contents

The third element in the comparative set of three treatments, a very detailed review of media contents, as interpreted in this thesis is another affirmation that in the expression attributed to Philip Graham, "news is a first draft of history". We have in the background to this section a review of what happened and its consequences, by a qualified panel of observers who were closely involved in production of the news of the crisis as it took place. We also have the treatment of later historical writing, broadly affirming what they have said. The section itself is presented expressly as a document. The material under study is essentially information contained in the reportage about the developing historical situation. At issue is how well it served as a balanced and informative chronicle, whereby individuals with access to the particular news outlets, if they had wished, might have obtained excellent guidance on what was happening. The review of contents is a reading of 5297 news reports, newspaper features or current affairs pieces for radio or television, of which 455 are the writer's own

work from the time. It groups the material in an historical order, according to themes and the chronology of events, and uses a simplified referencing system to show how information at each step can be sourced to the coverage being given by a particular news outlet.

The data amassed in this way might have several uses, e.g. in comparing the coverage given by the different news organisations. For present purposes the focus of attention is on the clustering of interest around main developments, indicating how these would be quickly identified, weighted for importance, and publicised. (For instance all outlets almost predictably devoted enormous attention – in space and air-time, day-by-day – to the Christmas execution of Nicolae Ceasescu and his wife; however the coalescence of reports and commentary around a less obvious topic, the decision-making in East Berlin on whether to suppress the Monday night protests in Leipzig, will be show as a refined indicator of the alacrity and value of news coverage). The rationale for working in such a way, using a large volume of raw information, is to support an observation about the way news media function, that they provide an immediate and dependable working digest on events in the natural world. Such coverage is treated as direct and simplified representation of objective reality through the gathering and proffering of the news to publics.

In this account, the journalistic processes of surveillance, fact gathering, evaluation, writing and other representation are refined and powerful. Otherwise they could not produce a fast treatment of well-known, important world events, capable of being validated by critical review over a decade. With some notable reservations, the journalists' self-critical review, and the comparative standard offered by the early history based on conventional sources, are proposed as giving this validation. It was important for a large number of articles to be chosen. Firstly, as indicated above, the main events spanned six months needing study, beginning just after the 1989 Polish elections, and ending as Eastern Europe moved out of the era of the overthrow of governments, into the era of elections for new governments. Secondly, a significant selection and spread of news media had to be made, and here the definition was applied, of news media outlets that demonstrated an editorial policy committed to comprehensive treatment of international news.

This came to the selection of four “quality” newspapers and two broadcast services: The Australian, The International Herald Tribune (Paris), the Guardian Weekly (including sections from Le Monde, Los Angeles Times, New York Times and Washington Post), The

Times, and ABC (Australia) radio and television news and current affairs. Some German outlets were considered but there were serious obstacles with translation and expense, and on the editorial plane, concerns about being able to interpret correctly strictly domestic angles on this predominantly German story. Accordingly this review does not deliver a precise match between the group of journalists who are reflecting on coverage overall by the Western news media, and the choice of publications for illustration. Nevertheless eight of the journalists interviewed, plus this writer, did work on the outlets listed in the review, and their writing under by-lines is directly quoted in a number of cases. Joint characteristics of these selected news media include the commitment of substantial space or air-time recurrently to headlined international news and supporting news stories; provision of analysis and commentary to go with such stories; and treatment of the information in orthodox ways. The latter point is meant to say that information is addressed to readers and audience members in a form close to that in which it was found. For example the contents of a document referred to in the news will be quoted in part directly, and comprehensively enough to give context and background – transferring to the receiver an experience of the original, heavily treated but not transformed.

This point is made to explain the omission of tabloid artefacts which are more complex to interpret. A London tabloid newspaper, for instance, would give intermittent cover to the East European story, ignoring it on most days, giving lavish front page attention on another. While demographic figures would indicate a readership not at all well backgrounded in East European politics the coverage would depend on preconception; typically the opening of the Berlin Wall would be splashed because it could be counted on to upset the settled, private world view of a big section of the readership. In short the coverage selected for analysis here, by “quality” outlets, is the most manageable and useful for study, from two points of view: It is highly informational, showing what was known about the topic at the time, giving a regular volume and continuous flow of facts and articulated assessment; and it dealt with the information plainly, taking something of a documentary approach, assuming every story should receive a share of attention, being less chancy than “popular” outlets about what kind of product to make out of the news each day. Despite these differences the various elements of news media work on common principles and the journalists’ community coheres around shared assumptions and practices, not least the so-called “news values”. It is posited here that a demonstration will be made of what a selection of news media outlets was capable of in dealing with the historical situation, and that the outcome can be applied to all news

media.

The “open book” character of the news media selected, as mentioned, created a problem with volume, as several articles would be published on most days, over the full six months. However this has helped with validity. Commentary on news media that does not demonstrate detailed familiarity with the product under study, or even systematic content analyses, using only a limited sample of cases, will be weak and open to criticism that they are offering just words based on impressions. For an undertaking like the present inquiry, to provide an authoritative treatment it was necessary to go through the base material thoroughly. It is put forward as well that the writer, as researcher, was correctly prepared for the task of editing this journalistic material as a practitioner in the field and direct participant in the chain of events forming the basis of the coverage. Access to copies of reports from 1989-90 was not simple. The six newspapers and broadcast services chosen had kept adequate archives of back editions from the time under study, but these predated electronic archives now in use and had to be obtained from different repositories, (ABC Television Archives Sydney; National Library of Australia; QUT Brisbane Main Library; University of Queensland Library).

The term “reunification” is used for the process of joining together the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) and the German Democratic Republic (GDR) in 1990, because it was far more heavily used in general discourse and mass media than “unification”. It was employed most heavily by government leaders organising the change. It is outside the scope of this thesis to go into the debate about which term to apply, taking in additional questions on borders, international law, historical precedents and cultural or ethnic unity.

LINES OF ARGUMENT

At each point in this argument the parallel considerations are kept in view: first, substantive events and processes of the natural world, in particular the mass social movements driving or abetting change, and second, the engagements of news media, whether seen as teams of reporters on the ground, news production operations, or reports going back to the public on the unfolding change.

Construction of histories

The half-year of change is reviewed firstly according to the panel of journalists who were directly involved in the coverage. It is then reviewed as a history compiled after the events in question by other observers. It is finally reviewed through a replay of the coverage of the time by six principal media outlets. In these three accounts the story comes out substantially the same, and there are sections of repetition at key points. For example early causes of the chain of events are identified with crisis in the Soviet Union and the reform policies of Mikhail Gorbachev, including rapprochement with the West and non-intervention in Eastern Europe, undermining the region's unstable governments. Other causes are associated with the interventions of the Polish Pope and re-emergence of Polish Solidarity in 1988, together with advances by reform communists in Hungary who opened the "Iron Curtain" to hundreds of thousands of East German border crossers. The change is seen as having been rendered inevitable by this German exodus, and by mass street protests especially in East Germany and Czechoslovakia, to a lesser extent in Romania or Bulgaria.

Commentaries by the writer highlight points in common among these three treatments, in particular the pertinence of mass media to the development of events, and the characteristics of mass social movements; those characteristics being: informal movements; inspirationally formed around folk memory, mass grievances, thorough-going alienation from the government and system; fuelled by a sense of opportunity to make demands felt; not durable, prone to split and disperse, or to find an accommodation in institutional politics; dependent throughout on attention from the mass media as a substitute for abiding resources, used for communication with followers and to marshal protest, as a lever of power. What conclusions are to be drawn from this consensus of three approaches? In general terms the exercise shows an interplay in times of crisis between the mass social movement and conventional politics, with the articulation of demands and generation of pressure on one hand, and attention to the mechanisms of state power on the other, so as to get outcomes organised. The example is given of the activities of the German Chancellor Helmut Kohl from December 1989 as central to the final settling of the crisis. In all three accounts as in his own testament he was to become aware of the mass movement in East Germany as a potent, unanswerable force, and commence a round of negotiations with diverse parties to affect a political settlement. News media in such processes are seen as forming at least a constant presence and roles are considered for media such as sustaining the protest movement and transmitting messages among protagonists otherwise out of contact with one

another. In certain periods, when informal movements become ascendant, journalists will be forced out of their routines of following the organised schedules of the powerful and elites, in order to pursue the more volatile game of obtaining information from the movement in the streets. Then they will revert to standard operating procedures, to monitor the making of arrangements that will come after a major change. Just as predictably a mass social movement will be seen to start looking for ways to institutionalise itself, to work in more conventional ways. In 1989 news media operations oscillated from one form to the other, in response to the evolution of events.

The present account, by discovering the high impact of individual decisions and actions, especially by Gorbachev and Kohl, opts for a voluntarist view that emphasises the initiatives of history-makers during critical incidents, within their context of broad social, economic or political change. As seen by journalists from their close-up position, in the words of one interviewee, Philippe Naughton from Reuters: “Kohl will go down in history as having the foresight and vision to realise what was happening and turn it his way; Gorbachev at the time was the hero, the man who cut things loose”. A Times article gave a recent restatement of the issue of personalities and high points of action in a crisis, trying to relate sensational individual actions, or happenings, to a broader context: “Saturated by the extravagant claims of modern news we have come to expect turning points in every bulletin; we see the course of events in a straight line, suddenly knocked off kilter by whatever has ‘suddenly’ happened. But in reality, the single momentous event that shifts the plates of history is a remarkable rarity ... The fall of the Berlin Wall is a convenient journalistic metaphor for a far wider and more complex dismantling of communism: by focusing on the image of the man with the sledgehammer, we absolve ourselves from looking at the bigger picture, or the ways in which the event did not change ordinary lives in Eastern Europe ...” (1)

Performance of news media

The consensus of the three treatments, specifically in terms of how news media function, will be that the journalists succeeded in their mission in terms of their conventional news values. Their contemporaneous account of 1989-90 has been validated, so far, by subsequent understandings of the situation; and by extension, the review carried out here strengthens a “professionalising” view of journalists in the Western democracies, as working autonomously in service of a common mission defined by news values, shared on close to a

consensual basis. There are reservations to be noted. The panel of journalists listed several failures of understanding or resolve on their own part. The German journalists were concerned about news media having adopted false government positions on the strength or otherwise of the East German economy, over several years before the change, and then in the era of reconstruction within a reunited Germany. Similarly journalists at the European Commission regretted seeing no links between the revolution in Eastern Europe and development of the single market, which would inspire extraordinary efforts by the newly democratised states to join in, and so reshape the boundaries of Europe. There are also external criticisms of the reporting of the process of change, to be taken into account, such as those of Horvat and Szanto. The interpretation that should be given to the mass movement aspect of the crisis, both in media reporting of the era and in later analyses, remains open to question. In particular there are reservations about the view that whole communities were out in wholesale rejection of the communist order and way of life. Dr Reinhard Schafers, nominated to provide a briefing for this project on positions of the federal government in Bonn, observed that apart from dissent within the communist establishment. The opposition movement in East Germany had been exceptionally small and weak, conducted mainly by church activists and artists, commanding mass support only during a short interlude; not really a sign of it having been a growing, spontaneous mass movement, nor of on-going adherence to any particular values. There was a “hard core” of protest and the build-up of mass support was slow, eventually resulting in the large numbers coming in, assisted by the rise of Gorbachev as a catalyst. “It took them some time ... This was rather late in the process, almost approaching the peak of Gorbachev’s time,” he said.

In the latter example, as recounted by Schafers, exposure to news media was an element in the precipitation of an eventual revolt in the GDR, through the availability of political messages from West German television, and also the more open agenda of Soviet television under a reformist regime, picked up by Russian speakers in East Germany. At each step in the three treatments of the process of change, news media appear, forming a continuing linkage between governments and publics, or other political forces and publics, so the role of the media practitioners again comes under examination. Were media practitioners seeking to go beyond publicising extraordinary facts, in order to provoke or abet change on their own part? By their own account it was not so; they were ever working according to the ordinary *dicta* of their craft, conventional news values, far from obsessed with the notion of direct generic community effects. Such cases might revive discussion on

the notion of journalists as occupying a quasi-official, institutionalised status in public life. Guided by social responsibility such journalists must be protected from unjustifiable external interference as always, formally bound by ethics, news values and standards of entry to ensure quality “hands-off” performance, suitable for placement on a register, on the model of other professional groups. However the interviews with the panel of journalists did not move in that direction; it does not go beyond mention in this study.

The perceptions of journalists and their rendering of issues are more exposed here than ideas about news media forming an institution, for instance to pursue interests in common with others, like government or corporate businesses. The self-proclaimed mentality of these journalists is the familiar mix of easy openness to any possibility matched with an emphatic commitment to “standards”, the conventional news values. It is a self-critical group, as represented by two of the correspondents who worked in the savage and ill-defined terrain of Yugoslavia. Mark Brayne from the BBC, concluding the Serb leader Milosevic was adopting fascist politics, could not use the word in his reportage – as his conclusion could not then be explained in a news context and audiences otherwise could not be expected to accept it. Naughton considered a chain of murderous incidents and concluded, “we did not know how to understand it”; a threat to professional self-esteem, as conventional news values adjure all reporters to ensure they understand any story before it can be written. Like the subjects of their reports the journalists were engaged in framing exercises to get a working understanding of what they had before them, as in this definition from Snow: “conscious strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and of themselves that legitimate and motivate collective action”.

The masses of people, who would repeatedly initiate the next phase of action in the historical process; who would provoke a crisis, and proclaim demands which absolutely had to be met, would preoccupy the coverage and make the journalists grapple to understand. As came to be broadly accepted, it was the emergence of a civil society that until those days had been at best dormant, thought to be extinguished. The journalists would note, define and try to analyse the manifestations of this phenomenon. The crowds, with their resentment and cynicism towards communist authority, and their anger over its failure to deliver goods and services, were perceived and characterised as people highly conscious of being “robbed of a life”. As they stood up to protest and try to remove the government, the danger of the situation would be represented in the news as a replay of the situation before the massacre of

Tienanmen Square – a familiar, recent, vividly credible model. The response of the crowds, pushing on with the movement, gathering more numbers, was seen in news reports as demonstrating “loss of fear”, removing a blockage to change in many aspects of life in the Eastern bloc societies.

Days of major crisis

Such fumbling after the meaning of all the street activity might produce credible day-by-day coverage, but the regular devices of journalism would be close to overwhelmed when crisis was at its height. It would happen for short periods during which all normal business was stopped; normal relations, links to authority and the positions of usual definers of the situation would be suspended; governments might declare themselves out of office; violence might seem to be in the offing; above all, the crisis would blot out all other public activity and would seem to touch the life of every citizen of the day. Journalists could take their place with the public at mass gatherings or the hastily organised forums of the dissidents. The biographies, motivations and demands of the main actors were close to the surface and obtainable easily enough, but no longer through usual channels.

This was seen in the days of the velvet revolution, taking place over less than a fortnight, as Czechoslovakia stood still, masses in the street preventing action by the government except to negotiate at disadvantage with dissident leaders who had the crowds at their command. In Romania it was close to the curfew-and-confrontation brought on in a country enduring violent revolution or a *coup d'état*; there was mass public involvement, but the movement for change was hardly led by the citizens. The most sensational public, and public-driven days of suspension came with the crisis surrounding the opening of the Berlin Wall, a matter of a week, but in history a long moment in time. A movement had arisen for the most part without leadership or a plan; the population of a country, literally, surged towards the West; in East Germany the game of government obviously had ended; no-one could know what would follow, but fear had gone and the change many had found too challenging to imagine suddenly had to be faced. As the long moment was given over to a world party, news media duly recorded it and spread the word; little else could be said or done. Then political and civic leaders sought to regain the initiative, to arrange the business side of the dramatic event – doling out of travel money; opening of new border check-points; convening of the expected forums and welcomes; making of appeals for a return to normal work; appeals to

citizens to postpone their travels to the West; negotiations with interested parties, within Germany, and among foreign states, on options for the future. News media accordingly would revert also to more regular business. The heavily floodlit episode is used to show the coupling of news media to realities brought up with the tide of history; in the moment of the movement, a coverage of the public event; in the moment of negotiated change, political coverage and commentary to make good sense out of the confrontation and compromise deciding outcomes for all.

Media-based reconstruction

For purposes of this argument the most dramatic episode of the Berlin Wall is used as a demonstration of the integration of news media with events in historical crises. The exploration of the journalists' engagement in the week of the Berlin Wall, and with all other stages in the collapse of the Eastern bloc, provides the material for a proposal at the conclusion of this dissertation. It is a proposal for an approach to general understanding of historical events through reconstruction of the news media engagements associated with those events. It would be a reversal of common practice, which is to take time over sources and documentation in an "unrepresented" state, and perhaps to then seek confirmation in media representations from the time. It is not a proposal to read back over the news from an outside perspective, seeking to interpret what it might mean – although in an era of high-speed, high-volume technologies, and super efficient industries working on a global scale, such an approach to interpretative research would be more persuasive than in former times. The actual proposal is another kind of outgrowth of the same technological and organisational advance. It is a proposal to take advantage of the transparency, proliferation, rapid flow and ease of archiving of treated information, bringing with it a revolution also in the availability of informed analysis and opinion. It is a proposal to take advantage also of the near-omnipresence of news media in major crises, in a world where communication services are very widely deployed. It asserts that with information now produced in overwhelming floods, news media, skilled and equipped for such tasks, are proving to be among the best managers, masticators, movers and mediators of meaningful data for masses of people. In simplest terms it proposes, as a path to understanding, immediate reconstructions of media operations that have taken place during major episodes, to draw on the surveillance, intelligence gathering, reporting and presentation of findings in the news – with a focus on the processed content, the step-by-step assembly and interpretation of

information. Doing this would require knowledge of news operations; preparation as with the operation of any complex system. It will be claimed that because of the quantitative and qualitative shifts in availability of information in recent times, this may be worked up as research practice, to be a distinct form of appraisal and resolution of knowledge and ideas.

(1) Ben McIntyre, “Pinning the Pivots of History”, reprinted in The Australian – Higher Education, 30.1.02

CHAPTER TWO

REPORTING SOCIAL MOVEMENTS-ONE

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT IN THE CRISIS

This section investigates the events of 1989 as a social movement or amalgam of social movements. It begins by referring to general research and scholarship in the social movement field, to explain what took place, and examine its meanings to citizens of Eastern bloc countries who took part in demanding change.

Social movement theories and popular rebellion in Eastern Europe

Current historical treatments of the Eastern bloc collapse give a prominent place to the visit of the Polish Pope to his home country in 1979 (1). The intense media cover it received was similar to papal visits in other places but in particular put focus on the standing of that country's government in relation to its public. Unimpeded media coverage from Eastern bloc countries was rare, and given the doctrinal clash between curia and regime, it was a large news opportunity. Reflected by this interest, amid a profusion of red and white banners or flowers, people in the crowds were seen turning their backs on police, deferring instead to unofficial marshals. This appeared as the assertion of a civil society long suppressed where the communist party asserted its "leading role" in all aspects of public life. The government had been facing a strong challenge by the independent trade union movement, Solidarity, with its links to the Church. Evidence would emerge that the Polish state authorities and Soviet leadership had been nonplussed by the election of Cardinal Karol Wojtyla to the papacy in October 1978, and his proposal to return to Poland; as was obvious on the day, they had opted to acquiesce and suffer through the event (2). Against this concession of the battlefield the startling images in the streets, above all the massive crowd turn-out, could not be denied. Something of historical significance looked to be going on, and it was open to the entire world to see, wherever news media were free to broadcast the sights and sounds. In those respects the situation foreshadowed events in the other Eastern European countries a decade later, including the climactic event at the Berlin Wall: a mass social movement of some kind making itself manifest in demonstrations, religious or secular; Western news media showing these extraordinary scenes; communist authorities apparently unable to make

any response even, in the end, if it might save the system.

The historical record shows news media themselves engaged as participants in events, as an element in the process; at the same time what happened is shown as a mass social movement, or change with elements of mass public engagement. While the sudden events of 1989 took place in different national, cultural settings, the mass movement factor, while stronger in some places than others, was common. It highlighted universal themes -triumph of the human spirit; contempt for frontiers- that stood out also in the media representation. That is especially so, it will be argued here, where crowds began appropriating the coverage unto themselves. This appropriation is suggested in **Photograph 1** included with this document. There is an indication of what it all would mean to the people in the crowd, and what they mean to be doing. Although professionally recorded the treatment is getting out of the hands of journalists; the event and the representation of it is well and truly the property of the participants and of any observers, in their undifferentiated human identities.

The social movement approach of William Gamson, Sidney Tarrow and others provides a context for reading this evidence of mass public engagement as the motor for impending great change - unseating of government, over-turning of institutions, revolution. Numerous instances are provided, drawn initially from dissident activities in the United States over civil rights issues or the Vietnam war but moving on to provide examples from the East European crisis. The applications here begin with alienation, the failure of relations between the Eastern bloc governments and their citizens, over time, through palpable economic failure and imposition of hardship on private lives; accretion of power, hence ability - before the time of revolt - to force through any change, by a *nomenklatura*, the enclosed political community; the widely despised guaranteeing of the security of the regimes by the Soviet Union - and in the minds of many the existence of the alternative, the West, as represented by increasingly available news media.

Gamson demonstrates the phenomenon of governments being alienated from their publics, bringing on conditions where “collective action takes a non-institutionalised form” and where the flow of demands on government will change from pacific and continuous to violent and disruptive - when circumstances begin to present opportunities (3). Where there is alienation, and with it loss of legitimacy of the regime, its decisions will be actively called into question, and the “revolutionary situation” will arise: “If a group within a society defies

the regime, and that regime orders its soldiers to arrest the rebellious group and they are unable to do so, the regime is not exercising effective authority over such a group” (4).

The psychology of dissenting groups is considered, along with the pattern of attempts by governments to deal with them and retain effective social control, as through persuasion, co-optation, sanctions or repression. Groups might be improvised, unorganised “solidary” formations, undeveloped as interest groups, more as *potential* groups, as for instance in Eastern Europe in the absence of a true civil society; their discontent will have a political focus, ranging from the authorities, to the political institutions and their justifications, to the political community as a whole (5). For a definition, “alienation from authorities means they are regarded as incompetent and stupid in achieving collective goals and biased against the group in handling conflicts of interest” (6). Alienation therefore is the opposite of confidence, where the authorities are seen as the group’s agents. It may be seen as one aspect of widespread refusal to participate in authorised activities of the system, and then, out of contempt, loss of trust begets, “the loss of system power, the loss of a generalised capacity for authorities to commit resources to attain collective goals” (7). In this scheme of understanding, groups that have neutral trust attitudes towards the political institutions and authorities, i.e. being unmoved emotionally by their own subject position in relation to those institutions and authorities, will be unlikely to attempt to get influence, but those alienated from them will have a high probability of making the attempt.

These groups in Eastern Europe, even if only transient formations of potential interest groups, were to become instrumental in changing both domestic politics and international relations. The process was universally recognised at the time as a crisis of history, a development to reshape political, social and economic relations in the countries concerned, fundamentally altering both individual lives of their people and world geo-politics. The next step here is to consider how, why and when such groups would act.

Kahn and Zald applying principles of organisational theory to international relations, considered as economic, territorial and ideological conflicts, listed the determinants or components of the interdependence of participants: structural determinants, time, culture, individual factors - and information (8). Enter certain elements of crisis -disequilibrium in relationships, uncertainty and risk (9)- with “information impactedness” defined for instance in terms of situations in which players cannot tell whether their partners are complying with

agreements (10). The case studies, on United States-Soviet arms talks in the 1980s, inform the present discussion, being an important part of its historical setting, and also represent a typical interplay of factors when groups and institutions begin competing for scarce political resources (11). In this analysis, the competitors must complement their view of objective situations, like proposals for arms concessions, with the uncertainties of past experience (e.g. of the Soviet Union as a threatening communist power), interpersonal relations (Gorbachev to Reagan, or Bush), and multiple constituencies exerting pressure (defence community, general publics). It has moved the discussion a step further towards making intelligible the confused and arresting blow-up of political activity in 1989.

Tarrow in Power in Movement describes social movements as expressly distinct from coherent groups which will have compulsory co-ordination and will be able to solve their collective action problems through internalisation. Social movements must operate through “changes in the structure of political opportunity”, and crucially the forms of collective action they employ will relate to conventions: “Their major external resources are the social networks in which collective action occurs and the cultural and ideological symbols that frame it. Together, opportunities, repertoires, networks and frames are the materials for the construction of movements ... Social movements form when ordinary citizens, sometimes encouraged by leaders, respond to changes in opportunities that lower the costs of collective action, reveal potential allies and show where elites and authorities are vulnerable... People join in social movements in response to political opportunities and then through collective action, create new ones. As a result the ‘when’ of social movement mobilisation -when political opportunities are opening up- goes a long way towards explaining its ‘why’ ” (12).

In Tarrow’s description, movements arise out of a sense of grievance in response to opportunities, but lack resources to develop a support base, will devolve into factions, experience splits or defection, and remain highly active for only a short time. Conventions and the capacity of members to engage in framing of the situation for themselves provide the essential strength to off-set these limitations. That is to do with shared ideas, notions from history or folk memories about political action - Charles Tilly’s “repertoire of contention” (13) whereby even a disenfranchised, habitually alienated community, where there has been no civil society to speak of, can summon up ways of behaving that will produce results.

The anthropologist David Kertzer is quoted on general knowledge of particular routines in a

society's history which helps movements to overcome their deficits: "Collective action is not born out of organisers' heads but is culturally inscribed and communicated ... Workers know how to strike because generations of workers have struck before them; Parisians build barricades because barricades are inscribed in the history of Parisian contention; peasants seize the land carrying the symbols that their fathers and grandfathers used in the past" (14). From political scientists Stuart Hill and Donald Rothchild: "Individuals construct a prototype of a protest or riot that describes what to do in particular circumstances as well as explaining a rationale for this action" (15).

To McAdam, McCarthy and Zald, shared meanings and definitions mediate among opportunity, organisation and action. Actors in the situation need to feel both aggrieved about some aspect of their lives and optimistic that acting together they can redress the problem. "Conditioning the presence or absence of these perceptions is that complex social psychological dynamics -collective attribution, social construction - that David Snow and various colleagues have referred to as framing processes... Many theorists focussed primarily on the sources and functions of meaning and identity within social movements," (16).

A definition is given for framing, as the "conscious strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understandings of the world and of themselves that legitimate and motivate collective action", and then the interdependence of the framing and action is emphasised: "A change is only an opportunity when defined as such by a group of actors, where organised to act on their shared definition of the situation. So it is pointless to ask whether Gorbachev's reforms encouraged the revolutions in Eastern Europe by changing the political structure of the former Warsaw Pact countries or, by heightening people's subjective awareness of the system's illegitimacy and vulnerability. Clearly they had both effects" (17). In another definition from Snow framing is called "a shorthand interpretation of the world, to locate blame, to suggest lines of action", (18); and there are diverse others of an applied kind, such as the psychologist Kennedy's, "the steering of the reasoning process by increasing of the availability of the representations of a demand" (19).

With the hindsight of over ten years it may be tempting to talk of the revolution in Eastern Europe only as a kind of culture fest that blew over political structures, whereas there exists firm evidence to record it instead as a rather fortunate outcome of a dangerous impasse – fortunate, given the low level of violence. Theory of social movements accommodates that

possibility, referring to the common practice of movements to challenge institutions through a campaign of disruption, against which the elites in power are prone to engage in repression. “There is considerable empirical evidence attesting to the significance of this factor in shaping the level and nature of movement activity,” writes McAdam (20), referring to the fate of the 1989 Chinese student movement. It had been in “good shape” in terms of other movement parameters, mobilising key allies including allies in the news media, and exploiting divisions in the ruling elite, until hard-liners were able to find the “social control capacity and political will necessary to thoroughly repress the movement”.

The history of movements has demonstrated the efficacy of violence on both sides, according to Tarrow. Disruption including violence by movements could be most effective in rattling the established order, whereas at the other extreme, faced with protest in an “expressive and non-reformist form” elites were “unlikely to be persuaded” (21). Reciprocally, state repression, or the threat of it also would be prone to success: “Changes in political opportunity affected the likelihood that mass mobilisation would be repressed or might succeed, and this affected people’s judgments about whether to protest or not” (22). The review of contents of news media conducted as part of the present study shows journalists working in Germany in October and November 1989 had noted public statements about the possibility of repression emanating from the East German government, and were thinking of a “Tienanmen Square” solution. At a crucial stage there was a debate in the government about use of force to suppress the weekly demonstrations at Leipzig, which was reported at the time, as is discussed in a later section (23).

Presence of news media has been modernising the process of framing of situations by governments, leaders of movements and the membership of those movements. The repertoire of behaviours that participants will know how to carry out, and expect of one another, has been experimented with and developed over time, according to Tilly (24). McAdam et al, reviewing arguments on framing processes, refer to five essential topics: cultural tool kits; cultural impact of the movement in modifying the available tool kit; strategic framing efforts of movement groups; frame contests between the movement and other collective actors, principally the state; and the structural role of the media, in mediating such contests (25). Returning to Tarrow on the “framing work” central to the activity of social movements, and in particular Gamson’s “injustice frame” for movements against oppression; the work of movement leaders or political entrepreneurs is seen as becoming in some ways more

difficult because of demands of sophisticated mass media. Slogans, songs and graffiti remain “important forms of symbolic communication” but the “permanent fare of news and entertainment that suffuses the airwaves” demands additional skills converting cultural symbols into collective action frames, (26).

Studying this, he would argue, “there is no substitute for relating text to context and asking how movements themselves make that connection” (27) - rejecting a “view of culture that does not account for interaction between our symbol system and the physical world of human activity” (quoting Kertzer, 28) and the study of “disembodied” political culture (29): “When a movement organisation chooses symbols with which to frame its message, it sets a strategic course between its cultural setting, its political opponents and the militants and ordinary citizens whose support it needs. Only by inscribing our analysis of movement discourse in a structure of power relations can we understand why movements employ particular symbolic practices and not others, and whether they are likely to carry the day” (30).

As for control in these situations, movement leaders, often seen as “early risers” at times when opportunities arise, by definition must lead and cannot control their aroused but most often inexperienced rank and file. It is possible to compensate for lack of organising resources through gaining the attention of media and engaging in “mobilisation of symbols”, and “anti-routines” (31) agreeable to journalists and not governments - the skills required to “capture complex situations in brief visual images that brought about a revolution in movement tactics (32).” Media attention can serve to cultivate a collective awareness; help movements maintain support by bolstering a feeling of status of their members and communicating their activities to their supporters; and help them to gain initial attention, which may be “the most important stage of their impact” (33).

It is recognised too that coverage of movements and public perception will be affected by the structure of the media industry, with its preference for dramatic, visible events; by journalists’ reliance on authoritative sources (such as those who wield direct power or have demonstrated ability to deliver useful new information); by news cycles or rhythms; by reporters’ professional values or orientations, and by how the media environment, mainly the degree of competition, influences the news, (34). News media can be fickle: “Movements frame issues in ways that the media will broadcast. But the media, which can shift rapidly from one newsworthy item to another, do not depend on movement activities for news.

Movements briefly, provisionally and often dramatically ‘make news’; but they cannot make the media publish news the way they want it to be made” (35).

A further observation on present-day media practices reflects on the spontaneous and rapid spread of protest activity from country to country in Eastern Europe, and the speed with which mass movements converged on particular strategies and co-ordinated their actions: “Movements spread far more rapidly now than they did in the past - even in the absence of formal organisations. This is in part an expression of the universality of the repertoire of collective action, in part due to the rapidity of global communication, and in part because of the appearance of transnational movements” (36). The example is given of the Polish round-table process being adopted in neighbouring states as the format for settling with the out-going communists. The appearance of global television had a great influence on the diffusion of the movement; political protestors learned about political opportunities through the mass media, and when they saw people not very different from themselves succeeding with protests, it was not very difficult to imagine themselves doing the same (37). An outstanding example from Eastern Europe was the conduct of the “Velvet Revolution” in Czechoslovakia through long media conferences convened by the dissident formation Civic Forum. Western news media having been able to enter the country promulgated bulletins and aired the massive street protests, and after several days of pressure state television began live domestic coverage. The situation was similar in Hungary, in regard to outside media, and the GDR, where access given to outside media including West German television increased rapidly from the start of October, and where reception of Western broadcasts had been commonplace for many years.

Zald among others also identifies difficulties for movements and governments with news media they will attempt to work through: “Media are not neutral to this process, since they lend themselves to different rhetorics and images, to rendering the salience and intensity of issues. Media differ in their ability to convey information, evoke emotional responses, dramatise events and focus attention. As they too are part of a larger cultural context this selection process will be shaped by the larger society. Moreover mass media have production routines and organisational dynamics that lead them to do more than transmit information; they transform it” (38). The news media will impose their own priorities, preferences and ideas of salience. Nevertheless activists must develop strategies for encouraging media to cover them, and the media contribution then will be to link cultural and framing processes to

mobilisation and political opportunity in social movements.

Klandermans and Goslinga give an orthodox appraisal of effects of news media, seeing it in terms of transactions of ideas or information among people already sharing some consensus of view: “The set of individuals interacting in one’s social networks is relatively homogenous and composed of people not too different from oneself. Processes of social comparison produce collective definitions of a situation ... Although mass media play a crucial role framing themes and counter themes of public discourse, the actual formation and transformation of beliefs take place in exchange with groups and categories with which individuals identify” (39). So the mystique of media influence is reduced in this view, closer to a model in which belief arises from individual disposition, interpersonal interaction, and *use of* sources of information that include media discourse, along with experiential knowledge and popular wisdom. A similar perspective is maintained by McAdam, listing six hurdles to be surmounted for the forcing of social change: new recruits, sustaining of morale and commitment, mobilisation of support from bystanders, constraint of the social control options of opponents, ultimately be able to shape policy and state action - and in the process, generate media coverage, *though not necessarily of a favourable sort* (40).

In this observation by Gamson and Meyer, media interests similarly emerge as a third player in the framing contests between governments and movements, an idea most credible in the Eastern European situation where the media in question were principally from the West and working beyond the control of the paralysed national authorities: “The mass media play a crucial role in defining for movement actors whether they are taken seriously as agents for possible change. When demonstrators chant, ‘the whole world is watching’, it means they believe they matter, that they are making history. The media spotlight validates the movement as an important player. This suggests that the opening and closing of media access and attention is a crucial element in defining political opportunity for movements ... The media’s openness to social movements is itself an important element of political opportunity. The complicated double role of the media tends to obscure this point. On one hand the media play a central role in the construction of meaning and the reproduction of culture. Journalists choose a story line in reporting events and commentators of various sorts develop arguments and images that support particular frames. On the other hand, the media are also a site or arena in which symbolic contests are carried out among competing sponsors of meaning, including movements” (41).

Accepting the 1979 visitation in Poland as a starting point for the process, Tarrow emphasises a certain mix of symbols as the key to its success, citing Laba on the emergence of the Solidarity movement, where Lech Walesa raised his fist giving the workers' salute alongside the Pope with his hand lifted in a papal greeting, and where the crown of thorns posted on Gdansk shipyard gates commemorated workers killed by police - "inherited symbols of consensus", a "fusion of the images of martyred Poland and suffering proletarians" (42).

Historical overview referring to social movement theories

Anthony Oberschall gives a history of the fall of the communist governments in Eastern Europe, both as a single phenomenon and through a country-by-country analysis. It works from the social movement perspective and is referred to here as a main source to provide an outline of events. In this treatment, *opposition* was driven by *opportunity*, both international, (Soviet liberalisation and, with the "Gorbachev factor", equivocation over continuing support for the separate national regimes; consequent stress within the Warsaw Pact), and internal, (divided elites; failed reform attempts, especially in the economy, with a persistent decline in living standards; withdrawal of the overt threat of Soviet intervention; consequent reduction of compliance among the public or even state bureaucratic apparatus with government demands): "The legitimacy of the state, that is, the citizens' moral approval of the state's authority, is an important dimension of opportunity. Loss of legitimacy puts a regime at a disadvantage in the contest for framing issues in a crisis... Moral force was an effective weapon when challengers faced an opponent lacking legitimacy" (43). The leading role of the party had closed off conventional avenues of complaint or civic minded participation, meaning that for any opposition the "capacity to mobilise" was low, and so when opportunity arrived in 1989, a loosely articulated and organised mass campaign became the form of attack - "dissidents and citizenry compensated mobilisation deficits by exploiting an increasingly favourable political opportunity environment" (44). Working through independent news media is an aspect of using "conventional avenues", but generally this did not become an option before mass disturbances of various kinds forced an opening of frontiers to Western media, and still later a lifting of controls on national media services, which however had no background in handling interest group politics.

This historical analysis concurs with other broadly-accepted accounts of the chain of events, commencing it with the Hungarian reform communists' decision to open their country's border with the West, breaching a diplomatic protocol with the GDR (on 11 September 1989) (45) and precipitating the exit crisis. Obserschall observes that in the GDR, "the people themselves in massive demonstrations came to frame the issue at contention ... from an initial freedom to travel and the reform of socialism to '*we* are the people!' and later to '*we* are *one* people!' and 'free elections'". In knowledge of the opening of the "iron curtain" by Hungary, and of the exodus from East Germany, indignant crowds in Czechoslovakia joined protests over police attacks on demonstrators, which quickly swelled and paralysed the country. In both the GDR and Czechoslovakia, "the Communists made no attempt to contest the opposition's framing of the issues and to defend the values and principles they had once claimed as their own" (46).

George Kennan, architect of the containment policy of the West - to contain any Soviet military expansionism in the expectation that in due course the system supporting it could well implode- is quoted for his long-held, still sometimes contested belief that communist ideology was effectively dropped by its own custodians: "The officials of the regimes, not believing a word of it said what they thought necessary ... The people said the things they thought the regime wanted to hear ... And the regime, knowing that they were pretending, pretended to be satisfied" (47). The same attitude of deep-rooted cynicism was expressed in regard to economic conditions and the proscription of enterprise outside the state system. Correspondents working in the Eastern bloc, including this writer, frequently heard the sarcastic adage, "we pretend to work; they pretend to pay us." The two main values giving the communist regimes a claim to legitimacy, fulfillment of egalitarian values in justice, and the promise of material plenty, were seen as being unattainable (48). In such situations, "citizens lead an atomised life and there is no civil society," (49) and by contrast, following research by Gamson, a supportive group is "essential to triggering individuals' willingness to speak out against unjust authority - authority that they might well tolerate if they faced it on their own" (50).

After decades of conflict -protest movements and industrial action met with periodic acts of state repression- the Polish change was very democratic in style. It began on 31 August 1988 when round table discussions opened between the government and Solidarity, on the anniversary of their 1980 Accords, and led to partially free elections the following June -with

close to a majority of seats reserved for communist party deputies or their affiliates. These produced such an overwhelming and explicit vote against the regime that after a period of negotiations a coalition headed by Solidarity formed a government. The chain reaction leading to wholesale collapse across Eastern Europe began in Hungary in April, with the replacement of an old guard majority on the communist party Central Committee by reformists who attempted a program of power sharing with competing interests. The central symbolic event was the formal rehabilitation and state funeral of Imre Nagy, leader of the revolt of 1956, on 16 June 1989. In that year civil freedoms were declared; independent trade unions formed; news media restrictions were lifted, stimulating vigorous public debate; the ruling party split; and at elections early in 1990 it lost office to a conservative-liberal coalition.

East Germany's relationship with the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) was a unique circumstance that became the determining factor in the way that the communist government, and system, was wound up. The fact of the Berlin Wall had exacerbated psychological stress; anxiety over the experience of the internal spy networks and border controls was called "wall sickness" (51). However, while the West applied strong pressure for liberalisation its influence was most restricted as long as the communists kept effective control, and in the protracted lead-up to reunification the main push had to be done as a domestic mass movement within the GDR. With little or no leadership from dissidents or intellectuals, masses of people upset the regime through their mass exodus and their mass demonstrations in the principal cities - especially those in Berlin, the October riot at the Dresden railway station, and the Monday night meetings at Leipzig. By the time of Mikhail Gorbachev's visit to East Berlin in October, trains carrying border-crossers were already rolling and street demonstrations becoming much bigger; not long after the visit, during which Gorbachev made known his insistence on reform, Erich Honecker was replaced as head of government and the mass movement exploded. The capitulation of the regime on 9 November 1989, with the opening of the Berlin Wall, confirmed to the world, amid great drama, that the fundamental shift in Eastern Europe was clearly taking place. Oberschall affirms the view that the events in Germany -so open, massive, conclusive, unavoidable- then triggered the diffusion of democracy demonstrations in Czechoslovakia and the Balkans (52).

Other theoretical approaches and the role of news media

International mass media were extensively and prominently involved in the process of collapse in Eastern Europe, their news services in particular not only giving heavy coverage to the unfolding events but themselves forming part of the picture. The European news theatre is a large, paying market for news and so a prime source of general news which can be plied to its “own back yard” and then sold on to other regions. Furthermore it is a central location for international and diplomatic interchanges, with in 1989 a very large accredited media pack concentrated at Brussels, headquarters of the European Commission, with other substantial clusters of international correspondents at such centers as Paris, Frankfurt, Rome, Warsaw and Budapest. Events in the Soviet Union were closely connected with the evolution of the crisis, as will be emphasised in this thesis, and so the elaborate media systems and large numbers of Eastern bloc and Western journalists based in Moscow became involved in it.

With all European communities conscious of the growing importance of pan-European concerns, national media, such as the national broadcasting chains of the major EC states and their leading daily newspapers, sent reporters and support crews to cover episodes in the crisis. United States media – the national radio and television networks including National Public Radio, and metropolitan daily press- appeared in force. All of these organisations not only augmented their regular strength to operate through existing bureaus, but sent in additional teams from outside whenever very significant events looked to be in the offing – such as the political activity in Berlin at the beginning of October and beginning of November. The story was of universal interest, a “world” story due to the engagement of American interests, gross disorder in the Soviet Union, and the bearing of this crisis on the world economy and outcome of the Cold War; so it saw a heavy commitment of resources by the leading international agencies of the time: the Associated Press (AP), Reuters, Agence France Presse (AFP), BBC World Service radio, BBC World television, Cable News Network International (CNN), and parent bodies of diverse corporate outlets, as News Corporation and General Electric (53).

Such heightened interest would be expressed in a crush of bodies and equipment at any media center or improvised meeting point, such as the Intercontinental Hotel in Bucharest in

December 1989. A foreshadowing of the numbers was given at Bonn in September 1987, where the state media service (*Bundespresseamt*), confessed itself unprepared for the level of interest in the visit of Erich Honecker, with some 800 international journalists obtaining security accreditation. The economic impacts and impacts on communication, transport and accommodation facilities would be plain to see. A political event becoming a media event would provoke an additional large event at the margins due to the arrival of numerous restless and demanding personnel, prepared to pay well but needing immediate service. The phenomenon of the media invasion, a “rolling roadshow”, will be referred to a number of times in the following sections, along with the additional impacts of new technologies, especially direct-dial telephony, communication satellites and mobile satellite up-link facilities (dishes on trucks).

Little could be predicted or depicted on the impacts that this media attention would have on the evolution and outcome of events. Impacts of news media are famously difficult to establish. General communication theory developed in America, in the tradition of Lazarsfeld and Schramm (54) investigated the handling of messages, and helped dispel early fears that 20th century propaganda systems would directly change political behaviour. Arguments that media messages were so highly potent would remain weak in empirical support. Persuasion through media would continue to be seen mostly as an extension of general psychological development, persons being influenced primarily by family or peer group, perhaps strengthening their views by taking in media messages they were predisposed to agree with. This might change where there was extreme exposure to media, especially in the case of vulnerable persons; advertising messages related to goods or services were found to be more persuasive than messages related directly to personal beliefs. Studies usually based on wide content analysis, focussed on demonstrating cultural hegemony and agenda setting (55) came up against the same difficulty of measuring effects and establishing empirical grounds. Psychological studies for example on impacts of heavy television viewing on young children (56) and ethnographic studies focussed on audience members' use of television, indicate ways that media messages may be woven into the fabric of life, but cover closely defined fields and have not resolved questions such as political persuasion. Studies taking in a production-side perspective would often include media workers informing on organisational practices, normally following a sociological approach with extensive interviews and workplace observation (57). Cultural studies viewing news media as institutions in relation to other institutions of society, part of a culture industry, or

contributing to social construction of reality, provide useful terms of reference and some conclusions affecting media practice, e.g. calls for new regulations (58).

However all these approaches share the difficulty of demonstrating clear, specific and uncontested effects of messages. There may be some consensus that in the case of news, meanings can be negotiated, audience members treating the news with the degree of seriousness they consider it deserves. Beyond that there is wide recognition that the flow of messages is so heavy, diverse and erratic it defies precise handling. News as a cultural product, part art, part science, part serious, part entertainment, partly offering information, partly playing on emotion, cannot be pinned down to definitive statements about its broad impacts. The persistent popularity of Marshall McLuhan (59) suggests his idea of burgeoning media having overwhelming effects that will defy ordinary measurement is intelligible to many who see themselves "worked over" -as he said- by media. Yet little can be predicted about the power this media inundation might exert over the evolution and outcome of events.

General communication theory and research does not look to be a great deal of help in providing guidelines for the project on news media and historical crises though Renckstorf and McQuail make a proposal for a future "social action" approach which could well be applicable (60). They have reviewed the main approaches to communication research, finding that persistent questions remain unresolved, and particularly, that communication research has been producing a "confusing variety of questions and answers", and a "multitude of contradictory findings concerning its central problem, the problem of impact". They consider basic models of empirical mass communication research - media-centred models, audience-centred and culture-centred - but with the same conclusion, "... the entire study of mass communication is based on the assumption that there are effects from the media, yet it seems to be the issue of which there is least certainty and least agreement" (61). The present investigation is closest to a conventional media-centred approach though it dwells on the question of who is communicating in any situation, and the claims of media practitioners to be brokers not the initiators or principal formulators of messages, i.e. not directly, not quite, not fully, communicators in their own right.

The treatment provided by Renckstorf in "Media Use as Social Action: a Theoretical Perspective" (62), avoids culture-centred models, as lacking an empirical orientation and

tending towards conclusions on the impact of media on the “subjective reality of individuals”, as “highly speculative” (63). It wants to build on a social action method where media users are seen as active individuals who interpret media messages. It avers that in such cases, “for the mass media and their messages this means that the media form but a part of the meaning-producing symbolic environment of human actors” (64), and “media users are active individuals who interpret media messages”. It proposes an “action-based reference model”, and it is suggested here that this might be studied for application, in the case of the investigative procedure to be outlined as an outcome of this study of news media in Europe in 1989.

The latter would seek to reconstruct media activity and treatment of crisis situations, in which mass social action might be expected, as in the 1989 historical situation. Such investigations might be informed by the model from Renckstorf and McQuail based on media use as social action, which would provide descriptive tools for understanding public responses. The model as expatiated upon by Vettehen et al (65) proposes, for instance, that how an audience deals with mass media and its messages may be considered a form of social action, as external action with accompanying internal of self-interaction during the process of interpretation. This would mean including intentionality, interpretation and reflection as central aspects of human social action. Accordingly, “interpretative methodologies should be employed where explicit attention is paid to the reconstruction of the world of those involved, both communicators and recipients. Qualitative methods, such as participant observation, in-depth interviews and group discussions are widely acceptable techniques for exploring this personal world” (66). Likewise, as indicated in this research project, those methods must prove useful in exploring and reconstructing journalists’ work in the same situations.

NEWS MEDIA IN THE CRISIS

This section investigates the crisis as perceived by a panel of journalists from Western news media who worked on the coverage. It concentrates on the week that the Berlin Wall came down, because, as should be confirmed in the course of this dissertation, that was the most important event in the East European crisis, as well as by far the outstanding news story. The focus is on that particular week also, because, it will be argued, it saw a seizure of power by the mass social movement which, for a short time, not only overturned ordinary

political processes but displaced news-producing processes that go with them. The option of keeping apart from the wide public, to relay plausible accounts of the chain of public events, from government offices, corporations and other formal sources had lapsed. News media were caused to play a different role, for a time, or at least to change their mode of operation, towards simpler and more populist forms of activity and reporting, literally out among the crowds. Many of the perceptions and experiences of the journalists overlap with those of the general public engaged in the protest movement in Eastern Europe, their own audiences and readership in the West, and the citizens from East and West who mingled freely at the celebration of the opening of the Wall.

The journalists were preoccupied at the time with their professional duties, which became onerous because of the urgent character of the events taking place. Their responses here are also used to obtain an appreciation of the position of political elites from East and West, but the study is most concerned with the practices of the news media in relation to the social movements, to provide an improved understanding of how media work, of the character of information they provide, and the possibilities of using a systematic review of media to read crisis situations generally. The proposition of this report is that the journalists worked on conventional, professional lines up to the moment of the opening of the Berlin Wall; that a public, cultural event then displaced conventional news reporting, for as long as a week; and that well before the week was out, conventional news gathering and reporting, through necessity, had resumed, although with some different assumptions about the agenda and the direction that events would take. In terms of the foregoing discussion, when the drama came to preoccupy the general public, framing of events by news media went out of consideration.

The Eastern Europe news story and importance of the Berlin Wall

The Eastern Europe story had brought successive shocks through most of 1989, notably: the rehabilitation of Imre Nagy; defeat of the communists in the Polish elections (in 1989 accepted by editors of the news media studied here, and media generally, only very cautiously or timidly as the beginning of the end for the system in Europe; the story was generally displaced that day by the massacre at Tienan Square, the death of Ayatollah Khomeini, and a catastrophic explosion aboard a train carrying fuel in the Soviet Union); and then the East German exodus and protest movement. Reports commanded headline status yet

the coverage remained a professional challenge, full of imponderables, and under the restraint of a certain imagination gap. There was a general consciousness that some resolution had to occur, but none in the political community (political leaders, official opposition, their staffs, heads of organised interest groups, public servants engaged in policy issues), the media pack (correspondents of major news organisations, their home desks, specialist or freelance journalists, regular commentators), or any quarter of the general public was prepared to imagine and expect what form that would take. It was uncertain whether there would be, in the case of Germany, a “Tienanmen Square solution”; some kind of negotiated reforms or, most difficult to conceive of, opening of the intra-German frontiers. It required reading of developments so as to be on hand for what might happen next; there remained a need to interpret or at least provide background for an audience or readership by this time alerted to great developments under way, but not yet expected to be feeling directly engaged in those events, any more than with other news of the day.

This changed with the announcement by the communist party Central Committee that permits would be granted to all citizens applying to cross to the West. The character of the public response, and the representation of the news was now transformed befitting the centrality of the structure, the Berlin Wall, in the life of the human family over a generation. First it had been a blunt fact representing a rude policy of suppression, so in plain material terms its removal showed beyond any argument that its builders had taken a fall. Secondly there was its symbolic importance in the mental background of masses of the world’s citizens. In the framing game there was now a great concurrence of views, and appropriation of the news by a mass public unto itself.

Photograph 1 included with this document, again, is indicative: East German citizens registered the meaning of the opening of the Wall, to them, by crowding through the established checkpoints and newly opened breaches in its structure, beginning spontaneously late at night, immediately the announcement was known; Western citizens did the same in welcoming them across; thousands flew in or drove to Berlin for the street party; and there was the plethora of emotions acted out - relief, shared glee, astonishment, expressions of contempt for the edifice now to be clambered over, broken down, and before long carted away and erased. Notions of human liberty, the human spirit, looked to be the heart of it, but these crowds made explicit that each would make of it privately what they would.

It was undoubtedly a feast for news media with an enormous market now giving full attention, with the emphasis shifted from conventional news values to crafting work, to take pictures and record words or deeds - provide a feed at a high level of creativity and technical competence; and make memorable artifacts, from the abundance of material literally available out in the street. There was no need to find and announce the news in the ordinary way, only to keep up the flow of verification, the continuing spectacle. None was heard to complain about this, that the story of their lifetime was a party - no death, no grief. The story in this phase took its place in the catalogue of grandly memorable, usually universal news events.

These events, frequently surrounding the sudden death of a celebrity, by public demand are relayed for hours on live television, and achieve access to private emotion, which then will be publicly displayed by thousands: the assassination of President Kennedy; first moon walk; capture of Saigon; death of John Lennon; Tienanmen Square; death of the Princess of Wales; September 11 2002. Some memorable events and images have a similar quality if not the same power, as with the deliverance of Stuart Diver at Thredbo, explosion of the space shuttle *Challenger*, or passing of the Queen Mother. For news media, in the midst of the celebrations the question already would present itself: what happens next in Germany and in Eastern Europe as a whole? Once more the game returned to finding out, in a timely way. So business would resume, with the deployment of news values; journalists framing the field, so as themselves to be able to understand; and framing the reported outcomes in order to be understood.

Operations in Eastern Europe

As crisis set in, government paralysis in the Eastern bloc states one by one had led to a power vacuum. Closed borders were opened; controls on media operations became ineffective, and in the different countries, outside media teams came in and began operating freely, to bear witness. These large groups of foreign journalists had arrived either on special visas prescribing limits to their activities, which they didn't take any notice of, or independently to take advantage of the sudden, mostly *de facto* lifting of restrictions. Individuals in government agencies or businesses willingly helped the journalists with their arrangements and on the whole did not report on them to security police or supervise restrictions in any

other way. Those were the operating conditions in all of the Central East European states and in Romania.

In some irregular ways, normal authority being voided, it was less restricted than in the West; for instance while the Prague state television centre remained barred to outside users, Western satellite up-link units set up and transmitted from Wenceslaus Square. When the crisis arrived in the communist world, so too did these mobile ground stations to operate as independent filing points. The significance of these units not long introduced at that time was emphasised in the 1998 BBC-CBS history of television news, "Breaking the News". Chris Cramer, BBC Television News Editor 1987-89, said new equipment and staff increases had co-incided with radical change in Eastern Europe: "We had a satellite truck that was on the road and seemed to be charging every revolution, every border that changed, every piece of mischief in Romania ... This piece of equipment could do no harm. Whatever country it went to a dictator was overthrown; whatever border it crossed that became an open border. It became a joke of the news room here ... Send it back to the BBC; we could do with a few overthrows" (67).

The crisis took on something of the character of a hostage drama; frequently unorganised dissident groups heading the huge, loosely committed popular movements, used their newly gained access to media for communicating basic organising messages to followers, imposing demands on the regime and displaying the events to western audiences. As has been observed already, development of mass media had been extending the reach and speed of social movement activities. By 1989 this expansion was being intensified still further by the exponential advances in communication technology. The physics of the situation was defeating political will to block messages. More transmissions through more channels, engaging more senders and receivers, meant that a part of the background to events had been a weakening of restrictions on the flow of information over a period of years. Jamming of Western radio stations had mostly ceased. West German television was routinely viewed in the GDR. Citizens might receive Western television services off satellite or obtain access to computer networks in the West. Formal controls on such activities had been swamped by the ubiquity and intangibility of the commodity, signals carried by wire or air; by the unprecedented range, direct delivery capability and quality of transmission available from satellites, and an open trade in cheap computer hardware and software worldwide. Small satellite dishes mounted on balconies in the apartment blocs had become a common sight in

East European cities, leaving a clear impression that citizens with an education and some time on their hands were setting up quality entertainment and information for themselves, undisturbed by authorities no longer equipped or motivated to prevent them. Telephone systems likewise were improved through the installation of sophisticated automatic exchanges in capital cities, giving outside direct dialing at least for foreign visitors.

By the widest consent the Western radio stations targeted at the Eastern bloc countries -the leaders being the BBC, Radio Free Europe (RFE), Radio Liberty (RL) and the Voice of America (VOA)- in providing a flow of outside news, and assisting dissident elements to maintain contacts, in the process prevented any attempts to revive a “Stalinist model of a completely isolated communist world” (68). In the long history of fluctuating radio warfare, a degree of detente had been realised from the end of the 1950s when all Western stations moved more towards “agitation by naked facts” (69), in preference to polemics which had caused the most agitation among communist authorities, over what they termed the “black heavens”. Connected with this process the formal human rights accord forged in the detente era of the 1970s, the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, ultimately associated with the formation of the Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe (OSCE), had enabled a greater opening to the Western radios, with interference thereafter only indulged in by the communist governments during intermittent periods of crisis.

As conditions of travel eased in different parts of Eastern Europe, systematic audience surveys by the stations, especially RFE and RL with substantial funding from the Reagan administration, demonstrated there was regular use of the stations’ services on a mass level. For instance, among the extensive reports on qualitative and quantitative audience research reported in Short, it was estimated that in 1982-83, Radio Free Europe was reaching from 56% of adults in Bulgaria to 85% in Poland. In a study based on 6500 interviews with East European citizens traveling to the West, and some inside Eastern Europe, the “listening audience” for the station was given as about one-third of adults in Czechoslovakia and Bulgaria, and between 58-68% in Hungary, Poland and Romania (70). After 1989 surveys were carried out on the ground in Eastern Europe and while the figures proved smaller than earlier supposed, in one instance nearly 14% of Hungarians were shown to have been listening regularly to RFE, the BBC or VOA during that year, with similar performances in other countries including Poland. That is equivalent to a well-used and influential service in any Western radio market (71). The messages were getting through and had been doing so

for decades. Former oppositionists coming into government attested to this impact. Jacek Kuron of Polish Solidarity used RFE to announce times and places of meetings in the early 1980's, when even public telecommunications were cut off as a social control measure (72); Vaclav Havel told the International Herald Tribune (IHT), 2.8.90, "if my fellow citizens knew me before I became President, they did so because of those stations" (73); and there was the celebrated case of Mikhail Gorbachev returning from the Crimea in 1991, publicly thanking the BBC for keeping him informed on the unsuccessful Soviet coup, while he was held in detention (74).

(1) See Garton Ash T, The Polish Revolution: Solidarity 1980-82, London, Jonathan Cape, 1983

(2) Ibid. p 28

(3) Gamson WA, Power and Discontent, Homewood Ill., Dorsey Press, 1968; quoting Smelser, p 16

(4) Ibid. p 25

(5) Ibid. p39

(6) Ibid. p 56

(7) Ibid. p 43

(8) Kahn RL and Zald MN (Eds.), Organisations and Nation States: New Perspectives on Conflict and Co-operation, San Francisco, Jossey-Bass, 1990, p 35

(9) Ibid. p 311

(10) Ibid. p 35

(11) *see also*, Zald MN (Ed.), Power in Organisations, Nashville, Vanderbilt UP, 1970, p 242

(12) Tarrow S, Power in Movement: Social Movements, Collective Action and Politics, Cambridge, CUP, 1995, pp 17-18

(13) Ibid. pp 31-47

(14) Ibid. p 19

(15) Loc. Cit.

(16) McAdam D, McCarthy JD, Zald MN (Eds.), Comparative Perspectives on Social Movements: Political Opportunities, Mobilising Structures and Cultural Framings, Cambridge, CUP, 1996, p 5

(17) Ibid. p 8; *see also* Oberschall p 97

(18) Ibid. p 269

- (19) Kennedy K., Queensland University of Technology, Brisbane, 25.3.99; guest lecture, unpublished
- (20) Op. Cit. McAdam et al, p 28
- (21) Op. Cit. Tarrow S, p60
- (22) Ibid. p 53
- (23) *See also* Garton Ash T, The Magic Lantern: The Revolution of '89 Witnessed in Warsaw, Budapest, Berlin and Prague, NY, Vintage – Random House, 1993, p 68; *also* Oberschell in McAdam et al, Op.Cit. p 102
- (24) Op. Cit. Tarrow pp 31-47
- (25) Ibid. p 19
- (26) Ibid. p 119
- (27) Loc. Cit.
- (28) Loc. Cit.; quoting Kertzer
- (29) Ibid. p 121
- (30) Ibid. p 123
- (31) Ibid. p 128, Molotch
- (32) Ibid. p 126
- (33) Loc. Cit.
- (34) Ibid. p 128
- (35) Loc. Cit.
- (36) Ibid. p 194
- (37) Loc. Cit.
- (38) Op. Cit. McAdam et al, p 270
- (39) Ibid. p 327
- (40) Ibid. pp 339-40
- (41) Ibid. pp 285-87, Gamson and Meyer
- (42) Op. Cit. Tarrow p 132
- (43) Op. Cit. McAdam et al p 93, Oberschall
- (44) Ibid. p 94
- (45) Ibid. p 110
- (46) Ibid. p 97
- (47) Loc. Cit.
- (48) Ibid. p 98
- (49) Ibid. p 103

(50) Op. Cit. Tarrow p 21

(51) Op. Cit. McAdam et al, p 109

(52) Loc. Cit.

(53) See Herman E. and McChesney RW, The Global Media: The New Missionaries of Corporate Capitalism, London, Cassell, 1997, p 49

(54) See McQuail D and Windahl S, Communication Models for the Study of Mass Communication, 2nd edition, London, Longman, 1997, and Schramm W. and Roberts DF, The Process and Effects of Mass Communication, Urbana Ill., Univ. of Illinois Press, 1971

(55) See Glasgow University Media Group, Really Bad News, London, Writers and Readers, 1982; Windschuttle K, The Media, Melbourne, Penguin, 1985; applications in education, Carnoy M, Education as Cultural Imperialism, NY, Longman, 1974

(56) See Edgar P, Children and Screen Violence, Brisbane, UQP, 1977; Gerbner G, Violence and Terror in the Mass Media, Paris, UNESCO, 1988, and “Gender and Age in Prime-time Television”, in Kirschner S and DA, Perspectives on Psychology and the Media, Washington DC, American Psychological Association, 1997; Nightingale V, “The Vulnerable Audience: Effects Traditions”, in Cunningham S and Turner G, The Media in Australia, 2nd edition, Sydney, Allen and Unwin, 1997.

(57) See Argyris C, Behind the Front Page: Organisational Self-renewal in a Metropolitan Newspaper, San Fransisco, Jossey-Bass, 1974, and “Good Communication that Blocks Learning”, in Ulrich D (Ed), Delivering Results: A New Mandate ..., Boston, Harvard Bus. School Press, 1998; Curran J, Gurevitch M and Woollacott J (Eds.), Mass Communication and Society, London, Edward Arnold, 1977; Curran J and Gurevitch M (Eds.), Mass Media and Society, London, Arnold, 1996; Curran J (Ed.), Media Organisations and Society, London, Arnold, 2000; Johnstone JWC, Slawski EJ and Bowman WN, The News People: A Sociological Portrait of American Journalists and their Work, Urbana Ill., Univ. of Illinois Press, 1976; Tracey M, The Production of Political Television, London, Routledge KP, 1977; Tuchman G (Ed.), The TV Establishment: Programming for Power and Profit, Englewood Cliff NJ, Prentice Hall, 1974, and “Making News by Doing Work: Routinising the Unexpected”, in Berkowitz D (Ed.), Social Meanings of News: A Textual Reader, Thousand Oaks Calif., Sage, 1997; Tunstall J (Ed.), Media Sociology, London, Constable, 1970; The Media in Britain, London, Constable, 1983, and Media Occupations and Professions, Oxford, OUP, 2001

(58) Turner G, Literature, Journalism and the Media, Townsville, JCU, 1995, pp 53-54

(59) McLuhan M, “The Medium is the Message”, in Schramm W. and Roberts DF, Op.Cit, p

- (60) Renckstorf K and McQuail D, “Social Action Perspectives in Mass Communication Research: An Introduction”, in Renckstorf K, McQuail D and Jakowski N (Eds.), Media Use as Social Action: A European Approach to Audience Studies, Acamedia Research Monograph 15, Lond, John Libby, 1996
- (61) Ibid. pp 7-9
- (62) Ibid. p 18
- (63) Ibid. p 23
- (64) Ibid. p 27
- (65) PH Vettehen, K. Renckstorf, F. Wester, “Media Use in Social Action: Methodological Issues”, Ibid. p 32
- (66) Ibid. p 33
- (67) “Breaking the News”, episode 2; BBC-CBS Co-production, Executive Producer Glynn Jones; broadcast BBC World television, “Weekend World”, 1998
- (68) Nelson M, War of the Black Heavens: The Battles of Western Broadcasting in the Cold War, London, Brassey, 1997, p 131
- (69) Ibid. p 118
- (70) Short KRM, Western Broadcasting Over The Iron Curtain, London, Croom Helm, 1986, p 246
- (71) Op. Cit. Nelson p 232
- (72) Ibid. p 159
- (73) Ibid. p 188
- (74) Ibid. p 193

CHAPTER THREE

REPORTING SOCIAL MOVEMENTS – TWO

The media perspective on the 1989 events is provided here through a set of extended interviews with practitioners. These face to face meetings were conducted to obtain their assistance in evaluating the news judgments of the day in the light of information and analysis emerging since that time. There will be an element of self-evaluation as it may show to what extent their coverage turned out to be a precise indicator of what was taking place.

THE INTERVIEWS

The interviewees are listed in **Appendix 2**. An undertaking was given to the journalist participants that a questionnaire would be sent to follow up the interviews, to allow for reflection on topics raised. This questionnaire was posted or emailed in February 2002. It is included here, along with some notes on the outcome of that exercise, as **Appendix 3**.

News values

As a starting premise it was posited that news professionals shared common understandings about their work ordinarily summed up as “news values” to be applied when choosing and crafting their stories. These are practical standards identified with the “Western liberal” tradition in news media. Each time, the discussion was in fact conducted with reference to assumptions about the way that events of the era and the demands of the job were to have been handled. The practitioners were more comfortable referring to pragmatic news values and less comfortable with discussion of social movements, or theoretical propositions such as concepts of framing. Questions were put to the respondents about possible influence and impacts of the news, and complicity or involvement of the news teams in the making of events, though this exercise does not go into proofs of media power, influence or effects.

The self-regard of journalists as to the importance of their work may match general community values at one point. This is the notion that the centrality of news in political events has something of a mythic quality, as expressed by Henningham: “Basic to the functioning of a free and fair society is a press which is itself free and fair. Journalists must be

free to report and comment ... but should be responsible to those who could be harmed or helped by their work - should exercise their power of publicity with sensitivity to possible effects" (1). This of course can be off-set by another prominent view that "few people believe their freedoms are bound up in some way with that of the press", and by poor ratings often given to journalists in public surveys of occupational status, suggesting that in the general view they have little hand in cultivating high standards of debate on civic issues.

More insular journalists' values in the liberal tradition are spelt out in journalism texts as lists representing "news values", "characteristics", "elements" or points for a news "checklist", all familiar to practitioners and hardly disputed among them. They draw attention to the importance to the craft, of accuracy; speed; the drawing power of a disaster; value in the unexpected; care for potential consequences of publicity; the high interest value of conflict or fear; power of emotion; proximity; prominent people; the unusual or novel; oddity; suspense; the need to work under intense scrutiny, and in one list the winning power of dumb animals, (3). Dennis and Merrill contribute to arguments in the public domain that the standard news values are important, and should be recognised as such, agreeing with the view that application of these values is integral to autonomous professional work by journalists, though qualified by the effects of commercial pressure in recent times: "In actuality, news decisions are made by journalistic professionals with little guidance from anyone, no matter how much their detractors may complain. This situation is changing, though, as intuitive judgments are being challenged more and more by market forces, which we learn about most effectively through market research" (4). Their contribution to the news values construct is a set of nine "standard criteria": Conflict (tension – surprise); progress (triumph – achievement); disaster (defeat – destruction); consequences (effect upon community); eminence (prominence); novelty (the unusual, even the extremely unusual); human interest (emotional background); timeliness (freshness and newness); proximity (local appeal).

Henningham adds to such listings the observation that as more of the diverse elements are represented in one story the more likely it is to be prominently run. Limitations in the usefulness of these values must be recognised. Some would concur with Mayer that the mixture of factors taken into account in reporting the news is insufficient as a tool-kit; that "hard news can't handle process; is reductionist; treats events and politics as a glut of occurrences; and cannot cope with any long-term historical processes, nor with complexity" (5). In this scenario issues are discarded as boring unless they can be reduced to terms of

personal conflict that "cannot tell you anything about the normative dimensions of the policy" (6).

Like many things this view may be modified by considering developments in technology since the time Mayer was writing, conferring on news media far better power to cope.

The history constructed from media coverage during 1989-90, in Chapters 7 to 12, indicates a powerful capacity on the part of digitised systems to manage enormous volumes of information, so the coverage can be extremely thorough. As well this coverage is weighted and organised into themes, with a heavy emphasis and large volume of output given to analysis and commentary. Such a high level of interpretative material, especially in the press, provided by both journalists and specialists brought in as guest writers, was a rather new phenomenon for news media at large. For example, Matthew Ricketson, in Curthoys and Schultz, comparing space given to features material in broadsheet newspapers between 1956 and 1996, found that space allocated to hard news had remained the same, despite a three to fourfold increase in the papers' size. That showed the first requisite for more commentary, more space in the newspaper, had been well achieved (7). Where publications like the IHT and Guardian Weekly had a long background in informed commentary, their capacity to deliver it had been enhanced. If the assumption is allowed that much of this new feature space will be given to "serious" commentary and evaluation of the news, and that increased educational opportunities alone will provide a receptive audience for it, news media should now be better able to "handle process" while still beholden to their pragmatic "news values". Evidence given here, in the review of contents of news media, will indicate they did.

There was the added fact that for at least forty years, often much longer, the East European countries had been outside the liberal tradition and so could be an expressly difficult area for Western journalists, unable to work according to accustomed routines. Government officials, heads of community or business organisations, colleagues in local news media, individual citizens would have no habit of speaking easily, confidently, truthfully and quickly with outside news media. A prime issue in the present case is the sheer, dominating importance of the East European story of the time. It was a commandingly important and dramatic episode that required high levels of performance of all the skills and professional devices recognised by the journalists as essential to their practice. It put these journalists under hard surveillance among the public and within their organisations. Observers of journalists at work have

identified the phenomenon of shared values which the journalists find intelligible, being applied actually as a vehicle for reifying or mystifying what they do. “It would appear that news judgment is the sacred knowledge, the secret ability of the newsman which differentiates him from other people”(8), as if the phenomenon is seen as an ideology or creed. “Most significant among the tenets of the creed is a set of conventions for choosing which information to include in the news and which to ignore ... Conventions are useful for legitimating the selection made and for deflecting outside criticism” (9). Granato says the conditions of work creating a journalists’ culture exclude non-journalists (10). It can simplify matters that the concerns dealt with here are mostly operational; certain terms of reference are developed as a means to examine the way the work is performed.

The exercise depends on the existence of a journalists’ culture. It would not go so far as to form an ideology, e.g. not formulating actual pretensions for journalists to see themselves acting deliberately as defending knights of democracy so much as helping to nourish democracy by participating in democratic practices. Journalists do subscribe to craft ethics which are worked out through exhaustive consultations and will be the subject of negotiation with their employers. Beyond that there is little collective impulse to expand into discussions of ideology, and critics like Turner think the journalists’ professional or craft culture is actually inimical to standard ethical behaviour - “a culture that is arrogantly unresponsive to social democratic formulations of the ethics governing journalism but violently responsive to ratings figures ...” (11). Tiffen approaches the point in a way that helps to explain the rationale being applied in the present study: “Journalists are in the grip of news values. Individual journalists talk as if there were some form of newsworthiness, independent of them and one over which they have no control, which constrains and guides their work ... The strength of news values transforms difficult decisions into routine choices ... News values reduce the role of individual attitudes ... It is more fundamental to understand them as responses to the various cross-pressures in news production than to construct imaginary formulas of newsworthiness” (12).

Application of news values

Looking at the values and assumptions of journalists understood in this way, the following are factors considered to have imposed strongest demands on the performance of news media in the crisis of 1989:

Accuracy. Establishing facts is the hallmark of Western liberal practices in journalism and the importance is heightened in conditions of crisis where mass excitement is abroad. Rumour is rife and while it is often an accurate pointer to facts has to be separated from what is verifiable. Political discord and loss of power will be covered up so skill resides in reading the signs and being alert to strategic developments. Uncertainty and imponderables in the crisis were to magnify the challenge involved in getting the facts and so getting the story right.

Prescience. An aspect of that skill is to be on hand for the main events, in a sense to know what will occur, or know what is potentially most important, due to intuitive and informed thinking. Being thoroughly backgrounded contributes to success with it. Training, founded on past experience, assists; as does luck. The Berlin situation required prescience because the chain of events was mostly uncontrolled; there were few set-piece arrangements or helpful advisory notices for crucial events. Where events were organised by the outgoing East German government they tended to be quite desperate gestures meant to invoke stability, which were beside the point and had to fail, so in October 1989 well-organised ceremonies to commemorate the fortieth anniversary of the GDR were overtaken as news by sensational oppositionist street demonstrations in East Berlin. Even after the opening of the Wall the arrangements for many public events like the demolition of the structure at certain places, to create new crossing points, were hasty and makeshift. In the journalistic ethos the ability to recognise trends and grasp their importance in advance always has premium value. "The obsession with speed and deadlines elevates the importance of timeliness and novelty in news judgments. The small proportion of news that becomes available outside routine channels and through the enterprise of reporters is especially valued" (13). So the extraordinarily open game with virtual absence of effective news management on a major running story was an opportunity for initiative and intuition to be deployed, while also a test and source of additional pressure for performance.

The idea of prescience can be applied as well to judging the significance of the news in terms of the future life of particular developments. A very strong story may be short-lived if it is to do with an isolated event that does not call for follow-ups, but a report on political developments put forward as significant for the future will be judged later in terms of whether the reporter and producers accurately judged its enduring quality. For example, the European Union inherited new responsibilities

and changed itself as a result of the 1989 events; was this seen well enough, and early enough to be watched as part of the coverage, in a way that would be intelligible to any significant number of observers? Being ahead of the game is a prime skill marking journalists off from others who can await events before reaching any conclusions, and in a crisis like that of 1989 it became still more important. This capacity for looking ahead, and highlighting matters significant to the future, is different to making public predictions in the body of news reports, which is generally proscribed by journalists, most obviously because it is a sure route to error and encourages fabrication as against establishing facts.

High volume, deadlines and scrutiny. Journalistic writing is usually done under pressure, and then judged by all according to orthodox critical standards as if it were done under conditions that permitted reflection and revision. The volume of work is determined by both the significance of events being reported and the market for it expressed by the demand for stories made by the news desk. Keeping calm in the crisis and operating with speed is expected, regardless of the volume. Mayer recognised the centrality of the time problem: “The bulk of readers, viewers and listeners have not the faintest notion of what an impossible job under incredible conditions good journalists in both print and broadcasting are confronted with day by day. The main reason they don’t know is that the media don’t choose to tell them day by day what an impossible, crazy, fragile enterprise the whole concept of a daily paper or show on deadline is, with the product you have routinised and processed and finally put out being originally unstable and partly unpredictable in origins, location and content”(14). The Berlin events had both arcane political behaviour that needed to be seen and unraveled, followed by the spontaneous public fiesta. On both counts they caused an extraordinary rush of activity, with high market interest building up to demand for continuous heavy coverage around the globe.

It all created intensified pressure for performance. By tradition the field reporter in these situations has considerable autonomy but then receives no quarter if the flow of copy is reduced or goes off target. Wide scope for obtaining reward is matched with the potential for censure. So Phillip Knightley discovered while covering a royal tour, and recounted in a discussion of cabalese: “SUN SAYS QUEEN WILL SIT CROSSLEGGED ON GROUND AT TONGAN FEAST AND EAT ROAST PIG WITH FINGERS STOP WHY YOU NO FILE THIS STORY QUERY SMITH,” he was asked (15). Reports of serious difficulty with irrational demands from the desk, (16), and reciprocating complaints, are legion, and that

issue plays a prominent role in shaping coverage.

Emotion, enter the public, fiesta. The Wall decision in November let free a wave of emotion demonstrated ably by thousands of people in memorable scenes. Before that there was tension. The Tienanmen Square shootings had taken place five months before; there had been talk, sourced to the East German Minister Margot Honecker and others, of worker groups being armed to defend the revolution in East Germany; rigidly authoritarian governments were moving to suppress opposition in Czechoslovakia and Romania. Suddenly it seemed possible all such repression was really coming to an end. The Berlin street party gave relief and met the wishes of many for a peaceful, celebratory end to the Cold War.

As with spot news - random events like accidents or a fight involving people in the street - members of the general public were caught up in the main action. It became plausible even wholly obligatory for news media simply to run open coverage of the activity around the city, leaving audience members to grasp the one great fact and make out the rest entirely for themselves on the strength of private thoughts and feelings. Journalists in that setting had something more than their usual task of working while others could indulge their feelings, though there was scope to channel enthusiasm into the handling of the job – hence the New Zealand reporter who started a trend by climbing onto the wall itself as a vantage point for her coverage.

Open coverage of the kind, for television at least, loses the elements of disclosure and analysis associated with more routine daily journalism. It was *par excellence* a case of issues reduced to the more strictly personal. Much journalistic work was still to be done on the immediate follow-through. It was uncertain whether the East German regime sensed at all that it might have been setting off events likely to escape its control and bring about the collapse of the communist republic. Posing and answering such questions would be the key to telling what would come next. The review of coverage here may show how the alternation between the street party and the need for other continuing coverage was managed.

Perceptions of a mass social movement

From the perspective of the media panel interviewed for this study it was a mass social movement that developed and commanded the initiative. While most of the subjects were

very experienced and knew crowds, this represented to them a change of usual practice. They were specialists generally with expertise in political reporting, European affairs, international relations more generally, or commerce and economics, and were in the habit of doing conventional news coverage, which is to say, working through institutions or with key personalities, ascertaining facts, applying their news values to identify news of concern to a particular market. They commented on how they identified the mass movement and how they operated in covering it.

To Geoff Meade, whose work from Brussels normally draws on decision-making within the institutions of the European Union, the revolution was a “tabloid event” where facts did not require explanation, but one that took the European Community, as it was, by surprise, and which had unexpectedly far-reaching implications for its future. It registered at the time with Malcolm Downing, Walter Wells and Bruce Wilson as an *irresistible* movement, because of the mass commitment. It could be seen in the streets that participation was thorough-going, extending to all walks of life, beyond the echelons of students and others who might be seen getting organised to articulate the demand for democracy. “It was unstoppable, more than the movement at Tienanmen square” - Wells. “The stopper was off the bottle. It was a popular uprising, with the desire to do what they wanted, to get rid of an authoritarian system. All hands joined with bits of organisations; it was not political; they coalesced around those leaders.” - Downing. Daniel Vernet similarly perceived that dissident leaders providing some organisation nevertheless were not in charge: “The dissidents were not representative of the people”. “We had a huge sense of people power” - Mark Brayne. Wilson and Tommie Gorman had separately found themselves in Prague at the outset of the week of demonstrations, and by co-incidence, went looking for information, or the public mood, at late-night bars in the cellars of the city. “The people came down on the regime like a ton of bricks; to look out on the streets it was unstoppable; quite a lot of the police were at their club by the fourth day for the traditional copper’s boycott, a bit of sick leave,” said Wilson.

Nicolas Rothwell: “They wanted us there to validate the event. They constructed a drama... One became adept at reading crowds; feeling crowds forming; often there was moral outrage, and it was impossible to be faking the emotions in these huge crowds... It was a communicating crowd. When the Czechoslovak federal leader, Ladislav Adamec, declared limits to compromise they just would not have this, as in Germany they would not have a gradualist settlement and so went directly to reunification... People were taking power, and

journalists were seeing it not manufacturing it. It was true theatre, a social movement... The ways they behaved were proper to their own culture. In Czechoslovakia they had writers to take control of the narrative; in Romania they workshopped a drama of an insane asylum.” David Childs, the Professor of German Politics, gave a reminder that mass politics was not new, recalling from Lenin that “a week is a long time in a revolution; for a brief moment in time people become activated, and interested in what goes on in the political sphere.”

Alexander Kudascheff had obtained permission from his radio network to enter the GDR in late September 1989 and work independently as the public protests built up in Leipzig and other cities – following the signs but being altogether unsure of what they indicated. He recalled a first intimation that a great movement could be under way. When crossing the border he was asked by an East German guard what he was intending to do: “The officer said he would really like to come with me, and I realised then there could be more in the story than demonstrations for more money or cars. I stayed for a month, at Halle, Leipzig, Rostok and East Berlin, and on return was asked about the situation. I had to say, they aren’t able to handle it. Whatever they give is not enough. If they give more, the people want more. This train is rolling and will not stop, but I don’t know what direction it is heading in.” Here Kudascheff makes a pertinent observation, that while political elites and news media did not know quite what to make of the announcement on visas in East Berlin, on 9.11.89, the citizens had no doubt at all and immediately moved in great numbers, thereby controlling the flow the events: “Schabowski made the statement, all could get a passport to leave if they wanted, and the people there understood immediately what he meant. It was a revolution made in a second. It could be only one chance. People said if we wait maybe they will change their mind, so we should go right now without the passport.” Werner Dollman reported his response a little earlier to seeing that the Czechoslovakian government had agreed to East Germans leaving through the West German Embassy in Prague: “It was happening everywhere and we were feeling that it’s over ...”

The media invasion

The presence of teams of media from the West was welcomed in the rebellious crowds in all the East European centres, and it connected with the tradition of decades, of using Western outlets to get information and maintain an opposition. “It played an important part; it symbolised freedom to them,” said Wilson, who at the same time prescribed a correct role for

journalists as “innocent by-standers” and disavowed any active moves by them to influence events. Philippe Chatenay was one other making the point that journalists would not *intend* making any difference through their actions to the outcome of events; extraordinary scenes, once witnessed, would be passed on to be shared. Dominique Moisi, from IFRI, saw the engagement as partly substantial and partly illusory: “Media played a role but did not create events; journalists may think they are writing history but they are writing about history.”

Getting into and working in East European countries had generally been difficult. Now Downing, an experienced field reporter turned to organising correspondents’ work from London, saw it as one of the main signs of a basic change that the visa system seemed to break down very fast. That fact, and the aid of new communication technology, enabled the journalists to operate very effectively. “The technology works for you once you are in; they cannot watch you 100% of the time; they cannot stop you reporting. There were very curious signals; some reporters took their life into their own hands by going in; it was dangerous; you could be shot; disappear; not be accounted for by the system; people were afraid to meet you; and yet in forty-eight hours border restrictions would be gone” - Gorman. Rothwell considered there could be various explanations for the absence of media controls, including inability of the authorities to impose such controls due to the power of new technologies in the hands of journalists and of the public at large. He noticed also that the backgrounding of correspondents in the recent history of the region surprised many of the citizens met in the streets; much of the information about their own countries had not been available to them.

There was the strong notion widely shared that witnesses linked to the outside provided some protection to the crowds. To Henning von Lowis, reporting in the street in Berlin, the likelihood of Soviet military intervention had continued up to the mid-1980’s. Even as it subsided after the change in policy in Russia, there was anxiety as the mass movement came to be perceived as a threat to the GDR state. He was conscious that it remained “technically possible to stop it with bloody repression.” He formed the impression that the involvement of news media, in transmitting information within the GDR, informing the outside world, keeping watch over the public events, had ended up with a determining influence: “It was extremely important; it could not have happened without radio and television, as a global network in the sky; or else we would still have the USSR and the GDR today.” While it is said the presence of international news media in large numbers, as in Berlin in late 1989, could shield popular movements from repression, Elke Hockerts-Werner believed the force of

the popular movement, given the expression of a physical mass transit of people out of the communist state, became inexorable, media or not: “Nobody can really say, but the media presence made no difference to people by then. People knew what had been happening already with the exodus through Hungary and Prague. The dam was broken.”

Following signs; believing the evidence

The reporters and editors described the experience of following signs during 1989 towards some imponderable outcome; registering facts but conducting a battle against their own disbelief. Wells had perceived from the time of the Solidarity electoral victory there was “something enormous coming up, either a Prague Spring, or a new kind of revolution.” Downing: “We knew something was up, but everyone was groping in the dark”. Chatenay considered that with hindsight the symbols in Poland -the red and white carnations, and maps of Poland in the crown of thorns motif- were the first cracks in the edifice he was confronted with. He saw the political community failing to grasp the message of the mass movement: “It was time to break with conventional wisdom and follow gut responses. Mitterrand and Thatcher felt comfortable with the status quo, but that was against what journalists were encountering on the ground. Against having too much background, it was time to dare to think of a change, when we saw the sledge hammer attack on the wall. The best information came up from the ground. The collapse of the Eastern bloc was easier to understand not from the summit but from the sledge hammer being used in Berlin”. Martin Walker in Moscow had seen the processes of *perestroika* and *glasnost* slipping out of the control of the Kremlin, and while it was “not a bottom-up process there”, he’d “got convinced something dramatically important was taking place”.

Rothwell traced the chain of events as a progress from disbelief to accepting with difficulty the full enormity of the change. There remained great scepticism over the intentions of Gorbachev at the beginning of 1989, but “unfolding from then”, there had been the Polish elections, revelation of the secret protocols of the Ribbentrop-Molotov agreement, the human chain in the Baltic states, and the departures and demonstrations in the summer - and “still people did not believe”. After the opening of the frontier by Hungary, celebrated with an outdoor party at the border, and the “startling event” of Gorbachev’s October meeting with Honecker in East Berlin, suddenly in November there were the “events that no-one had fantasised about three months before,” those of the Wall. Once that happened it was like

falling dominoes, and the realisation of a “list of unthinkableables”, like the accession of Vaclav Havel to the Presidency of Czechoslovakia, and the opening of Romania. Brayne, a correspondent with a wide brief in several countries, had worked through the “quiet” Jaruszeliski years in Poland, with a “gut feeling” that “something was brewing here; we saw something beginning to wobble”. Comparing notes with a colleague in Bonn in the Summer he’d considered that 1989 would be “quiet”, but that was before the “crucial moment” of the Hungarian decision on the border, and the beginning of realisation that large movements had begun. Nevertheless while reporting events, expectations were still kept in check: “We still did not think it could happen; in September we did not think the Wall would come down.”

Prescience and probity

In these special circumstances the value of prescience was accentuated. It was doubly difficult to be right and doubly dangerous to be wrong. The first call was to be on hand and prepared to take on board the next convulsive move; the second was to dare to indicate in the coverage where events might be headed. It was a failure of duty to the audience or readership not to be ahead of events, and not to be seen in that position; it was a threat to credibility to anticipate wrongly and, worse, make anything like loose predictions - especially if they turned out to be wrong. Here the issue was both managing one’s own perceptions and imagination, and at the same time adjusting to those of others, especially the public following the news.

Brayne was articulate on this dilemma in discussing his coverage of the rise of Slobodan Milosevic in Yugoslavia, as a reform communist, but campaigning on Serb nationalism. “I saw that this was fascism, but I could not report this,” he said. It could not be articulated convincingly at that early stage as news; it was a conclusion difficult to feel certain of, for oneself; it could not really have been accepted for belief by others. He said “hedging your bets” was an answer in such cases; giving a few indications, or suggestions, not everything you knew, to help prepare the way for what might follow. Chatenay: “It’s a question of it’s better to be safe than to be wrong, simply because it’s so embarrassing to get things dead wrong ... I think with the journalists who were in Leipzig for those demonstrations in the Summer, I can’t remember reading or hearing this is the end for East Germany, whereas obviously it was. But I think it would have been irresponsible to affirm that this was the beginning of the end; it would have been prescient to speculate as to whether this might be, possibly the beginning of the end... With hindsight it’s easier today to see the beginnings of

the first cracks in the system, but if you can see cracks in your wall you still cannot speculate the whole building will be coming down in two months.”

Achievement in the coverage

The journalists display no illusions over the impacts or even practical value to the public, of their coverage. There was a division of views. Reporters in this group who put forward a clear view admitted more doubts than the editors. The reporter Walker considered the response to changes in the Soviet union affecting Eastern Europe was “slow”; Brayne described the media contribution to the historic change, in the end, as “incidental”, reflecting a view that daily news reporting gives an insufficient treatment as the process had to be “more than the sum of its parts”; Gorman agreed, calling the media vehicle “not very good” for keeping records on such processes, as “we go in daily”, although through technology its impacts were being magnified and sped up; Rothwell owned to allowing the treatments to be slightly influenced by “black and white” thinking, as in the view of Poland as a “nation betrayed”; Dollman thought that the coverage “lagged behind and did not influence developments”. Downing, who was news editor at the BBC World Service, assessed its coverage as successful through having bureaus in place before the crisis, which helped in organising traveling correspondents; Brock at The Times was pleased with the initiative of two journalists who had spotted the trend early and asked to be sent to Eastern Europe to check, and very satisfied the newspaper had agreed to it; Wells of the International Herald Tribune thought the total effort by Western media, from leading outlets to “even small newspapers”, had been thorough, commenting: “I cannot really say they fumbled colossally”. Similarly Naughton, despite anxiety about the ability of correspondents to manage each situation, considered the reportage overall achieved its goal. “I don’t think we got it historically wrong anyway,” he said.

Dollmann draws on accounts of his experience as director of a specialist field unit covering foreign news for ZDF, to make his point that nobody was really ready for the collapse of communism. Accompanying Chancellor Helmut Kohl to Moscow in October 1988 he had noted instances, as on a visit to a scientific establishment, where directives from Communist Party officials were seen to be disregarded. It was taken on board as tangible evidence of a substantive change in the system, more telling than words would usually convey.

Psychologically prepared to that extent, on 9.11.89 he was with Kohl in Warsaw, a fact which

would speak for itself on the question of the West German government's anticipation of the events of that week - notwithstanding the growing importance of the Polish relationship. No West German television chain had provided live coverage of the Politburo media conference at which the new border policy was announced. Kohl scheduled an off-the-record briefing on the news received, and it was agreed ZDF could set up a live feed to its headquarters, in case the story should turn out to be worthy of the Chancellor abandoning the briefing format to speak publicly instead. In the event Kohl did agree to speak, but the editors of ZDF, still uncertain of the import of the announcement in East Berlin, did not broadcast those first reactions of the Chancellor live. The parallel service, ARD, which had asked for a split of the feed, put it to air live and enjoyed some kudos as a result.

Dollman said, "I talked with reporters and phoned head office at Mainz to say this could be the most important story for many years. We did not yet know what to make of it. They were not reporting it that way. It shows how difficult it was to judge what was happening, where a major network opportunity was missed. Kohl and his aides told us they did not know what to make of the announcement by Gunter Schabowski. They did not really believe he meant what he said. We did not jump at the news, although for foreign broadcasters it might have been easier, or more obvious. ARD and ZDF joined the coverage late in the day. Our news led with the story but did not say it was the end of the GDR. We just could not believe it."

These are telling reflections to illustrate a point about the prescience or lack of it, of the reporters. They were faced with imponderables and a situation working towards a largely inconceivable or at least wholly unanticipated outcome. On a poor base of intelligence material, intelligence sources becoming in those days as confused as anybody else, they were driven to work on nuance in a fluid and unpredictable setting, where no particular players were known, even to themselves, to hold the initiative of the day. The Kohl government would later take a bold initiative in jettisoning inter-state negotiations with the GDR in favour of the accession policy; in early November a broad mass of citizens in the GDR was certainly developing a political momentum of some kind; the communist party in retreat began replacing its leadership, and with astounding consequences would attempt to liberalise its travel policy. Few dared suppose at any time when such moves would surface or where they would lead.

Case study on German politics

The Berlin Wall, because of the political sensitivities surrounding it, and its symbolic power, was a key factor in the crisis sweeping through all of Eastern Europe; and while like the partition of Berlin itself, it represented an international problem. However the Germans obviously would be the people most directly and dramatically concerned with it. The German journalists consulted for this inquiry had particular concerns about specifically national political issues which posed professional problems for them, and which, given the central position of divided Germany in this history, by application had wide effects. The following is a treatment of their reported experiences, presented as a case study.

In the background to the crisis is a sense that official policy in West Germany contributed to a gross underestimation of the weakness and instability of the GDR, which in turn left all parties unprepared for what was to happen to it. Thomas Kielinger said West German governments had adopted a “head in the sand policy, propping up the bankrupt state”, for the sake of stable relations with the Eastern bloc. This had extended to government officers confronting and intimidating journalists who reported failings of the GDR as trouble-makers rocking the boat. “Aid money was put in to stabilise the system, and there were wishful parameters set up, as to how stability had to be achieved, with information to the contrary excluded. East Germany was hailed as the most successful of the Eastern bloc economies, with the ninth strongest industrial performance in international lists and so forth. Journalists were told, for instance by the office of Chancellor Kohl, to pass on a threat to their publishers that they could be held responsible for a collapse of the existing system. This was at senior levels. The journalists were deterred from reporting what they saw. It took Gorbachev to tell us how rotten communism was.”

Kudascheff agreed that a kind of consensus existed about having to live with the East German state, which impeded a critical view: “Journalists like others supposed Germany would not be reunified for 50 to 100 years; that it was a cold war problem and eventually Washington and Moscow might arrange something; but in the meantime all believed that we would have to live together with things as they were.”

Hockerts-Werner was producer of the WDR television program *Deutscher Alltag* which broke ground by taking its documentary teams into the GDR over a period of ten years. She concurred that the “hidden bankruptcy” of the state clouded the judgement of all parties and provoked the East German leadership to consider a dangerous policy of holding onto power at

all costs. Hennig Von Lowis of Menar said very little information was in circulation about conditions in the GDR; there was speculation by 1989 about opposition activity within the communist party (the SED) but “no real information”; dissident groups were known to be very small, and economic stress had been effectively disguised: “Many politicians in West Germany believed the GDR state was stronger than it was. We know now it was a satellite state, but while its economy was weak, it’s propaganda was good.” Dollmann: “The system was bound to collapse but that was not known in the West. What happened in the end took place instead of what could have been a long agony.”

Political controversies

By early 1998 it was commonly held that the decision to make the Deutschmark the sole legal tender for East and West Germany from 1.7.90, the policy of immediate currency parity, and the rush to reunification associated with it, had proved misguided and was causing massive harm. Journalists who’d been engaged in covering the events surrounding that decision had become critical of it, and most would admit to having handled the issue rather uncritically while it was being resolved, because of the uncertainties of the time. The targets of criticism in 1998 were these pillars of the integration policy for East Germany: (a) the 1990 pronouncement of Kohl on the part of his government that the standards of economic performance and living standards in the Eastern Lander would match those of West Germany in seven years, (an initial target of five years was revised after a short time), and as the slogan went, that the region would become a blossoming landscape, a *bluhendelandschaften*; (b) adoption of an expansionist spending policy to effect this growth, by funding a very large infrastructure program in East Germany, and selling business assets in the East to private enterprise – a program characterised by its spirit of demolishing much of the existing infrastructure in the East and building the replacement structures from the ground up; (c) amid clamour in the East for Deutschmarks the decision to effect full currency union from July 1990; (d) putting aside proposals for co-existence of states, a confederation or a phased reunification, with the decision to enact the constitutional accession of the Eastern Lander to the FRG on 3.10.90, as the form reunification should take.

Reporting of the economic take-over of East Germany and introduction of full parity in the currency, was seen as having been in positive terms, in response to great public pressure, whether arising from feelings of euphoria in the West or clear demands for economic

integration in the East. Such feelings overcame apprehension about the future, although some apprehension was also expressed in the news during 1989. Dollman: “There was a certain anxiety at the time, and what happened in the end is that people would be less well off than before reunification; it is quite clear that many in the West have to more or less financially support 17 million people in the East, with consequences for every family; that was because of changes such as the change to a single currency, one-to-one, as we all know. Most economic difficulties today come from decisions taken at that time, but we were not very sceptical then. Now people are disillusioned and anxious, and the government is reproached that it did not tell people openly and clearly what to expect to happen. It spoke of blossoming landscapes and was raising expectations. Yet what else could the government have done at that time? Other countries in Eastern Europe which have had great economic difficulty would say that Germany has paid an easy price to be united.” Hockerts-Werner also saw the *bluhendelandschaften* program revealed as having raised expectations without justification: “With changes like the Deutschmark, people could see a possible disaster, but not the whole problem. Now this has become a psychological problem in East Germany. The news media were always more realistic than the leading politicians about our own problems in the West, but the trabbies were coming over, and people were told, ‘we will give you everything’. It was a mistake, and the population in the West did not want to share.”

The pattern described by the journalists as a group had become an orthodox view, that a policy which had grand popular backing immediately foundered on unforeseen economic obstacles, then began to be associated with serious problems in the form of disillusionment and anxiety among the public, and differences within the formally reunified country that belied an actual unity of experience and purpose.

So these observers, from a strategic vantage point as leaders in the national news media, were questioning the policies improvised during the months of crisis and attributing to them the causes for distress in the community. They reflected also on their own involvement in the circumstances in which the political decision making occurred. The most common explanation of the currency problem is that it forced a radical rise in the cost of production in East Germany, causing the region’s industries to lose their established markets in Eastern Europe, which in turn led to high unemployment. In East Germany the jolt was felt at grass roots level where people were adjusting to the many other aspects of change. In business, “suddenly there was no money; no state money; nothing to finance them. So there were take-overs; in media Murdoch came in and the Maxwell company,” (Dollman). In private life,

older people who had worked for the GDR and believed in it found “nothing was true any more”; younger people born there were confronted with a personalised crisis; “many suddenly lost everything. Now there is nothing; no work; no ideals; nothing to believe in; there is a psychological malaise in the country, in the former GDR,” said Hockerts-Werner. (A book of social history, an account of neighbourhood affairs in Leipzig seven years after reunification, called Changing the Curtains, the Money and the Guns, adds to these observations about the quality of life) (17).

Von Lowis had a strongly critical view of the take-over of the East by the FRG, arising from his experiences as DWE representative at Rostok, taking up the appointment immediately after his coverage of the opening of the Berlin Wall. Anticipating a long period witnessing change in a democratised GDR, he observed after reunification on 3.10.90 a wholesale disruption of community life. He experienced difficulty getting acceptance of reports for broadcast to give the perspective of East German authorities on disturbances that resulted from sudden immigration – including the arrival of anti-immigrant skinhead gangs from West Germany. In this account the sale, down-sizing or closure of enterprises, displacement of managers and staff by “Westies”, establishment of the highly organised political parties based in West Germany, and an overall insensitivity in management of the change, had degrading effects that might have been avoided, had there been a patient transition: “East German people wanted the Deutschmark and free travel but did not want annexation. They had practically lived in two worlds, in the daytime working in a socialist country, and at night watching television as in a capitalist country. They saw a big difference, but many are not very happy about what happened to them. It was a policy of liberation and occupation, and everything had to be demolished... Some national identity had been established in the GDR, and many people now realise that, too late. It is not possible to put two countries together overnight. Professionally it is a big problem to bring over to the West, to the Rhineland, what West Germany did to the GDR ... in the East many persons’ biographies have been destroyed.”

Kudascheff took the same view, that while material goods softened the pain of reunification, as time had revealed, the process was conducted wrongly: “In the GDR people would be watching West German television and some of the programs they would believe to be reality. It was a problem for them to differentiate fiction from non-fiction; to decide what to believe from the television, just as it was a problem to believe their government. In one way the

people were very isolated, in what they themselves referred to as their system and their values. Kohl, Brandt and others were mistaken to talk of one function or mechanism to unify Germany into one whole thing. You cannot unify by calendars. Both East and West Germans are angry at the government about that now.” In West Germany the high cost of reconstruction in the Eastern regions imposed a strain on household budgets through the 7%, later 5% Solidarity Tax (*Solidaritätszuschlag*) committed to the enormous costs of the seven-year rebuilding program. The scale of the operation is set out in the 1997 Bundestag report reviewing the “change”, (*Wende*) (18). Kielinger provided an analysis of figures on the German economy indicating positive revenue growth and export performance, but off-set by worsening unemployment and the continuing costs of reconstruction in the East. He illustrated the national dilemma by including the example of DM9.5-billion in subsidies given with the sale of the Leuna/Buna chemical complex in Sachsen-Anhalt, meaning “DM4-million for every job saved” (19).

On the report of this panel, such spending came to be seen, certainly in West Germany, as over-commitment in pursuit of a vast but ill-considered program. One casualty is the ethos of German fraternalism, the proclamations of rejoining “brothers and sisters” made on the road to reunification, described now as hiding from well-recognised differences. Claus-Dieter Gersch of DW indicated the severity of old regional tensions: “Before 1945 East and West German people were thinking in a different manner. Saxons in East Germany had a different language and way of thinking to those who were behind the psychological barrier of the Rhine. They were not our brothers and sisters in the East. There is a wall in the mind, in Germany.” Dollman also identified such cleavage: “For historical reasons people regard themselves as Rheinlanders or Saxons – in the West, the so-called unpopular Saxons”. Jealousies between East and West were activated also by perceptions of the eastern regions getting too much in the way of new buildings, street works and telecommunications services while such works were allowed to run down in the West – a well-worn theme on the news agenda by the end of the 1990’s. Hockerts-Werner said imposition of the Solidarity Tax put an end to many positive sentiments: “People loved to see the trabis coming in 1989 but not for very long.”

Relations among political elites and journalists

Returning to the coverage of the immediate crisis of 1989; the facts of life in conventional

politics, managed by professional politicians, had to be dealt with, but together now with the less predictable and potentially very powerful reality of the mass social movement. The central tendency of these journalists' analyses of what they were dealing with is that they were in the midst of an unexpected and unusual phenomenon, a spontaneous political movement of the people, which had to be reconciled with their usual day-by-day practices within the formal institutions – social, economic, political, intellectual. It is a theme of these interviews that while news media fell behind an upheaval being conducted as a mass movement, they maintained a better grasp than the political community, with key figures in government, East or West, failing to anticipate or comprehend developments, and scrambling to keep pace. The reports of the journalists here give a perspective on the political leadership as a grouping whose framing of situations was often awry and misleading in the year of crisis. These reports stand to be useful as, in the observation of Moisi, in order for journalists to understand power, it is necessary for them to get close to it - which they do achieve. The journalists are in the building with the political leadership at decision-making time; they have good access to them for questions; and while not as close as various strata of advisers, lobbyists or supplicants, they come from separate institutions and so do not depend on them for jobs, advantage or survival.

The image of the politicians generally given is of individuals resolved, at least in their early responses, to stay with the *status quo* in preference to acknowledging the leadership of the streets. It is not unreasonable to suppose that members of government, feeling the weight of daily responsibility for social and community affairs, would want to see things kept manageable in an accustomed way. Negotiated, managed change, would be a safe preference for those intent on keeping a controlling hand, and so retaining political power. Many of the journalists point out that as well, such persons demonstrate ordinary humanity and would be as distracted by the uproar as all others. In the outcome the journalists' report presents Mikhail Gorbachev as the outstanding figure who, however wittingly or unwittingly, whether or not in control of events, broke the boundaries of convention, opened new perspectives and permitted new power relations to emerge. Helmut Kohl is presented as much more the institutional politician and negotiator, but one who recognised the public mood in time and responded to it. Others - Francois Mitterrand, Margaret Thatcher, reform politicians in the Eastern bloc, old guard communists like Erich Honecker - stayed more conventional in their stance.

Along with others, Gorman saw historic political relations being revised by the mass social movement, which used news media, itself charged with new-found technological means, to influence government: “A lot of the past had been lost in a vacuum; Solidarity brought that back; and world leaders would sit watching, then make statements. As well, we are experiencing a revolution like the industrial revolution, except it is in our industry, and is changing the way we operate; it is much faster.” Wells and Meade saw politicians using news media adroitly as a channel for their perspectives and proposals, with the qualification, from Meade, that “palpably false” information or statements would always be discarded. Wilson represented the classic aspiration to a disengaged form of involvement with the power structure: “We are limpets on the ship of fame; we have a healthy disrespect for authority.”

John Palmer was ready to make a “very tentative” appraisal of the functioning of news media in new ways due to new technologies, resulting in pressure on both parties in the media-power relationship. As one outcome, the style of coverage had moved away from interpretation of events for audiences or readers, by reporters, such as British correspondents who provided an exhaustive coverage of the 1917 Russian revolution : “In Europe media is now more of a pervasive presence, with the internet and so forth; more is available in real time than before, and all can know about something at the one time. There has been a change in the quality of the work; *finding out* is now less difficult; *understanding* is more difficult. There has been a culture shift inside media, with more questioning of persons, authorities, who are less certain of their knowledgeability. Journalists can get ahead of the authorities with information. The knowledge gap between politicians and those who report on them has narrowed since the times of scarce communication resources, for example reliance on telegraphy in 1930s Europe, when telephones were unreliable, and with fewer channels of communication, less possibility of leaks. So, politicians who in the past saw all telegrams during a crisis would have two to three days start on the journalists, but that does not happen today.” In the framing of issues, he said, while much more information is coming available to the public outside of media services, “we are getting a blurring of entertainment and journalism ...” On the reluctance of government leaders to adjust to sudden change, Childs related an incident in which he had obtained some access to Margaret Thatcher in late September 1989. At a conference he had organised he was rebuffed on attempting to draw attention to the accelerating events in Germany: “We are not interested in the German question,” the Prime Minister said.

Journalists were able to carry on business, admittedly amid baffling and spontaneous change on all quarters, in accordance with the standing protocols of news gathering -fact gathering, detachment, checking official sources- up to the week of the fiesta at Berlin. That conventional business practice included dealing closely with those in power, which was to resume in the aftermath of the fall of the Wall, and the fall of the Eastern bloc governments in a chain. To journalists on the panel who were accredited to the European Commission at Brussels, and a number of the others who gave interviews, the outcome of the crisis was that the European Union inherited the situation and as a result came to establish a new European architecture -institutional, economic, later to be social and political. The reporting and interpretation of such a process was daily bread for most leading journalists on the territory and it began as a return to conventional journalistic practice, soon after the popular assertion of power in the streets of Eastern Europe began to settle down.

A first step had been the Paris summit of the European Community that November (18.11.89), the shortest-ever summit of that body. Its being convened at short notice at the Elysee Palace conveyed some sense of urgency; it had the character of an improvised conclave to get on top of an unexpectedly powerful event in Berlin, one demonstrably as much outside the control and knowledge of West European leaders, as of their East European counterparts. To this writer attending directly after working in Eastern Europe, there was an impression of an assembly of people accustomed to being at the centre of decision-making, now bemused to find the important action going on beyond the collective grasp. This European Council heard an appraisal by Kohl and determined that East European states emerging from the old system would need help with democratisation, principally through specialised economic aid. That resulted in the very large-scale technical assistance program, PHARE, but as pointed out by Meade, the Council had missed the essential point. People in the Eastern bloc did not just want practical aid; they would be pressing to join Western Europe: "The bulk of our coverage overlooked the direct and huge ramifications for the European Community... The EC itself was taken by surprise; it was like hearing of an earthquake; there were difficulties in understanding this challenge to all expectations, with this biblical movement of people in the early days of it. We all got it wrong. We thought of aid not expansion, and covered the day to day reactions from the Commission, such as establishing the programs, PHARE and TACIS. We could not see, for years, where it would lead."

This observation is important because the next step was a political negotiation, (and so, much in the area of interest and competence of the European Union media gallery). It helped to translate the business of government, politics and social control, back into orthodox state arrangements. Also, according to current conventional wisdom, it prepared the way for further European integration – making that another consequence of the fall of the communist system. The negotiating step was the dialogue that took place between Chancellor Kohl and President Francois Mitterrand from the end of 1989 into the following year, and leading towards agreement on monetary union, expansion of the EC, and moves towards political union. The 1992 Maastricht agreement was an outcome; it set the date for the monetary treaty, single currency and single monetary policy - 1999. In the interim, the re-designated European Union received applications for admission from most of the former communist states, made agreements with them on forms of association, reached internal agreement in principle to their being admitted, and set up standards they would need to meet - at base, criteria of wealth, productivity and economic management (20).

The bi-lateral, in fact two-man consultations said to have endorsed this great change began with dissatisfaction in West Germany over the reluctance of the French President to accept German reunification as the outcome of the crisis. Mitterrand had made visits to Eastern Europe, including the GDR before its formal democratisation, which were seen as active moves to promote alternative solutions to reunification. Then through his dialogue with Kohl a settlement was reached, whereby in simple terms Germany would agree to and underwrite monetary union, and France would accept a reunified Germany in the context of more binding European integration. There was broad accord that integration into a closer union would reduce any potential for a divisive German hegemony in Central Europe. The interpretation of the Kohl-Mitterrand dialogue is widely agreed, Gorman representing a general view: “It was a deal from Mitterrand; we’ll live with this and you underwrite monetary union”. “I think it was more complex than that but notably both the French and British governments were against German unification; they never thought it would come off and if it did it would be a bad idea; and completely against the swing of history Thatcher and Mitterrand weren’t exactly overwhelmed by the idea of one Germany”- Downing.

Moisi had been concerned about the direction of French policy: “Mitterrand was not very enthusiastic about the prospect of German unification and I think it played a negative role in Franco-German relations. Suddenly the Germans realised that the French were more

nationalistic than they had thought they would be... I remember writing in 1989 that Francois Mauriac had said, 'I love Germany so much I want two of them', and I used that by saying, Frenchmen should say, 'I love Europe so much that I am willing to accept one Germany' ” George Brock suggested the tension was reflected in the attitude of news media in France, which sympathised with political leaders' concerns, undermining the quality of their own coverage in terms of standard news values: “The interesting test case here is the French media. At that juncture the French political class, with Mitterrand, the government was on the verge of a collective nervous breakdown as a result of the prospect of the reunification of Germany ... French media were very much less coherent than other media about this and to my mind very parochial. They were absolutely obsessed by German reunification to the detriment of their coverage of the wider European scene.”

Vernet, Editor of *Le Monde* in 1989, disagreed, saying French media had been the same as those elsewhere. Where they had difficulties reading the mass movements in Eastern Europe, they were misled by official thinking, but in the end had found themselves better in touch than their governments: “I think that the media people were almost enthusiastic about what was happening in Germany and more positive than the government. I think it was the present Foreign Minister Hubert Vedrine, the diplomatic advisor of Mitterrand, who was writing that Mitterrand was conscious of public opinion not being ready for German reunification and that was not true; the media and public opinion were much ahead of the government.” Vernet viewed the mass movement of peoples as ultimately overruling the machinations of statesmen and the speculations of news media. “While the media coverage was a good job generally speaking, we have to recognise that at the time, (September to the beginning of November 1989; while *Le Monde*, for example, supported the democratisation of East Germany and the protests against the regime, and criticised Mitterrand for travelling to East Berlin on the 20-21 December because we judged the trip was a kind of support for the moribund regime), we were also somewhat intoxicated by what the German government said, that the goal of people might not be reunification, that they were trying to have two democratic regimes on German soil. The goal of reunification was adopted later and we could have recognised a little earlier that the mass movement was for German reunification. Yet we were still much in front of the government in France. I remember the Foreign Minister Roland Dumas, I think in November, saying in the National Assembly that German reunification was not on the agenda - but it was on the agenda, it's clear.”

These are telling reflections to illustrate a point about the prescience or lack of it, of the reporters. They were faced with imponderables and a situation working towards a largely inconceivable outcome. They were driven to work on nuance in a fluid and unpredictable setting, in which no particular players were known, even to themselves, to hold the initiative of the day. They would be influenced by their regular information providers, like Dumas, or Thatcher, both unwilling to confront the “German question”. The Kohl government would later take a bold initiative in jettisoning inter-state negotiations with the GDR in favour of the accession policy; in early November a broad mass of citizens in the GDR was certainly developing a political momentum of some kind; the communist party was falling back on prepared positions, moving towards the change in its travel policy. Few dared suppose at any time when such moves would surface or where they would lead. The central tendency of these journalists’ analyses of what they were dealing with is that they were in the midst of a spontaneous political movement of the people.

Violence and fear

The report on these interviews has so far indicated a strong concern with going into the unknown, whether confronting ideas long held implausible like the sudden reunification of Germany, or working in new ways- as following a mass social movement instead of dealing principally with politicians. Individuals will try to understand and interpret situations by referring to what is already known, and that phenomenon presents itself here as a concern that was felt about the massacre in Beijing in June 1989. It was seen as a possible precedent, conditioning the expectations of media. It made reporters more cautious, by dampening the imagination and chastening any tendency to accept the possibility of a change in the system. At the time of Gorbachev’s visit to East Berlin, in early October, reporting of the demonstrations made frequent references to Tienanmen Square and relations between the Chinese government and the GDR. Almost all the journalists engaged in the story and interviewed here said it had some prominence in their thinking.

“Lots of people expected an outcome like Tienanmen square, especially in dealing with the harsh regimes in Czechoslovakia and the GDR”- Rothwell; “It was quite possible; there was violence in the European story, in Romania, in Yugoslavia, at Vilnius and in other

parts of the former USSR”- Gorman; “In 1989 it was known from past experience; communists would use force”-Brayne. “The experience of Tienanmen Square was read in two different directions at once because in one sense, until the tanks rolled in, it looked like an extraordinary crack in the superstructure, but when the crackdown occurred it seemed to strengthen the conventional wisdom that the regimes while facing a new constellation of forces were actually capable of mastering them. I was certainly anxious that we were going to find ourselves in a position where there was widespread instability in Central Europe and that we’d be unable to go to these places to cover them”- Brock.

As reported above, Von Lowis had harboured active concerns about a possible armed Soviet intervention, believing that the presence of news media acted as a vital shield, and Hockerts-Werner was haunted by archival evidence turned up nearly ten years later, suggesting a violent solution –an occupation of West Berlin- was always considered by the communist government in East Germany. Chatenay mixed reminiscences over the prospect of a violent reaction with the convention that the new Soviet position under Gorbachev made the crucial difference: “There was the fear that suddenly there would be a very rude awakening; that the border police would open fire; there was a mythology of the Berlin Wall as guard towers and border troops who would open fire for yes or no; you must have seen that place near the Bundestag where there are all those crosses for people who have died trying to cross the wall ... I think many people half-expected a crackdown at one moment or another; today I think it didn’t happen because there was no green light from Moscow, and none of these East European communist regimes dared do much without at least approval from Moscow if not ordered from Moscow; I tend to think all those old fashioned communist leaders like Honecker were totally destabilised by Gorbachev; he didn’t act or react like the communist leaders in the Kremlin they were used to.”

Gorbymania and Gorbachev in East Berlin

The stubbornness of the old regime generated difficult relations with the Soviet Union which were to come to a head in October 1989. Lowis commented on an aspect of the tension and ambiguity which had crept into relations between the USSR and Germany, dating from time he spent at the Deutschland Radio bureau in Moscow during the *Glasnost* era, in 1988, where he recalled “working with the Soviet media, to bring glasnost to East Germany.” Soviet frustration with East Germany’s rejection of liberalisation policies was evident, and so there

was co-operation between Soviet and West German radio services broadcasting to East Germany, to overcome censorship by the GDR authorities of news about developments in the USSR - in fact to overcome difficulties of Soviet broadcasters in actually contacting their East German colleagues.

The Gorbachev visit to East Berlin for the fortieth anniversary celebrations of the GDR was a challenge for interpretation. East Germany had been resistant to the pressure from Moscow for internal reform; the leaders' rhetoric was mutually supportive, though contradicted by some of the utterances the Soviet leader was beginning to make; and the tides of protest could not be ignored. Accordingly, and typical of the reporting of the time, a dispatch from this writer to cover Gorbachev's arrival included contradictory elements; his solidarity with his hosts mixed with uncertainty about what he might permit to happen: "The Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev has arrived in East Berlin to take part in celebrations for the fortieth anniversary of the communist East German republic. Lee Duffield reports that the visit follows a week in which thousands of East Germans have left for the West, or taken part in large demonstrations against the government... Mr Gorbachev began a heavy schedule of welcoming ceremonies and wreath layings straight after his arrival. Both he and the East German President Erich Honecker are to give major speeches later, during a mass parade. The two leaders have had differences over the Soviet Union's policy of reform and East Germany's resistance to it. It is not certain whether Mr Gorbachev will take one of his famous walks among the crowd, because of speculation that opposition groups might use his presence –as a symbol of change- to launch a demonstration. The communist countries have rallied to support the East German government, sending their senior leaders to attend the celebrations. A message from the Soviet leadership said East Germany had defended its independence, despite strong pressure (QUOTE) 'from the enemy'". (ABC Radio, 10 pm, 6.10.89).

Gorbachev as the standard bearer of change had visited Western Europe, including his trip to West Germany in June 1989, declaring his concern for an end to the cold war in the "common European home". Werner Dollman of ZDF believed the popularity Gorbachev derived from these initiatives up to late 1988, was a case of news media working to the grass roots in contradiction of government policy in Bonn. Chancellor Helmut Kohl had likened the *glasnost* policy, sometimes translated as "openness" but also as "publicity", to propaganda of the Goebbels era – a persistent pounding of an official line, with a weak basis in facts, not relieved by the presence of alternative views and feed-back (21). "Making Gorbachev

popular was done by mass media. Official policy was to be sceptical as they did not believe Gorbachev, and when he was given heavy coverage like the leading pages of Der Spiegel, his popularity as indicated in the mass media was not regarded as genuine by the government. The news media might have taken the lead in this respect; they realised Gorbachev was not just a propaganda puppet of the Politburo,” Dollman said.

Gorbachev acquired a place in the imagination of Eastern Europeans as a liberator as evidenced by the demonstrations in East Berlin, early in October 1989, where he heard young protestors calling “Gorby save us” (22). Yet it was plain the Soviet leader, like virtually all others, had no notion at that time of the coming demise of the communist state. Gorbachev’s public statements on support for the GDR government were equivocal. He immediately passed on to Western journalists his famous warning to the Politburo of the East German communist party that “life punishes harshly anyone who is left behind in politics” (23). Media interpretation of his comments was cautious, although during that week German reporters obtained leaks from the Politburo meeting showing the State President, Erich Honecker, had been under intense internal criticism. Alexander Kudascheff agreed in 1998 the full import of those comments was not exploited at the time, although it came to be understood quickly enough that they were aimed at the old guard within the SED, and not a declaration that all support was being withdrawn from the recalcitrant party as a whole. “Gorbachev’s comment was aimed at Honecker, Milke and those others, as even Gorbachev was unable to conceive that nothing would stop Germany being reunified in March or April.” (The incident is dealt with further in later sections including Chapter 8 which reviews media treatments of the main processes, events and issues).

Vernet explained the decision by Gorbachev to repudiate the East German regime in terms of *realpolitik*: “The GDR’s only justification was ideological; there was no legitimate reason for its existence aside from the communist system, as it was not a nation like Hungary, and Gorbachev with his own reforms, even though they were to fail, was undermining the fundamentals of the system. The only justification left to underwrite East Germany would be geo-political, and the importance of it was not great enough to him. He needed Western support and was pursuing deep, not cosmetic changes.” Brayn: “Gorbachev said to the leadership of these countries, I am not going to bail you out, and it was the ultimate demonstration that these were satellites, puppet regimes, because they fell when the puppet master let go of the strings.”

In many quarters in the West, remembered experience guiding perception had kept Gorbachev -after all, still captain of the Cold War adversary- under suspicion for a long time. That was to be altered only by the emergence of a strong liking for him among the public, then taken up by news media, ahead of a late response from their governments. Walker who observed the rise of Gorbachev from the closest quarters noted that both Western governments and media were reluctant to accept the *glasnost* changes as genuine. Much of Western Europe had started to become convinced, with Thatcher, from 1986, but the suspicions of the German Chancellor had been persistent, and the American administration was reluctant, even until some time following the demonstration of huge public acceptance of him during his 1987 visit to the United States. Chatenay admitted to sharing some of the scepticism while writing for *Le Point*: "The big question in my mind with Gorbachev was, is this meant for consumption in the Western countries? There was in the back of my mind the reality of control of dissidence in the Soviet Union, and then the question of the lessening of state control over everything, to which I did not know the answer ... It might have been totally divorced from what he was doing in the Eastern bloc or the Soviet Union."

Paralysis of the regimes

Despite apprehensions of a violent response it was a startling fact of history that the communist regimes left power quickly and without argument. Many in the *nomenclatura* in those states had realistic hopes that with their background in business, politics and administration they could return to participate another day, in another guise - as many have, most prominently in the reform communist parties.

However it had been an involuntary surrender from power without the fight that might have been expected, and some of the psychological interpretations of that reality would bear investigation. In the perception of the correspondents there was a demonstrable loss of will to power, loss of confidence, and an open acknowledgment of lost legitimacy before the world. Virtually no polemics were offered, through state media or to Western journalists; some efforts to proclaim a new way, as with the SED under its new leadership post-Honecker, ran into a wall of cynicism and ridicule as much from its own disaffected party members as from the contemptuous public.

Rothwell perceived "loss of belief" in his contacts and speculated about natural limits to the

life of a regime, measured against the natural life of a person. Brayne called it loss of the “will to power”, by contrast with the self-assurance of the Chinese communists. Walker, on the Soviet Union, saw that reform “emasculated the police state, and removed the sense of confidence in repression;” in the end, “the old guard lost their nerve and self-confidence”.

The accompanying, and balancing phenomenon was the surge of confidence, sometimes indignation among the public, most characterised as a loss of fear. “There was a collective shift, a loss of fear, as with the fall of Ceausescu when an artificial power disappeared; it had been in people’s minds and the illusion was gone”-Brayne. “Solidarity first rattled the regime; people were no longer afraid and they were encouraged to face the truth and could not be put down or snuffed out any more. When the travellers came out and saw that so much in the West they had heard of was true, they must have really been pissed off”- Gorman. Childs also spoke of the reaction of the border crossers, who were experienced with Western television, finding themselves in the West; seeing the shops and feeling themselves “robbed of a life”. Much of the alienation of this public had been to do with television, as in Germany where models of dissent were provided by, “the activities of the Greens, industrial showdowns, sit-ins, boycotts which became media events; movement leaders showed the importance of getting on television to get noticed; there were peaceful protests against things that people disagreed with.” He said Politburo members in East Berlin had intimated that they’d been geared towards dealing with a violent rebellion; instead they found that actions to deal with non-violent protest techniques imported from the West, such as closing off city streets around a sit-in, produced more alienation among more of the people. Moisi described a situation where there was “no fear any longer;” the regime had “psychologically collapsed” and so was vulnerable to the mass uprising : “They knew they were fighting on the defensive; they knew they were fighting for countries that were no longer legitimate, and for positions that were anachronistic. The system was so rotten it needed only an extra push to collapse.”

Frames and perceptions

The journalists adhere to their news values, as defined here, very uniformly and tenaciously. As has been shown they admit to susceptibility to influence, and contrariwise also claim considerable autonomy, for example in being associated with but independent of political elites. Where the question is raised of framing, the concept of -“conscious strategic efforts by groups of people to fashion shared understandings, that legitimate and motivate collective

action” - is accepted as useful for analysis, but they reject notions of journalism as leading or guiding public opinion. This cohort of participants who were close to the centre of the historic storm, might agree to having influenced outcomes indirectly, here and there, through their reportage and through their presence in the field – for instance revealing influential facts at a strategic moment. However any such influence is seen as always being limited because it is without system, direction or drive. They are not power seekers and are not participating with any intention or plan to alter the situation. Nor are they stupid or guileless, or in other ways particularly open to manipulation. It is an informed and reflective group, conscious of the settings in which the work is done. That is put forward in fact as an argument that news is not propaganda; the professional cadre get between promoters and the audience, while not being themselves a promoter group. They also operate transparently; by definition the work of mass media is open to investigation to a high degree; information to be obtained by them is valued most if it can be published - therefore all parties can always know most of what the journalists know. Through long exposure to feed-back and any practical consequences of their reporting (such as defamation suits), the journalists do not see it having peculiar effects. They do not acknowledge having any influence beyond natural processes of communication and interpretation within the political culture, like any others. In a word it is an “open book” concept whereby no influence is sought; and if there should be some influence it is still not likely to be too crucial in the general plan of life.

Descriptions by these interviewees of their methods of *surveillance* and *selection* emphasise market orientation, with the journalists writing for what audiences and readership may be concerned with, and responding to operational pressures that keep the focus on establishing facts. *Recording* and *presentation* generally will be modeled on a simple one-to-one representation of the natural fact being reported - another product of necessity in the rush of daily news but seen also as helping to authenticate it. There are concerns in this group as elsewhere about daily news production being inadequate to deal thoroughly with historical processes on a large scale, like the collapse of the Eastern bloc.

Some of the comments on those themes, including the idea of receiving guidance from the public:

“There is a dual track; there is the popular press and the people with one set of preoccupations, and the other part of the press with basically good intentions, that influences

agendas, and they converge, as they converged for instance in the coverage of Diana's death, in a certain way. Entertainment has always been an important element in the daily press; news itself, human events are entertainment; that's really a great source of energy; the entertainment is there whether it's a major fire or a double axe murder; it's horrific, but it's entertainment"- Wells.

"There is no conscious framing by those definitions; the operation is going too fast; events are so dramatic they are really recorded as they are happening; speed has come in as a bigger factor than ever before; you can get things out very quickly; and there is an echo factor to deal with, where people will react to reactions in the outside world" - Gorman.

"We decide on the issues that people will want to see addressed. However, if for instance there is a conference, while I may select what people may want to know about from that conference, I do not seek to change the agenda of the conference. It is a matter of employing the news values to choose what I think everybody will want to know. That is news judgment, with the market as the key"- Meade.

An introspective statement by Brayne articulated two of the propositions of this investigation; that through a complex psychological process news media are a window or prism by which the natural world may be comprehended, and that whatever the actual consequences of the process may be, journalists are under moral pressure to keep faith with their publics, to act fairly in representing the news to them: "There's a lot to be said for not pretending you have actually got the answer. It's allowing the listener to experience your own struggle to understand. The word transparent is about you as a medium. As a journalist you are called upon to be transparent so people can see through you to the story and it is a danger if you get too stuck into the process yourself and the story becomes about you. I love that phrase in Evensong, 'my soul doth magnify the Lord'. You are the magnifying glass; they hold it up to look at the story; it is going to be distorted by your imperfections and blemishes, but if you try to pretend that you are perfect, or that you have a perfect understanding of the story, or that you are irrelevant to the listeners' or viewers' understanding of the story, you are going to end up grossly distorting what they see."

Conclusions on the coverage of the crisis

A slightly blasé tone might be sensed in these assessments which is not ill-matched with the self-reports of the journalists on their handling of the 1989 crisis. All are attached to the “open book” position on news gathering that with the best planning in the world it remains sound policy to have few preconceptions and fewer intrusive personal interests; to be prepared for anything and strive to exclude nothing of significance. It is a liberal approach that seeks to take strictly personal, emotional concerns of the journalist out of consideration by keeping the focus on the professional values called into play by the reporting situation. That approach became a challenge to maintain in the welter of astonishing events in 1989, with, as a starting position, a case being made that the political community and news media had no foretaste of what was to break upon them.

Whereas the panel of journalists in this case admits to problems of judgment in anticipating and evaluating events, the discussion gives no indication either of gross errors of fact, or tendencies to intervene in any way in coverage that would favour outside interests, such as corporate interests, or advance pecuniary interests of their own. As stated above it is a case study where the performance aspects are all set in high relief because of the extravagant scale of the events they were covering.

Irene Quaile-Kersken, on the English program desk at DW, pointed out that for German outlets the story was especially protracted, running at a height of intensity for several weeks longer than in other countries. As international media were looking at it on a follow-up basis, it developed into a series of fresh episodes for coverage in Germany as crowds made the crossing at different points along the intra-German frontier and went on to begin their new life: “There were the images of them coming over the hills; they kept arriving and each time it had to be covered and assessed.”

Kudascheff recalled the experience of many of his colleagues, faced with the rush of unpredictable activity: “During that time you worked eighteen hours a day, and then every report would be made out of date by new developments after two hours; so even while you were writing you knew it could already be wrong.” Thus Dollman, whose preference is to understate the influence of journalists in the shaping of events, drew attention to the especially confused circumstances, to conclude: “We lagged behind and did not influence what happened in Germany.”

The experiment in taking this well-placed panel of observers to some depth over the crisis, its aftermath and their own professional involvements and judgments, supports the view that the journalist's vantage point can be highly useful in documenting and analysing a point of crisis in history. The interviews identify certain main themes very clearly, as with, in Germany: the judgment that masking of the economic weakness of East Germany helped to preserve the communist state; that the withdrawal of Soviet support by Gorbachev fatally undermined it; that the economic and constitutional policies for the reunification of Germany were erroneous. These were developed out of agenda items in the coverage of the time. The question of the actual engagement of media in the decision-making involved in the historic events, and even an influential propagation of decisions within the process, remains open. The general stance of this panel of journalists is to aver above all that no broad social responsibility accrued to them through exercising their access to sources of power and their ability to seize on events ahead of time, apart from the over-riding duty that as much as possible information published must be factually correct.

If it is agreed that the involvement of news media can affect outcomes in some way - as in Von Lowis's statement that they provided a necessary shield for a successful movement of dissidents- there is little information available as to the mechanics of how that may occur. The journalists are quite happy to have been a human shield in a kind of hostage drama, but while intending participants, power seekers of one kind or another, may have set out to play such a role, the journalists did not. The slightly indignant perception that news media were inveigled into an official lie over the state of the East German economy, through pressure exerted at high levels within company or government, is one instance where a control mechanism is acknowledged and said to be effective. While journalists commonly, as in this case, will not have a theory about their own influence over current events, they have a generally well-informed and very focused approach which comes from professional habit. So, as it is demonstrated here, there is some promise that further and more far-ranging inquiries of this kind will help towards a better understanding of the issue of media and power.

Where the discussion focuses more narrowly on professional issues, i.e. the quality of journalists' work when assessed in terms of shared news values and assumptions, the picture emerges of a very effectual service that nevertheless restricts its own aspirations. Journalists will strive to obtain verifiable information but not seek to be the ones to use it; for example upon establishing that the Soviet army would not suppress demonstrations in East Germany, it

would be considered actually unethical, and professional unsatisfying for them, according to standard news values, to organise protests. It is accepted that the news teams were close enough to their market to divine what people were thinking before their governments did; made a correct early diagnosis that a big grass-roots movement was under way; and made public some of the apprehension being expressed in different quarters about the ambitious economic program proclaimed by the Bonn government. It is accepted also that such apprehensions or reservations about the German economy were under-played, and that adequately critical handling would have led to these matters receiving more prominent coverage. There is support for Dollman's conclusion that coverage overall "lagged behind and did not influence what happened." That is consistent also with the journalists' perceived role, in the ethos shared by this group, of reporting thoroughly; being under no obligation to intervene in events; and even in the view of many, having a responsibility to remain detached more than all others. However a beginning has been made in finding out about an important crisis in history by engaging news practitioners as chroniclers, and also through this engagement and perspective, in finding out more about the place their activities had in the process, and perhaps influence of those activities in the outcome of events.

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(4) Dennis EE and Merrill JC, Media Debates: Issues in Mass Communication, NY, Longman, 1996, p 126

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- (12) Tiffen R, The News from South-east Asia: The Sociology of Newsmaking, Singapore, Institute of South-east Asian Studies, 1978, p 68
- (13) Loc. Cit.
- (14) Op. Cit. Tiffen 1994, p 14
- (15) Knightley P, “Interesting If True”, in *Granta* 53, Spring 1996, London, p 33
- (16) Op. Cit. Tiffen 1978, pp 75-78
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- (19) Keilinger T, “Now You See It and Now You Don’t; a Close Look at Germany and the State She Is In”, *The European Journal*, Vol. 5, No.1, Sept/Oct 1997, London, p 34
- (20) See Merlo O, “The Ship in Troubled Waters: Developments in European Monetary Integration”, *CESAA Review*, 3/99; Contemporary European Studies Association of Australia, Melbourne
- (21) See also Brown A, The Gorbachev Factor, Oxford, OUP, 1996, p 245
- (22) Gorbachev M, Memoirs, Sydney, Doubleday, 1996, p 524
- (23) In his own version, “life punishes harshly anyone who is left behind in politics”, *Ibid.* p 525; see also for this incident, “life itself punishes ...”, in Garton Ash T, We The People: The Revolution of 89 Witnessed in Warsaw, Budapest, Berlin and Prague, Cambridge, Granta Books – Penguin, 1990, p 65; Walker M, The Cold War And the Making of the Modern World, London, Fourth Estate, 1993, p 313; Op. Cit. Brown, p 249; and Chapters 5 and 8 following.

CHAPTER FOUR

SHORT STANDARD HISTORY – ONE

This short history gives a conventional view, a decade later, of how the crisis of communism in Eastern Europe worked itself out. It is meant to function as a control or dependable referent, against which the considered views of the journalists, and the “instant history” of the media coverage of 1989-90, can be compared. In outline: Mikhail Gorbachev, unsuccessfully battling to save the Soviet Union, sought to cultivate positive relations with the West, and left the East European states to find their own paths. His intentions in this regard came to be known and believed, especially through the demonstration effect of his acquiescence in the unanticipated election of non-communists to power in Poland. Mass politics in the other Central East European states ensured the defeat of the communist regimes, with the opening of the Berlin Wall as the ultimate sign of capitulation and transformation. A “reform communist” government in Hungary, a long time in the making, had promoted the change by opening its Western frontier, permitting the exodus of citizens from East Germany, fatally undermining the regime in that country. It would still require conventional politicking and diplomacy to put in place the institutional arrangements for a new European order, which, it transpired, would be adapted to the structures of an expanded European Community. The West German Chancellor Helmut Kohl took a lead in setting up arrangements with government leaders in Moscow, East Berlin, Paris, Washington or Warsaw, for the GDR to be absorbed into the Federal Republic of Germany as a result of free elections. The Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia was clearly a mass social movement. In the Balkans, the insurrection in Romania was more like a coup d’etat with mass public backing. Events in Bulgaria began after the pace generally had quickened, and in fairly rapid succession followed the pattern set in the other East European countries. The change in Albania and the break-up of Yugoslavia amid civil war would be for the near future.

USSR AND GORBACHEV

The collapse of the Eastern bloc in Europe is a story that keeps returning to the fate of the Soviet Union and Mikhail Gorbachev. Historical treatments of the events in Central Eastern Europe include, in fact depend on considerations directly to do with Gorbachev’s situation. It

is rational to argue that what happened in Eastern Europe was essentially directly caused by the coming collapse of the Soviet Union. In that case the resolution in Eastern Europe - the resilience of Polish Catholicism and worker power; finding of a liberal way in Hungary; civilised mass politics in Prague, Bratislava and Berlin; murderous /absurdist theatre in Romania - formed a dependent part of the disintegration of the Soviet empire closer to its heart. This would de-emphasise national and cultural differences and the harm done to Gorbachev's position by the fall of the "satellite" states, but would recognise some essentials of power relations in the empire. The empire would fall and take the constituent members with it into disintegration regardless of anything else. Looked at chronologically, the collapse of communist regimes at the margins in Eastern Europe might have seemed to be part of a movement spreading towards Moscow, but any closer examination of the record shows this was hardly the case, and was hardly seen to be the case. It started at the centre.

Reddaway and Glinski provide a concise and analytical treatment of the causes of failure in the Soviet Union, beginning with discrediting of the reformist optimism of the 1960s, and an "atmosphere of civic apathy", with wholesale subversion of the system at every level, moving to anger and revolt. Much blame was attached to the "moneyed *nomenklatura*" obsessed with Western merchandise, causing diversion of resources from infrastructure to imports; widening gaps in the distribution system filled by black marketeering and the criminal underworld; against shortages of basic goods, and rationing; all generating a "sentiment of mutual distrust in society". Confronted with the military dilemma in Afghanistan, America's Strategic Defence Initiative, and failure in the technological contest with the West, the state authorities relied increasingly on the export of natural resources in chasing hard currency. In this analysis the Gorbachev reforms were seen as belated and inadequate to reconcile inimical social forces, while "the resources of legitimacy of the post-1917 order were exhausted" (1).

It is easy to find agreement that economic failure provided the first precondition for collapse; especially, the economic failure of the dominating power, the Soviet Union, as a holder of vast resources, and custodian of communist economic / ideological doctrine proposed for several years as an actual alternative to the liberal capitalism of the West. Walker's treatment of this failure is persuasive (2). Firstly, Gorbachev's reform administration banked on oil production to get it through an industry crisis in the 1980s and was let down badly by global trends that undermined the value of returns (3). Secondly, economic processes had changed so that success with heavy industry, Nikita Khrushchev's goal of catching up with the capacity

of the West being substantially achieved, did not compensate for the Soviet Union's weak position in a new world economy featuring greatly expanded productivity and efficiency.

To extend his point, widespread introduction of main frame computer systems in Western business from the 1970s permitted a liberalisation and radical expansion of financial activity, hence turnover and scale of investment in production, hence an exponentially bigger world economy in which the less sophisticated command and barter systems could no longer compete. "While the Soviet Union was laboriously building up the industrial hardware of the 1960s, the West suddenly found that it had developed the software which enabled it to change the nature of its economic life" (4). Brian Moynahan provided an inventory of this new "technology lag" in 1990: "The US has 80 phone lines per 100 of population, the Soviet Union perhaps 10, and the quality ... is so poor that data transmission is often impossible. There are more than 25 million home computers in the US. The Poles with perhaps half a million privately owned Ataris, Commodores and Sinclairs are better off than the Russians. With large and mainframe computers the Russians have at most one-tenth of the US capacity. Their mainframes are mainly copies of the US technology of the early 1970s, IBM 370s and Digital Equipment PDP 11s" (5). Who would invest in low return enterprises in such economies? Who would buy low quality goods produced without the new marketing supports including service follow-up and quality control standards of Western enterprise? The Soviet system was outstripped by the West's own *perestroika*, the West's "new industrial revolution" (6).

Thirdly, the political system - government by a *nomenklatura* drawn from the Party, state bureaucracy, armed forces and KGB- ensured the devotion of excessive resources to war preparation and high science. American estimates had defence taking 16% of GDP, \$US250-billion p.a. in 1990, equaling the United States, on a far smaller economic base (7). One new aircraft type and a new missile would be developed each year over two decades (8). Fourthly, as part of the same process, starvation for consumer goods had cumulative ill-effects ruinous to social solidarity, co-operation and morale. While accepting the possibility that a civil society might emerge through education and positive achievements in industry, Brown (9) saw it blighted by environmental waste, high mortality rates and endemic alcoholism: "It is well known that there were, in effect, two Soviet economies: one - privileged and pampered and in a number of areas up to world standards - devoted to military production and defence-related industry; and the other -starved of capital, new technology, and esteem - constituting

the civilian industrial sector and supposedly providing for the needs of the of the ill-served Soviet consumer” (10).

This paralysis became apparent in diverse ways. A certain bumbling inadequacy of arrangements for large numbers of media workers at the May-June 1988 Moscow summit conveyed to many a strong intimation that nothing was working well (11). Eduard Shevardnadze was among the senior officials around Gorbachev that week demonstrating high-spirited optimism to their guests; a younger leadership looking to conquer crisis. In retrospect, with a taste for a telling catchphrase, he was looking on the situation in the bleakest terms; the population as a “humiliated people”, the country impoverished, living on the “brink of catastrophe” (12); the system broken down long before the advent of *glasnost* and *perestroika* (13); the centralised networks of party and government a monolith being destroyed from within. He confirmed, with Gorbachev, the story of their conversation in 1984. In Archie Brown’s account they agreed people in the Soviet Union could not go on living in the way they had, Shevardnadze saying: “Everything’s rotten. It has to be changed” (14). Gorbachev as a leader among his generation had been at university at the time of the death of Stalin; was untouched by habits of mind that hindered older officials in accepting Khrushchev’s denunciation of the dictatorship; found patrons in his push for co-operative schemes and other innovations in agriculture (acquiring still more important sponsors later in Yuri Andropov and Andre Gromyko), and in becoming CPSU General Secretary in 1985, possessed by a definite “zeal for change” (15).

The second condition demanding urgent change was the parlous state of East West security, the new Cold War marked by confrontation in Europe over deployment of intermediate range nuclear weapons, ending 1970’s détente (16). Considerations as to its various causes: Soviet sensitivity to pressure from the West on human rights, under the terms of the Helsinki Final Act; Western concern over technical enhancement of Soviet nuclear weaponry including increased MIRV capability; West European demands for a protective umbrella, with increases in British and French nuclear capability outside of Superpower agreements, motivating the deployment of SS20 missiles (17); possible sentiment within the Soviet leadership that only a tough security line would compensate for growing and apparent economic vulnerability at home; the advent of the Reagan administration and its Strategic Defence Initiative (SDI, “Star Wars”), demonstrating the new preparedness on America’s part to force mutual engagement in a disastrously expensive arms race; ill-will over the surrogate

conflicts in Africa, Latin America and Afghanistan. In the outcome, real fear of pre-emptive attack returned, creating a “paranoid obsession” in the USSR (18); “a dangerous level of Moscow nervousness” (19), and “nuclear dread” (20) amid mutual misunderstanding (21).

It was blocking pathways where the new Soviet leadership desperately wanted to go, towards economic salvation including far more integration with the West, and the policy notion promulgated in 1985, the idea of the “Common European Home” (22).

The task was represented by Brown in terms of necessary transformations, being transformation of the political system to remove its totalitarian character; movement from a command economy to a market system with private enterprise components; transformation of inter-ethnic and centre-periphery relations in the USSR to resolve the “national question”, and transformation of foreign policy, to relieve the enormous burdens of militarism (23). It called for wholesale renovation of the institutions of society (24). The policy adopted to meet these needs was the *Glasnost - Perestroika* program.

Perestroika

Economic *perestroika*, a renovation, was characterised by moves, legal and administrative, to remove decision-making from government agencies, over investment, credits and resources allocation; to shift decision-making on such matters to enterprises and provide incentives including rights to retain / re-invest profit; to reduce military budgets, convert military production to civilian purposes and divert the investment to productive industries. Campaigns were launched against corruption and alcohol abuse, producing in the latter case one of the many contradictions and defeats of this program, a serious loss of tax revenue. Some decision-making was engaged in directly to meet developing crises, as with the importation of consumer goods to assuage urgently demonstrated demand on the part of workers, especially in mining, who took part in protracted strikes, and with part-payment of returns to farmers in hard currency to stimulate a response to under-production (25). Yet crisis would deepen under *perestroika* and ensure the defeat of its author. The program would founder. It could not succeed in the short time frame available to it, with the degree of economic paralysis already being experienced by the mid-1980s; inflexible structural arrangements (no tradable currency, restricted banking system); the resistance of vested interests within the *nomenklatura* and of growing liberal forces wanting even more radical change. In the attempt,

economic reform had to link in with political reform. Informed opinion sided with the June 1987 gathering of Soviet economists cited by Walker, who reviewed the limitations on economic reform attempted in the 1960's, and concluded: "deep transformations in the management of the economy cannot be realised without corresponding changes in the political system and in the social and spiritual spheres" (26). There was no outside help available, no Marshall Plan, but investment from the West might be courted if Western governments were shown that genuine reform was taking place in the direction of individual rights and democratic government.

Glasnost

Glasnost, first proposed in limited form in the Brezhnev era, was translated in the West as "openness" or seen in more restricted terms as "publicity", meaning enhanced human rights together with a transparent handling of changes promoted by the government. Gorbachev signaled that thorough-going change would be countenanced through invoking terms like "democratisation", referring to programs such as wider consultation with unions, begun as early as 1984, and he breached a taboo of the system in pronouncing the idea of "pluralism" (27). This proclaimed policy of toleration had immediate and dramatic effects: a reaction to the repression of generations and bursting forth of publication and publicity, then debate, open criticism of society, and before too long, given that no special loyalties had been earned, a certain biting of the benevolent hand, a constant cacophony of criticism of the regime itself. Liberalisation to bridge gaps between the leadership and citizens became "a job for apparatchiks: manufacturing opposition to themselves" (28). Early landmarks were the release of *Repentance* by the Georgian film maker Tenghiz Abuladze, under the protection of Shevardnadze, who saw in its historical subject a story about "what capriciousness and lawlessness lead to" (29); and then publication of Anatoli Rybakov's *Children of the Arbat* (30), and other expositions of the terror. In Gorbachev's own account these two initiatives were seized on by the cinematographers' and artists' unions who had been "waiting for this signal"; a precedent had been set, and soon, "... censored works began to spill out" (31). The bitter experiences and powerful art of Alexander Solshenitsyn, published fleetingly in the 1960s, became known in his own country with the lifting of bans. Political prisoners were freed including the eminent physicist Andre Sakharov, released from banishment at Gorky to become a leader of the liberal group in the USSR Congress of People's Deputies.

Parliamentary reform became essential in the transformation that occurred in the Gorbachev era, 1985-91. After four years the new parliament was convened on 25.5.89 as the result of competitive elections, though still conducted on a non-party basis and with one third of the 2250 seats reserved for the Communists. It was seen by Gorbachev as the realisation of a fundamental political process, delivering power to a legitimate state authority: “If we attempt to characterise briefly the political reform ... it was the transfer of power from the Communist Party into the hands of those to whom it should belong according to the Constitution - to the Soviets, through free elections” (32). Beyond the argument with liberals that it was insufficient, Gorbachev contended the alternative would have been a ruinous “mutiny” by the *nomenklatura* (33), and the general record does not dispute the importance of the role played by the partly democratised parliament in the termination of the Soviet Union. Brown lauds the transformation of the USSR through the initiatives of Gorbachev as General Secretary as something others could never have anticipated or achieved. Relegating for a moment severe episodes of warfare and police repression in the USSR, he states: “... it is doubtful if change of such magnitude could have taken place with so little violence -especially in Russia- in any way other than through the elevation of a serious reformer to the highest political office within the country. The prospect of a reformer becoming General Secretary ... had been ruled out in advance by many Western observers and by such prominent exiles as ... Alexander Solzhenitsyn and Alexander Zinoviev” (34). Walker saw the democratic character of the parliament enhanced and magnified by the fact that its sessions were televised at length (35).

The “wholesale renovation of the institutions of society” (36) saw the contradictory impacts of Gorbachev’s promotion of reformers or non-communists into positions of authority, admission of a non-communist opposition to parliament, and introduction of media freedoms. It was the opening of a Pandora’s box (37) that “brought tensions to the surface of national life” (38) from which no retreat was available. The opening of the first democratised parliament in 1989 was therefore seen as both a high point in the General Secretary’s popularity and support, and a point of intensification of criticism and rejection. Conservative reaction including disaffection in the armed forces ran parallel (39). It had a bearing on Shevardnadze’s “conspiracy of losers” (40) who “crawled out of holes” (41) as every crisis would permit - including Soviet embassy officials in Eastern Europe given to withholding information from the Ministry, up to 1989, the very year of crisis. A progression could be noted in the personal position of Gorbachev from emphatic communist to social democrat by the time of the attempted *coup d’etat* in 1991 (42); it matched the shift of power base, and

legitimacy, from the post of General Secretary alone, to father of Parliament, to state President. Embattled on two ideological fronts his management of events became ambivalent, contradictory, stop-start, of necessity a case of moving two steps forward, one backward at each stage (43).

If ever the sudden renovations invoked under the new program could have succeeded, in the actual outcome the program of economic change, *perestroika*, went wrong. Parliamentary change and rights reform, *glasnost*, also went wrong for the reformer Gorbachev, awakening dissension and bringing to the surface the resentments and distrust against the regime, of seventy years standing. Most tragically and spectacularly attempts to manage the “nationalities question” went wrong, bringing the dissolution of the Soviet Union at the end of 1991. Brown (44) identified economic policy and the national question as the two main failures of the Gorbachev era: “He underestimated the intensity of nationalist feelings and assumed too readily that an extension of political and economic liberties within the framework of a genuinely federal state would lead to a resolution of the national question (45) ... Even if the Soviet Union had been a more nationally homogenous society, the problems of democratising it after such a long period of totalitarian and authoritarian rule would have been immense, but they were enormously complicated by the aspirations of a number of the nations within the Soviet multinational state to break away entirely from the USSR” (46).

Nationalities

This became essential background to the events around the Berlin Wall. Continuing rebellion and civil war formed the backdrop to all other initiatives and developments; preoccupying the Soviet leadership; sapping energy and resources, human and economic; ultimately closing-off options for a wholly rational or productive settlement of the dilemma of the future of the republics and the communist system in Europe and the USSR. Riots had broken out in Kazakhstan at the end of 1986 over pressure for change within the Communist Party, a common framework of disputes in the outer republics, with reform Communists demanding autonomy for their own states. The protracted, violent conflict between Armenia and Azerbaijan, over Nagorno Karabakh, erupted in February 1988, abating at the time of the Reagan-Gorbachev summit in Moscow, but breaking out again in June. The conflict built up towards open warfare between the two states, with an inter-communal massacre in Azerbaijan in January 1990 (47); Soviet troops were sent in after Armenia asserted power of veto over

Soviet laws, and went into action at several points, with the clashes at Baku leaving many dead.

At the beginning of 1989 the governments of the three Baltic republics -Estonia, Latvia and Lithuania- passed laws giving precedence to their own languages over Russian, followed in this by other states including Moldova. The three republics embarked on a chain of activities leading to declarations of sovereignty (May and July 1989); followed by interventions such as Gorbachev's January 1990 visit to Lithuania, where he was confronted by demonstrations, and eventually disastrous military interventions in 1991, before the republics were able to secede. In this climate it was a new disaster for the Soviet leadership that elections in the republics set for 1990 would begin in the Baltic region; Lithuania beginning with the election of a parliament that immediately declared for independence (48). Anti-Soviet, anti-Russian sentiment was inflamed by official disclosure on 23.7.89 that annexation of the Baltic republics had been contained in secret protocols of the Soviet-German pact of 1939 - as was the partition of Poland. In Georgia, police and soldiers inflicted severe casualties among anti-government protestors at Tbilisi on 9.4.89; Soviet troops intervened in inter-communal fighting in Uzbekistan on 4.6.89; and in January 1990 in Moldova there were protests in favour of union with Romania. Further conflict would occur, and declarations of sovereignty later in that year by Armenia, Uzbekistan, Moldova, Byelorussia, Turkmenistan, Tajikistan, the Ukraine and Russia, the latter posing immediate threats to survival of the Union under the leadership of Boris Yeltsin as President. Outside of the USSR the Tienanmen Square massacre took place in China on 3-4.6.89, and in Eastern Europe violent repression of demonstrations at Timisoara heralded the bloody overthrow of the Ceasescu regime in Romania, in December 1989 (49).

Mass engagements

A characteristic of these developments was the frequent involvement of masses of people, whether in peaceful demonstrations, full-scale rioting or warfare. With such actions the cause being campaigned for was rudimentary and plain, be it defence and advancement of the national language, assertion of community rights, individual human rights, or holding onto territory – or a Western-style economy and democratic form of government. There was no ambiguity either about the strong determination of these actors in a desperate drama. Although frequently operating in the absence of a democratic tradition, crowds of common

citizens nevertheless were shaking off the habits of life under dictatorship to make their demands, and would require that the regional leadership should represent those demands. The disturbances, especially nationalist rebellion in the republics, had the marks of mass social movements. They were born of great public alienation from the central authorities, loosely organised and emphatically pursuing clear, simple demands. In character the array of unforeseen, often spontaneous events was different to the official game, the Kremlin program themed on application of state authority from above to bring about changes in economic management, democratic but institutional changes in the system of government, conferring of rights including communication rights, high diplomacy over complicated games of strategy and disarmament abroad, and deal-making on the international stage to bring together resources for an encompassing rational reform. These were two different political worlds; different psychological and social phenomena. There was no loyalty among the masses anywhere to the rational and reasonable game of a Soviet leadership backed up against the Berlin Wall; none would see any reason for such loyalty; often enough the eruptions in the streets, villages or countryside would upset the formal plan.

The collapse of the situation of the republics into violence undermined, in particular, the last main plank of the reform initiative, the policy of outreach towards the West and to the world as a whole. In the overall plan, the outside world was not supposed to be offered an unstable, disintegrating entity for future partnership. In the overall plan, an emerging economy of the Soviet Union, and its developing democracy, would give it an honourable place among nations. It would take a lead in ending the arms race, as well as reducing the costs of the arms race, to the relief of all, and it would be admitted to the sphere of prosperous nations engaged in trade and investment. As a plan of action this had been wholesome, and was endorsed by a public that rejoiced openly in formal agreements relieving the prospect of war (50). For some time it appeared that matters might go according to plan. The rejoicing and popularity, if fickle, was universal, bringing on “Gorbymania” in the United States and Western Europe, and significantly for the immediate future, in Eastern Europe as well (51). Shevardnadze sought to evade the disintegration and war, even prevent it, in very consciously enacting foreign policy as part of a wide strategy - calling it “(the task of) our participation in the new foreign policy strategy, closely linked with the efforts of *perestroika* and democratisation of society...” (52).

Relations with the Western alliance

That was always seen as a feasible project for a world accustomed to the idea of a dichotomy of two superpowers, both viable and representing two contending systems. In those terms, it was a formidable policy initiative backed by great resources, not least Soviet military power to be bargained or applied. The speech by Gorbachev to the CPSU Twenty-seventh Congress on 25.2.86 is seen as the foundation of the policy, styled for times when, as he said, “an integrated and in many ways integral world is taking shape” (53). Shevardnadze, with responsibility for implementation, welcomed the declaration as a menu for action, its provisions including: an end to preparations for nuclear war; conduct of Soviet-American relations as “normal, civilised dialogue”; mutually acceptable compromises; balance of interests; restriction of military capabilities to “reasonable sufficiency”; confirmation of the principle of comprehensive control and verification; seeking of ways to end nuclear tests and dismantle intermediate range missiles in Europe; Soviet military withdrawal from Afghanistan; a security system for Europe based on the Helsinki process; radical cuts to nuclear and conventional arms; moves to defuse regional conflicts; normalisation of relations with China; concern for global problems, and initiatives, “to build relations with our neighbours on a basis of respect for their interests and the principle of non-interference in their internal affairs” (54).

These points became the theme of an actual process of implemented change. After six years without a summit meeting between United States and Soviet leaders, the meetings had recommenced and seven took place over five years. Shevardnadze had “dozens” of meetings with the Secretaries of State, George Schultz and James Baker, to deal with the five “baskets”: disarmament, regional conflicts, human rights, bi-lateral relations, and “transnational problems” such as natural disasters, epidemics, illicit drugs, international terrorism (55). There was a surrender of long-standing policy positions on the Soviet side, with the sudden announcement of a major concession sometimes provoking a hesitant response. Very cordial relations developed under the Reagan administration, the President putting on record his response to progress on armaments at one point; “George and I just couldn’t believe it was happening ” (56). The Bush administration installed in 1989 had been reluctant to thaw; there was the characterisation of Shevardnadze by an American official (Marlin Fitzwater) as a “drugstore cowboy” scattering his surprise announcements (57), but that was reversed by the time of the November events in Berlin. James Baker recalled, “I personally did not believe that this was a different breed of cat until I became Secretary of

State ... We knew that Gorbachev was trying to appeal to European publics but that seemed to me to be designed to undercut us ...” (58). Shevardnadze took pleasure in the “qualitative change in relations”, overcoming at home (and in the West) “severe resistance by the supreme guardians of orthodoxy” (59), and concluding “the civilised world began to trust us” (60). It was a “qualitative” success when Reagan recanted on the “evil empire”, telling Gorbachev in Moscow, “I was talking about another time” (61) and a substantive gain when the President agreed to suspension of SDI (62).

The focus on Europe came to be emphasised, reflecting the view of Walker and many others of the Cold War as “an extreme version of the continuing political debate between the conservative and social democratic parties across Europe” (63). Gorbachev first proclaimed his theme of a “common European home” in Paris in 1985 (64), speaking at other times of Western Europe as “our basic partner” (65). The “principle of non-interference” in the affairs of neighbouring states was to mean abandonment of the so-called Brezhnev doctrine of control in Eastern Europe, and so the end of communist government there. This doctrine of non-interference was definitively proclaimed in Gorbachev’s speech to the United Nations General Assembly on 7.12.88 (66). At its heart the agenda was an agenda for settlement in Europe, raising questions of a future European architecture: agreement on Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces (INF) then Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE), central to the success of the full set of arms negotiations; constant debate over verification regimes; and then invocation of the Helsinki agreements, Gorbachev proposing an all-Europe security conference, which came to be realised with the CSCE / OSCE process, commencing with a conference at Paris of the 34 countries 18-20.11.90.

This intense series of encounters therefore brought positive results for all parties, through improved European security, and provided the Soviet Union with a valuable asset in Western support for Gorbachev’s position. As already noted however Gorbachev’s position was deteriorating virtually throughout his time in office, running for just under seven years. Despite dazzling single achievements, the co-ordination of huge policy initiatives in a cross-fire of dissent, and episodes of mass support if not adulation, the twin burdens of the economy and the nationalities kept pushing the entire structure of government and society towards collapse. A signal success of the diplomatic campaign came the month after the opening of the Berlin Wall; the declaration by the Soviet and United States leaders, at their summit at Malta, of the “end of the cold war” – notwithstanding some continuing reservations

over armaments (67). The event and attendant consultations with the European allies ushered in a phase of open support for Gorbachev on the part of the Western powers, against all opponents. It was valuable support, an asset in the trials that immediately followed, although not enough to stave off inevitable confrontation and defeat.

It hinged on financial and economic assistance, and such aid that was promised or delivered - food aid, import credits, assistance with technology- was never adequate to force, short-term, the kind of turn-around in economic and political fortunes then needed. There were bold attempts: Gorbachev unsuccessfully approached the Group of Seven (G7) for extraordinary assistance at Paris in July 1989, and at London in 1991(68); Japanese aid of US\$24-billion was spoken of but unforthcoming, amid pressure for a settlement over the Kurile Islands, which could not be achieved; versions of the 1991 “Grand Bargain” were put forward, an “IMF”-style deal proposing Western government assistance of US \$30-billion p.a. in return for radical economic deregulation (69). An eleventh-hour agreement was made, on 12.11.91, for US\$10-billion in urgent funding from the G7 and European Community, but rescinded after the Belovezh agreement on disbandment of the USSR (70). In the midst of talks on setting up the “2+4” agreements for a German settlement early in 1990, immediate aid to the USSR was organized by West Germany, initially major shipments of meat and dairy products to relieve Winter shortages, and also an immediate untied loan of DM5-billion; substantial assistance, still short of putting the Soviet economy on new foundations (71). In summary the West, though impressed by Gorbachev and his transformation of Soviet policy, was not in a position to bankroll an immediate economic revival and rebuilding of the USSR. In 1991, as he said, “the question of Western support for the reform process took on great urgency. In general our Western partners understood this too. However they were still undecided and ‘shifting from one foot to the other’” (72).

Reddaway and Glinski represent the failed campaign for material support as born of a misunderstanding of the notions of globalisation and interdependency: “Evidence suggests that either Gorbachev or his speech writers genuinely believed ‘interdependence’ operated uniformly ... with the result that Western governments did have a major stake in the success or failure of Gorbachev’s domestic reform policies. This idealistic aberration inspired Gorbachev with excessive self-confidence in bargaining for western material aid and in his belief that the mechanism of interdependence would force Western elites to help him ...” (73). Together with the collapsing economy of the Soviet Union, and its dismemberment by

secessionism and war in the outlying states, it was further disarmed by the fall of the communist governments in Eastern Europe, and at the diplomatic level too would again feel its loss of power, over the issue of military withdrawal from the former Warsaw Pact states.

News media engagements

Liberalised news media were to form an additional plank in the reform platform, Gorbachev and his allies at the start of the process being resolved to allow media freedom as an expression of their political morality and an antidote to political reaction. Free mass media might be considered as institutions and resources of society in their own right, which will assert themselves as a distinguishable, autonomous factor in an historical drama. Yet that is not the conventional way of placing news media in general histories, nor the view generally taken of mass media by policy makers such as Mikhail Gorbachev. Conventionally all other movements and factors will be placed centre stage, and news media will be in the wings, occasionally moving into the spotlight to play a part that is important but dependent on main action, which it has no acknowledged function in generating. For example, in histories of the August 1991 coup the news media were recognised as important in publicising Boris Yeltsin's declaration on top of a tank; in keeping links with the outside world, and in keeping the detainee Gorbachev informed through the BBC World Service. In the history being reviewed here, economic change, the nationalities, foreign policy outreach, and domestic liberalisation under *glasnost* are the recognised processes; news media are given a home under the *glasnost* label, part of "human rights" considerations and liberalisation, together with book publishing and the release of prisoners. The free news media are considered as outcomes of policy which at times will themselves become instrumental, if still secondary and dependent factors in some main game.

This should be no surprise. News media may form together as an autonomous institution but one which beyond ensuring its own survival, e.g. in opposing state censorship or advancing new communication technology, remains mostly derivative, interested in following events not starting them, endorsing or criticising state policies rather than being elected to implement them, documenting boom or bust in material production rather than directly investing in it. Media organisations increasingly are part of general corporations, but in that regard they concentrate on their own corporate concerns rather than social issues, whether with the vertical integration of News Limited or affiliations in other ways with such related businesses

as publishing, films or telecommunications. Still, interventions and influence of news media in political crises are not a new phenomenon. John Palmer's reading of despatches to Western newspapers from correspondents on Russia's wars of revolution and foreign intervention indicated a strongly informative and shrewdly analytical coverage that was easily available to readers and so likely to have assisted in the management of events (74). Yet the actions of media, being in the form of reports, without recommendations, rather than material deeds, are elusive, quite hard to measure or even document. Editors, producers and reporters find themselves at the very centre of events but do not legislate, privatise, nationalise, make legal judgments, open fire, detain or release political adversaries, impose taxes or rationing, order the closure of factories, make treaties with foreign governments, or even pretend to government of the public, beyond proclaiming often well-researched editorial opinions intended to be influential. In the economic sphere of the natural world they usually will be encountered as no more than representatives of unmagnified, major business corporations like many others. Debate about effects of media and persuasion through media, in fields like political choice, is unresolved.

By 1989 however news media were ubiquitous, operating on a new, more sophisticated technological level internationally and within countries, able to maintain communications and transmit from the remotest and most difficult locations; they were operationally prepared to take advantage of every relaxation of control over the movement of reporters; at the distribution end they had overcome obstacles to penetration among the public, like an absence of radio sets or jamming of signals. Aspects of the culture of Western journalism, like the habit of professional neutrality (or fickleness?), or the habit of standing up political leaders and putting questions in a rhetorical, challenging way (theatre for the audience; a substitute for taking a stand on one's own account?), had developed late in the 20th Century. This media was something of a new phenomenon; it was seen to be very important, yet remaining in the view of the history-makers, and in the record of the era, conventionally as a "soft" player sometimes accorded responsibility for very significant interventions, not quite ever-present in the story, but rather appearing sensationally at discrete moments.

The following is part of the record of salient aspects of mass media involvement in the era of change. Pressure for change in the Soviet system had included media pressure. The Reagan administration under its National Security Directive 32, May 1982, ordered very applied and

costly initiatives to destabilise communist regimes, including selected economic embargoes, diplomatic initiatives, covert measures, cultural measures and radio propaganda - major funding provided for broadcast services into the Soviet bloc countries, to be reviled in official places there as the “Black Heavens” (75). This campaign was most pronounced in Poland after the declaration of martial law, where the withholding of American economic support to the state, and communications assistance to the Solidarity movement - including use of the Western radio services - supplemented the inspiration delivered by the advent of a Polish Pope, in 1979. Early demands of Solidarity had been, relief from rising food prices, legalisation of strikes, and the broadcasting of Sunday Mass on state radio (76). Radio penetration in this pre-*glasnost* era was sanctioned by the Helsinki Final Act 1975 and follow-up accords to which the Soviet Union had subscribed. The accords provided agreement on the 1945 European borders, arms control principles, the principle of non-intervention in affairs of neighbouring states, and respect for human rights, under which there came to be a relaxation of controls on the radios. Dissident movements could appeal to the principles of “Helsinki” as a policy and defence; it was in many ways the “West’s secret weapon” (77).

Walker refers to Gorbachev’s acknowledgment of the opening of the world through news media, telling the United Nations in 1989, “nowadays it is virtually impossible for any society to be closed”, and includes in the concept the seductive appeal of Western consumer goods to a deprived public (78). Brown identifies Gorbachev’s open political style, including the televised walks among crowds, as the first indication registered by Western leaders that he might be a man to “transcend his political origins in the apparatus of the Soviet Communist Party”, to create “an era in Soviet history of unprecedented freedom”. He observed also that the liberalisation immediately enabled frequent and open public attacks on the government itself, within the Soviet Union, over the state of the economy (79). A spate of press crusades developed, beginning with media backing of a successful environmental movement to cancel diversion of the Siberian rivers; the “first open civic campaign in decades” (80).

Gorbachev was himself perplexed from the beginning over media management, though not quite admitting with Shevardnadze that mishandling of information about the Chernobyl nuclear disaster (26.4.86) had been a bad start for a reform leadership (81). They had followed an institutionalised, seemingly instinctive urge to suppress the news until forced to make disclosures after the circulation of alarming reports coming in from the West (82). Management of news about the massive earthquake in Armenia in December 1988 was

entirely different, with full and early disclosure, and television coverage of Gorbachev's personal tour, where he collected abuse in the streets over failed building standards and, once more reversing past Soviet practice in such cases, invited international aid. The habit of candour once learned would continue; he would later tell Western news media that costs of the two disasters had greatly contributed to derailing of the Soviet economy, always insisting, about Chernobyl; "... it severely affected our reforms by literally knocking the country off its tracks" (83). Media efforts quickly became more sophisticated and included use of the engaging spokesperson, Genardiy Gerasimov, to appear on English language television shows and deliver key messages to correspondents. Reagan's reconciliatory speech at Moscow University in May 1988 by arrangement with the American authorities was to be telecast as an address to the Soviet people, though this was only honoured in part - excerpts were broadcast in news programs.

Liberalisation was not to be always helpful. It was central to the breaking up of political relations and formation of opposition on the two fronts, as Gorbachev would say: "gradual liberation of the press from the dictates of Agitprop revealed growing disagreements about the reforms that were being carried out" (84). He deplored "malicious" political coverage in the opposition media (85) but replaced editors in official media who sought to obstruct reform programs. Reviewing the process whereby autonomous publications like *Moscow News* would upset government offices, and government or party publications would default on support for reform, he commented that "the press gets out of control", a development that had led to a disruptive polarisation of public opinion (86).

Quite late it was possible to overcome fierce resistance to reform and pass a liberalising press law, a decree on 15.7.90 removing Party control over media and guaranteeing freedom of publication, with specified prohibitions such as those against inciting armed rebellion or promoting racial intolerance (87). It was far removed from the long Soviet tradition of direct, pre-publication censorship of articles on the widest range of topics, from air crashes, to the location of defence facilities, information on even seasonal or local price increases, aerial photographs of Soviet cities, or economic statistics not issued for publication by state agencies (88). Shevardnadze as still a main political actor in 1991 was in contact with Western figures during the August coup, observing that the plotters had failed badly by leaving communication services untouched. He had made his own contribution to events by finding a French television crew who recorded his statement, a "cry in the wilderness" (89).

He thought that news media had contributed very much to frustration of the coup d'état: "praised be information technology ... the electronic media also served the truth" (90). This was media at the centre of policy, action and outcomes. Change in news media practices accompanying general liberalisation was integral to the change in political culture. Free to operate, and more than being passively indicative or representative of change, news operations were instrumental in the circulation of strategic political information and the speed of that exchange, as well as being useful in facilitating the formation of opposition parties. The change of political culture and changing media culture would be catalysts to the overall process of change in Eastern Europe, running parallel to events in the USSR – a change from subservience to state policy to free operation, with a strong tendency to criticism and encouragement of dissent.

Such change at the heart of the empire was a revolutionary process, in Brown's terms, one where reform turned the system itself into "something different in kind" (91). Gorbachev recognised the change as a profound psychological event, concentrated on the elimination of the element of fear, and as he saw it this mass impetus for freedom would overwhelm all and every device of persuasion, or non-violent dissuasion, as in the case of free elections: "The elections revealed that the authority of the CPSU had fallen as soon as people had stopped being afraid of it ... the local bosses had at their disposal practically all the newspapers, radio stations, television, transport, an army of agitators, offices, houses of culture, and so on, but more often than not they were defeated - and by people who had been unknowns only yesterday" (92).

This thesis is working to set the balance in the description of news media in a particular historical situation. It has noted that news media had expanded and had become instrumental in some key developments, while still not seeing itself as a policy-making body or one with executive powers. It posits that news media may have taken on a broadly unrecognised function as an autonomous element, a discrete actor in the interplay of institutional politics able to function according to its own dictates with the potential to make other elements follow. In this matter of going out autonomously, following their own priorities, the attentions of news media would be restricted to some matters and inapplicable to others. Such impacts as they had might be limited also in scope and in time so that, for instance, news of an event disclosed in media reports may be responded to and depended on just until checks are made by those connected with the business on hand. News media perhaps can be seen as operating

in a walled garden, touching a certain range of concerns and working in a certain temporal space which will come within its frames of attention. As a paradox the thesis will also show news media in yet another kind of role, in situations where historic changes become the property of mass rebellion, and where the fixations of formal institutions / organisations - including news media- lose importance.

(1) Reddaway P and Glinski D, The Tragedy of Russia's Reforms: Market Bolshevism Against Democracy, Washington DC, US Institute of Peace Press, 2001, pp 29-31

(2) Op. Cit. Walker pp 233-34

(3) Ibid. pp 282, 328; confirmed by Gorbachev, Op. Cit. p 468; *see also* Reddaway and Glinski on the severe revenue crisis of 1986, aggravated by US-Saudi collusion to lower prices on the world oil market, Op. Cit. p 124; *also*, Reid reports on failures to make above-norm oil deliveries, and even reductions on agreed deliveries, because of failing Soviet production; Reid AL with Bartlett et al, "Continuity and Change: Europe Since 1918", in Gowland DA, O'Neill BC, and Reid AL (Eds.), The European Mosaic: Contemporary Politics, Economics and Culture, NY, Longman, 1995, p 162

(4) Op. Cit. Walker p 240

(5) Op. Cit. Moynahan p 401; *see also* Op. Cit. Brown p 63

(6) Op. Cit. Walker p 241

(7) Op. Cit. Moynahan p 399

(8) Ibid. p 375

(9) Op. Cit. Brown p 18

(10) Ibid. p 159

(11) These were micro-concerns, impressions, difficult to write about credibly, certainly for members of an elite media brigade accustomed to having services laid-on, not wishing to look over-concerned about their own convenience. Some sent reports about the ambiance of the occasion, referring to shortages in restaurants or the failure of services which in the past had not been bad, (as with a later "Letter from Moscow", detailing the collapse of services aboard the train from Vilnius, "Precious Few Sleepers On Or Under The Lithuania", The Times, 18.1.90). Plainly no effort had been spared to make a good impression and have things go well, but a bad impression was made. Great uneasiness was created about this failure to deliver services as intended, even for such a prime event. It was after all at the core of the empire, a showcase, at a time when meeting "Western" standards of openness and style had

acquired symbolic importance. Satellite communications to the outside world did work well. However this writer was informed by a NATO engineer at Brussels that this had been achieved by declaring the existence of a Soviet military satellite and re-commissioning it for media use. Many officials were on hand in a helpful frame of mind; common citizens showed good manners and good will. Yet arrangements staggered under the weight of a thousand small failures, especially on the “Soviet” side of arrangements, in stark contrast to the American media centre in a hotel ballroom, connected to events by landline and to the United States by a collect call system. Shuttle buses among venues did not turn up; the very limited number of late catering outlets for workers on extended shifts during these six days would close during their promised hours; sections of the new simultaneous translation system wired into the auditorium broke down at Gorbachev’s news conference. Igor Korchilov, Gorbachev’s interpreter who translated at the news conference, refers to this up-graded facility proudly installed in time for the occasion. When it failed in some of the front rows Gorbachev personally organised the re-seating of journalists so that Russian speakers would occupy the seats without translation, an embarrassing delay in proceedings not mentioned by Korchilov, (See Korchilov I, Translating History: The Summits that Ended the Cold War..., London, Aurum, 1997, p 181). In a further embarrassment part of the media conference was also taken up by the subject of Boris Yeltsin. Gorbachev told questioners certain public criticisms being aired by his dismissed Moscow Party chief and future nemesis, and timed for the summit, should be dragged out into the open and discussed, in the spirit of *glasnost*. The city’s reputation for an insistent, blatant consumer hunger was excelled. Services of all kinds had to be obtained at a price in American cigarettes; black market money changers had to be often rebuffed; this “great capital” was a sad place, a shock to newcomers and returnees, obviously in trouble and down on its dignity.

(12) Shevardnadze E, The Future Belongs to Freedom, NY, Free Press – Macmillan, 1991, pp 54, 59

(13) Ibid. p 188

(14) Ibid. p 37; Op. Cit. Brown p 81; Similarly, “We can’t go on living like this”; Gorbachev to Raisa Maksimovna on the USSR, shortly before election as General Secretary in 1985, Op. Cit. Gorbachev p 165

(15) Op. Cit. Brown p 57

(16) Bartlett dates the “Second Cold War” in the period 1979-85; in Gowland et al, Op. Cit. p 67

(17) Op. Cit. Walker p 244

- (18) Op. Cit. Shevardnadze p 58
- (19) Op. Cit. Brown p 219
- (20) Op. Cit. Walker p 268
- (21) Ibid. pp 274-5, 286
- (22) Op. Cit. Gorbachev p 428; Op. Cit. Shevardnadze pp 113, 130
- (23) Op. Cit. Brown pp 158-9; Op. Cit. Shevardnadze p 43, foreign policy closely linked to *perestroika* and democratisation of society
- (24) Op. Cit. Brown p 121
- (25) Reddaway and Glinski, labour activism cut across borders of the republics, Op. Cit. p 149
- (26) Op. Cit. Walker p 304
- (27) Op. Cit. Brown pp 124-5
- (28) Op. Cit. Reddaway and Glinski p 121
- (29) Op. Cit. Shevardnadze p 32
- (30) Rybakov A, Children of the Arbat, London, Arrow, 1993
- (31) Op. Cit. Gorbachev p 207
- (32) Ibid. p 278
- (33) Ibid. p 279
- (34) Op. Cit. Brown p 1
- (35) Op. Cit. Walker p 312
- (36) *See above*, Brown Op. Cit. p 121
- (37) Ibid. p 13
- (38) Ibid. p 258
- (39) On restlessness among senior officers, Brown reports the attitude of Marshal Sergei Akhromeev and others on the withdrawal from Afghanistan, Op. Cit. p 236. This is qualified by Gorbachev's praise for Akhromeev's loyalty, Op. Cit. Gorbachev 459. In the SBS television program "The German Gambit" which concentrated on disaffection of the officers, the American advisor Condoleezza Rice recalled a conversation with Akhromeev during bi-lateral consultations; he was as astonished as the Americans at the concessions being made by Gorbachev and Shevardnadze, regretting that "a mighty empire was surrendered in no time". Shevardnadze was said to have regarded the Marshal as one of his main adversaries. Rice said another senior official considered Gorbachev had conceded far too much while being showered with compliments by the West, becoming "a politician who was no longer heeding information and operating on his own gut feelings". The program also quoted Gorbachev to

the Americans at the outset of the push for German reunification: “Help me to stop reunification or a Marshal of the Soviet Union will take my place”. “The German Gambit”, ARTE-ZDF, Germany, SBS Television Australia, 9.11.99.

(40) Op. Cit. Shevardnadze p 202

(41) Ibid. p xvii

(42) Op. Cit. Brown p 317

(43) Ibid. p 156

(44) Ibid. p 130

(45) Ibid. p 30

(46) Ibid. p 160

(47) Ibid. p 279

(48) Op. Cit. Reddaway and Glinski pp 159-60

(49) Op. Cit. Gorbachev pp 703-10

(50) Op. Cit. Brown p 237

(51) Ibid. p 189

(52) Op. Cit. Shevardnadze p 43

(53) Op. Cit. Walker p 291

(54) Op. Cit. Shevardnadze p 51

(55) Ibid. p 85

(56) Op. Cit. Walker p 293. Following his election as General Secretary of the CPSU on 11.3.85, Gorbachev had suspended the deployment of SS-20 missiles in Europe on 8.4.85; proposed cutting in half the number of all Soviet and American nuclear weapons on 30.9.85; and proposed the abolition of all intermediate-range nuclear weapons on 22.7.87; he would continue along that line; Gorbachev Op. Cit. pp 703-5. Walker details the exchange on 22.2.86 that produced agreement on INF and the START Treaty, Op. Cit. p 292.

Shevardnadze followed the practice of making concessions to assist agreement in his talks with Shultz, in the lead-up to the May-June 1988 Summit. At their 26th meeting, in Geneva 11-12.5.88, the Soviet Union reported it had ceded points to make possible a regional agreement that would facilitate a Soviet withdrawal from Afghanistan. On disarmament, with INF and START under discussion, Shevardnadze accepted the offer of a full “accounting” instead of demanding to oversee the demolition of certain missiles under the INF Accord, but prospects for signing the accord at Moscow were still delayed by reservations on the part of US Senators over other aspects of interpretation. As in this broadcast report, by the writer, Shevardnadze asked for more trust: “Mr Shevardnadze delivered the concessions that were

sought, in the form of a new, written agreement. He also authorised a diplomatic note, assuring the United States Senate that a new generation of weapons, the so-called futuristics, would be covered by the INF accord, as they had wanted. He and Mr Schultz both declared that the Senators' complaints had been answered ... Mr Shevardnadze let it out that he, too, was wondering whether all the work had been fully necessary. Through his interpreter he used the word 'over-dramatised', suggesting perhaps the American political process was a shade too frenetic. The Soviet Union, he said, had not been too fussy about its own qualms on INF ...” (Correspondents' Report, ABC Radio National, 15.5.88). Similarly at the multi-lateral conference on chemical arms at Paris in January 1989, Shevardnadze announced at a media conference with Schultz the Soviet Union would begin destroying its stockpile of chemical weapons that year, before the completion of a proposed international agreement. This prompted the Australian Ambassador for Disarmament, David Reece, to say that realities of negotiation meant the Soviet timetable was too optimistic (ABC-R, news 9.1.89).

(57) Op. Cit. Walker p 311

(58) In “We Are The People”, radio documentary series, episode 3 of 6, Producer Misha Glennie, broadcast in “The Europeans”, ABC Radio National, Australia, 17.10.99

(59) Op. Cit. Shevardnadze p 51

(60) Ibid. pp 47-49

(61) Op. Cit. Brown p 238

(62) Ibid. p 235

(63) Op. Cit. Walker p 5

(64) Op. Cit. Shevardnadze p 48

(65) Op. Cit. Brown p 243

(66) Op. Cit. Gorbachev pp 459-62

(67) Ibid. pp 510-15

(68) Op. Cit. Walker p 317

(69) Ibid. pp 312-14

(70) Op. Cit. Gorbachev p 669

(71) Op. Cit. Garton Ash 1993, pp 350-1

(72) Op. Cit. Gorbachev p 665

(73) Ibid. p 80

(74) Interview with the writer, Brussels, 19.2.99

(75) Op. Cit. Walker p 288

(76) Ibid. p 265

(77) Ibid. p 235. John Palmer agreed, considering the Helsinki accords worked through a kind of metaphysics, words helping with a blocking effect on very possible repressive action: “Particularly after the Helsinki conference in 1975 you had the partial legitimisation of independence and human rights groups in these countries. There was a continuing dissent activity be it under very difficult circumstances, with Charter 77 in the Czech Republic in particular and later on Solidarity in Poland ... The days of the system were numbered when they could neither suppress the opposition nor move to reform. They were trapped in a stasis, a paralysis. In both my book Europe Without America in 1985 and in Trading Places a couple of years later I had predicted the regimes would not survive. To be honest I would not have predicted the regimes would fall so quickly nor with such a degree of implosion, (Interview, Brussels, 19.2.99).

(78) Op. Cit. Walker p 313

(79) Op. Cit. Brown p 7

(80) Op. Cit. Reddaway and Glinski p 124

(81) Op. Cit. Shevardnadze pp 175-6

(82) Op. Cit. Brown pp 163, 189. Gorbachev continued to argue the first announcement had to be delayed because essential information was not yet to hand.

(83) Op. Cit. Gorbachev p 189

(84) Ibid. p 210

(85) Ibid. p 279

(86) Ibid. p 208

(87) Op. Cit. Brown pp 383-4

(88) “The System of Formal Censorship”, in Dewhurst MD and Farrell RF (Eds.), The Soviet Censorship, Munich, Scarecrow Press, 1973, p 56

(89) Op. Cit. Shevardnadze p 218

(90) Ibid. p 207

(91) Op. Cit. Brown p 108

(92) Op. Cit. Gorbachev p 283

CHAPTER FIVE

SHORT STANDARD HISTORY – TWO

Events in Eastern Europe in 1989 are commonly viewed as functions of three main influences: the failing centrally-directed economies; Mikhail Gorbachev's consistent policy of non-intervention against political change within the East European states, and the phenomenon of mass social movements that got themselves up to support a set of objectives, of which there was one in particular - eviction of the communist party from power.

EASTERN EUROPE

There is a recognised sequence of principal events forming a narrative, a process of astonishing reversals for communist authorities and their surrender of office. These can be traced through schedules of dates provided by several writers including Gorbachev, Brown and Timothy Garton Ash. The latter chronology is adapted as **Appendix 1** and annotated to indicate the participation of the writer as a news correspondent on different occasions. There were influential factors in play before 1989 contributing to sensational, determining events. One such factor was the set of impacts of the Helsinki Final Act in Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. Another was the long process of experimentation with economic reform and liberalisation in Hungary. Soviet economists formulating change under *perestroika* consulted Hungarian practice as a model (1). In May 1988 Janos Kadar, communist party leader since the Soviet intervention of 1956 resigned, and by 1989 a powerful reform faction had consolidated its position and was prepared to split the party rather than continue with basic policy deeply at odds with the public will.

POLAND

As to the sequence of events, a decade after the fall of the Berlin Wall there was some consensus that the story must start with the Polish Pope visiting Poland: "In October 1978 there occurred a shocking external intervention in the affairs of People's Poland. Cardinal Carol Wojtyla, Archbishop of Krakow, was elected Pope. The nation celebrated this 'miracle', spontaneously, in churches and on the streets: the regime was dismayed, though Gierek's Politburo put a brave face on things, and welcomed the elevation of a 'son of the Polish nation'. In June 1979, after

some diplomatic wrangling, the Pope returned to his native land for the most fantastic pilgrimage in the history of contemporary Europe” (2). In this account - widely replicated especially in the reminiscences of many persons who were contacts of correspondents - it was a grand religious event, a vast arousal of national spirit and a powerful political enactment *en masse*. The crowds were massive and united; the public appearances were televised and the world bore witness, so there could be no lies about what the public thought; the Pope spoke of human rights and dignity, and encouraged the flock to be “mature enough to be nonconformists”. In conclusion, “as important as this triumphant articulation of shared values was the experience of -there is no better word for it- solidarity” (3).

It was a key episode in the formation of the Solidarity movement, “that tacit alliance of workers, intelligentsia and Church, unprecedented in Polish history, unique in the Soviet bloc, unseen in the West ...” (4). Solidarity’s sudden successes in 1980 led to the formation of its reform and management commissions, and so a “dual system” for the management of civil affairs, unacceptable to the regime. As a harbinger of later events across the region, with “almost uncontrollable public anger” (5) widespread against the government, over ration cuts especially, Soviet intervention was averted, though only by the imposition of martial law. Later Solidarity, having been driven underground, having survived the martial law period, police surveillance and the murder of clergy, re-emerged in August 1988, when it entered negotiations with state authorities over fresh protests and strike activity, against an austerity budget. The die was cast for Europe as a whole, though none could tell at that time.

In a typical action of the time a gesture of amelioration by the government in late 1988 was seized on by Solidarity to mobilise fresh support. The official initiative was to restore national war commemorations to 11 November, services having been held for several years on another date, in the communist calendar. That cold evening a huge crowd carrying Solidarity banners attended Mass, spilling out of the church building, participants kneeling in the streets for over two blocks. It then paraded to Victory Square, unmolested, police scarcely in evidence. Following speeches the crowd dispersed, but a column of youth members marched off - to be caught up with, beaten, arrested and dispersed by police in the darkened streets. It was another repudiation for the communist government, another show of strength by an organised opposition, another botched public relations exercise, another burst of adverse coverage in the foreign media (6).

The weakness of this government was made plain, quite apart from the persistence of its opposition. Beyond its client base in the *nomenklatura* it had no public support, and with the collapsing economy no room to manoeuvre. Casual observers would know of the under-investment, failed ventures with Western capital, run-down and unsafe heavy industries, and consumer poverty. They would change dollars for zlotys at increasingly distorted rates in the open street; observe queuing for very little in any stores, a butcher shop typically with nothing but some pork fat, a “department store” stocked like a junk shop, or an electrical store mobbed for half a dozen television sets brought in on a truck. Travellers to Poland brought their own hospital kits including syringes and antibiotics, in case of need; prostitution was rife; traffic police routinely took small bribes. In one survey 90% of university students asked about their hopes for the future said they hoped to leave the country to study abroad (7). Public disgust was palpable. A slogan from hard times, repression, the drive to industrialise in the 1950s, that “your children will live in paradise”, was being repeated everywhere with bitterest irony. The Round Table talks that began in February 1989 produced the agreement on parliamentary elections, the first round held on 4.6.89, resulting in a rout of the communist party (Polish United Workers Party - PZPR). After a second round of voting Solidarity candidates had captured all seats in the upper house, the Senate, and all of the 35% they were eligible to contest in the lower house, the Sejm. With seats reserved for it in the semi-free electoral model, the PZPR was unable to win just three needed to retain parliamentary control, in a combined National Assembly. An attempt to govern through national coalitions under communists, Mieczyslaw Rakowski then Czeslaw Kiszczak, failed after the client Peasants’ Party (ZSL) and Democratic Party (SD) began separate talks with Solidarity.

As at every opportunity since the Papal visitation in 1979 a deeply alienated public chose one of two courses. Many ignored the opportunity. It was far from an overwhelming voter turn-out, 60%, the outcome bringing a sense of “confusion” rather than illusion, according to Glennie (8). Many others, feeling the country had been traduced, explicitly expressed their intentions with such a heavily one-sided vote as eventuated, especially delighting in the opportunity provided by the voting system to literally “cross out” government names (9). The logical meaning of the electoral victory in June was very obvious, but still the results could not be proclaimed as the ousting of the communist party, because just at that time the consequences were imponderable. Leaders of Solidarity were themselves professing to be unready (10). Journalists were confronted with a familiar dilemma; an impulse to state what looked to be obvious and give the event its due weight, against the controlling impulse to deal with facts as established and talk about the

immediate future only in conditional terms - less satisfying to a demanding market. In the crisis brought on by the vote, could / would the Communist Party agree to go? Would the USSR consent? Parliamentary games were one thing; over forty years' experience of history were another.

Such questions were resolved when the negotiating process produced its decision: Solidarity assumed the head of a coalition government, with a veteran advisor and leading lay figure of the Catholic Church, Tadeus Mazowiecki, installed as Prime Minister on 24.8.89, a minority of his Ministers drawn from the communist PZPR. The June elections can safely be labeled as the commencement of the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe but took place in the presence of great uncertainty and in an absence of triumphalism. The event was robbed of prominence and attention by others taking place in the world news. The writer crossed Victory Square in Warsaw to the International Press Centre at the end of that election day -daring to think of the historical significance of the story; considering its deserving place at the head of the news; interested in its reception by editors- to be confronted by images of tanks at Tienanmen Square, on CNN. The voting in Poland, which would turn out to be epoch-making and signal a new life for millions of Europeans, was pushed aside by the story of the Beijing massacre; the death of the Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran attended by shocking displays as his body was carried through the streets, and the catastrophic explosion of a train carrying an inflammable liquid cargo in the USSR.

The Soviet Union in this crisis took an attitude of non-engagement, but at the start of it the principles of non-intervention already laid down by Gorbachev (11) were yet to be tested, yet to be taken at face value, yet to be trusted or even believed. Rakowski, having in the past found some acceptance in the West as a "moderate", as Party leader and Prime Minister looked for support through contacts outside Poland, for instance giving interviews to correspondents (briefly venturing into heavily-accented English) (12), and hosting a visit by the British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, who offered none of the hoped-for money or comfort, expressing support for more democratic change. Most significantly appeals to Moscow would fail.

Foreigners were informed of the common response in the streets, when Rakowski made a sudden trip to see Gorbachev: "Papa! Papa!", they laughed. The Solidarity-led coalition was agreed to by the communist party after a telephone call from Rakowski to Gorbachev (13), who obviously told him it was time to accept. The Soviet leader put on record a positive impression of Rakowski the man, a "distinguished figure", but represented acceptance of the election outcome

as consistent with an established helping hand policy on Moscow's part. (He said Moscow had given advice to the military regime of General Jaruzelski in the early 1980's, to reject so-called "spinelessness and liberalism", but the USSR had not transgressed the general's authority and had contributed heavy economic aid for Poland against a Western boycott) (14). Despite some critical commentary in the official Soviet press the 1989 election outcome was accepted and congratulations extended to Mazowiecki by the Soviet government.

The advent of this freely elected Polish government, together with ascendancy of the reform faction in the government of Hungary, and the positions being taken by Mikhail Gorbachev, were the pre-conditions for the central process in the collapse of the Eastern bloc in Europe, which began immediately, before that Summer was out. It was a process that brought in Czechoslovakia, Austria, and the "two Germanies"; the process of the ending of the German Democratic Republic followed by German reunification; the process signified by the fall of the Berlin Wall. As observed everywhere by that time, including at the Kremlin, "it is virtually impossible for any society to be closed", and the factor of fear was evaporating. Closed regimes, unstable, failing in the economic sector, bolstered only by implicit terror and possible Soviet intervention, were now seen to be becoming vulnerable. News of the Polish change was known in Eastern Europe, whether through grudging acknowledgment in official media, or broadcasts from the West, or through travel and personal contact. The dissidents who had come to power in Poland had conferred with their opposite numbers in the neighbouring communist states for some years. At the official level in East Germany communications with neighbouring Poland, since the rise and persistence of Solidarity, were restricted. There was a ban on selected periodicals from Poland, and later from the USSR as well, but public sentiment did not recognise such bans and dissent manifested itself on two fronts.

Many holiday-makers and others traveling to Czechoslovakia and Hungary that Summer instead of going home crossed into Austria and made their way to the Federal Republic of Germany, where as they knew, they were entitled to full citizenship and material support. The episode of the border-crossers was in full-swing by early September. In one month the second front would be opened, a mass protest movement in East Germany itself, precipitated ironically by the attempt to hold celebrations for the fortieth anniversary of the GDR. In this series of episodes the position of Gorbachev and the Soviet Union was seen to be crucial. The rise of a mass movement went together with an understanding of the position of non-intervention that Gorbachev was about to honour. That mass movement would promote certain clear demands which became a

watch-word for all of the movements that broke out in the following months: hold free elections; end the official “leading role” of the Communist Party as state policy; permit free movement of citizens; withdraw Soviet forces from the national territory; allow a free market, and end the censorship of news media; all of which would be to permit the emergence of a civil society.

“WALL PROCESS”

This section follows the chain of events leading directly to the opening of the Berlin Wall, in the glare of mass media of the world. From the installation of the new government in Poland events moved fast, involving a connected series of actions in Hungary, Poland, Czechoslovakia, the GDR, and on the part of Western interests especially the government of West Germany. This can be treated as a separate process, cutting across national and ideological boundaries, mixing the initiatives of government leaders and masses of plain citizens, directed towards an outcome that for most of the way through, none were able to specifically describe. Though not able to exactly pre-figure in the mind a new order without the communist system, all would be looking for a solution of the crisis involving the break-down of that system and the rebellion by its subject people.

Border crossers and demonstrations

At the time it may have seemed like a confusion of activities, but the actions of the mass of people who took over the process of change were very focused, concentrated on their essential goals. The Hungarian authorities had symbolically opened the Iron Curtain on 2 May, removing the barbed-wire fence and proclaiming a liberalised exit policy. East German families booked for Summer holidays began escaping across the open section of frontier. Pressure mounted with East Germans crowding out FRG embassies in Prague, Budapest and Warsaw, demanding rights of exit. At the beginning of September the Hungarian government again acted, announcing it would permit the exit of East German citizens to Austria, later citing adherence to an international protocol on human rights, as part of liberalisation, and abrogating long-standing consular agreements with the GDR (15). The movement of people became a flood. As many as one fifth of the East Germans supposedly off on camping vacations in Czechoslovakia and Hungary ended up going to the West, 50000 making the crossing by the end of October (16). It was a spectacle for news media, the lines of Trabants, salutes of welcome from the Austrian border guards, large gatherings of people at transit camps at Passau and other nearby points in

West Germany.

It did seem the initiative was in the hands of a mass movement, though this had to be tempered by questions about the reasons for the Hungarian government's actions. On a superficial reading the pressure of numbers had forced the government's hand at Budapest. Some information was available about movements and contacts between Budapest and Bonn, arcane matters of politics and high-level diplomacy, overwhelmed in the exhilarating rush of "real people" grasping their chance at freedom. Soon however details would emerge of exchanges within the formal political sphere; direct negotiations; interruptions in the process, evidently for further talks to take place with Hungary's Eastern bloc allies; as a consequence intermittent postponements of the signal for the border crossers to go; and there were undertakings of substantial economic aid for Hungary too. The principal meeting took place near Cologne on 25.8.89 among the West German Chancellor and Hungarian Prime Minister, and their Foreign Ministers (17).

The timing of events was precise. The government of East Germany was committed to the fortieth anniversary celebrations of the republic from Thursday 5 October 1989, and so took action to contain its problems. It agreed to the "freedom trains" for the transport of intending border-crossers from Hungary to the West, insisting on their transit back through East German territory, then closed the border with Czechoslovakia (18), which was not a fortified barrier - in an attempt to head off further escapes. Almost ritualistically it had invited the senior leadership of all the communist states and offered accreditation to Western journalists, of whom several, including the writer, took the opportunity both to enter and to enjoy some strength and security in numbers. All could see that this regime so exposed to embarrassment over citizens seeking to emigrate rather than celebrate would have trouble hiding the problem, while at the same time it would be pledged to best behaviour before the world. Something unforeseen might happen.

The weekend started a cascade of events leading directly to the fall of the communist regime, and reunification under the constitution of the federal republic only one year later, 3.10.90. In the historical conventions, it had two prime features that would be significant for future developments. Mikhail Gorbachev as guest of honour made a political intervention against the inner leadership associated with Erich Honecker, head of the East German Communist Party (SED); news of his comments to the party's Central Committee, ("Life punishes harshly anyone who is left behind ..."), immediately circulated; it spread confidence in the notion of Gorbachev as friend, or at least, as one who would not sanction Soviet military intervention to back the regime. So there was impetus for the second feature of the October weekend, the demonstrations,

which became a mass movement. Already crowds had rioted at the Dresden Barnhof, trying to board a “freedom train” in transit. In Berlin crowds of young protestors stormed the popular convention centre, the People’s Palace, as Gorbachev attended a function - shouting “Gorby! Save us!” A systematic police action followed, demonstrators rounded up and carried off with violent acts before the news cameras; similar scenes occurred at Gethsemane Church; then the foreign media contingent were thrown out, temporary visas having expired, most to be refused any re-entry for at least a week. A major demonstration that Monday night at Leipzig, a weekly event since the first protests at the city’s St Nicholas Church in September, drew unprecedented numbers of people (19) and began a rolling sequence of growing, massive, unanswerable confrontations in cities throughout the communist republic.

The Monday night events at Leipzig are acknowledged as the beacon and bellwether of the movement. The chronology, **Appendix 1**, shows the way the momentum has been gauged in terms of most widely-accepted crowd estimates: 16.10.89 100000; 23.10.89 300000; 30.10.89 300000; 6.11.89 500000 (20). These protests were always dynamic, the crowds seemed organic, always taking the movement one step further, growing as confidence mounted and fear subsided, and also becoming the forum for publication of bold new demands. Rothwell recreates the atmosphere of the Leipzig events in a novel based on his reporting experiences, “Heaven and Earth” (21). Calls for reunification, having been heard earlier, were voiced as the main demand at the Leipzig demonstration on 18.12.89. The incident is covered in Chapter 10 following. The protest movement could only be spontaneous; the organisation available through Protestant church bodies, courageous and protective but concerned with rights rather than securing power, or the secular dissident movement, had few resources. An opposition figure such as Gerd Popper saw Western journalists at his small flat, recounting controls imposed even on incipient organisations: Any gathering of more than a dozen people at the flat had been interrupted and broken up; a scientist, he’d been put to work over several years stoking furnaces, being caused to contribute to the city’s characteristic bad air, the composite “smell of Eastern Europe”, part soot, part cheap detergent, part fume from low octane gasoline, part smoke from rough tobacco.

Western news media received throughout most of the GDR sustained the movement. Being news media it was drawn to what was dramatic and what was new. Simple but sufficient operational messages could be read from the conventionally objective content and tone of the coverage, for instance that the protests at St Nicholas Church occurred each Monday and were expected to

continue. Those daring to join protests would find a reward in prominent coverage on the nightly news, millions bearing witness; amateur video footage was smuggled out and used here and there, giving the small privately owned cameras a role to supplement the mighty significance of communication satellites in the 1989 crisis. During October into early November the story of formal political changes came to be set against a background of nightly compilations on how many protests there had been, numbers of participants, in which cities. The information was gathered through an extensive, and expensive, deployment of journalists in the West, detailed in Chapter 9 following.

On the ground penetration by Western reporters could overturn elaborate efforts at suppression, as when some admitted to East Berlin for the anniversary celebrations made a freelance trip to Dresden to see the damage around the rail station and confirm the rumours of full-scale rioting, sharing the information with colleagues back in the capital. (The episode is covered also in Chapter 8 following). In this environment the opposition party, New Forum, was formed; a principal slogan in the streets became “New Forum” - legalise the opposition. In West Berlin a former Green Party parliamentarian with links to the dissidents in East Germany, Wolfgang Schenck, obtained information on opposition activities and until there was sufficient opening of the country to allow East German dissidents to speak freely, acted as a spokesperson available to Western media, under the name of a support group “East West Forum” (22). The protest movement was dynamic, always growing, very forceful because spontaneous and effectively unguided; no politician, police officer, spy, or reporter, no more than the participants themselves, could say where it would strike next or what it would lead to.

The protests had vital leverage in the early dangerous days when the communist leadership retained the will and resources to violently suppress them, specifically the Dresden riot on 3.10.89, the Gorbachev protest in Berlin on 7-8.10.89, and the Leipzig meeting on 9.10.89. The latter became important in the rapid evolution of events in the more formal world of institutional politics, very directly. The essential story has been confirmed, that while Honecker wanted the demonstration suppressed, that action was blocked by the intervention of leading citizens; the conductor Kurt Mansour, a priest involved in the human rights movement and the head of the city communist party. Egon Krenz, about to succeed Honecker, telephoned the city and accepted that the protests should not be touched. This manifestation of the emergence of a civil society effectively ended consideration of a “Tienanmen Square scenario”. Talk of the mobilisation of armed workers’ brigades, some of it attributed to Margot Honecker, the Party leader’s wife who

would resign as Education Minister late in October, had been featured in reporting at the beginning of the month. The writers included correspondents who recalled the bloody surprise action at Beijing, just four months before, and who could not suppose what alternatives the growing uproar in East Germany might produce (23). While the mass movement developed its objectives and continued into 1990, in terms of sheer power of numbers forcing a decision, the million-strong demonstration in East Berlin on Saturday 4 November was a hammer blow. It was seen as an across-the-board, civic act that cancelled the last vestiges of legitimacy of the regime. Immediately in the wake of this imposing event came the decision on the Berlin Wall; final paralysis of confidence within the regime in East Berlin; replacement of its leaders in successive waves, with an intensification of interest in controlling the situation on the part of the Bonn government, and eventual surrender of the SED to defeat at free elections.

Moves towards German reunification

The evolution of this phase of history is in two tracks; the mass movement running in parallel with, in its own way driving a succession of events in the institutional political community, generating extraordinary scenes played out in world news media; and the world itself of office-holders, national management and diplomacy, a world accustomed to working through and with news media, and so a world also inhabited by journalists in their routine career lives. The sequence, after the episode of the border crossers in September and October, became: the shock of the Berlin Wall; a period of further retreat for the regime in East Germany, offering policy reversals and new communist leaders, Honecker replaced by Krenz (18.10.89), replaced by Hans Modrow (13.11.89); a brief interlude for the GDR as a non-communist state under a parliamentary coalition (headed by Lothar de Maiziere, Christian Democrat Prime Minister from 12.4.90); and then, through the impetus of the unrelenting public revolt, resolution in the form of German reunification including a currency union, under Article 23 of the Basic Law. This was the “all-German” federal constitutional structure which had been maintained by West Germany, allowing accession of the East German Lander to the federal republic, following state elections (24). Reference has been made to the impacts of events in Hungary and Poland in stimulating the first change in East Germany, much of that significantly being the determination of private citizens to leave the country *en masse*, not activity of an expressly political kind. A factor always noted at this point is that the East Germans were unique in Eastern Europe in having West Germany there to receive them unconditionally. Reference has been made also to the deciding importance of the stance on non-intervention adopted by Gorbachev; in Brown’s considered

view, Germany's reunification "could not have come about when it did without his ultimate acquiescence" (25).

A further important factor is the political management of the situation in Europe, as regards German unification, by the Bonn government under the Chancellor Helmut Kohl and Foreign Minister Hans-Deitrich Genscher. If the power of the street protests in East Germany, and exodus of citizens to the West, invoked arguments that the Eastern bloc had to fall, as it were spontaneously, as the outlet for an aroused public will; the actions of the West German government provide the counter-argument that such a change somehow still had to be put through the processes of institutions. Both interpretations are valid; the two sets of circumstances and activities are shown in the record to have inter-acted at many points. Kohl for instance, discussing a German treaty settlement with Modrow, was confronted by wild crowds at Dresden, 19.12.89, demanding something else, a full reunification. Whatever the effect of such influences, as palpable displays of public feeling and resolve, in a month he had started his push forward with an aggressive program on reunification. The Dresden moment was registered very widely as a turning point in this way, for example with Garton Ash: "The real and very emotional breakthrough for the Chancellor was his visit to Dresden ... This cry from the people in East Germany, the continued flood of emigration and what can only be described as the collapse of the East German state were the three factors which impelled the Bonn government to move from a measured 'calm and sensible development' to a headlong dash for unity" (26). Kohl would himself report the incident in similar terms (27). Beckoning and increasingly obvious prospects for an electoral victory would also have been influential.

INITIATIVES BY KOHL

His record begins with the notation that he was slow among leaders in the West to trust Gorbachev's intentions; witness the unfortunate early comments linking *glasnost*, propaganda and Goebbels. The major West German political parties had come to an accommodation with the existence of the separate East German republic. The Social Democrats (SPD), initiators of *Ostpolitik*, a crucial opening of relations with the GDR for Cold War circumstances, in late 1989 were proposing a confederation of the two states (28). The Christian Democrats, CDU, were struggling with internal discord over the vexed issue of the future Western border of Poland. All parties, all people, were hampered by the imagination factor. Ordinary psychological constraints

were imposed on movement towards the unknown and unexpected; the exit of communist governments and reunification with the West. This changed through a series of initiatives where the Bonn government was the main actor, making agreements with separate partners as stakeholders in the unfolding drama. Any standard account of these moves will support an historical view whereby consciously resolved actions by a leader or leadership can shape and determine events which otherwise would never have occurred. The following initiatives, a set of relations, fitted together.

General principles. A policy on eventual unification was proclaimed in the form of guiding principles, the Ten Point Plan, at the end of November (28.11.89). The plan pronounced in the Bundestag to general agreement offered a step-by-step progression through organised co-operation between the two German states, in such areas as the economy; democratisation in the East; and achievement of an eventual federal state through democratic free choice. No foreign government had been consulted in its preparation, which in fact was limited to a very tight circle in Bonn, and this was to cause difficulties, e.g. an immediate “frank and rather sharp exchange of views” between Gorbachev and Genscher (29). **Relations with Hungary.** Direct dealings with the reform government in Hungary were well-progressed by late August, with the Prime Minister Miklos Nemeth and the Foreign Minister Gyula Horn making the visit to Bonn to see their counterparts on 25.8.89. A bilateral arrangement included West German economic transfers, beginning with DM 1-billion state credits, and agreement on the part of Hungary to let the border crossers go, releasing a continuing flood of citizens out of the GDR and frustrating moves by “reform communists” taking over in East Berlin to retrieve political stability in the situation. It was a case of “Bonn’s good relations with the powerholders in Budapest, strengthened by economic leverage” (30). (Kohl would publicly thank the Hungarian leadership during a visit in December for their bold action, which he saw as restoring a birthright of freedom to fellow Germans).

Relations with Poland. With the prospect of a non-communist German government sharing a frontier with Poland once again, discussions commenced with the Polish government over recognition of the 1945 borders; terms were sought for recognition of German ethnic minority interests; there was alarm at all levels in Poland, where the position on borders, vis-a-vis Germany, was intractable; the process required repeated visits and gestures of friendship, which saw the German Chancellor in Poland at one crucial stage, the night of the opening of the Berlin Wall, 9.11.89. Garton Ash avers the Chancellor accepted the Polish borders would have to be

kept, as demanded by all of Germany's partners and neighbours, but prevaricated while his supporters became accustomed to that reality as a price of reunification (31). **The European Community (later European Union).** A special European Summit was hastily called at Paris on a Saturday night (18.11.89) where Kohl would brief his eleven counterparts on the situation in the two Germanies just over one week after the opening of the wall, and obtain affirmation of Germany's right to unity through self-determination; a policy that was followed through in later meetings to an agreement on the admission of the GDR to the European Community (EC) as a constituent part of an expanded Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). (Further on this summit, see also Chapter 10 following).

Relations with France. As perceived by the journalists in particular (viz Gorman, Vernet, Brock; Chapter 3 above), the prospect of German reunification threatened the special Bonn-Paris relationship built up over nearly two decades within the EC. President Mitterrand's bi-lateral dealings with Gorbachev (e.g. Kiev visit 6.12.89) and Modrow (e.g. State visit to the GDR coinciding with Kohl's visit, 20-21.12.89) attracted major publicity as intended, and demanded express attention from the Chancellor, who met Mitterrand at Bonn just before Christmas and again in France, on the Atlantic coast, on 4.1.90 (32). In these dealings the explicit requirement of France, the United States and other allies was reiterated, a reunified Germany would need to be part of an extended European Community, and in that context the French leader sought further to secure Germany's commitment to monetary union. Understandings reached on these points are widely seen to have been influential in obtaining the allies' collaboration in the settlement of the "German question" and also in mapping out future structures for Europe.

Relations with the United States. Kohl setting out to get acceptance of his plan, recognised the importance to Germany of the meeting at Malta between Presidents Bush and Gorbachev (2-3.12.89), who would in the event eschew the idea of separately seeking to determine the fate of Europe. He established before-and-after contact with the American President, including a meeting just before the follow-up summit of the NATO allies at Brussels. At that summit the ten-point plan was outlined with emphasis on the principle that Germans saw the reunification of their country linked to the European idea and institutional development of the EC.

The three months December 1989 through to the end of February 1990 saw a systematic resolution of institutional arrangements co-ordinated among several partners, with the West German Chancellor at the core of the process. The record of this negotiation and consolidation shows a generation of policy decisions by the different partners *en train de negocier*. This is not

to say it was just improvised policy-making. In cases such as the Polish frontiers or the admission of parties to talks on an international, final post-war settlement on Germany, debate was informed by settled understandings and well-known, formal historical positions on the part of the different negotiating parties. On the other hand imponderables existed, such as the likely mind-set, will, strength of opinion of the German public, East and West, on the country's reunification.

All parties come to agree

On the latter point the continuing public agitation in the GDR, and shifting of the rhetoric towards reunification on the *Bundesrepublik* model, provided a crucial environment that itself militated in favour of the main decisions that came to be made. The visit of Kohl to Dresden in mid-December, to be confronted by crowds demanding unity, has been mentioned. Modrow, in office as GDR Prime Minister since 13 November, had formulated proposals for a "treaty community" of the two Germanies, and for a substantial development aid program West to East - a program that if adhered to would have been far cheaper than the grand-scale renovation undertaken after eventual reunification. However by the end of January Modrow, in the hostile political climate bequeathed to him, had agreed to early elections for the East German Parliament, to take place in March. These elections would be bound to further jeopardise the position of his government and the communist state. At the same time - a paradox- he would press on with his constitutional plans, all predicated on the continuing existence of the GDR. He saw Gorbachev (30.1.90) then announced his "Modrow Plan" for development two days later. This action was condemned by events which would flow on from the pattern of thinking being developed elsewhere. For instance, in Bonn the following week the federal cabinet determined on a practical investigation of monetary union (7.2.90), a step strongly favoured and being strongly pushed among the East German public. Kohl with Genscher then went to visit Gorbachev in Moscow (10-11.2.90). Gorbachev had just completed a meeting with the American Secretary of State, James Baker, where they established the principle of "4+2" talks for a German settlement.

In Gorbachev's own account, senior Soviet leaders discussed the situation, and concluded that, while "Hans Modrow's government found it difficult to prevent the complete disintegration of the East German republic", it was possible to help the East Germans by getting them included in

the settlement negotiations; and with those considerations in mind the Soviet Union gave in-principle assent to German reunification: “The West German Chancellor believed that the coming parliamentary elections would lead to the formation of a government that would favour unification, and that the people and the Parliament would fully support such a decision. In this view, the main task was therefore to stabilise the situation in East Germany as much as possible, to prevent economic collapse and political chaos, and to reduce the flow of East Germans to the West. Kohl tried to convince me that the only way to achieve this was by implementing an active policy, by creating an economic and monetary union immediately after the elections ... I could see that Helmut Kohl was set on pushing through the process of unification and I had good reason to believe that he had the support of the United States ... ‘One could probably say that there is no disagreement between the Soviet Union, the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic on the question of German unity,’ I said. ‘We have reached an understanding on the main starting point - the Germans must make their own choice. And they must know our position on this issue.’ ‘The Germans know it,’ Kohl replied ... The ‘German question’ was not only one of unification and the satisfaction of national aspirations, since it also affected the interests of neighbouring nations. Quite a few questions arose in this context: the guaranteed inviolability of borders and the recognition of post-war territorial and political realities, the future military-political status of a united Germany, the link between pan-European policy and German unification ...” (33).

This exposition by Gorbachev set the pattern for the following two years whereby the Soviet Union was to negotiate from a position of disadvantage, seeking to extract concessions like the maintenance of a demilitarised status for East Germany after reunification. Gorbachev was to persist with proposals on the future architecture of Europe, emphasising the CSCE and inclusion of the USSR. Hugh Miall would give a common reading: “Gorbachev’s vision of a Common European Home was an important contribution to the shaping of European order, since it provided a framework within which Soviet foreign policy could become reconciled to the loss of the east European buffer and German unification” (34). The facts of the Western allies’ economic predominance, and public support for change in Eastern Europe, made emphatic with the opening of the Berlin Wall, had given them the initiative, and Modrow was to be victim of this now clear shift in the balance. The GDR Prime Minister took a Ministerial party to Bonn on 13.2.90, proposing economic agreements that would advance his “treaty community” plans. It was an extension of his request for economic development aid made at that other such occasion where the agenda was to change its course, the December meeting at Dresden. He would have

gone to Bonn with some trepidation. Gorbachev writing on the “fate of the Modrow Plan” reports that on the night before, he briefed the GDR Prime Minister by telephone on his talks with Kohl (35).

Journalists at the venue for the Bonn meeting noted an anti-climax. No substantial agreements were made; Modrow returned home empty handed, even conceding some first steps towards accepting the Deutschmark as sole German currency, which he had not wanted. As it was reported, a shift of policy had occurred; the Eastern side were suddenly cold-shouldered. German journalists were ready to attribute this to very recent opinion polling in the East, to which they were given some access, foreshadowing a clear electoral victory for the right-wing, pro-reunification parties. (Further on this meeting, in Chapter 9 following). With the GDR elections now brought forward to just five weeks away, the realities of electoral politics had struck home. Kohl, experienced in democratic party politics, now able to work with evidence on actual public voting intentions, had gone ahead and managed the essential settings. With his colleagues in the ruling coalition of the FRG, he would perceive that support was available to get a settlement based on monetary union in Germany and reunification under the Federal German constitution. The citizens in the East had been calling for the Deutschmark and an end to the communist regime; and these were now to be proffered to them. It had been shown that an agreement could be got for the rapid imposition of the Deutschmark as a single currency, softened by wage controls and other regulatory buffers in Eastern Germany, to be withdrawn by set stages. This would precede the anticipated emergence of the region as a garden of prosperity, a “blooming landscape”, to be achieved through liberal application of human rights and money. It was a vision of the leadership of the government at Bonn, amid realisation that the power was at hand to take command of events. They saw it could be done; decided on it, and proceeded.

BERLIN WALL AS THE TURNING POINT

The symbolism of the Berlin Wall has often been spoken of and its importance in the timing of events is plain enough to see by reference to dates in the process. For the West German Chancellor Kohl the making of arrangements, the closing-down of deal-making with the SED government and commencement of negotiations with all other interested parties began in earnest with the opening of the Berlin Wall. It had been the ultimate concession of defeat by the regime responsible for the erection of the Wall; it was a signal to a political leader in Kohl’s strategic position to have confidence, confirmation that what was dreamt of could be got. An imagination

gap had been overcome; the generations of people who lived through the Cold War perhaps had needed to see the event, the breaching of the central symbol of that conflict, before being able to fully accept the old order was going. Notwithstanding the difficulty of conceiving of it being removed, the pressure for opening of the Wall as proof of reconciliation and change had been great; the idea of the event taking place was well signposted in the public arena. Very prominently the United States Presidents, Reagan and Bush, had been calling for it happen; Reagan proposed it in his address at Moscow University in 1988 (36). Bush, mission achieved, recognised the sensitivity of the matter for the coming developments and made his famous promise, not to “dance on the Wall” (37).

Popular Revolt in East Germany

Many thousands of others had literally been dancing on the Berlin Wall in that great street party of the second week of November 1989. Citizens of East Berlin had provided the settings for getting to that point with their mammoth demonstration the previous Saturday, 4.11.89. Where a few months before all protest had been outlawed and prevented, the city was taken over by its disaffected public. The human ecology would not sustain the SED Central Committee; it was brusquely removed from office, in an internal Party process, once the weekend was over, and the new Politburo doubtless could see its own survival was in some jeopardy. Crowd pressure impelled the opening of the Berlin Wall in two ways, those being mass protest in different forms in the lead-up to the announcement of the change, and then a spontaneous public response, the movement to the West, accentuated once the barrier was officially brought down. Confronted with the ongoing exodus of citizens government leaders had already, well before 9 November, publicly foreshadowed a substantial reform of visa restrictions to permit travel to the West, meaning at least a regulated opening of the Wall. News media outside the GDR had recognised this and given it due prominence, (as detailed in Chapter 8 following, “Passports For All”). Yet that coverage concerned a move still said to be coming, not a reality; it was about a possibility a few steps beyond the ordinary imagination.

The first way the crowd asserted its will was in its confrontation of the SED government, acting as a social movement, one with a **policy**, a **program of action** and **levers of power**. It said in its own inchoate way of saying, that the office holders foreshadowing change in the visa regulations should immediately get on with implementing it. The **policy** of this movement was compelling and unanswerable because it was very simply expressed, achievable in terms of pragmatic

implementation, easily grasped and understood at all levels of society and passionately supported by massed numbers. It was spelt out in the slogans shouted out or carried on banners in the streets: communist party out; free elections; freedom to form parties; open frontiers; free speech; reunification; Deutschmarks; shopping. The last, it could easily be argued, would be as much a spiritual release and necessity as an indulgence, for householders ever excluded from the human pastime of enjoying themselves at the markets. This was a population to whom the peculiar psychological malaise had been ascribed, “wall sickness”, a kind of imprisonment, a depressing separation from what was normal to the species, a blighting of everyday life (38). (Some years later Germans would be talking about the “wall in the mind”, a continuing separation of outlook between the Eastern and Western sectors of the country).

The **program of action** of this movement was being implemented; it consisted of actions not very political in themselves: leave the country in large numbers taking the children in the Trabant, and if remaining at home, join hundreds of thousands of neighbours in the peaceful largely unorganised protests. These remarkable street events appeared to have no central leaders or co-ordinators; initially no marshals to keep order; few people with loud hailers; usually no organising committee to give media conferences afterwards. They took place mostly in the absence of police escorts or police controls; after the first weeks police most often stood by non-committally, certainly in the later weeks, or were nowhere to be seen. The presence of Western news media provided witnesses and ensured the essential messages went out around the country, that the parade had happened in great numbers, certain demands had been made, and it would be on again, same time, same place. With the movement happening and authorities obviously unable or lacking the will to stop it, there was a clear opportunity and the numbers grew.

The campaign of action in its spontaneity and openness - folkloric in its simplicity and spirit of community solidarity or togetherness - as well as its size in numbers, was itself a mighty **lever of power**. The demands being made were emphatic, specifically because not being made by a standing political organisation, by any kind of body with a notion to compromise. The display of opprobrium towards the leadership of the communist party, expressed *en masse*, was social rejection in a classic mould; it was the phenomenon which had presented itself with the Papal visit to Warsaw ten years before, decades in cultivation. It appeared to take the whole community with it; it left no room for a government to manoeuvre; nothing they tried to do could distract or placate this community in revolt. A second lever was the reality of imminent economic break-down because of the exodus of the workforce, the very factor which had

motivated the erection of the “anti-fascist protection barrier” nearly thirty years before. A third was the close interest and immediate proximity of the West, by this time the West German government in particular, with its great material resources, waiting to activate diplomatic contacts, looking for confirmation that reunification was wanted, watching for its moment of opportunity. The public might yet declare itself at one with the West and seek reunification within the FRG, if provoked to it. The fourth lever was the fact of the withdrawal of the Soviet Union under Mikhail Gorbachev; full realisation was fast settling into the general consciousness that he would not help the regime.

Gorbachev and Berlin Wall

Gorbachev had made sure his admonition to the regime one month before, “life punishes harshly ... anyone left behind...”, would be publicised; it was given out to reporters by Genardiy Gerashimov. Gorbachev was to say, “thank God, the new East German regime had the courage and enough common sense to refrain from trying to quench the popular unrest in blood. I believe that the Soviet position had also contributed to this; the East German leaders realised that Soviet troops would not leave their barracks under any circumstances ... I briefly had a faint hope that the new leaders would be able to change the course of events by establishing a new type of relations between *two* German states - based on radical domestic reforms in East Germany ... However, it soon proved that the majority of the population would not accept any government or party that tried to preserve the GDR ...” (39). Brown emphasises the importance of Gorbachev’s resolve not to intervene, in practical terms not to permit the use of Soviet troops in underwriting the East German regime: “It was precisely the perception that behind them stood the might of the Soviet army which kept them in power. Once it was realised -as it was by 1989- that even those Soviet soldiers stationed in East-Central Europe (who were especially numerous in East Germany) would have orders to remain in their barracks rather than suppress popular demonstrations calling for an end to the Communist regimes, everything else followed” (40). Shevardnadze similarly gave highest significance to Gorbachev in encouraging the mass rebellion in Eastern Europe: “The population’s reception spilled over into mass popular demonstrations ... They welcomed him as a natural ally in their resistance against their own leaders. This was easy to see in the mood of the crowds, in the shouts and greetings ...” (41).

Such involvements would add to the difficulties of the Soviet leader in home politics. While he perceived that the GDR was thoroughly destabilised, and there was little to do but try to

negotiate a settlement with the West, the Berlin Wall can be identified as a turning point in his political fortunes, a political death warrant not only for the SED but for Gorbachev himself. It was a definite point of weakening; on the one hand, it ensured his good relations with Western governments, but was to take away his bargaining capital with them; on the other hand, it alienated the Soviet political class; overall it was enough to tip the balance of assets and set off a chain of events devastating to his position. The dual crises of failure in the Soviet economy and rebellion or civil war in the republics - especially the intensifying conflict in Azerbaijan- had formed a severely distracting background to his intervention in October, in East Berlin, and his subsequent attentions to Western Europe or America. At every moment when a positive initiative was being tried abroad, a new outbreak of violence or upsurge of opposition to Gorbachev would be reported from the Soviet Union (42).

The opening of the Wall was accurately seen in Moscow as the loss of East Germany and a mortal threat to the Soviet position throughout Eastern Europe. The engagement of the General Secretary in that process was resented by traditionalist Soviet leaders opposing him, viz Yegor Ligachev conservative leader in the politburo of the CPSU. After the Malta summit that December, a success in terms of rapprochement with the West and an opening to future co-operation, Gorbachev returned to a hostile reception, as reported by Walker: "The heroic phase of the Gorbachev era in international relations ended with the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, a development he had neither anticipated nor was able to prevent. In spite of immense pressure from conservatives in his own party, he abided by the course he had established in the speech to the United Nations the previous year" (43). In the United Nations address, 7.12.88, already cited, Gorbachev characterised the Russian revolution as part of the "background of history"; proclaimed reasonable sufficiency of armaments as the standard over "excessive stockpiling"; and in foreign policy, advanced the "principle of freedom of choice" in place of force. Walker adds he did so, "even as the great spasms of freedom unleashed violence in his own country, with open war between Armenia and Azerbaijan. On his return to Moscow Gorbachev faced bitter attacks in the Central Committee plenum, and finally threatened to resign, leaving the party to the fate of its comrades in East Germany or Poland..." (44). Similarly, Archie Brown: "The collapse of the Berlin Wall ... and the Soviet acceptance of this had strengthened Gorbachev's standing in the West, but it did nothing to help him at home" (45). Gorbachev himself admitted lack of foresight: "I should be less than sincere if I said that I had foreseen the course of events and the problems the German question would eventually create for Soviet foreign policy" (46).

Gorbachev's "high points" are seen as having been between mid-1988 and mid-1989. The 19th Party Conference of the CPSU, 28.6.88 - 1.7.88, endorsed political reforms. It accepted his proposition that the leading role of the Party in society should be "only through democratic methods", and scheduled open elections for the first Congress of People's Deputies (47). Walker bundles this event together with celebrations of the one-thousandth anniversary of the Russian Orthodox Church, and the amicable Moscow Summit with Reagan, 29.5.88 - 1.6.88, making the early Summer of 1988 his best period (48). Brown describes the period of success running longer, counting in foreign policy successes which had enhanced his power, and his (admittedly temporary) great popularity within the Soviet Union, on account of the parliamentary elections and convening of the Congress of People's Deputies in May 1989 (49). In another view Reddaway and Glinski consider Gorbachev's authority "went into a precipitous decline" from early 1989. The "glacier began to move" in the Spring of 1989 with the electoral defeats of the *nomenklatura* in Poland and Hungary, and the events of that year revealed the "true nature of Gorbachev the liberal anarchist", quietly encouraging rebels in Moscow, Prague or Beijing, apparently in an attempt to "break out of the Soviet domestic stalemate by establishing pro-Gorbachev regimes in the satellite countries ..." (50). Although at each point his successes in effecting change were provoking more resistance and so begetting further instability (51). Gorbachev's popularity outside of the Soviet Union continued strongly. His disarmament initiatives and genial air of accessibility had brought out cheering crowds during visits to the United States in December 1988 and Western Europe in the Summer of 1989.

Within a year of the Wall event, by the time of the 28th Congress of the CPSU, 1-13.7.90, the defeats of Communist regimes in Eastern Europe, compounding economic crisis at home, ongoing challenges to the authority of the *nomenklatura*, secessionism in the republics, and the emergence of a strong democratic opposition, had produced an overt reaction. "The conservative top echelon of the Party decided that the time had come for revenge" and "castigated the leadership for the loss of monopoly rule by the CPSU", in Gorbachev's own account. While the Congress condemned totalitarianism, in a "break with Bolshevism" (52), it forced a vote on his re-election as General Secretary amid threatening rhetoric and calls for his resignation. It set the adverse tone for the remainder of the Gorbachev era to December 1991. Brown observed, "people who deemed it necessary to seize power from Gorbachev in August 1991, and who proved capable of putting him under house arrest as a prelude to establishing a new, highly authoritarian regime, were hardly likely to flinch from undermining his policies whenever

opportunity arose at an earlier stage.” Considering the limits to imagination being tested in the events of 1989, he noted that Gorbachev’s own abandonment of the Communist Party in August 1991, following the failed *putsch*, “went well beyond what he could have envisaged himself accepting five years earlier” (53).

The intervening factor in this progression, from a viable if difficult position with still many political resources available in his favour, to a consistently embattled, rear-guard, losing stance, was the fall of the Berlin Wall. It is true that *glasnost* and *perestroika*, and many of the concessions towards the West, had always been opposed. Given the problems of the economy and the nationalities, a process leading to the defeat of his program of renovation was to be expected, and unquestionably was under way. Yet coming at that particular time, as things on other fronts were deteriorating, the Wall event was an obtrusively visible example of failure, for all parties to note. It was a clear signal to the West that conditions were right to move on its demands, to start taking power and possessions away from the Soviet side. Kohl’s negotiations up to that point with the new authorities in Hungary and Poland had been more tentative; in the first case represented as protecting the rights of Germans, the border crossers, and in the second case, a necessary preparation now that there was a non-communist government in Warsaw, for attending to the Polish border issue, against a date when reunification might be achieved. Being such a conspicuous and heavy loss the opening of the Wall was a late warning to traditionalists in the Eastern bloc that a final crisis had approached, a provocation to if possible drop the reformer, also if possible to restore old strong-points and slow the retreat. Shevardnadze saw the recriminations over the Wall, used against reformers, as blindness to an unanswerable political reality on the ground: “I am disturbed by all the groaning about the destruction of the Berlin Wall and the unification of Germany. I am amazed by the moral blindness that seizes people’s hearts when they avert their eyes from the real reasons for the division and its elimination. The Berlin Wall was built not as an obstacle in the enemy’s path, but as a barrier to its own citizens ...” (54).

(1) Op. Cit. Walker p 306

(2) Op. Cit. Garton Ash 1983, p 28; *see also* Gowland D et al, Op. Cit. p 160

(3) Op. Cit. Garton Ash 1983 p 29

(4) Ibid. p 25

(5) Ibid. p 196

(6) It was not an international media event in terms of many correspondents drawn from outside;

those would soon occur but coverage was still being done mainly by resident correspondents. The writer attended on off-the-record advice from the Solidarity office at Brussels, sponsored by the ICFTU, that “something might happen”, in the way of a major demonstration. At the end of an era, it was still a visit in Cold War mode: some uneasiness surrounding a briefing by the Solidarity spokesman, Janusz Onyszkiewicz, at his home; then an interview with the leader Lech Walesa at Gdansk, security police outside in parked cars. For the ceremonial occasion, government leaders appeared in Victory Square. There, one of the state security detail, always last to be won over to reform, rejected my government pass and marched me away from the official area. This provoked hoots of approval from the assembled public, trustees bussed in, glad to see at least one obvious Westerner properly restrained.

(7) Garton Ash T, The Uses of Adversity: Essays on the Fate of Central Europe, Granta Books – Penguin, 1989, p 249

(8) Op. Cit. “We Are the People”, episode 3, Producer Misha Glennie, “The Europeans”, ABC RN, 17.10.99

(9) Loc. Cit.

(10) Op. Cit. Garton Ash 1993 p 37

(11) *See* Chapter 4 above, Gorbachev to UN General Assembly, 7.12.88, Gorbachev Op. Cit. pp 459-67

(12) At a Warsaw media conference upon opening the Round Table discussions Rakowski proposed that new economic laws including tax incentives for foreign or domestic investors would help his government’s position, and forecast the government would do well in the June elections; (Lee Duffield, Radio Australia current affairs, 24.2.89)

(13) Op. Cit. Garton Ash 1993, p 41; also Walker Op. Cit. p 311

(14) Op. Cit. Gorbachev p 479

(15) Op. Cit. Garton Ash 1993 p 66

(16) Op. cit. Garton Ash 1990 p 66

(17) Op. Cit. Garton Ash 1993 pp 5,63; *also* Op. Cit. “We Are the People”, episode 3, Producer Misha Glennie, “The Europeans”, ABC RN, 17.10.99. Other references to this meeting; “Initiatives by Kohl”, this chapter, and “Wall Process”, Chapter 8 following.

(18) Op. Cit. Walker p 312

(19) Estimates vary between 20000-70000, see Garton Ash 1993, Op. Cit. p 67

(20) Garton Ash T, In Europe’s Name: Germany and the Divided Continent, NY, Random House, 1993, pp 635-36

- (21) Rothwell N, Heaven and Earth, Sydney, Duffy and Snellgrove, 1999, pp 253-59
- (22) See reports quoting Schenck, "Passports For All", Chapter 8, and "Chaos in East Germany", Chapter 9 following
- (23) On 9.10.89 and concerns about "Tienanmen Square", see Op. Cit. Garton Ash T 1993, pp 67-68; Garton Ash T 1990, pp 67-68. The incident is dealt with fully in Chapter 8, "The Aborted Tienanmen Solution for Leipzig"
- (24) The Basic Law of the Federal Republic of Germany, Bonn, Press and Information Office of the Federal Government, 1979
- (25) Op. Cit. Brown p 244
- (26) Op. Cit. Garton Ash T, In Europe's Name 1993, p 346
- (27) Op. Cit. "The German Gambit", SBS Television, 9.11.99
- (28) Op. Cit. Garton Ash T, In Europe's Name 1993, p 637
- (29) Op. Cit. Gorbachev, p 527
- (30) Op. Cit. Garton Ash T, In Europe's Name 1993, p 370
- (31) Ibid. p 353
- (32) Op. Cit. "The German Gambit", SBS Television, 9.11.99
- (33) Op. Cit. Gorbachev pp 529-30. As observed by Garton Ash, "the story of the public positions taken by the Soviet leadership is that of a dramatic retreat ... The Soviet leadership would 'see to it that no harm comes to the GDR', Gorbachev told his Central Committee in December 1989 ...", Garton Ash T, In Europe's Name 1993, Op. Cit. p 349.
- (34) Miall H (Ed.), Redefining Europe: New Patterns of Conflict and Co-operation, London, RIIA, 1994, p 9
- (35) Op. Cit. Gorbachev p 531
- (36) Op. Cit. Brown p 238
- (37) Ibid. p 239
- (38) Op. Cit. Garton Ash T 1990, p 64
- (39) Op. Cit. Gorbachev p 526
- (40) Op. Cit. Brown p 250
- (41) Op. Cit. Shevardnadze p 116
- (42) At another level, he had been symbolically let down as well, typically, on the June 1989 visit to the Chancellery in Bonn, as one of the Zil limousines ostentatiously laid on, broke down at the red carpet. The General Secretary robustly called up a replacement; journalists considered

what kind of mention the embarrassment might warrant; essentially friendly local crowds, never to let a joke go by whistled and offered predictably derisive remarks.

(43) Op. Cit. Walker p 302

(44) Ibid. p 313

(45) Op. Cit. Brown p 239

(46) Op. Cit. Gorbachev p 516

(47) Op. Cit. Brown p 175

(48) Op. Cit. Walker p 302

(49) Op. Cit. Brown p 175

(50) Ibid. p 147

(51) Op. Cit. Walker p 301

(52) Op. Cit. Gorbachev pp 351-61

(53) Op. Cit. Brown p 14; see also Marshal Akhromeyev and others, fn 39, Chapter 4 above

(54) Op. Cit. Shevardnadze p 182

CHAPTER SIX

SHORT STANDARD HISTORY – THREE.

The Wall event as a crucial demonstration, revelation, of the concrete likelihood of change, the real state of power relations in society, was there to be read by members of the professional political community on both sides - but they did not hold the initiative in causing it. It was very much caused by the actions of other actors, members of the nascent civil society, the East German border-crossers and crowds taking over city streets, helped out a little later on by their counterparts on the Western side. The story of the Wall on the night of 9.11.89, confused as it may be, helps to support that interpretation because it is so emphatically and widely acclaimed as a story of spontaneous popular activity. The events of that night demonstrated the key transition, from an assumed public compliance with the dictates of the state, to the failure of the state to enforce its authority, and a challenge to that authority represented by mass disobedience, a disregarding of its will.

DEBATE ABOUT THE EVENTS OF 9.11.89

The happenings of the night of 9 November were at first the product of decision-making by a governing party now lacking the power to enforce its decisions as it would want them enforced; and then they became the product of mass popular will, the momentum of people literally ready to move. It was a take-over. Garton Ash recounts the key narrative of one month: “The ninth of October, when security forces faced a massive crowd, but stepped back from a Tiananmen massacre, was the first crucial breakthrough ... The second crucial breakthrough came exactly a month later, on 9 November, when a mixture of common sense and bungling by the state’s new communist rulers turned a planned opening of the German-German frontier and Berlin Wall into one of post-war Europe’s most extraordinary and magical scenes ...” (1)

After the Saturday demonstration, most observers settling on a figure of one million in the streets, an expectation was abroad that something decisive must occur. Foreign news media arrived including a large contingent of heavily-equipped television crews from West Germany. All gained open access to the GDR, as had become normal practice, assurances being given to Western governments that this access would be part of a new order. They began to spend their days following a sporadic flow of developments: appearances by dissident leaders; the emergence of critical reporting against the *nomenklatura* in the East Berlin news media; the

revolution within the SED Central Committee, all of its old membership being replaced.

The following is this writer's narrative, based on observation after arriving from covering elections in Greece on the Monday 6.11.89; it is one of many from that day which are essentially in accord, given as eye-witness accounts from professional observers: Word was passed among journalists that the Politburo had been meeting and its spokesman Gunter Schabowski would give an evening media conference. A few hundred may have been there; not over-crowded; this had been a long if inconclusive day. English translation was available through small radio headsets. After lengthy questioning of Schabowski it appeared the story would be about corruption under the old order. East German journalists led the attack revealing an extensive background of luxury and indulgence on the part of the *nomenclatura*. Speculation about this investigative phenomenon relieved a certain tedium creeping into the night's proceedings. One view was the "reformed character" school of thought; once "out of the cage", able to report without official guidance or control, these journalists were acting as true investigators, probing the misdemeanours of officials high or low. Another view was the "unreformed character" school of thought; once prepared to do what the old order wanted, now prepared to do what the new order would want; some of the information did sound like government leaks. The announcement came at the very end, much as an afterthought, from an indistinct question. The three points were: The Central Committee had determined on one other initiative, to introduce a new visa for travel outside the country; this move would have immediate effect, and the border authorities would be instructed to approve all applications for the visa. Beyond that there was confusion. Schabowski could tell us little more.

The general impression then looks to have been an accurate one, that a system of paper visas would be improvised and in the intention of the regime, the flow of border crossers, once channeled through an official process on home soil, could be expected to slow down. This impression of the regime's intentions was validated in part by events on the morning of 11 November at the new Eberswalder Strasse check-point, where a machine digger had been brought in the night before to knock down part of the Wall. An officer of border guards introduced the crowd to a party of young *vopos* with portable ticket machines supported by straps around their necks, ready to give out the visas. "These are your sons," he said; they should be treated nicely. At the appointed hour, 8 am, the check-point was declared open; the crowd pushed through the gap in the wall; a few people took tickets, but then the guards were roughly pushed aside; the mob rushed across the muddy no-man's-land to West Berlin, there to

be met with open arms; the street party was well under way (2).

On the night, Thursday 9 November, the populace had taken up the opportunity of Schabowski's late announcement and forced the issue by presenting at the check-points in great numbers. After the exodus of the border crossers and the protests in the streets, this was the second way in which crowd pressure impelled the opening of the Berlin Wall. The idea of "common sense and bungling" on the part of the GDR authorities is exact. In the climate of revolt, demonstrating an emphatic will on the part of millions to vote with their feet, opening the gates looked like a sensible response. It would head off angry confrontations in the short term and opened the possibility that the movement might even be contained at a later time. However it was bungled, in that, in the anxious political climate, the terms of the arrangement were not thought out or made completely clear; an unsound assumption was made, as if things were normal for the regime, that there would be time to set up procedures after the announcement had gone out; state officials including the border police were not informed of when or how the change was coming and so were unprepared. What then happened was plain to see. Small crowds began gathering on both sides of the Wall, late in the night, to celebrate. Many of those on the East side demanded to be let through and crossed over. A few, boldly, went back and forth. So word spread and the numbers grew all through the night. Most were younger people; they made for the Kurfurstendamm and night clubs on the Western side, where West Berliners started shouting drinks. Several were encountered returning early the next day to sleep off all the excitement; others who still had just heard, began crowding in large numbers at the check-points, to queue across to West Berlin. Some went to police stations first to get their visas. Many resolved to stay in the West until absolutely certain the concession would not be taken back, but on the whole there looked to be no doubt in the streets of the city, from the first moment, that the Berlin Wall had come down. From midnight on, huge mobs suddenly developed; those amazing scenes of jubilation were enacted and televised along the "outer" Wall, on the Western side.

The events of that day have been reviewed and revised many times, some providing a critique on the involvement of mass media. An example is the argument proposed under the title "misleading cues", in a Freedom Forum debate by Janos Horvat and Andras Szanto, in essence saying Western news media failed to adequately background their stories about the collapse of communism (3). The account of the Schabowski media conference given in this article states that he only raised "the possibility" of free travel and emigration, and in saying the changes

would immediately take effect, meant that the communist leadership would deal with those questions immediately. It continued: “He did not mean that East Germans would be allowed to travel freely from that moment or that the Wall would be torn down. The East German public, however, took his statement as a cue to flood the wall immediately. And by failing to stem the exodus, the government in essence acquiesced to what many believed would be only a temporary opening of the wall” (4).

The differences between this account and most others are slight, but the article appears to imply that the international news media wrongly reported the Wall had been opened on a free-for-all basis, and perhaps also that they should not have done so, as that purportedly wrong reporting started the rush and turned the page of history. Actually the headlines it quotes, to show presumptiveness, guessing, or even incitation of the crowds to action, are in simple accord with what was said and indeed happened; e.g. the *New York Times*, “East Germany on Thursday lifted restrictions on emigration or travel to the West, and within hours tens of thousand of East and West Berliners swarmed across the infamous Berlin Wall, for a boisterous celebration”. The critique is itself a commentary on outlook. Horvat, a television news presenter for several years in Hungary, perhaps takes a view that accuracy would mean registering the statement more exactly as its authors might explain it themselves, with perhaps analysis or extra commentary to cover various possible interpretations. He might think also that citizens are impelled psychologically to act specifically by what they see and hear in the news, taking it more as a directive cue than information entirely for their own discretionary use.

However the “mounting political turmoil” (5) of the time, referred to in this critical article and seen as a distorting factor in decision making, was in fact a proving ground for freedom of action and liberal thought. The news media reported accurately that the key concession on travel had been made, and that the East German government would set up a new visa scheme for it. As the article implies Schabowski was confused in answering questions especially with his use of the term “ab sofort” (immediately); he said they would start on it straight away. Those encountered in the hall that night generally expected that given the social pressure, crossings would need to begin the next day, which turned out to be consistent with the way the authorities set about handling it. The media conference was broadcast; he was seen and heard live as well as being quoted in copy. The news was broadcast immediately as it would be seen as important to many people.

Western news media - outlets such as those represented by the interviewees in this study and those surveyed in the review of contents in the following chapter - use a code of ethics and operating guidelines to cover practical direct effects (e.g. to assist with public safety in case of air crashes in urban areas), but do not hold stories pending anybody's deliberation on the possible political impacts, intended or unintended. News is provided to the public on the understanding that free citizens will make of it what they will, people apprehending the information at their own respective levels of preparation and understanding. There was no doubt about East Berliners' understanding of their situation in relation to the opening of the Wall. It was they who made things happen; they had the clearest idea of the implications and possibilities raised by the Schabowski announcement. The essential next chapter was in their hands as private citizens, not in the hands of the communist party, and once again the news media immediately reported what they immediately did. The *Los Angeles Times* report quoted by Horvat and Szanto said, "thousands test the new policy by crossing to West Berlin". That was correct on both counts; having heard the information broadcast, as active citizens able to test it, rather than passive subjects to be guided by authority, they did test it. Reporters saw and heard and told. Media reviews of this kind help us with useful thoughts on the process but can fall down over points of timing and interpretation. The Schabowski statement and its immediate aftermath had to be reported immediately as witnessed; no delaying period, to ponder over questions of how one might influence events, could have been allowed; it would not be part of standard operating procedures. What Schabowski said was recorded; what he meant to say, in so far as he knew or was able to articulate it, was also given; and then the news had to go out; further analysis on what he said is of interest but is not the same phenomenon as, should not be compared with, the news (6).

A point is made throughout this thesis on the events of 1989 about the challenge being made to the imagination. Being involved in the process was to have a sensation of traveling towards uncharted regions of experience, of being part of an inexorable progression. Up to the fall of the Berlin Wall, among engaged observers including political leaders from East and West, the news media, policy analysts or academics, there was understandable resistance to accept the likelihood of certain changes taking place, such as the formal opening of the "intra-German" frontiers. Such thoughts invoked fear of instability and imposed pressure to be cautious. Balking at the unknown worked against the imperative identified by Garton Ash in that era, a need to be prepared for imminent change, as when looking at pressure that used to be felt by the USSR to intervene in Eastern Europe; "... the West should prepare itself for such a crisis:

analytically, psychologically, and by planning possible responses” (7). Internal resistance to the new situation was identified as well in the Eastern Bloc states, forced to be inward-looking by the absence of such conditions for change as “full state sovereignty, with liberal democracies on all frontiers” (8). There were some considered reservations among people in the East about wanting to keep benefits such as free health care, and about re-privatisation, according to survey research in Poland quoted by Garton Ash (9).

Reasoned discussion would lead to talk of a negotiated settlement worked out over time, referred to by journalists interviews (viz Kudascheff, “Journalists like others supposed ... eventually Washington and Moscow might arrange something”, Chapter 3 above). The idea of a third way, a reformed communism working towards affiliation with the West, in Germany through a treaties arrangement between the two states, was proposed (e.g. by the West German Social Democrats), but was overcome by the overall drive for radical change. Once again, a mass public, sensing opportunity and anxious to seize the moment before it was lost, decided the outcome; it went directly for the main goals put up in the broadest terms, as it was a movement, and not one equipped or prepared for debate and compromise. In the way of a social movement such momentum could not be sustained for very long; it would be necessary for the workforce to return to work, for everyday processes to be resumed. It would come to the heads of institutions to negotiate an orderly outcome, in this case, as has been shown, with the West German Chancellor in a leading role.

A new start; new system; new architecture

The preferred outcome of participants in this historical drama, whether Western political leaders, the mass of protestors in Eastern Europe wishing to join the West, even the Soviet reformers supporting a “common European home”, was a new architecture for Europe. Disenchantment with the process of change would appear in many quarters, but enduringly the institution of choice, supported by most voters in the East, and certainly by most of their governments, would become the framework of the European Community, the later EU. At the centre of Europe the German state would be reunified through democratic self-determination; it would be integrated with the neighbouring states in a monetary and political union, through the EU, foregoing the role of an hegemonic power with an extensive region of influence unto itself; the 1945 borders would be confirmed, foregoing Germany’s past as an expansionary power. Genscher proclaimed the goal as a “European Germany, not a German Europe” (10). The

President of the day, Rikard von Weizsacker, later expressed that goal as appropriate for a contemporary society, more multi-cultural and committed to an ethic of freedom, “where one can be different without fear”. He reminisced: “Over forty years of a divided continent under the constraints of the Cold War finally led to the historical point when the real Europeanisation of Europe could start: the year 1989 with its courageous, gentle, nonviolent revolutions. When the Wall came down in Berlin ... never before had I experienced an event taking place on German soil where so many people around the globe shared our joy. Much less enthusiasm marked our neighbours’ feelings when German political unification followed. Would they be reliable partners? Would the Germans now return to their old national seesaw policy in the centre of the continent? But no euphoric new German nationalism emerged. There was complete unanimity among all political camps in Germany that after unification we wanted to be even more Europe-orientated and integrated than before”

(11). Symbolically at the reunification ceremony on 3 October 1990 hundreds of European banners, gold stars on blue, were mixed in the crowd with the German flags.

East Germany acceded to membership of the European Community through reunification. The other Eastern European states also registered expressions of interest with the Community, very early, to be realised following the European summits on the issues of monetary and political union, and expansion, beginning at Maastricht in 1992. The preferred ethos was liberal democracy with a market economy, made practical and more attractive by participation in the single market and single currency system of the EU. Niko Weghter, as Spokesperson for External Relations with the European Commission, was involved in direct contacts between European Commission members and governments of the Eastern Bloc states during the transitional period, 1989 - 90. He reported all members of his delegations taken by surprise by the strength of those governments’ emphatic commitment to joining: “All meetings from December 1989 into 1990 confirmed this inclination to prepare for membership. We had to try to be realistic ... When we saw Tadeus Mazowiecki the first question was when can we join the EC; and in Prague they said forget previous relationships, forget Comecon, forget the Soviet Union, forget the neighbours, there was one alternative for them. They wanted to be part of the West. There was talk that we understood, of a ‘psychological desire to be part of a family’ ... People on the street in these countries know their future depends to an extent on Brussels; that is the main thrust” (12). The element of practical salvation was very obvious in these cases. Breakdown had been occurring in all of the Eastern bloc economies, a transparent failure of the hope for “emancipatory modernisation” that was to have been achieved under communism

through development, growth and fair distribution of wealth (13). The answer to this within the popular movement was to enable citizens to travel, find employment or set up businesses, go shopping. The answer at the institutional level of governments, economists, banks, was to find models that involved a working market. In both cases joining the West, if possible, stood to offer a direct solution.

VELVET AND VIOLENCE

Two other revolutions dominated the unfolding of the events of 1989, one “velvet”, in Czechoslovakia, and one violent, in Romania; in a sense, they represented how to conduct a sudden move to democratisation, and how not to do that.

Czechoslovakia

The week after the wall came down, the reported death of a student, Martin Smid, in a Prague demonstration (17.11.89) set off a chain of spontaneous protests. These led to resignation of the Czechoslovak Communist Party Central Committee on 24 November, and after further direct negotiations, with the street protests and threat of strikes in the background, capitulation by the communists in an agreement on power sharing ahead of open elections. Beginning with broadcast reports of the protest on 17 November, the Velvet Revolution depended as much as, or more than any other on news media, initially the foreign media alone. The reported death was broadcast by Voice of America and picked up by other outlets, and there was controversy over the truth of it or otherwise. Horvat and Szanto, again, report this episode as a likely case of false information purveyed by Western news media, as it were unfairly overturning the then-government's position (14). It will be shown however that the death report was considered an open question, with coverage very early including contending versions of what took place. News media felt it necessary to pass on the claims but explicitly refrained from taking sides as to whether they were true.

The Czechoslovak government had become among the harshest in suppressing rights and was notorious among foreign correspondents for its intransigence; it was thought there was little point going there to try to report. Yet in November 1989 it seemed worth the try, as the resigned, evidently demoralised condition of the party-state apparatus just following the fall of the Berlin Wall became apparent. The press attaché at the Czechoslovak Consulate in Brussels,

complaining he'd been "given no instructions", was prevailed upon to issue a few visas to journalists joining the rush to Prague, including this writer, on the night of 22.11.89.

Colleagues who visited a few hours later were denied visas, but hearing they could be admitted to the country if they had a place to stay, drove to the frontier, said the name of a Prague hotel, and like hundreds of others were shrugged through. The caravan included vans with generators and satellite uplink facilities. Manoeuvring within the regime saw the country's television begin live broadcasts of the demonstrations, then close for a day, then re-open; all with no effect on the output of Western crews and the return of their reports broadcast back into Czechoslovakia by stations in neighbouring countries. Reporters who checked in at the previously officious foreign press centre were given cards but few staff were on hand and there was no further contact with state officials for the duration of the protests except for the issue of some government statements. With the USSR again withdrawing from the situation, in fact issuing a public repudiation of the decision to invade Czechoslovakia in 1968, the *nomenclatura*, as in each country now experiencing crisis, became "caught between the hammer of popular revolt and the anvil of a complete transformed external context" (15). In this context Garton Ash makes observations on De Tocqueville's notion of the ruling elite's loss of belief in its right to rule (16).

The improvised protest movement, Civic Forum, functioned through the use of news media. Correspondents asking around in Wenceslaus Square were directed to the first meeting at a small theatre, The Disk, and later to the *Laterna Magica* (Magic Lantern children's theatre) where the dissident leadership, Vaclav Havel and his associates, would hold long evening news conferences following each day's activities. Those activities had usually been contacts with the Party or government, and with other groups inside or outside the country, and speeches to the massive protests in the streets. The broadcast images of mass protest were very newsworthy, very telling; the information from the news conferences would feed the requirements of the next twelve hours and advertise the agenda for the following day of action. While the auditorium was often not crowded there were high points of activity as described by Garton Ash, recalling the slogan in the streets, "the world sees you": "It saw them through the eyes of the television cameras and the thousands of foreign journalists who flocked into the Magic Lantern for the daily performance. They were a sight in themselves: television crews and photographers behaving like minotaurs, journalists shouting each other down and demanding to know why the revolution could not keep to their deadlines..." (17). On 24 November Alexander Dubcek appeared unannounced at the rally in Wenceslaus Square; that night, immediately after

the resignation of the Politburo, he toasted the event with champagne, together with Havel, at a news conference where it was announced.

The dissident movement's choice of the peaceful option of a Velvet Revolution should not obscure the fact of brute power being deployed to force the change of regime. The crowd packed into Wenceslaus Square, generally thought to be easily 250000 on most days, was the same implacable crowd that had gathered in Leipzig or Berlin. People turning out in sub-zero temperatures were not there to be elegant; they were reactive, shouting down mentions of the government in retreat; some television viewers in the West reported their impressions of these protestors as rather a wild crowd, sporting their padded jackets and beanies, calling out aggressively; the jingling of keys may have sounded joyous but could also sound sinister, depending on who heard. Communication by word of mouth, the news media or cleverly artful small posters, was highly effective. The message for Monday 27 November was "general strike, mid-day", an event that once and for all would tell that the public, the rediscovered civil society, had made its choice. Wenceslaus square, the obvious place, was crowded again, at the appointed time. A slow roar welled up from somewhere in that mass; it spread like a wave; the entire square then erupted into sustained cheering. This was a spontaneous movement in evidence; broad based; resolved.

Romania

Murder at Timisoara heralded the beginning of the change for Romania. Considerable dossiers had been built up on that country by journalists because of the bizarre and insidious turns of policy and state management in the decade before. A cult of personality had been built around the dictator Nicolae Ceasescu and his wife Elena, perplexing to the understanding of outside statesmen as well as correspondents. Gorbachev was known to be exasperated with Ceasescu and reported difficulty managing his responses (18). Rothwell sought to draw the character in a fictional interview with a journalist, showing a mix of cunning, rudery, dangerousness, the habit of power (19). Ceasescu's program had entailed the clearance of large sectors of Bucharest for grandiose, if foolish and gerry-built edifices; the project for herding villagers into rural tenement complexes; an export drive ruinous to productivity and public welfare, which in the case of power restrictions for fuel-saving was actually ruinous to public health; the scandal of an unsustainable baby-drive filling wretched orphanages. These reckless practices understandably had been commanding anxious attention, but the coverage was necessarily at

second hand; access had been difficult; little was known in the community of journalists about conditions on the ground. Those who went in were confronted by something like another world, a violent place unused to reason, where the notions of Western journalism, built on establishing facts, were put on weak foundations. Here was a Balkan bear-pit out of legend where factuality and truth became tradable items. It would be a challenge of the first order to find out and describe what was going on, to oneself as much to any market.

As in Czechoslovakia the first signs of collapse in state authority were apparent to foreigners, in the form of the abandonment of restrictions on entry visas and news media. Accordingly the main features of the narrative were played out in news media, initially with uncertain, indirect sources, and then in heavy volume, an army of correspondents working on the ground. First, attacks by security forces on ethnic Hungarian protestors at Timosoara, over the persecution of the priest Laszlo Tokes, had spread and were being reported in lurid detail initially through communist news agencies. These agencies -Hungarian, East German, Russian or Yugoslav- were presenting themselves as newly liberated and unlike their Western counterparts were immediately able to employ resources in the country. A first wave of Western reporters encountered street fighting and saw bodies so the stories received some validation. Secondly, the story switched dramatically to Bucharest with the televised confrontation between Ceasescu and a rally crowd in the act of turning on him. The sequence was to become well-known and well-understood, but at the time the intercepted broadcast was cryptic and looked ominous, the image cut off amid sounds of gunfire and screaming. Thirdly, news media negotiating the task of getting in - the sudden removal of state restrictions somewhat cancelled out by the cutting off of transport services, and civil disturbances in the towns - encountered street fighting in the capital, which was immediately televised for the world. (A French news bulletin being transmitted live from an outdoors location was interrupted by the arrival of a crowd running away from gunfire. The presenters later moved their set to a room within the French Embassy building, and it was reported that the building then came under fire). Fourthly, a loose self-proclaimed leadership, the National Salvation Front, declared the communist government at an end. This group had gathered at the television centre, which was attacked by troops from the state security force, the Securitate. Fifthly, the armed forces announced the execution of Nicolae and Elena Ceasescu, whereupon the level of violence began to subside quickly.

These developments would require checking and assessment. Even the fact of the executions was received very sceptically at first, and it took time to get confirmation of the details,

supported by the visual evidence of the two dead bodies displayed on television. Serious doubts had emerged over the extent of the slaughter said to have occurred at Timosoara and other centres. In the coming weeks the exaggerated figures were pulled well back from the estimated 40000 dead in Romania; falsification of information was revealed in several cases, e.g. the infamous exhumation of bodies from a hospital graveyard, put on show as victims of the repression; media outlets ran corrections on the facts as established. Horvat and Szanto (20) made the episode of the hospital bodies their third point in a case against the news coverage of the end of East European communism, although, as will be shown, the reporting was qualified, the reports tendered advisedly, the corrections introduced in the days it took to make checks. In Prague a powerful protest movement had provided images of dissent and revolution, while conscientious, at least rational politicians on both sides provided information. It had been possible to make out a coherent pattern of developments. In Bucharest there was much to be seen on the ground indicating a violent mishap in the country's fortunes; burnt-out buildings; tanks deployed in the streets; eye witnesses to the fighting (some displaying wounds; some with good English who would turn up later in groups of Securitate coming over to the new government); vigilantes controlling access to public areas like the railway station, surrounded by troops; dead bodies being interred in makeshift ceremonies in a public park, declared a cemetery. The difficulty was to provide it with a plausible context in terms of the government of the country, its leadership and future; lies abounded yet much that seemed incredible would check out to be true.

Over time it was worked out that elements of the ruling formation, together with comrades on the outer with the regime, and some anti-communist dissidents, had seized on the moment of revolution in Eastern Europe to bring off a *coup d'etat* against Ceasescu and some of his immediate backers, mostly Securitate. This was to permit the authorities to end the excesses and assume a new incarnation as democrats; much the same course as that followed by communists in other countries but necessarily through more drastic and devious means. There was clearly a popular revolt as well. It looked to have started spontaneously in the towns and cities, inspired by events in the other communist states, and in rebellion against the hardships and humiliations of life for virtually everybody in Ceasescu's Romania: hunger, bullying, deficient health care, no heating in Winter. In the central incident at Palace Square as reconstructed from eyewitness reports, people literally stood up to oppose the dictator; the Securitate opened fire on the crowd (in some accounts coming up out of concealed manholes; there were such manholes to be seen); the army sided with the citizens, and the fighting

continued over the ensuing dates. Certainly individuals believed they had been in a popular rebellion and the soldiery were seen as heroes, being thanked by grateful citizens as they stood guard outside main buildings. Nightly rallies in late December drew big crowds, sometimes 20000, for speeches and rousing folksongs.

Still, bewilderment was setting in over the assumption of power by the NSF. Romania was not a country with any substantial democratic traditions and the mass movement would not keep its momentum or coherence for very long. It had not achieved the numbers or power of the movements in the other states, having been unable to mobilise in the impoverished backblocks of the Romanian countryside. In the outcome, controls on the supply of goods and services in Romania were relaxed providing considerable relief to the public, and the human rights situation greatly improved. In the first elected parliament, in 1990, the NSF maintained control, eclipsing its right wing opposition which would have a long way to travel towards building a strong mass base; an ethnic Hungarian party formed a third major faction. A panel of international observers passed the conduct of the poll as fair, given the difficulties, including weak government resources. Problems would persist with a poorly developed, poorly organised economy; with breaches of the peace over political, industrial or ethnic grievances; and protracted social problems including very slow progress in ameliorating the plight of orphaned or discarded children.

FOLLOW-UP ANALYSES

Considerable writing has taken place since 1990 concerned with the future prospects of Eastern Europe, and circumstances have impelled that much of it be concentrated on problems with integration into the European Union or on the violent break-up of Yugoslavia. A cross sectional treatment of that writing here produces an epilogue for the short history

Economic reconstruction, and integration of the European union

Bartlett et al, canvassing politics, economics and culture across Europe, chose an understatement in saying that by 1995 the eruption in the communist world had remade the conditions for developing the European Union: "This debate over the EC's future beyond 1992 assumed even greater importance following the dramatic transformation of the central and

eastern European political landscape in 1989 with the rapid collapse of communist governments and the opening of the Berlin Wall. The subsequent unification of the two Germanies in 1990 and the break-up of the Warsaw Treaty Organisation and the Yugoslav and Soviet states in 1991 presented altogether unfamiliar conditions for determining the EC's future" (21). In addressing the economic future they identify the prosperous core of Europe, the region of the "blue banana" reaching from Northern Italy through to London, and problems of integrating it with the more peripheral European economy, in particular the aspirant EU members in Eastern Europe.

This dual problem -European integration of special interest to the prosperous core, and expansion of the European Union to the East- became a preoccupation of scholars and policy analysts throughout the 1990s, remaining a work in progress. Jacquemin and Wright, for example, in a country-by-country situation review, referred to causes of widespread anxiety within the business community. Those included anxiety over the price advantage of Eastern European products, firms in the East being able to profit from negligible capital costs and low cost of labour, though handicapped by limited industrial capacity (22). East Germany became a special case as a result of its accession to EU membership through reunification with the West . Anderson traces management and policy issues that arose, e.g. the 1994 negotiation over access to structural funds for the Eastern *Lander* , which were set at the standard applicable to Greece and Portugal, and demands from those state governments for the most flexible available regulation on spending (23). As in East Germany high unemployment and severe difficulties through lost productivity would persist throughout Eastern Europe.

Richard Baldwin in Dobrinsky and Landesmann has argued that the fears about negative impacts from opening markets to the East, in some industrial sectors of the EU, were exaggerated; but as well, a shattering of trade arrangements in Eastern Europe is demonstrated in the aftermath of the change of 1989 (24), noting that while the east European countries have benefited from increasing exports to the EU, they have lost ground in overall export trade with the West generally, represented by the OECD (25). Their study highlights the enduring disadvantage of most of Eastern Europe, with social as well as economic effects, and which worked against earlier ambitions for direct entry into the European Union : "Because the Central Eastern European countries are so poor, so populous and so agricultural, an early eastern enlargement would be costly" (26).

Civil society

The notion of a civil society occurs often in debates about democratisation in the former communist countries. To Jaromir Cekota, absence of a mature civil society is a grave problem in the context of efforts to integrate with Western Europe, although a problem being slowly overcome: “The presence of democratic institutions and the growing regulatory framework of a market economy can be viewed as necessary, but not sufficient conditions for the existence of civil society. In the pragmatic sense civil society can be defined as a community in which a sufficient majority of citizens respect voluntarily a few basic rules of democracy including private property and other human rights... On the whole Central Eastern European countries made significant progress towards civil society within a relatively short time ...” (27).

Weakness of civil society and even social malaise, as reflected in the German concerns with a “Wall in the mind” dividing east and west, have been persistent themes in analyses of the period post-change. Stjepan Mestrovic was able to generalise from his investigations of the Croatian experience during the crisis in Yugoslavia: “For the most part the nations that were ruled by communism have never developed the traditions of human rights and the rule of law that are taken for granted in the West. In fact, because they lacked anything like the Enlightenment tradition, Russia, Croatia, Slovenia, Poland and other nations that emerged from the tyranny of communism looked to Western Europe and the United States for guidance in establishing democracy and free markets. But since 1989 the United States has been preoccupied with its domestic problems ...” (28). He later expatiated on a backlog of problems linked to social malaise: “Communism produced wholesale, collective psychic sickness, or what might be termed collective neurosis, in the societies that ruled in Eastern Europe and the former USSR. This collective neurosis, in turn, gradually but inevitably led to internal problems in morale and production and to the symptoms of anomie that eventually caused communism to collapse” (29).

The history of the Balkans conflict in the early 1990s provided by Mestrovic conveys both the sense of regret and distress over the tragedy, which abounds, and a sense of recrimination against the Western powers. This is concentrated on the time it took for the European Community states, at the urging of the German government in particular, to recognise Slovenia and Croatia, ensuring their protection from Yugoslav federal forces in 1992. The episode was indicative of the confusion that was to exist throughout the decade of the 1990's over the state of relations among different interests and countries in the region, the institutional arrangements,

and the distribution of power. In this volatile and testing, almost immediate sequel to the change in Europe, intervention in Yugoslavia, while it could not be done on the brisk timetable demanded by many enduring the crisis on the ground, was to eventuate. It was attempted successively on the part of the European Community and the OSCE, the United Nations, then NATO; with the United States brought into the situation by degrees, through to the uneasy truce in Bosnia, and in the Kosovo crisis the bombing campaign against Serbia. The complaint against the EC, articulated by Mestrovic, is that its member countries were hidebound in following their diplomatic doctrines: "It is ironic that up to January 15 1992 the European Community would not recognise Slovene or Croatian independence, on the principle of maintaining the integrity of federal borders, yet the internal dissent within the EC on these and other matters threatened the full realisation of the cosmopolitan dream ... of a sort of United States of Europe" (30). In regard to the USA, domestic political pressure against a costly foreign involvement was seen to prevail: "The United States waited until 7 April 1992 to finally go along with its European friends and allies in recognising the efforts by Slovenia, Croatia and Bosnia-Herzegovina to break away from the Serbian-dominated, communist Yugoslavia" (31).

News media

The same writer extends his criticisms to media handling of the crisis in Yugoslavia, voicing an intellectual's complaint that news is too fragmentary to convey information - "the average American cannot hope to grasp 'truths' that are filtered through the media prism to become bytes of information scattered across a vast field of electronic signals" - and that the background to stories is not explained: "News media give limited Balkan coverage; they believe that viewers are fascinated with power, personalities and the bizarre. Much news coverage is therefore little more than 'political soap opera' and a large part of the world remains invisible to the media ..." (32). More usual judgments of the news media involvement in that crisis acknowledge that it was dangerous and traumatising for many of the journalistic participants, if less so than for the unwilling protagonists, and that over a long period there was heavy attention, and constant headline coverage. By comparison with the rush of reportage that had to accompany the collapse in Central Eastern Europe, the Yugoslav theatre demanded a very persistent, still more costly deployment. A criticism reported in a Freedom Forum seminar was broadly accepted, that in many cases -often at the presentation / production stage, after field reporting was done- naivety, or journalistic lack of memory, or knowledge, came out as a

bias. The offensive by Serbian forces in Bosnia –with revelations of atrocities and the ongoing siege of Sarajevo – led to frequent use of reports on US television news carrying condemnation of the Serbian side: “Raised on a Manichean view of the world the US media have tended to turn the Bosnian struggle into a battle between evil aggressors and innocent victims ... As Henry Kissinger pointed out, ‘In typical Wilsonian fashion, the media see that war not as the expression of real geopolitical differences between two or three groups, but as a war caused by bad and evil men’” (33). A response from the same debate called on the standard conventions of Western news: “It is not the media’s job to articulate out national interest. It is not the press’s job to create an informed public. The media can only provide information” (34). In the considered accounts of journalists from the field in former Yugoslavia, there was much information to be conveyed of a raw kind, intelligible to their audiences; in such a time and place there are scant opportunities to work through the geopolitical background, although has been seen in this study, the effort frequently will be made.

Alienation and rebuilding

The notion of a shunning of the peoples of the former communist countries by the West, the term introduced by Mestrovic, again like the “Wall in the mind” is a common perception and must remain a factor in relations. Feelings of disappointment and blunted expectations have translated into suspicion and ill-will. George Schopflin has sought to explain attitudes in such cases that look like a kind of dependence: “The elites that took power from the communists did so in the name of democracy. The slogan of democracy proved extremely effective in demobilising loyalty to the communist system, largely because it was legitimated by tacit or explicit reference to the success of the West ... The West was not understood as a complex social, economic, political and cultural entity but as a political and economic success, which had won the Cold War. The externals of high levels of prosperity and sophisticated technology were regarded as the hallmarks of the successful competitor and it is no exaggeration to suggest that for many people ‘democracy’ was little more than an appendage to economic triumph. Thus their expectations were that the introduction of ‘democracy’ would automatically bring with it a Western level of prosperity” (35).

The alienation reached a bitter state in the fighting over former Yugoslavia, as in an account from Hussein Agha, monitoring views from the Middle East (36). Special problems with the “Balkanised” mix of populations within Bosnia-Herzegovina might be taken into account but

did not deflect the emotional response : “What is perceived as the persecution and massacre of the Muslims in Bosnia reaffirms the people of the region’s worst suspicions about European motives and attitudes toward the Muslim world. The relative ease by which Christian Slovenia and Croatia became independent states supported by Europe, in comparison with Bosnia, fuelled the fears of the people of the region ...” . Ethnic or social strains are coupled with serious pains of economic adjustment to ensure a level of crisis continues in Europe well over a decade since the euphoric day when the Wall came down, though in the full sense the notion of crisis implies not only danger but opportunity; and concerted efforts to produce a balanced outcome are on-going, above all on the part of the civil society.

(1) Op. Cit. Garton Ash T In Europe’s Name 1993, p 345

(2) Lee Duffield, Eberswalder Str crossing; ABC radio news 11.11.89

(3) Horvat J with Szanto A, The Crucial Facts: Misleading Cues in the News of Central and Eastern Europe During Communism’s Demise, The Freedom Forum Media Studies Centre, Columbia University, NY, Occasional paper No. 11, December 1993

(4) Ibid. p 12

(5) Loc. Cit.

(6) Full discussion of the Schabowski statement and issues raised by it is given in the section, “What Did Schabowski Announce?”, Chapter 8 following, including a transcript from a radio interview giving his own testimony.

(7) Garton Ash T 1989 p 223

(8) Ibid. p 269

(9) Ibid. p 237

(10) Op. Cit. Shevardnadze p 133

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(12) Interview with the writer, Brussels, 18.2.99

(13) Garton Ash 1989 pp 231-41

(14) Op. Cit., Horvat J with Szanto A, p 15

(15) Op. Cit. Garton Ash T 1993 p 122

(16) Ibid. p 142

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CHAPTER SEVEN

REVIEW OF MEDIA COVERAGE - ONE

The objective of this chapter is to demonstrate how a history may be constructed from a limited selection of news media accounts, indicating in the process the centrality of the engagement of news media. The media treatment was mostly a conventional day-by-day reporting of salient events, though linked in sequence to cover running issues, and augmented by analysis, commentary and editorial views especially in the news features area. This history is intended to be compared with the previous chapter, a more conventional short history constructed principally from testimonial sources obtained over the period of a decade after 1989. There is agreement between these two accounts on what took place: the causes; what was important for the future. This chapter then gives rise to the proposition that news media working in the Western liberal tradition at the end of the 20th Century, (committed in their editorial stance to free flow of information and ideas, and committed in their operational practices to the implementation of standard news values, as already described), maintained an important chronicling, analysing and documenting role. It will indicate that the media operations themselves - represented by personnel in the field and media products available to the public - have had a certain omnipresence, in the dramatic political activities of the time. If the accounts produced in real time by news media are very well informed, accurate, prescient, satisfactorily explanatory from the point of view of their readers / audiences, and reliably indicative of the next developments in the story, then news media must be seen as central to the historical process. That is because they will have been intimately associated with the formulation of events, and, although making no exaggerated claims for themselves about producing outcomes, they will have been at least providing dependable intelligence immediately to hand. Their products also will be evidence of communication (mass communication, communication among key actors) which has taken place in the evolving historical situation, not least because much of it will have been conducted through the channels of the mass media. With their following of daily events, they will be seen, in terms of representation, as uncomplicated, close accounts of the natural world.

Such an observation about the function of news media is a starting point. It does not resolve all questions about the way the historical material is gathered and assessed on the way through. It only shows that news media had an account in place, on the day, which with the hindsight of a decade's review and reflection, was firm on essential points of fact and interpretation. It was

not fragmented, irrelevant to coming developments, too limited in the range of coverage, or wrong on points of fact. It did not proffer analyses that were later repudiated by informed opinion, though it must be said that at time of writing it is still “early days”. Certainly the German journalists interviewed in 1998 were feeling chastened by the fate of the bluhendelandschaften, “blooming landscape” policy and their own participation in promulgating it. They were concerned also about the news media having been inveigled into accepting the notion of East Germany as an economic success, before the change, and the publication of mounting evidence to the contrary. Likewise the dismissal of the GDR after 1990 – reflecting an attitude of government – may come to be seen as an error. Talk of a nostalgia for aspects of the pattern of life in the pre-1989 Eastern bloc has not died down, any more than the reformed, and reduced, East German communist party has yet withered away. So ideas and developments not anticipated in 1989, not in the “script” being followed by either the crowds or the political community, yet significant for the middle-term future, may turn out to have been in gestation but unrecognised in all public accounts. Similarly the journalists accredited to the European Commission admit to having been as unprepared as the institutions of the European Community itself for its role as inheritor of the situation in Eastern Europe. Because of such concerns, the use of the panel of journalists with their recollections of the 1989 crisis was intended to extend the range of possibilities being looked at; to fill out the picture. For example the journalists were questioned about framing – ways of managing the material in accordance with their preconceptions and general world view. It should be observed here, as elsewhere in the dissertation, that the news media in 1989 –gatherers in the field, producers, and distribution systems addressed to certain markets- were strengthened by comparison with the same institutions only a few decades before, because of new communication technologies which had come into use. The productivity of this media force in all departments of its activity had become very strong.

Conduct of the review of news coverage

A detailed review was made of six news outlets working in the tradition of liberal, mostly English language journalism. They all have editorial policies committed to a thorough treatment of foreign news. These are large organizations, normally producers of daily output, working in the mainstream of mass media with abundant resources; and together they can be expected to have given a comprehensive treatment of the main events and processes in the period under review. They are:

The Times (London) (T); all copies scanned on microform for articles, graphics and pictures relevant to the change in Eastern Europe. An interview was conducted in London on 2.2.99 about the coverage by the Times, with the Managing Editor, George Brock, who had been Foreign Editor during the period under review.

The International Herald Tribune (Paris) (IHT); review of all copies on microform. An interview was conducted in Paris about this coverage, on 9.2.99 with the Editor, Wilbur Wells.

The Guardian Weekly (Manchester) (GW). The edition available to the writer on microform was the UK “Manchester Guardian” edition. Together with the IHT (above) it carried a block of syndicated articles originating with the Guardian, New York Times, Washington Post, Los Angeles Times, some other American newspapers such as the Baltimore Sun, and Le Monde, which together provided a highly resourceful account. The articles included current news reports pegged on events of any one day, interpretative commentary by staff columnists, and analytical pieces by outside contributors with some special knowledge of the events, viz the former diplomats Henry Kissinger, Jeane Kirkpatrick and George Kennard. Interviews were conducted with the former Europe Correspondent of the Guardian, John Palmer, at Brussels on 19.2.99, and with Daniel Vernet, Director International Relations at Le Monde, who was that newspaper’s Editor in the period under review, at Paris on 11.2.99.

The Australian (Aust); review of all copies on microform. An interview was conducted with the Australian’s Chief European Correspondent, Bruce Wilson, in London on 4.2.99, and with the newspaper’s Correspondent in Europe in the period of the crisis, Nicholas Rothwell, at Brisbane on 9.4.99.

ABC (Australia) television news and current affairs; (ABC-TV). A search was made by ABC archives staff for reports on a list of principal events nominated by the writer, and the resultant selection of **137** reports from news bulletins and current affairs programs mainly the “Seven-thirty Report” was reviewed from videotape and short summary documents kept on file. This review was carried out at ABC Television in Sydney on 26 and 29.3.99. There were limits to the compilation as an historical record, as cataloguing and archiving from 1989 was much less thorough than at present, and costs for the search, though at a very reasonable rate, had to be restrained.

ABC (Australia) radio news and current affairs; (ABC-R). This was a compilation of the writer's own scripts as European Correspondent for radio, which covered the great majority of events on the historical record of the time. A total of **455** reports were reviewed, of which over 300 were in news bulletins, 89 in daily current affairs programs mostly AM, and 17 in Correspondents' Report. Other outlets included live reports for ABC metropolitan radio stations and requested reports for Radio Australia.

The abbreviations - (T), (IHT), (GW), (Aust), (ABC-TV), (ABC-R) - are used in the text in this chapter, as the documentation is dense and also essential to the purpose of showing how the news coverage was achieved. A narrative has been extracted from the material gathered, and where reference is made to news stories making up that narrative, the citation is given, to show which publications on a given date were reporting that news or providing commentary. For example in the following section **Gorbachev in East Berlin**, his statement at an impromptu roadside media conference was reported by five of the outlets, as indicated: (T, ABC-R 7.10.89; ABC - TV 8.10.89; IHT 7-8.10.89; GM 15.10.89). The period chosen covered the six months August 1989 through to and including January 1990. It was a manageable task for a single researcher yet exhaustive with a total of **5297** news items and features read, viewed or listened to, and noted in a systematic order. Articles are cited in the **bibliography** of this thesis document where they have been singled out for individual reference or used for quotations.

The particular sequence of events and processes began with the developments during Summer of 1989 as the East German border crossers started moving to the West from Hungary, in large numbers, while Solidarity in Poland, having won elections the previous June, was negotiating, with difficulty, to take power at the head of a coalition government. The sequence then took in the episode of the Fortieth Anniversary celebrations of the GDR at East Berlin, attended by Mikhail Gorbachev, in early October; the rapid collapse of the authority of the East German regime with the opening of the Berlin Wall on 9 November; the Velvet Revolution in Prague; violent overthrow of Nicolae Ceasescu in Romania; and beginnings of change in the other Balkan states, with the removal from power of Todor Zhivkov in Bulgaria, a split in the Yugoslav Communist Party on national / ethnic lines, and initial protest activity in Albania.

In January 1990 the pattern was altering. The process of mass revolt was being consolidated in

Central Eastern Europe (Czechoslovakia, East Germany, Hungary, Poland) into more institutionalised forms, where coalition governments had been sworn in under non-communist leadership. The West German Chancellor, Helmut Kohl, was active in the organisation of international consultations leading to German reunification; work was in progress on achieving a new architecture for Europe built around the then European Community. As a companion process well integrated with all these developments, relations with the Soviet Union under Gorbachev changed and intensified, over arms agreements and the security framework, economic co-operation, the settlement in Eastern Europe including German reunification, and especially following the Malta Summit in December, an international campaign to “help Gorbachev” in his battle against the disintegration of the Soviet economy, state and society.

This review of media content forms part of the general appraisal of news media operations during the historical crisis. Its purpose is to test how effectively and comprehensively the news media anticipated events and represented their significance, in the light of later understanding. It will consider a number of issues in detail, and while not strictly a quantitative treatment it will count the numbers of reports on different subjects to indicate the relative weighting given to aspects of the unfolding history. Categories in the analysis were devised during a preliminary assessment of the material in this compilation, after consultation with so-far agreed historical accounts of what took place, as in Chapters 4-6 above. The categories are:

Wall process. This name refers to inter-connected events leading to the opening of the Berlin Wall, from the demolition of the “Iron Curtain” on the Hungarian frontier, through the mass exodus and mass demonstrations in East Germany, interventions of Gorbachev in East Berlin, and the fall of Erich Honecker and his successors. The section deals with five historical issues which have been the subject of debate, such as the “Tienanmen Square solution” that was considered by some of the communist authorities in East Germany. In these cases the question is whether information published at the time was sufficient to say that news media provided a knowledgeable, accurate and timely account of what was really happening. The section therefore addresses most directly the question of quality of news coverage as at least a draft of history.

Polish transition. The Solidarity-led government was installed; sought Western aid in its economic crisis, and confronted the western border issue.

Chaos in East Germany. After opening of the Wall, the regime under Krenz then Modrow unsuccessfully offered reforms; was destabilised by protests and mass emigration, and capitulated to take-over by West Germany.

Helmut Kohl and Reunification. Kohl emerged as a leader in forging a settlement of the “German question” within the two Germanies and through international relations.

European Futures. Parallel developments were moving to a new European architecture based on the European Community.

Soviet crisis and Eastern Europe. Arms negotiations and strengthening relations with the West; failure of economic *perestroika*; liberalisation under *glasnost*; revolt of the nationalities and collapse in Eastern Europe.

Czechoslovakia. Velvet Revolution.

Balkans. Piecing together a confused scenario in Romania. Change in Bulgaria following what had become a familiar pattern. Beginnings of the change in Yugoslavia and Albania.

Analyses and Media Issues. A final section considers some of the analyses proposed by journalists in addition to those referred to in the foregoing sections, and so indicates the degree to which the account given by news media was given context and explanation, as it unfolded. This section also considers articles relating to specific concerns of news media practitioners and organisations, affecting coverage, e.g. lifting of bans on live television coverage of Czechoslovak demonstrations; or the campaign of lies in Romania.

Reports were compiled in other categories but not reported on separately in this review. Such information assisted with treatment of the issues in the above sections. One of those categories was for **Communist Parties**, being the side issue of fraternal parties surviving the collapse of the European communist bloc, in Europe, Central America, Cuba, Vietnam, and especially China. Another concerned strictly domestic **West German** politics such as internal party debate over the Polish border. In regard to **Mass Social Movement**; news stories were not allocated to a category under this label but the discussion of the news will concentrate on indications / evidence of the determining power of the mass movements in forcing change.

Table 1: Collapse of the Eastern Bloc June 1989 – January 1990 incl.

Newspaper coverage in The Australian, The International Herald Tribune, The Times, and The Manchester Guardian Weekly

Number of news reports and features on the topics listed

WALL PROCESS		626
	Gorbachev East Berlin	
	Bonn Budapest dealings	
	Hungarian revolution	
	Aborted Tienanmen soln.	
	Passports for all	
	Schabowski's statement	
	Mass emigration	
	Demonstrations in GDR	
	Breakdown of the SED	
	Week at the Wall	
POLISH TRANSITION		400
CHAOS IN GDR		327
KOHL AND REUNIFICATION		238
EUROPEAN FUTURES		462
SOVIET CRISIS AND EASTERN EUROPE		
	USA and arms negotiations	399
	Economic glasnost	343

	Perestroika	159
	Nationalities	442
CZECHOSLOVAKIA		285
BALKANS		
	Romania	436
	Yugoslavia	66
	Albania	15
	Bulgaria	106
ANALYSES, MEDIA ENGAGEMENTS		
	General commentaries	215
	The themes of skepticism and doubt	76
	Media issues	110
Total		4705

Table 2: Collapse of the Eastern Bloc June 1989 – January 1990 incl.

Coverage in ABC Radio and Television, News and Current Affairs

Number of news and current affairs reports identified in survey

	ABC Radio	ABC Television
WALL PROCESS	127	41
POLISH TRANSITION	38	7
CHAOS IN GDR	67	26
KOHL AND REUNIFICATION	21	21
EUROPEAN FUTURES	27	9
SOVIET CRISIS AND EASTERN EUROPE	18	8
CZECHOSLOVAKIA	62	14
BALKANS		
Romania	57	5
Yugoslavia	8	3
Albania	2	-
Bulgaria	7	1
ANALYSES, MEDIA ENGAGEMENTS	17	-
TOTALS	455	137

Characteristics of the coverage

As distinct from news stories which are more immediate, normally concerned with facts about events, and generally shorter, newspaper features or broadcast current affairs reports will be less immediate, will take in more background and possibly analysis, and will normally be longer in length or duration. With strict focus on news content, small stories and longer ones, including the print features, broadcast current affairs or analytical pieces, are not differentiated in the count. In the main they are treated together here as “reports”. Each contributes to the unfolding of the theme, as in the case of the “wall process”; all are topical, given they deal with the on-going headline story of the time, and as foreign news for the media outlets concerned, each usually consists of a report on a new development, an event, as a peg, with at least some points of background explanation. The different types of report therefore converge. The shorter pieces are very cogent to the unfolding of events, and explanatory, while the longer pieces seen in this review are generally written as topical news features rather than essays, whether the author is a guest writer or a regular journalist. Some of the print features bring together a number of related developments and different angles, which is standard with the television reports also - packages giving a general round-up. In such cases, for purposes of this analysis the item will be placed in a category according to the main point of information in the story. There are differences among the outlets, e.g. the International Herald Tribune - an expatriates’ newspaper with no domestic readership - carries more diplomatic news; the sequence and dating of some reports is different for the Australian print and television outlets as the time zones confer later deadlines; the Guardian’s weekly edition naturally emphasises feature material over news reports.

Prominence of stories in the publications is not a key issue in this case, almost all of the coverage being prominent in the order of news of the day. News of the rapidly unfolding situation in Eastern Europe was often lead material, in newspapers almost always located on the front page or at top of the world news section, with features in “op-ed” adjacent to leading articles - themselves frequently about the Eastern Bloc story. The explosive developments of the time produced an extraordinary splurge of reports dominating entire print issues or broadcast bulletins, such as the day itself of the Wall opening. The Times led on 10.11.89 with “The Iron Curtain Torn Open”, and including picture montages with captions had twelve reports or features about the Berlin Wall in that edition. The following day, the momentum had become powerful, and leading with, “Hammering Down the Wall”, there were 23 reports or

features. The International Herald Tribune on 10.11.89, “East Germany Opens the Berlin Wall”, had 14 reports / features, and on 11.11.89, “Parts of the Wall Are Taken Down; Soviets Warn Against Reunification”, sixteen. This was matched on some days during the Christmas period when general news is slow and when in 1989 the revolution in Romania provided a run of really extravagant fare, from disputed stories of open atrocity, to the execution of the dictator, a large-scale international aid operation, and days of street fighting in the capital city: The Times, 23.12.89, “Bloodbath in Bucharest”, 18 reports / features on the Eastern European crisis, of which 14 about Romania; then 26.12.89, “Ceausescu are ‘Tried and Shot’”, 16/14; the IHT, 23-24-25.12.89, “Ceausescu Overthrown in Chaotic Revolt”, 17/13; 26.12.89, “Military Executes Ceausescu and Wife”, 26/20.

Some observations can be made about illustration. As many as half the newspaper photographs used were single portraits of main actors in the story, especially less well-known figures viz Krenz, Modrow, Havel, though by 1989 these were commonly “same day” pictures rather than standard stock from the library. Some outstanding, dramatic photographs were widely syndicated, appearing in several publications and becoming famous in collections from the period. One example is the photograph reproduced here of crowds occupying the breach in the Berlin Wall, **Photograph 1**. Another is the image of the intending emigrant pulled down by a police officer from the wall of the West German Embassy at Prague, **Photograph 2** (T, IHT 3.10.89; Aust 4.10.89). Graphics were common though used more sparingly than in newspapers ten years later; for example maps represented the flow of border crossers making their way Westward in special trains, (People in Embassies in Eastern Europe, GW 20.8.89; Thousands in mass transit from Hungary, T 2.9.89; one million on the move, T 16.9.89; exodus increases tension between two Germanies - crossing points, GW 17.9.89), or to show the location of unfamiliar trouble-spots within the borders of the Soviet Union, (Proposed ethnic German Soviet republic, Aust 21-22.10.89; opening Sakhalin Island, Le Monde, GW 10.9.89; Crisis in the Baltics and Transcaucasus, USSR republics’ frontiers, GW 21.1.90; Bush urges chemical weapons ban - stockpiles locations, GW 1.10.89).

Images of the Brandenburg Gate were ubiquitous. This review of coverage shows the look and reputation of that monumental structure had as much influence over publicists, pictorial editors and television producers as over the thousands who congregated before it. If anything the image became over-used with a procession of visitors posing before the wall at the Brandenburg Gate still closed up to the end of December; amongst others Vaclav Havel,

Douglas Hurd, Neil Kinnock and Senator Edward Kennedy. The regular Monday night demonstrations at Leipzig, with ever-expanding crowd numbers, were an effective distance-marker and barometer of public feeling, and also provided a spectacular, much-used image - blaring lights and the restless crowds thronging an enormous boulevard. The gatherings of well over 100000 in various locations, especially at Wenceslaus Square when the focus moved to Prague, provided a telling editorial message, the message of a public up in arms, reinforced with powerful visual impact, and sound.

CHAPTER EIGHT

REVIEW OF MEDIA COVERAGE – TWO

The chain of events leading to the opening of the Berlin Wall, beginning in August with the removal of the “iron curtain” between Hungary and Austria; the grand exodus of the border-crossers; failed attempts to stem the flow of emigration from East Germany through temporary border-openings and commissioning of the special trains; in early October the debacle of the Fortieth Anniversary celebrations of the GDR, in the presence of Mikhail Gorbachev, and consequent removal of Erich Honecker; the acceleration of the pincers movement of spontaneous mass power - massive demonstrations and massive emigration- forcing the East German authorities to the opening of the Wall on 9.11.89.

WALL PROCESS – FIVE ISSUES

This sequence is treated extensively because it raises discussion on five prominent topics which in particular were addressed as part of the reportage of the day, and which it can be expected, will continue to be addressed in historical treatments. These topics have been considered in the review made by the journalists and in the short history. Perusal of them shows a contemporary record outlining connections - facts, causes, effects- about which there came to be wide agreement. Here these five topics are labeled, (1) **Gorbachev in East Berlin**; (2) **The Bonn and Budapest Deal on the Border Crossers**; (3) **The Aborted Tienanmen Solution for Leipzig**; (4) **Passports For All**; and (5) **What Did Shabowski Announce?** They are explained in the text in each case; each invokes a discussion as to the value of the news coverage. They are a test of whether the news media were getting the story right in a useful and credible way, or performing on the margins as entertainers and unversed spectators. Did daily news identify the historical threads and main themes, or did it present only a disjointed mosaic? The question is put; in these areas, was the news successful in providing a dependable account of what happened, in the sense of dependable information and explanation? Treatments of the news in the “Wall Process” came to a total of **794 reports** published predominantly in the period 1.8.89 through to 20.9.01; running up to the completion of the second weekend after the opening of the Berlin Wall, with just a few of the reports appearing after that time.

(1) **Gorbachev in East Berlin.** *On this visit and on other developments immediately relevant to*

it, 55 reports were recorded. Mikhail Gorbachev was concerned about the Honecker government's resistance to change and delivered certain messages while in Berlin for the GDR 40th Anniversary, 6 and 7 October; his presence is widely believed to have influenced events, e.g. by encouraging protests, and enforcing a growing realisation at all levels, in all countries, that the Soviet Union would not intervene to save the communist governments of Eastern Europe from overthrow. What was learned of Gorbachev's position and his activities, and published, during the period under review? Was the significance of his contribution that week taken on board or missed and left to be picked up in later reportage / later histories? The essential information about the Soviet position came out, even though it was deliberately obfuscated by the Russians' public rhetoric endorsing the socialist regime and their simultaneous passing of oblique messages that tended to contradict the rhetoric. These messages were reported with due reservation at the time, and revisited in news coverage as their full meaning was confirmed by events.

In East Berlin, visiting the tomb of the Unknown Soldier, Gorbachev broke off to address a small crowd from the East German youth movement, then some journalists, who agreed on the translation that East Germans should not panic over their situation, while the future must be decided “in Berlin, not Moscow;” one report adding he had “confidence in Erich Honecker to bring about whatever change is necessary.” This public if unheralded event attracted much coverage as an indication of his ambivalence towards the East German regime (T, ABC-R 7.10.89; ABC - TV 8.10.89; IHT 7-8.10.89; GM 15.10.89). It was the main, direct indication of his attitude, taken out from behind the façade of socialist solidarity. Later through the spokesperson Genardy Gerasimov he passed on the famous line delivered to the SED Central Committee, “life punishes harshly anyone who is left behind in politics”. This was taken up over time as being very significant, though less prominently in the immediate coverage of that week, being edged out by stories about action - the riot at Dresden; escape of border-crossers; suppression of the big demonstration in East Berlin; accumulating crowds at Leipzig (GW22.10.89; ABC-R 15.10.89). While these comments were off-set by numerous gestures of support for the GDR regime, by the USSR, they were read as indicators that the Soviet Union was no longer underwriting its position, and were a message at least to the gerontocracy around Honecker that they should go, to make way for a more flexible communist leadership. Publicity was essential to Gorbachev's purpose of exerting pressure on Honecker but he had needed to control it (1). To that end the passing of information through Gerasimov was continued. The impromptu speech to journalists came just at the time he was talking to the Central Committee,

and plainly caught this mercurial, boisterous politician in a mood to speak out; but the kernel of what he wanted to say was resolved in his mind and he wanted it publicized.

The position to be taken by the Soviet President had been well anticipated, e.g. The Times proposed Honecker would not receive the “usual help” from Moscow (T editorial 26.8.89), and quoting the Presidential adviser Valentin Falin it said Gorbachev was concerned his decision to go to East Berlin would lead to “mass public demonstrations” (T 16.9.89). According to the Los Angeles Times he had found the East German and Czechoslovak regimes “anachronistic” (IHT 6.10.89). The Guardian columnist Hella Pick recalled Gorbachev telling the Council of Europe in July the Eastern European states could “choose their own social system”, (GW 27.8.89); Pick documented signs of his “frustration and exasperation” with Honecker (GW 15.10.89); and later in an article on the East European “Hurricane” observed that with the wisdom of hindsight, Gorbachev’s “coded messages” to the regime, to urgently begin reforms, had been in response to an awareness of “seething discontent below the surface”, (GW 3.12.89). Among some singular interpretations, Andre Lafontaine in Le Monde was perceptive; reviewing Gorbachev’s words to the Central Committee in East Berlin, he concluded Honecker would be “less sure of counting on Moscow”, and the public would “lose their sense of fear”, leading to the “inevitable destruction of the Berlin Wall”, (WG 22.10.89). On the contrary a writer on the IHT concluded there’d been really “no public hint” to East Germany to make changes (IHT 9.10.89), though another constructed the possibility that Gorbachev had sought to undermine Honecker, out of fear the East German regime might outlast him in office and lead a disastrous reaction against reform (IHT 13.11.89).

Coverage of Gorbachev’s direct involvements included his meeting in Moscow with Egon Krenz as successor to Honecker, a week before the opening of the Wall. Again little information was given out openly. The visit occurred against a background of condemnation from the East German opposition (ABC-R 1.11.89). Krenz was seen as being there “to learn”, about implementing change (T 31.10.89). While there had been agreement on keeping two Germanies and maintaining the Communist Party’s “leading role”, Gorbachev had proposed changes such as open elections (IHT 2.11.89). In one account, “Gorbachev’s attitude was not known” on reform proposals for the GDR, though Krenz was being seen in Moscow as a “stop gap”, having been “too close to Honecker” (ABC TV, Moscow Correspondent John Lombard, 2.11.89). The pattern of coverage emerged that journalists could state more firmly over a period of weeks that the “Polish” model would apply; the Soviet Union would leave the SED to its

fate, with some reservations, specifically that the East German republic under whatever government should remain, and should continue in the Warsaw Pact. Upon the fall of the Berlin Wall, Gerasimov as chief Soviet spokesman indicated that salvaging the security pact would take first priority (T; IHT 10.9.89). Serious discussion of German reunification emerged in the news media immediately following the 40th Anniversary events.

It is indicative of Gorbachev's dilemma of having to deal with policy failures and rejection on several fronts at once, that the record shows several concurrent crises on his agenda, even that very week as the "celebrations" in East Berlin, the demonstrations and politicking, were under way: communist leaders in Latvia reiterated demands for autonomy; armed clashes broke out in Armenia; the Hungarian communist party came forward with its proposals to adopt a social democratic platform (T 9.10.89); his own government, desperate over production losses in Soviet coal mining and heavy manufacturing, announced strikes would be made illegal in key industries - a measure it would quickly be forced to drop amid savage public obloquy (T10.10.89).

This review indicates that information to world publics about the situation of Mikhail Gorbachev and his intentions was enhanced by the news coverage of the East Berlin episode. Accurate reportage was reinforced by reasoned explanatory treatment in the commentary stages. Published analyses of the events from September onward perceived the Soviet President as seeking and deserving to obtain some advantages, while in an embattled and retreating position. A Times editorial saw Gorbachev distracted by domestic crises while guided by human rights considerations on issues such as the mass emigrations; it was time for his interests to be accommodated by the West, (T 12.9.89). The IHT on 1 December led with a "US View": "US administration officials have concluded that the Soviet leader, Mikhail S. Gorbachev, has basically written off Eastern Europe and no longer feels that direct control there is essential for Soviet security. Administration officials say they believe events in Eastern Europe are running much faster than Mr Gorbachev anticipated when he began encouraging change there. But they say they feel the Soviet leader has not been unnerved by the pace, which will probably strengthen his hand in his talks this week with President George Bush ..." (IHT 1.12.89). An accompanying article by Bill Keller analysed the Gorbachev policy in Europe: "In effect, what Mr Gorbachev seeks is a huge exchange, in which Moscow surrenders its costly ambitions of expansionism - at least beyond its postwar borders. In return, Moscow wants admission to the club of civilised and modern countries, bringing with it Western technology and a period of

calm in which to focus on the problem that really threatens Soviet security: an economy that cannot compete in the world or satisfy the growing wants of its own people” (IHT 1.12.89). Don Oberdorfer of the Washington Post would describe it more in terms of Gorbachev’s weakening options under constant pressure; “how much more can he withstand?” (IHT 26.1.90).

(2) Bonn and Budapest Deal on the Border Crossers. *The mass exodus of East Germans at the time of the 40th Anniversary was made possible by the decision of the Hungarian government to dismantle the “Iron Curtain” and let the border crossers go through to Austria. This course of action was accompanied by negotiations with a number of outside governments especially the FRG. To what extent was the whole story told at the time? Altogether 107 reports were consulted on international negotiations associated with the border crossers, in the period leading up to the Anniversary, through to the week after the opening of the Berlin Wall - 1.8 - 19.11.89.*

The time was propitious for change. As more than 150000 East Germans spent Summer weeks in Hungary (estimates ranged from 100000 to 250000; IHT, 1.9.89) the reform wing gained ascendancy in the Communist Party and began putting through a new program. (Minister Imre Pozsgay, the reformist leader, announced at this time he would head the break-away party, Movement for a Democratic Hungary - Aust, 18.9.89). Frontier installations along the Austrian border had been demolished, by general consent out of distaste for past repressions and in the interests of friendly relations with Western economic creditors. Hungary was a state seen to be acting courageously, against a likely hostile reaction from Moscow and its Eastern Bloc neighbours; and driven by dual factors - an “imperative of reform” and economic crisis, (Commentary, Rudolf Tokes, Professor of Political Science, University of Connecticut; writing in IHT 15.9.89). The border opening was commemorated at the picnic on the frontier on Sunday 20.8.89, whereupon more than 500 East Germans took the opportunity to cross over that day, some 18 being stopped by guards (ABC-TV 20.8.89; T 21.8.89; Aust 21.8.98; GW 27.8.89). The Hungarian government in the view of many, (those people perhaps invoking the past-trauma of 1956), exposed itself to danger, in continuing to permit crossings, eventually letting through the bulk of an exodus of some 200000 from East Germany in the first ten months of the year (Aust 9.11.89). Its legal pretext was another reform, the signing of a United Nations human rights protocol on 14.3.89 (T 13.9.89; IHT 20.10.89), committing it to give free passage to refugees, whereby it repudiated its 1969 consular agreement with East Germany to

withhold exit visas from visiting GDR citizens. (As reported in Chapter 5 above, “Wall Process: Border Crossers and Demonstrations”).

As pointed out by the IHT (20.10.89) Hungary was alone in Eastern Europe in adopting such an undertaking on refugees and received severe criticism from partners, Czechoslovakia, Romania and the GDR, contributing further to putting the “Eastern Bloc in disarray” (IHT 18.9.89). There were several East German protests, against “open interference” in internal affairs of the communist republic (T 11.9.89), and violation of the 1969 agreement (T 13.9.89); the border crossers were declared “expelled” from the country (ABC-R 1.10.89), and reviled as “traitors” and “criminals” (T 3.10.89). The position of the Soviet Union would be the key interest in this. Memories of past interventions were stark; in the Summer months Gorbachev had not finally demonstrated his position on absorbing those losses and humiliations. It was surmised that the arrival of the conservative Soviet politburo member Igor Ligachev at East Berlin, expressing support for a “loyal and trusted ally”, might have been part of a concerted Moscow response. In the event, the bold decision by Hungary to open its frontier with Austria, in mid-September, was received only with mild disapproval by Soviet spokesmen as a “very unusual step” (T, IHT 13.9.89).

More serious Soviet responses were reserved for the intervention of West Germany, which began with assistance to the crowds inside its embassies in Budapest, Prague and Warsaw, and the opening of the reception camps in Bavaria. Chancellor Helmut Kohl called on West Germans to welcome the new arrivals and took a lead in greeting them at railway stations (IHT 11.9.89). Soviet representatives took exception to West German interests in the border crisis as nationalistic and “not normal diplomatic activity”, (while also suggesting East Germany could itself consider making changes) (IHT 4.10.89). The Foreign Minister, Eduard Shevardnadze, condemned German “revanchism” (IHT 28.9.89), anticipating a communist rear guard action that was to occur, against the movement for reunification.

The West Germans had struck an agreement with Austria and Hungary on opening the border, and arrangements for assisting the travelers, at the end of August (IHT 1.9.89). Reasonably thorough reports came to light almost immediately of a visit to Bonn by the Hungarian Prime Minister, Miklos Nemeth, and Foreign Minister, Gyula Horn (e.g., IHT 26-27.8.89), though there were no announcements or briefings until their return home. The government of Hungary stated that it saw the emigration issue as one between the two Germanies but was giving its helpful support. The large West German economic guarantees given to Hungary at that point

were not disclosed until later; the sums were not obtained by journalists at the time; the financial side of the agreement could be inferred but not confirmed. However the GDR found out and classed the agreement a “trade in humans” (IHT 11.9.89). With continued rupturing of population, increasingly bitter complaints were made, the FRG accused of breaking bi-lateral undertakings, so tension worsened between the two German states (GW, John Palmer, 17.9.89). The FRG would reject claims of “provocation” (“... the provocation of the attraction of freedom,” Bonn government spokesman Hans Klein, ABC-TV 15.9.89), and condemn the suppression of the large demonstrations in East Berlin at the beginning of October (GW 15.10.89). Considerable attention came to be focused on West German moves to match economic favours with political co-operation. If Hungary was understood to have received economic support, Moscow would receive country-to-country transfers of DM3-billion to help “save Perestroika from failure” (T 23.10.89); Kohl would declare plans to the Bundestag, upon the opening of the Berlin Wall, for a “new dimension of economic aid”, available in return for democratisation in East Germany (T, IHT 9.11.89; Aust 10.11.89).

In the outcome Kohl would repeatedly thank the Hungarians for their courage in a crisis, intimating that there had been fears of a turn to violence (T 15.9.89; ABC-R 17.19.89; Aust 23.9.89). Pragmatism would rule with the approach to the October Anniversary in East Berlin, the GDR feeling pressure to achieve some stability. Exit agreements were made between Hungary and East Germany (FRG spokesmen denying any cynical back-door undertakings on their own part; Aust, 23.9.89); and among the two German governments and Czechoslovakia, the latter having suddenly become a main transit route and holding area for thousands of its East German neighbours (IHT 5.10.89). The USSR provided helpful assurances it was not disposed to intervene, Shevardnadze joking about his “Sinatra doctrine”, (They could do it their way) (T 26.10.89), proclaiming that East European states would have “absolute freedom” to choose their own paths (IHT 26.10.89). A volatile situation had been negotiated in the midst of propaganda skirmishes and marked by lack of candour over the management of financial incentives paid by West Germany to its Eastern bloc negotiating partners. News media documented the drama of the exodus, the largest mass migration in Europe since the end of the Second World War, and struggled with mixed results to indicate why and how it should be happening as it did, at that time.

Hungary’s revolution. The engagement of the Hungarian government as an initiator of the East German exodus was a consequence of its own change, a parliamentary style of

transformation within the country, spurred on by economic stress and civil dissatisfaction. The Hungarian government managed its part of the East Germany crisis while negotiating a rapid though anti-climactic process of change within its own territory, mapped out in **150** articles read for this study. When the Soviet Union under Gorbachev confessed unwillingness to assert its hegemony it was taken as a signal to move on well-prepared lines. Hungarians had experienced their own mass involvement in change in the previous June, with the ceremonial reburial of Imre Nagy, laying to rest the ghosts of the 1956 uprising, a trumpeting to the world that the country had finally moved onto its new path. The story thereafter would be told more in terms of orderly, if urgent, organisational politics; less in terms of disrupted private lives, overnight social transformation, revolution in the streets. In late 1989 Hungary went much further in erasing the symbols and connections of Cold War communism, turning its back in particular on the Soviet Union; it also made constitutional and political changes to set up democratic government, and it endured dire economic problems.

Eliminating the past took many forms, including removal of symbols like the illuminated red star prominent on the Budapest skyline, a massive hammer and sickle, sections of the Iron Curtain border fence itself, and several commemorative street signs. This demolition work naturally involved strong imagery and was of great interest to international news media (GW 13.8.89; T 25.8, 12.10, 25.11.89; Aust 13,23, 28-29.10.89; IHT 27.10.89). The reform communist government, under pressure, disbanded the Interior Ministry and its security apparatus (Aust 3.10.89; T 22.1.90), though it was publicly pilloried and dishonoured later in a wiretap scandal (IHT 6-7,18.1.90; T 9,20.1.90; ABC-R 13.1.90; Aust 22,23.1.90), showing that state surveillance had continued. The contemporary and practical application of this national policy of repudiating the communist past was the formal rejection of Soviet armed forces on Hungarian soil. They were asked to leave and an agreement signed on their phased departure early in 1990 (IHT 20.9.89; Aust 23.10.89; T 19,24.1.90; ABC-R 24.1.90).

The divided Congress of the Socialist Workers Party in October 1989 cleared the way for full democratisation in constitutional law and electoral politics (T 3,5-7,9.10.89). The re-formed, social democrat party that emerged had a mixture of factions on its central committee and suffered severe drops in membership (T 10,11.10.89; GW 15,22.10.89; IHT 8.11.89). However on its way out of office it sponsored a new constitution on Western liberal-democratic lines, substituting multi-party politics for the “leading role” of the Communist Party (IHT 9,11,19.10.89; GW 29.10.89), and before the dissolution of parliament at the end of its

December session, scheduled free elections for 25 March 1990 (T 20.9, 23.10.89; Aust 6,9,10,12,20.10, 22.12.89; IHT 7-8, 21-22.10, 20.11, 22, 23-25.12.89; ABC-TV 19.11.89; ABC-R 24.1.90). Proclamation of the constitution revived public interest and brought out a cheering throng (T24.10.89). Street protests had long been tolerated, as when crowds turned out in sympathy with ethnic Hungarians, caught in the violence in Romania (ABC-TV 22.12.89). At other times, voter turn-out was low, e.g. for by-elections which went against the communist party (T 5,7.8.89, 11.1.90; IHT 7.9.89), and for the November referendum on arrangements for electing the President - which gave a relative advantage to the incumbent party leader, the reformist Pozsgay (T 18,26.10, 1.11.89; GW 3.12.89; Aust 2.11.89; IHT 24,27,28.11.89). This public matter-of-factness about reforms may have been the psychological product of years of incremental change, the policy of "Goulash Communism" having been to push just gradually on to a Western model, to "avoid another 1956" (IHT 12.10, 30.1.90). Soviet officials far from threatening intervention by 1989, agreed to the withdrawal of their forces without extravagant debate (Aust 19.1.90; IHT 19,23,24.1.90). Change might have been surprising, a challenge to the imagination, but the end of communism was organised by consent; the March elections were to produce a coalition government comprising the newly-formed rightist liberal party and a revived conservative party with longer historical roots.

The state of the economy would further encourage a blase attitude towards liberation and change, as a dampener on high expectations. The Hungarian economy by international consensus was beset by excessive external debt, high inflation and inadequate levels of production (T 2.9, 9.1.90; IHT 2-3.12.89, 9.1.90; Aust 9.1.90), needing not so much direct sustaining aid -foodstuffs, currency support- like Poland, as investment and access to Western markets (IHT 22.9, 11.10.89). Government leaders were forced to admit to having lied over the size of external debts (Aust 23.11.89); there was public discontent over "prices, muggings and squabbling politicians" (IHT 24.10.89); and a run on cash reserves forced new currency controls (T 3.11.89). Substantial assistance was forthcoming, for instance \$US900m with trade concessions and technology transfer from Japan, together with opening of a Suzuki car plant (IHT 10.1.90; T 18.1.90), and enormous store was put on economic co-operation with the European Community (T 12.9.89; application also to join the Council of Europe IHT 4-5.11.89), which offered loans exceeding \$US1-billion, tied to an IMF program (T 7,18.12.89). Substantial US aid and bank investment was also forthcoming (IHT 23.8.89; Aust 28-29.10.89; IMF conditions IHT 23.11.89; bank investment IHT 26.1.90). Hungary would see its future increasingly in terms of EC membership which it would pursue aggressively with encouraging

results.

(3) The Aborted Tienanmen Solution for Leipzig. *In the sources consulted here 48 reports have been checked outlining the development of the street protests at Leipzig that formed a central on-going event, an informal institution, around which dissent was organised during the crucial months of revolt. The significance of the Leipzig protests was not lost on communist leaders determined to retain power. There has been debate leading to consensus that Erich Honecker intended to suppress the growing demonstrations, focussing in particular on the protest at Leipzig on Monday night 9 October, but that the actions of local civic leaders and other government figures prevented it. How thoroughly was this episode of the so-called Tienanmen Square solution canvassed publicly at the time, compared with what came to be known of the incident later?*

Undoubtedly much of the concern about a Tienmen Square solution arose from threats made by the regime, readily received by news media conscious of the events at Beijing the previous June - some of the correspondents had been there. At the commencement of the week of celebrations for the GDR 40th Anniversary dissident leaders associated with the Protestant Church passed on to correspondents that they had been told by a senior government official to “remember China”. Whether a realistic threat or a bluff to discourage protest action, this found its way into several reports, (ABC-TV 4.10.89; ABC-R, RA, 6.10.89; T 6.10.89). Erich Honecker reportedly commented on the June events in Beijing while appearing at a public function with the visiting Chinese Deputy Prime Minister Yao Yulin, receiving front page attention, (e.g. IHT 10.10.89). Margot Honecker, referred to the armed workers militia prepared to defend the revolution (2), and this militia organisation at Leipzig announced it had members on call, “weapon in hand”, (T 7.10.89).

Whatever real crisis attended this talk of violent suppression, it came to a head just after the weekend demonstrations in East Berlin, which took place on the last day of Gorbachev’s official visit - with claims that Honecker wanted the demonstration at Leipzig on the Monday (9.10.89) put down in an exemplary way. The Leipzig protests had begun in the Summer; they had a practical base at the St Nicholas Church close to the central city boulevard, commencing each time with prayers for peace, and the regularity, same time every Monday night, was producing attendances: a band of 1200 protestors was broken up by police on 4.9.89 (T5.9.89); more than 10000 took over the streets a month later, on 2.10.89 (T 3.10.89).

The sources for reports on the proposed crack-down were mostly communist officials, part of a divided and disintegrating state organisation, prepared to divulge facts but themselves either not knowledgeable on all details or afraid to speak openly. Three writers from the New York Times News Service published what became close to the standard account, in the International Herald Tribune of 20.11.89. In this account, Egon Krenz as security chief travelled to Leipzig to countermand the order to shoot. It continued: “According to Manfred Gerlach leader of the small Liberal Democratic Party, and others, a huge force of soldiers, policemen and secret agents assembled in Leipzig and was issued live ammunition. Their order was to shoot if necessary and the order had reportedly been signed by Erich Honecker. ‘There was a written order from Honecker for a Chinese solution’, said Markus Wolf, the retired head of East Germany’s spy agencies who has emerged as a vocal advocate of change. ‘It could have been worse than Beijing’. But by then many in the politburo had come to the decision that Mr Honecker must go. In Leipzig, Kurt Mansur, the director of the *Gewandhaus* musical theatre, and some local party officials opened urgent discussions on averting a clash. When tens of thousands took to the streets of Leipzig that night the police did not interfere. The ‘revolution from below’ was under way ...” (IHT 20.11.89). An account in The Times (Anne McElvoy and Ian Murray, T 18.11.89) quotes Gerlach on Honecker signing an authority to shoot, defied by Krenz who was said to have fallen out with Honecker during the Summer. It says live ammunition was issued, and quotes a letter to the press from the Leipzig volunteer militia threatening use of firearms. (See also, IHT 4.12.89; Aust 18-19.11.89; GW 26.11.89).

Different versions have a leading clergyman from Leipzig and one local party official joining Mansur, as a civic-minded group who got through to senior officials. Krenz was seen to remain in Berlin, either opting to leave the matter in local hands or telephoning to inquire what was happening, too late to intervene. (In the background to these reports, earlier coverage, e.g. upon his appointment as Party leader, had quoted comments by Krenz in June, supporting the brutal action taken at Tienanmen Square, e.g. IHT 30.10.89). Among later accounts, the former West German Chancellor Willi Brandt told the Suddeutscher Zeitung he had learned that Soviet officers prevented a bloodbath at Leipzig by persuading their German colleagues to keep their troops in barracks, (IHT 4.12.89; T 14.12.89; Aust 15.12.89).

Glennie in his radio documentary reports that Leipzig party officials had broadcast a statement to the crowd at 5:30 pm on 9 October, calling for calm and offering dialogue with national

leaders. They testified they had then telephoned Krenz at East Berlin asking that the demonstration not be touched. He had called back, after a march had already begun, to confirm there would be no police action. The program produces evidence that state security had been preparing to collect prisoners in a State of Emergency, but unexpectedly large number of protestors threatened to overwhelm the resources made available. Crowd control during the weekend demonstration at East Berlin had emphasised using large numbers of troops to contain and catch the protestors rather than disperse them. With live ammunition and big numbers upsetting the operational plan there would be potential for a bloodbath, and on the Monday evening troops and police were crowded into Leipzig. Krenz was interviewed for the program about his intervention: "With all due respect to the people in Leipzig, they were under a lot of pressure, but to make this appeal for prudence and dialogue, that's all very well, but military units don't act on appeals, they act on orders from above. On the ninth I made a call to Leipzig at about 6 pm to say that the troops would not step over any lines. But the day before in Berlin we had already decided not to use force against the demonstrators. That was the decisive factors. Of course the Leipzigers did not know that yet; but anyway it's quite normal practice to bring security forces in to protect a large gathering of people. I'm sure you have that at football matches in your country" ("We Are the People", episode 4, Producer Misha Glennie, "The Europeans", ABC RN, 24.10.99).

After the first week of October Honecker's authority as Party leader and state President had lapsed; he was forced from office a little over one week later. Between 50000 and 70000 took part in the Leipzig protest on 9 October, shouting "Gorby! Gorby!", (ABC-R, ABC-TV 10.10.89; GW 15.10.89), the British correspondent Brian Hanrahan already reporting "signs of a Communist Party struggle" behind the scenes, (ABC-TV, 11.10.89). It could be seen that a decision had been taken not to attack the crowds; the numbers were too great for violent suppression around the country and a new, more ameliorating policy would need to be attempted.

After a week state-run media began covering the Leipzig protests, with occasional lapses and interference from authorities, ("Too big to ignore", ABC-TV, 18.10.89). On 16.10.89 the slogan had become, "The Wall Must Go", and the crowd estimate had grown to 120000, (T, IHT 17.10.89; GW 26.10.89). Reporters could chart the development of the movement's demands week by week by monitoring the catcalls and slogans, through to the ultimate political demands for democratic government and reunion with the West - "Free Elections", "We Are

One People". On 6.11.89, three nights before the opening of the Berlin Wall there were close to 300000 at Leipzig demanding "Passports For All" (T, ABC-TV 7.11.89). The enduring authority and close-lipped secrecy of the East German communist state was shown in the news media to have collapsed; in a crisis generated by citizens massed in the street, orders from the top were seen to be disregarded. In this situation outside news media now operated freely, witnessing, recording and publicising the action, and probing effectively for information from behind closed doors.

(4) Passports For All. *This section absorbs material collected about the announced intention to liberalise travel across the border, and from a sub-category listing other advance signs that the Berlin Wall was likely to fall; 70 articles consulted altogether. The decision to open the Wall flowed from earlier, publicly announced decisions to permit travel to the West. Nevertheless the event caused world-wide astonishment and excitement. This would be because foreshadowing a change was different to the actual realisation of it, especially in such a sudden, spectacular and uncontrolled way. Yet it must be asked, had the news media known its business well enough to take proper note of the preceding announcements, and so give the public of the world adequate notice of the likelihood of the opening of the Berlin Wall?*

The decision to grant free travel came amid a flood of concessions to popular demands for liberalisation and democratisation, from mid-October through to the first week of November. The communist government was disintegrating, in a state of fright, and being decapitated through dismissals in both party and state structures. On one hand hundreds of thousands of citizens continued to leave, demonstrating wholesale rejection of the communist experiment and exacerbating its economic failures; on the other hand demonstrations continued to grow - and continued to articulate ever more explicit demands for radical change. The members of the SED like anybody in the world were hard-pressed to imagine such sudden change that they, and the communist system, might be immediately displaced. Consequently, commencing with the accession of Krenz as Secretary General of the SED from 17.10.89, a program was improvised whereby, it was hoped, the public might be placated with offerings made by grace of the regime, which could then stay in office and find time to regroup. Disaffected citizens pleased with the lifting of social controls might get tired of attending demonstrations, especially if able to get visas for travel abroad. Prospective border crossers might no longer emigrate in large numbers.

However the mass movement of protestors was ahead of the world in imagining changes they considered to be imperative; this was metaphorically speaking a tribe in arms made desperate by hard experience of repression; it showed a sense for an immediate opportunity that had to be grasped. By the beginning of November a key concession, re-opening of the border with Czechoslovakia, (shut down during the October protests), had provoked a new, unprecedented rupture of population toward the West, and on the weekend of 4-5 November one-million protestors captured control of the streets of East Berlin. The concessions, including dialogue with the opposition and the promise of free travel in the immediate future, gave way to the hard facts of the opening of the Berlin Wall and free movement to the West - and with that an intensification of interest in the idea of Germany's reunification. It has to be emphasised; this population was in a frame of mind to take immediate, dramatic action; it was resolved to effect major change, in most concrete terms, on its own behalf; it was emphatic and uncompromising about what it wanted, especially that communists should not govern; it was neither organised nor disposed to negotiate over half-measures like a new visa system.

The welter of concessions announced and published in news media - in policy areas where change previously would never be discussed- included promises of freer travel and ending of censorship (ABC-R 17, 21.10.89); suspension of national service obligations and abolition of "crimes against the state" (ABC-R 9.11.89); amnesty for the border crossers and for protestors detained during Gorbachev's visit (T 28.10.89; IHT 28-29.10.89; GW 29.10.89), ahead of removing altogether the crime of fleeing the republic (Aust 3.11.89). State authorities had begun meeting Church leaders in September (T 18.9.89); and then leaders of the dissident movement (IHT 26.10.89), foreshadowing a lifting of the ban on the opposition group New Forum (Aust 3.11.89). To popular acclaim the long-serving communist television commentator Karl Eduard von Schnitzler was taken off air (T 1.11.89). On the eve of the decision on the Wall, Gunter Schabowski, the politburo spokesman, was foreshadowing "big changes" including an unspecified lifting of travel restrictions (ABC-R 9.11.89), and together with Krenz, future open elections (T, IHT 9.11.89).

The broad range of informed opinion relayed in the news media - the responses of leaders from the government or opposition, East and West; academic commentators; specialist journalists, among many others- in the main stayed firm that the hastily implemented reform program would fail to meet public demands for change. Typically Wolfgang Schenck, spokesperson for the dissidents' contact group, East-West Forum, considered only a substantial material change

could modify the public mood, specifically “it would take a strong gesture like opening the Wall” (ABC-R 8.11.89). Thomas Kielinger, as Editor of Rheinischer Merkur, previewed the visit of Krenz to Moscow and the Berlin demonstration of 4 November, anticipating the massive show of strength and concluding that with serious divisions within the SED, no concessions would be adequate to save its position (ABC-R 1.11.89). The Times columnist George Schopflin considered a qualified offer of free elections and more open travel a “measure of desperation”; the protests would “not let up”; at issue was whether the Party and government in East Germany could “last it out” (T 10.11.89).

The possibility of a passport reform was raised within a week of the change of leadership, Krenz ordering a reform of travel laws - though perhaps over “some years” - in tandem with an announced “public debate of all issues of society” (T 21.10.89; ABC-R 22.10.89). It was mentioned also in one of the first utterances of the reform-minded Hans Modrow as Prime Minister (ABC-R 20.10.89), and given out as an agenda item for a Communist Party politburo meeting as “passports for all” (T 24.10.89). The Australian’s Correspondent Nicholas Rothwell wrote extensively on the announcements then being made about travel: on the foreshadowing of a plan to issue a new form of passport (Aust 21-22.10.89); and about citizens being urged by Krenz to await the new law, which would enshrine “renewal and continuity” - while he enjoyed a kind of “honeymoon” in office, though tension in the country remained “at breaking point” (Aust 23.10.89). Reuters reported that the promised passports law was being drafted (Aust 26.10.89).

By November expectations raised by these announcements had to be met. A front page report in The Times on 4 November quoted Krenz on television the night before that most travel restrictions would be ended in a week; the report went on that the exodus of citizens was continuing and the situation within East Germany was “out of control” (T 4.11.89). In the welter of reports concerning mayhem and gestures of appeasement on many fronts, it was announced that within thirty days passports would be made available to all citizens, who would be able to obtain visas for travel abroad (IHT 6.11.89). With 23000 known to have left for the West over the previous weekend (IHT 7.11.89), up to 300000 were reported at the Monday demonstration in Leipzig on 6 November, demanding “free elections”, and travel abroad without restrictions - as an acceptable form of delivery on the promise of “passports for all” being attributed directly to Krenz (IHT, ABC-TV, ABC-R 7.11.89). Twenty-four hours before the announcement on the Berlin Wall citizens were still being urged to wait calmly on the

concession that would quieten all anxieties (ABC-TV 9.11.89). A writer in Le Monde, referring to the visit that week by President Francois Mitterrand to Bonn, passed on the view that, “it is the promise of quick exit visas, if enforced in practice, which will mark the first real turning point for a cornered East German regime” (GW 12.11.89).

Thus, strictly speaking it was known to millions that a dramatic change in the travel rights of East Germans was about to be announced, but there remained a crisis of trust and belief. Journalists reported it but could not see how it would be enacted; members of the public would have the same sceptical view. In reasonable expectations of the time, the new law would be likely to contain restrictions and limitations, while by contrast the citizens required full freedom of movement. In addition these reasonable expectations would not extend to seeing the GDR open its frontier by ordering a full opening then demolition of the Berlin Wall. That act had been spoken of and demanded in political rhetoric, but to grasp it as a coming reality at the start of November 1989 was difficult.

Retrospectives during the celebrations of that week invoked past demands by President Ronald Reagan to Gorbachev - “Tear down this wall!” - which had seemed somehow quixotic at the time, on a visit to Berlin and again at the 1988 Moscow Summit (ABC-TV 10.11.89). It was reiterated by his successor George Bush (“This wall must come down”, IHT 15.8.89; T 6.11.89; Aust 21.11.89), and the Defence Secretary Richard Cheney, stating a “true test” for Mr Gorbachev would be to “tear down the Berlin Wall” (Aust 28-29.10.89). The idea in fact had been invoked several times in debates surrounding the process of change in 1989. For instance an article in the Guardian Weekly on “East Germany’s Nervous Summer” considered it in terms of an opportunity for the Soviet leader to dramatically intervene: “Mr Gorbachev has been embarrassed by challenges from the West to demolish the wall, which he could do because it is in what continues to be called, and what in international law still is, the Soviet sector of occupied Berlin” (GW 20.8.89). Gorbachev had himself raised the notion that in time the Wall might “disappear” (Prof. Ronald Steel, International Relations, University of Southern California, Aust 14.9.89). The Neue Züricher Zeitung reflected widespread editorial opinion: “The Berlin Wall with all its political consequences to Germany and Europe has become a useless relic of the past ...” (IHT 7.11.89). The New York Times said “to tear down the Berlin Wall and the rest of the iron curtain would expose the weakness of communism by restoring freedom of movement ...”, though the exodus under way was already producing such impressions (IHT 26-27.8.89). “Tear Down the Wall!” was a defiant chant at demonstrations

since the first vigils in support of the border crossers (Aust 6.9.89; IHT 17.10.89).

Talking of the gesture and seeing the deed done required a closing of the imagination gap, yet there is a very simple logic in the relationship between a law permitting freedom of travel and the act of opening the Berlin Wall, as implementation of the law would remove the purpose of the barrier. For example Rothwell reporting on one million demonstrating in Berlin while thousands crossed to the West with impunity through Czechoslovakia, observed that the frontiers of East Germany were already “effectively open” (Aust 6.11.89). He had inferred from comments by East German leaders including Krenz that with “chinks in the Berlin Wall” already, they had started a process of bringing it down (Aust 3.11.89). Likewise Craig Whitney in the International Herald Tribune: “East Germany begins to ponder something the West has been demanding for twenty-eight years, demolition of the Berlin Wall ... In effect by allowing citizens to travel without restraint to Czechoslovakia, the communist authorities have begun to tear the Wall down ... An East German communist official told reporters in West Germany last week the Wall had become of ‘at least limited significance’” (IHT 6.11.89).

This writer joined those pointing to the logic of removing the Berlin Wall, yet not thinking it was about to happen: “Only a short time after the fall of Erich Honecker the Politburo announced its first reform. Citizens would no longer have to give reasons for applying for a passport. Restrictions where they could apply to go, were dropped. They could put in for a visa for West Berlin if they wanted ... So more can leave and are waiting to get their passports. The second change was the invitation issued by Egon Krenz, the new communist leader, to all those who fled, to return ... The sequence of moves has an obvious logic. If the East Germans, once again, can travel in and out, why should the Berlin wall be left standing? ... Opposition leaders say they will keep up the pressure to the maximum. They believe that if they relent the regime will take the opportunity to turn back the clock. They say they won’t now give up, until they see the ultimate sign of victory. They’ll want to see the Berlin Wall come down” (ABC-R, Correspondents’ Report, 29.10.89). Two days before the event the West Berlin Mayor Walter Momper considered he was stating the obvious: “The Berlin Wall is increasingly meaningless; I hope the GDR will pull it down” (ABC-TV 8.11.89).

Still it was not seen that way by the GDR. To be able to retain the structure and control entry points, in the manner of any democratic state exercising its legitimate authority, would mean the communist government was continuing to hold office. The GDR however had asserted

more authority over citizens' lives than would a democratic state, with less legitimacy, as was plainly perceived by the public at large; so it was not trusted, in fact not allowed to carry out the opening process as it wanted. The attempt to relax controls at the Berlin Wall would open the floodgates, almost literally in terms of the press of human bodies surging through, and force the removal of the barrier for all time.

More than that, the act of free movement between East and West, in the dramatic circumstances of an open public revolt, illuminated the possibility of an immediate reunification of Germany. If it was strongly wanted, why should it not be done? Again the direct logic of the crowds was on exhibit as they surged through the opened Berlin Wall. Television reporters faced with making sense of the event in a few sentences to camera noted the spirit of unity and resolve, and the aspect of a public *fait accompli*: "It's an historic and highly emotional moment. For practical purposes the Berlin Wall has been all but torn down ..." (Ian Henderson, ABC-TV, 10.11.89);

" Their city has been controlled by the victors of the Second World War. In a few astonishing days the German people have taken it back" (Neil Ross, ABC-TV, 10.11.89). Similar observations now abounded. Those looking to the future sought to talk in terms of plain logic. The United States Ambassador to West Germany, Vernon Walters, presumably with access to the best quality of intelligence from different quarters, went further than others with his predictions that the change would be large-scale and quick. Quoted from a radio interview he said the exodus of East Germans to the West showed it was "abnormal to have two Germanies," and he believed Germany "could be reunited in the near future" (IHT 4.9.89, p 1). The following was written just after the opening: " It took three and a half hours to get back through Checkpoint Charlie. The concrete blocks and the barbed wire are still there, but the issue of the Wall is settled. And with that the issue of Germany is open. The people have snatched their history away from the rulers. Now nobody knows what they will do with it ... The most extraordinary aspect of the sudden, extraordinary turn of events is that it clearly came with Moscow's endorsement ... Popular pressure is forcing the pace. The people are orderly, in the best humour, but no-one is in control. Does this mean reunification?" (Flora Lewis, IHT 13.11.89).

(5) What Did Schabowski Announce? *The actual announcement of the opening of the Berlin Wall came at the end of a long media conference and there has been questioning of exactly what the politburo of the SED in mind. Was the reporting of the media conference accurate,*

and did the reporting itself, as opposed to the intended content of the announcement, precipitate any of the events that followed? The strongest answer is in the texts of the media reports which are given in detail, in an appendix.

Announcement on Thursday night 9.11.89 at East Berlin, and the reactions. The announcement of the decision on the Berlin Wall was maladroit, performed by a spokesperson who did not appear to have a firm grip on the information or its implications, and evidently unsure of his own authority to speak on the matter. The statement eventually released by the Central Committee, reproduced here from the press, reads as the work of an organisation geared to bureaucratic processes with no experience of explaining its actions in a properly accountable way. The announcement was nevertheless clear enough for the journalists in the room to grasp, as is indicated in the reports carried by the six news outlets being reviewed in this section. The overnight story, through into the morning of 10 November, was in three main steps: (a) The announcement at the news conference containing some essential points; that a new visa system would be applied permitting people to go to the West; it was to come in immediately; officials would be instructed to approve all visa applications. (See this writer's account in Chapter 6). (b) Word was spreading in the streets with crowds gathering to celebrate late at night on both sides of the Wall. To this writer as with others, after filing initial reports for early morning radio in Australia, it was plain that the crowds were building up to something. After a few hours large numbers of people could be seen, being let through the checkpoints. Nothing had been said about the visas being issued that very night, but Schabowski had said "immediately" and border guards without instructions on the matter were being confronted by crowds demanding to be let through. (c) Further information was produced through official channels, such as a notice that the visas would be available from police posts, from 10 November onward, and that the regime intended to keep the structure of the Wall itself, with movement to continue through controlled checkpoints. These messages were reported fully, all channels being open, no restrictions on air-time or space, news outlets having become alert to a major event. All of this information was reported straight, in explanatory tones but without embroidering the sense, though the mood in the crowds began to force some rhetorical flourishes in the news copy - it was being reported as an "emotional" night; "historic"; hard to believe.

The story was bound to spark days of heavy coverage and as it started on a Thursday night was set to receive massive attention in the weekend press and television news.

There would be factual errors and misjudgments, especially with any predictions about the likely future, but on the evidence seen here this coverage was mostly accurate handling of plain facts. The bulk of errors found would be small scale, e.g. a comment in one report that “hundreds” had died attempting to cross the Wall, whereas some eighty had died there, among hundreds killed along the entire intra-German frontier. An earlier television report on Krenz had concluded he was a “known hard-liner” inheriting power from the builder of the Wall, and himself “unlikely to be the man who pulls it down” – whereas he had found himself in that demolitionist role.

The East German statement on travel and emigration rights gave four points.

1. Private journeys into foreign countries can be applied for without fulfilling preconditions (reasons for travel, relatives). Permission will be given at short notice.
2. The relevant passport and registration offices of the regional offices of the People’s Police in East Germany have been ordered to issue visas for permanent emigration immediately without the present preconditions for permanent emigration having been fulfilled. Application for permanent emigration is also possible as before at departments of Internal Affairs.
3. Permanent emigration is allowed across all border crossing points between East Germany and West Germany and West Berlin.
4. Because of this (new ruling) the temporary issuing of permits in East German missions abroad and permanent emigration using East German identity cards through third countries will no longer apply.

(Aust 11-12.11.89; IHT 11-12.11.89)

The media coverage of the announcement and its aftermath is given here in the form of **13** items, consisting of extensive quotations from newspaper articles and broadcast transcripts, together with commentary on how the material was being assembled, as **Appendix 3**. A transcript is also included of Schabowski’s own account of the media conference, from the Glennie radio program. The collection of reports tells what was happening in the eyes of the many trained observers engaged in the coverage on the ground, and provides a documentary explanation in response to any critique of the coverage. It shows what the observers from the news media saw or discovered, understood, and passed on to the public. In the hindsight of more than ten years it replays the moment and does not look to have carried falsehoods or to have been deficient in other ways.

Other aspects in the Wall Process part of the coverage

A review of the remainder of the 794 reports in this part of the treatment of the East European story covers an extremely broad range; it shows the reportage based on events but clustering around topics or themes, like the mass emigration process; and it indicates that the news coverage over time marked out a series of milestones, usually events of major news significance, by which the overall process of change can be documented.

Mass emigration. Altogether **110** reports on the movement of the border-crossers gave a saturation of numbers, usually estimates of the numbers crossing over obtained from sources such as the West German Foreign Ministry, and colour material, as with the many pictures of young family groups making it to the West, tearful farewells between those going and those staying (IHT 13.9.89), hundreds of cars queuing or left behind at the frontier in Czechoslovakia (T 23.9.89; GW 12.11.89), people salubriously quartered at a holding camp in the popular vacation area around Lake Baladon (T 8.9.89), or East German officials attempting to remonstrate with people in camps in Czechoslovakia or Hungary (T 19.9.89). In a period of confusion over policy, thousands were able to transfer directly by road through Czechoslovakia while others were pursued trying to travel by round-about routes, e.g. swimming the Danube frontier between Czechoslovakia and Hungary (T 26.9.89). There were appeals to the travelers from the Western side not to cross, as concessions were being negotiated with the GDR, or concerns were being expressed about accommodating such large numbers in the West. The United Protestant Church in East Germany called for two weeks of “cooling off” after the wild days of early October (T 10.10.89). Chancellor Kohl, inevitably aware of some ambivalent feelings at home about taking in the flood, while continuing to meet new arrivals and make cautious mentions of a future united Germany, sometimes also said people should think twice about coming (T 10.10.89; Aust 7.11.89).

There were reports in the different publications specifically about the phenomenon of embassy compounds filling up with people as soon as they had been emptied, under special transport arrangements (IHT 3.10.89; T 28.8.89, 13.9.89, 2-3.10.89; ABC-R 9-12.9.89); visits to the transit camps at Passau and other towns in Bavaria (T 5/12.9.89; IHT 11.9.89; ABC-R 13.9.89; ABC-TV 6.10.89); reports about the special trains, notably with mentions of the crowds storming the first ones at the start of October, trying to get on board (T, ABC-R 6.10.89). The

scenes of departure provided many gripping moments, as with a young man interrupting an interview to run for his train: “this is my chance, I have to go” (T 8.9.89). Milestones were featured: the picnic at the Austrian border; crossings to Bavaria (early September); announcement of the special trains, (by the West German Foreign Minister, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, while visiting the emigres at Prague - GW 8.10.89); closing of the border with Czechoslovakia (early October); the new, much bigger wave of travelers after a re-opening of the Czechoslovak frontier in early November.

Demonstrations. Apart from 48 reports about the demonstrations at Leipzig, and protests at other cities on the same Monday nights, **36** reports were reviewed on demonstrations in the GDR from the beginning of August through to mid-November. These conveyed the mood of mounting defiance spreading throughout the society; ever bigger gatherings in ever more places, generating crisis. A schedule of main events was created: the suppression of the riot at Dresden on 4.10.89 (T, IHT 5.10.89; ABC-R 6.10.89); the East Berlin (“Gorby Save Us!”) demonstration late on 7.10.89, broken up by police in front of visiting Western news media (ABC-TV 8.10.89; T, ABC-R 9.10.89); the million-strong throng at East Berlin on 4.11.89 (ABC-TV 5.11.89; IHT 6.11.89), which rendered the position of the East German government impossible and heralded the opening of the Berlin Wall. These events became progressively more open and less susceptible to being violently suppressed. The police action at Dresden, keeping crowds of youths away from the trains carrying emigres, had taken place with no outside news media present. Most information was given by Church sources; details were sketchy; some foreign correspondents arriving for the 40th Anniversary went to Dresden, and back in East Berlin reported on the debris left by the violent confrontations and damage to the railway building. The second major demonstration began covertly, with a note slipped to Western journalists giving time and place; a bogus fight started at the Alexanderplatz, and then as the crowd built up, a procession, to blockade a reception being held for the visiting Soviet President. The world watched the baton charges and arrests. One month later it was a different order; the mammoth Berlin protest was advertised and not opposed; it developed as a mass community event and could not have been touched.

Break-down of the SED. The ruling communist party, (Socialist Unity Party, SED), was thought to be, and thought itself, strong at the commencement of August. In December, after splits, mass resignations, leadership spills and wholesale retreat from its policies in government, it was preparing final defensive positions at an emergency Congress, where the

“leading role” (monopoly of power) of the communist party was dropped, and a new party proclaimed on democratic socialist lines. Altogether **78** stories were written about this process in the six news outlets.

In the Summer several reports concentrated on Erich Honecker’s illness, with some speculation about likely political implications, and on his recovery, (T 31.8.89, 12.9.89; IHT 15-26.9.89). There was the incident of Gorbachev’s meeting with the Central Committee, then Honecker’s confrontation with critics at that body, and resignation from his offices under pressure - recognised in news reports as a sensational break in the order of events, (Aust 16-19.10.89; T 18.10.89; IHT 19.10.89; ABC-R 19.10.89; ABC-TV 19.10.89; GW 29.10.89). The appointment of Egon Krenz as Secretary General had been expected; his election to the state Presidency by the Volkskammer was controversial, and drew attention, because 26 members, mostly from the small client parties, opposed it (IHT, ABC-R 26.10.89; GW 29.10.89). Within two weeks the communist government resigned in the heat of the new wave of emigration and intensified street protests (T, IHT, ABC-R 8.11.89, ABC-TV 9.11.89), precipitating resignation of the politburo and full Central Committee; then the later replacement of nearly half its members including closest associates of Honecker; and the appointment of Hans Modrow as Prime Minister (IHT 8.11.89; T, Aust, ABC-R 9.11.89). The reconstituted politburo then declared for free elections and free travel across the Wall. Its mishandling of communication over the decision on the Berlin Wall may have added to the chaos and confusion of the moment, but the impression was already abroad that this political party had become an irrelevance in terms of the mood of the public; it publicly accepted that its options on emigration had been reduced to one solution, and that its own best choice was to cease obstructing change. The new Ministry under Modrow promoted a reform program but could not avert further disintegration of the communist party, leading to resignation of the whole politburo, including Egon Krenz, in early December, (T 3-4.12.89; ABC-R 4.10.89; IHT 5.12.89; GW 10.12.89), ahead of the emergency Congress.

Week at the Berlin Wall. The story of the Berlin Wall was seen to have millennial qualities; public engagement was the key factor; a mass public in East Germany had appropriated vital decision-making from the government; a world public had appropriated the reading of the event as a triumph for humanity. In the Guardian’s report: “It was one of those very rare, absolutely electrifying moments when the ordinary lay people take over and all the professionals -from prognosticators to border guards - get quietly out of the way” (GW 19.11.89). More orthodox

political work had to start again even during the week of the celebrations, to forge a workable settlement for Berlin and Germany; but it would need to be a settlement in accord with the key demands of the crowd - democracy for East Germany with freedom to travel to the West. In the meantime news media would cope with the hubbub and movement, dealing with much more than the rational routines of coverage in normal times. This involved **122** reports as recorded from the six media outlets.

The West Berlin Mayor, Walter Momper, gave the occasion some of its ceremonial and inspirational form, pronouncing the often-repeated line, "Europe is a different place this week", (GW 19.11.89); striding across the no-man's land of Potsdamer Platz to shake hands with his East German counterpart Erhard Krack (T, IHT, ABC-R 13.11.89); and being host to the Chancellor Helmut Kohl who told a town hall rally that Germans should strive for unity and self-determination (T11.11.89; Aust, IHT 11-12.11.89). This media treatment includes the flow of numbers, an estimated two-million East Germans crossing on the first weekend (T 13.11.89); empty streets in East Berlin, a down-turn in annual Christmas shopping figures there, and interviews with some stay-at-homes who did not bother to go over to the West to have a look (T 13, 14, 30.11.89); the shopping boom in the West, people displaying a marked interest in hardware for home improvements, amongst many other things; and a trade getting under way in souvenir pieces of the Wall (T 7.12.89). The East German authorities announced their intentions to keep the Brandenburg Gate closed off; it was blockaded by crowds, and in a week there was public discussion about getting it open by Christmas (IHT 13, 15.11.89; Aust, T 16.11.89). With great congestion at all the crossing points, more openings were made, and the spectacle of crowds cheering on the heavy equipment breaking down the Berlin Wall, got high priority (T, ABC-R 11.11.89; Aust, IHT 11-12.11.89; ABC-TV 12.11.89). The sealed-off, so-called "ghost stations" on the shared U-Bahn line running beneath the two sides of the city, including Potsdamer Platz, were re-opened; and amid the stories of fraternisation between East and West, a party of cross-country runners went over on the first day to take part in an event in West Germany (T11,13.11.89).

No particular art or inventiveness was called for on the part of media reporters or producers in this feast of feature material and significant new moves, though positively creative treatments would abound. The material was extraordinary and proclaimed itself. Publishing reflections on the week of events, the news media being reviewed here gave preference to the notion of a social movement overcoming resistance to change. The writer Gunter Grass was given space in

the IHT to observe that a fundamental change had taken place in relations between East and West Germany, “under pressure from the people”, (though he counseled keeping “a clear head amidst emotion” when it came to considering German reunification) (IHT 13.11.89). A former British Ambassador to Bonn, Sir Julian Bullard, also wrote that reunification had become the issue, out of a process in which “events rather than governments have been in command”. He proposed “self-determination” would have to be a key factor in future change (GW 19.11.89); and the journalist Flora Lewis, registering the views of Berlin citizens on events since 1961, observed more poetically, “the city of war and danger is now the symbol of a changing world” (IHT 28.11.89).

- (1) *Gerasimov later expatiated on the exchange, which he said was followed by moves on the part of Schabowski and others in the leadership to establish direct lines of contact with Gorbachev. “Gorbachev was talking about times are changing. We must change with the times. So this was how he was talking. He was not talking directly to Honecker; look you are old, you don’t understand; you must step down or you must change your ways radically. He didn’t say that. He couldn’t. It was diplomacy after all, and it was because Gorbachev used this kind of language, it was easy for his counterpart simply to ignore it, just to nod, I agree, as if it didn’t concern him personally”, Op. Cit. “We Are the People”, episode 3, Producer Misha Glennie, “The Europeans”, ABC RN, 17.10.99.*
- (2) See Chapter 5, “Wall Process; Border crossers and demonstrators”.

CHAPTER NINE

REVIEW OF MEDIA COVERAGE – THREE

POLISH TRANSITION

Installation of the government led by Solidarity in Poland was followed in a strong flow of news stories which continued into September 1989, where this monitoring exercise commenced. It was heralded as the “end of the communist system in Poland”, although in the absence of precedents, that still needed to be said cautiously. Later concerns included church-state relations, Poland’s adamant position on retaining the Western border with a reunified Germany, and its campaign for large-scale economic aid from the West.

This section takes in **445** news items about Poland during the six months to the end of January 1990. The defeat of the Communist Party in Poland helped provoke similar changes in the neighbouring Eastern bloc countries. Because of the transient successes of earlier Solidarity campaigns and a degree of free movement and publishing, the country had been regarded askance for some years by the East German government. A small resident Western media contingent was already working in Poland before the start of the industrial unrest in the Summer of 1988, which had led to the Round Table negotiations, elections, and the victory of Solidarity. Media interest had intensified with these events, and the country being generally open to Western journalists, the elections process and negotiations that followed were well scrutinised, though still treated with skepticism. It remained to be seen whether a non-communist government might at the end of it all be permitted. With the actual installation of a Solidarity Prime Minister, Tadeusz Mazowiecki, on 24.8.89, a range of active issues then came onto the news agenda: fresh urgency in Poland’s relations with those two major influences of its history, Germany and Russia; future relations between the Catholic Church and the state; policy to deal with an overbearing economic crisis; the apportioning of power among the political forces in Poland, especially the ascendant Solidarity and diminished communist party.

The communist leader at the beginning of August, Mieczysław Rakowski, who had a past record as a moderniser, signalled an intention to fight for position against the fact of Solidarity’s ability to command majority support in the joint houses of parliament. Taking

over as Secretary General of the Communist Party he relinquished the Prime Ministership in favour of General Czeslaw Kiszczak (T 1.8.89, GW 6.8.89), who, in a largely public process, negotiated with other political parties but failed to form a government (IHT 11, 15.8.89). In the background a new strike wave had started against deteriorating economic conditions (T 12.8.89), and a plan to nominate the charismatic Solidarity leader Lech Walesa as Prime Minister goaded the communist side to negotiate more urgently for a compromise. Given Walesa's prominence this incident was to receive front page attention in the West (IHT 17.8.89). He remained a commanding presence, giving his blessing to Solidarity's formal accession to power, a few days before it happened, at a rally addressed jointly with Mazowiecki at St Brygida's Church in Gdansk (IHT 21.8.89).

The decision to form a Solidarity-led coalition under Mazowiecki, to include communists, was endorsed by Moscow, not so surprisingly in view of Mikhail Gorbachev's declaration for autonomy of states at Strasbourg the month before (T 18.8.89); statements on the decision carried in Moscow media reiterated that it was "for Poles to decide" (T 22.8.89; IHT 18.8.89; Aust 29.11.89). Relations were worked out in a co-operative spirit. A well-publicised telephone call by Rakowski to Gorbachev, amid some public derision, resulted in the communist party withdrawing threats to stay out of the national government, if it were unhappy with the negotiations (IHT 23.8.89). The former US Presidential security advisor Zbigniew Brzezinski considered "Rakowski seems to be agitating for Soviet political intervention, deliberately exaggerating the alleged dangers (of Solidarity's accession to power) to the Soviet world" (GW 27.8.89). The Soviet government sent congratulations to Mazowiecki upon his election by Parliament (Aust 26-27.8.89), and there were conciliatory moves in the new government's early weeks: the USSR was to assent to pressure from Poland for more information about the Katyn massacre (The secret execution of Polish officers under the Soviet occupation) (T 2.11.89); Lech Walesa proclaimed that Poland under the new order would stay in the Warsaw Pact alliance (T 18.8.89, GW 3.9.89), and General Kiszczak, during a transient crisis, publicly affirmed there would be no more *coups d'etats*, Soviet-approved or otherwise (IHT 11.9.89).

Mazowiecki, by world consent holding an "unambiguous mandate" (T 19.8.89, GW 27.8.89), was elected by show of hands in parliament and sworn in before a large international media contingent. Among news media, patient and curious attention to the domestic political negotiations in Poland, piecemeal developments briefly mentioned on back pages for what

they might lead to, had changed to commemoration of a large break-through affecting all of Europe (T, IHT, ABC-R, ABC-TV 25.8.89; GW 3.9.89). A cabinet emerged after further difficult negotiations with a minority grouping of seven members from Solidarity holding economic portfolios they considered necessary for attacking the economic crisis; five communist Ministers with some of the security and defence portfolios they had demanded; and a balance of members from small parties (Aust 9-10.9.89; T 6,9.9.89; IHT 6,11.9.89; ABC-TV 20.8.89, 15.9.89; GW 10, 17.9.89). Poland had gone over to an open parliamentary process. On the day of the swearing-in, elected Solidarity deputies chatted with correspondents on the floor of the Sejm itself, with some sense of wonderment over the change.

In office the new Polish government had to take on another product of transformation in Eastern Europe, a review of the issue of Germany's Western border. Chancellor Helmut Kohl gave this a high priority, in view of pressures from German nationalist interests and ethnic Germans in Poland. His presence there at the time of the opening of the Berlin Wall was to assist this German population through obtaining assurances on their rights, and the visit was considered important enough that after a short interruption to go to Berlin it was resumed (Aust 3,14.9.89; GW 19.11.89). Opinion in Poland was almost unanimously hostile to the idea of German reunification because it would re-open discussion of former German territory transferred to the country after 1945. A blunt rejection by Rakowski was even stronger than the public objections being passed on to Kohl by the Polish right wing (T 18.11.89). Through open diplomacy the Chancellor achieved a qualified acceptance of his assurances: West Germany, like East Germany, recognised the Oder-Neisse line; under the Bundesrepublik constitution Germany as a whole could only do so formally and finally through a democratic process, which would demand a settlement of the "German question" under international law, for example a treaty to end the conditions of the Second World War (T15.11.89; IHT 2,24.1.90; Aust 9.11.89, 9.1.90). The Ten-point Plan produced by Kohl in December, on steps to reunification, was rejected strongly by the Polish Foreign Ministry (T 8.1.89); the government later demanded and achieved special representation and consultation for Poland as part of the "4+2" negotiations (France, UK, USA, USSR, plus FRG and GDR) to officially resolve the allied occupation of Germany and the War.

Problems with religion also brought back past traumas to be reviewed and resolved, in this case, unexpectedly in the form of the Catholic Primate Cardinal Jozef Glemp being accused

of anti-semitism. His support for construction of a convent at Auschwitz and stubborn dismissal of Jewish objections also brought into discussion the relationship between the Church and Solidarity. Officers of Solidarity such as the media spokesman Janusz Onyszkiewicz had been relaying a message to journalists since the June elections that the Church was out of all political involvements; the Auschwitz issue was represented on many sides as “calamitous” for Solidarity’s efforts in staking out positions for the national government (IHT 6.9.89). The issue invoked the mythology of Polish anti-semitism, and was given consistent coverage outside Poland, most publications returning to the story once every few weeks. The American newspaper, the IHT, (possibly considering a large Jewish and ethnic Polish clientele in its potential readership), was more intensely interested, providing 30 reports from the beginning of August to early December. Mazowiecki as an eminent Catholic layman achieved strong ties with the Church. He relayed a message from the Cardinal that his government could count on the Church’s “sympathy” (GW 3.9.89); he had delightedly reported on a congratulatory phone call from the Polish Pope, at the news conference on the day of his swearing-in (ABC-R 25.8.89), and visited him in Rome, on which occasion Pope John-Paul joined in public calls for economic aid to Poland (IHT 21,27.10.89; T 21.10.89).

Poland’s dire economic straits were dealt with at the levels of reporting on consumer hunger, shortages, inflation and relief of distress; the government austerity policy; the large-scale Western aid packages, never large enough in Polish eyes; political campaigns in Western circles to promote a bigger aid program; and Lech Walesa’s international campaign as a traveling ambassador for assistance to Poland. Hardship for common citizens which had formed the base of Solidarity’s demands would continue to be a crucial background factor and problem, close to the surface, much-exhibited in news media as a large element in the Polish “reality”. News items about conditions of life would be concerned with hip pocket impacts of devaluation of the zloty, and “money chaos” (T 12.9, IHT 18-19.11.89), moods of pessimism (GW 27.8.89), increased emigration (GW 24.9.89), a food supply crisis with proposals for food stamps (T 3.10.89; IHT 28.11.89), black marketeering (T 16.10.89), alarming poverty trends (T 3.11.89), crime waves (T 9.11.89), drivers taking their cars off the road because unable to pay registration (Aust 6-7.1.90), or new price rises on basic goods (Aust 2.1.90). Henri de Bresson’s comment in *Le Monde*, “Poland’s open market means empty shops” (GW 27.8.89), would apply, until shops began to fill, with prices then rising well beyond the experience or means of the clientele.

In addition to immediate food aid programs in the hundreds of millions of dollars, early international assistance - investment support, credits, grants, technological and management support- included a fund of US\$1-billion to support partial tradability of the Polish currency, and an IMF fund of US\$725-million (IHT 2-3.9.89, 26.12.89, 4.1.90; Aust 1,22.9.89; GM 26.11.89). Bilateral assistance from West Germany was reaching US\$1-billion in October (IHT 13.10.89). Editorials in the IHT in particular supported claims by American economists and others that the austerity program deserved support as an investment and as a sign of faith in free market systems, but would fail without strong outside backing (e.g. IHT editorial, “Poland needs help quickly” 26.10.89, and “Democratic Poland can make it if the West weighs in quickly”, 31.10.89); the Bush administration and Congress gave qualified responses in both words and additional money (IHT 19-20.8.89, 5,13,14,28.9.89; GW 3.9.89, 29.10.89; Aust 22.9.89; T 2.9.89, 4.10.89). The “market economy” program of spending cuts, deregulation and privatisation adopted in Poland would be disparaged as wild “Thatcherism” (T 2.10.89), though there were persuasive public appeals from trusted leaders, like Walesa, to give the system a fair trial, and early organised opposition, e.g. demonstrations headed by the communist party trade union leader, Alfred Miodowicz, got only modest support (IHT 14.9.89, 7-8, 14-15.10.89; proposed no-strike agreement GW 3.9.89). Walesa showed a very acute understanding of the urgency and primacy of the economic situation and confronted foreign governments and economic forums with the idea of a common interest in sharing resources with new entrants into the open economic community. Already a celebrity he entertained journalists with a homespun approach and readiness to be rude, sometimes telling government leaders, e.g. in Canada or France, their contributions were shamefully too small (ABC-R 1,6.9.89; Aust 7.9.89; GW 16.11.89; T 20.9.89, 17, 30.11.89, 2.12.89). His itineraries included Germany, the European Community headquarters in Belgium, Ireland, North America and Japan.

Internal politics in Poland, the first state to leave the communist fold, continued to draw world interest. A position was taken by the victors of the moment that the change to non-communist rule, in an economic depression, should not be triumphalist; leaders of Solidarity assembled at Gdansk days before taking over government, stressed there’d be “no fiesta” (ABC-R 21.8.89; IHT 17.10.89). As Deputy Prime Minister, Solidarity’s Bronislaw Geremek announced a clearing out of communist party officials from the state bureaucracy who’d been resisting implementation of government policy (ABC-R, IHT 18.1.90); a paramilitary force used in the past against strikers from Solidarity was disbanded (IHT 30.9-1.10.89). A most outstanding

development was the decision of the Communist Party, (the Polish United Workers' Party), to disband, and then re-establish itself from January 1990 with a democratic, left-of-centre program; (the new formation would be elected to government in a little over a decade), (IHT 4.10, Aust, ABC-R, IHT 29.1.90).

The function of *finding out* was less difficult for news media than in East Germany as Poland's revolution had really been available to world inspection, despite periods of closure, since the strikes in 1969 and early days of Solidarity; its institutions were relatively open; the complicating factor of a partner Western state, FRG to the GDR, was absent. On the other hand *understanding* Poland's dilemmas and considering solutions that were put forward remained a problem for analysis; and serious attempts were included in the coverage reviewed here. Zbigniew Brzezinski, the former US National Security Advisor, a specialist on Soviet affairs, assessed Poland's change in terms of a dilemma for the Soviet Union, in January 1990 calling it, "the most important upheaval in the communist world since the death of Stalin." He saw at issue, "the future character of communism including the fate of Soviet perestroika"; and "the stability of East West détente and of Mikhail Gorbachev's commitment to it." To avoid provoking a reaction, the West would need to disavow any impression that it would "inject itself geopolitically into Poland". He said Poland itself had suffered through the exclusion of the most talented, ambitious and innovative citizens from the economy; its chance was an economic program that would "mobilise the best brains" (IHT 23.8.89).

Specialists in finance and economics had similar problems to all others in considering the change in Poland in relation to its viability, and also, to possible Soviet responses; imagination did not yet permit a realisation that the great power was vastly weakened. Bradley Graham from the Washington Post: "The formation of a Solidarity-led government in Warsaw has generated new problems for Western leaders in deciding how much aid to send to Poland and on what terms. Officials in Western capitals acknowledged the importance of ensuring the success of the new Polish government to boost the prospects of reform movements throughout the Soviet Bloc. But until Solidarity leaders can present a feasibility program for economic stabilisation and restructuring, US and European governments and banks appear hesitant to commit anywhere near the multiple billions of dollars that Poland needs to resuscitate a devastated economy. Even then ... there are limits to what Western nations can afford as well as concerns about how the Soviet Union would view an outpouring of aid from the West to a strategic Soviet ally" (GW 27.8.89). Levels of economic assistance

to Eastern Europe would continue to disappoint new governments in the region, as anxiety about the attitude of the Soviet Union would fall away.

The players were unready on all sides, including Tadeusz Mazowiecki as Prime Minister, interviewed by Sylvie Kauffman for Le Monde: “It’s the situation which has changed with bewildering speed. I had thought it would evolve more slowly.” He stressed the new government would fulfill all its responsibilities as a member of the Warsaw Pact. As for reform, he was moving away from communist government towards a “normal situation” in government; and as a guiding principle, “the important thing is to tell people the truth” (GW 3.9.89). Polish relations with the Federal Republic of Germany, over a border which the two states did not yet share, were receiving detailed background treatments by the start of 1990, helped out with archive footage and maps. Peter Millar in the Times recounted the story of the settlement at Yalta, and the expulsion of 13-million Germans from Poland, to explain the attitude of the West German Chancellor, who had disavowed “correcting old unjust expulsions with new ones”, but had again expressly refused to guarantee the Western border (T 9.1.90).

CHAOS IN EAST GERMANY

Destabilisation under Krenz and Modrow

Attempts by the Communist Party (SED) and government of East Germany from the middle of October to gain time and stabilise the situation through reform initiatives including right to travel; thwarted by growing public alienation and dissent; in a short time, political intervention by the West German party in government early in 1990 to take the prize by then on offer. This section of the review commences after the fall of the Berlin Wall.

The process of collapse in the GDR got worse after the Wall opening in mid-November; mass protest all over the country and the mass walk-out across its borders carried on through the whole period into the new year; the country was at peace, but completely distracted from ordinary life, in turmoil and ungovernable. This disintegration over the period 9.11.89 to 31.1.90 is documented in **420** reports in the six publications. As they show, in the first week of December the Central Committee of the SED resigned, not to be replaced, effectively ending the Party’s control over government as a coherent political force. The absence of

armed violence put limits on language used to describe the calamity and confusion of the week, though all agreed on a “vacuum of power” or “leadership void” (IHT 5-7.12.89); even, a country on the “verge of chaos” (Aust 4.12.89). The Prime Minister, Hans Modrow, seen as a possible “German Gorbachev” at least among political parties and news media (IHT 6.11.89), soldiered on, proposing a restructure of the economy, liberalisation and co-operation with West Germany; which shortly rejected his approaches and began its take-over of the GDR. That outcome was much in line with demands being forcefully made in the streets by late December, for “One Fatherland”. The mass public showed no interest in revised state policies or concessions from a GDR government; if there was a collective mind it was plainly made up, fixed on removing all communists from authority and achieving reunification with West Germany.

Again a review of news media coverage provides a direct and weighted account of events; identifying a trend; forming into different strands or processes that might be resolved after some weeks or months. An apparently orderly change after the installation of Modrow (T 14.11.89, ABC-R 13.11.89) - under a slogan that citizens as a general rule could "do anything not expressly forbidden" (Aust 18-19.11.89) - saw some further concessions including liberalisation of media laws and new promises on free elections (Aust 19.11.89; IHT 20.11), though Krenz as Communist Party leader and President would continue to oppose "dangerous" ideas about reunification (ABC-TV 19.11.89). Ominously for that point of view, Kohl in the meantime was briefing the European Community summit at Paris on the implications of the opening of the Berlin Wall, stressing the importance of self-determination by the Germans (GW 12,26.11.89; T 18.11.89; ABC-R 19.11.89; ABC-TV 19.11.89). In East Germany a date was set for round table consultations with opposition groups (T27.11.89; ABC-R 8.12.89), and the Volkskammer effected the symbolic and much-awaited act of surrender, removal of the leading role of the Communist Party from the constitution (IHT 2.12.89; GW 3.12.89).

The new leadership sanctioned a highly publicised campaign against the former leader Erich Honecker, with much information provided to the state media organs, including investigation of alleged corrupt practices, abuse of power and finally treason, for which he was indicted on 15.1.90 (IHT 16.1.90), as it happened on the same date as a mob sacked the headquarters of the State Security police (Stassi) (T, ABC-R, Aust 16.1.89; GW 21.1.90); such were the times. His legal case was extensively reported (T, IHT 24.11.89; ABC-TV 6.12.89). He was

expelled from the Volkskammer with more than 20 other members of the former leadership on 16.11.89 (IHT 17.11.89), and expelled from the SED with 11 others a fortnight later (IHT 4.12.89). After periods of house arrest and hospitalisation for cancer treatment (IHT 4.1.89; ABC-R 15.11.89, 29.1.90), Honecker eventually was allowed to leave the country. The persistence of this pursuit of the previously lionised Head of State was indicative of the sense of betrayal and disillusionment being experienced in the communist republic; also a measure of the determination of his successors to distance themselves from his government and attempt a new start. It was a sign of the divided state of the communist party that while Krenz as the immediate successor very publicly abandoned Erich Honecker, Modrow in his turn would demonstrate his disassociation from Krenz and his allies. A would-be reformer demoted in earlier times, Hans Modrow had recently led the mass protests at his home city Dresden, and in parliament attacked the previous leadership for having "lied to the people" (ABC-R 13.11.89; TV 19.11.89).

It could therefore have been no surprise to citizens in December to see the Party apparatus disintegrate under pressure, with resignation of the full Central Committee including Egon Krenz the Secretary General, projecting East Germany onto a "slide to political chaos" (T 4.12.89; also Aust, ABC-R 4.12.89; IHT 4,5.12.89). Krenz resigned his remaining offices including the Presidency a few days later, and was stripped of Party membership in late January (ABC-TV 4,7.12.89; ABC-R, T 7.12.89, 20.1.90; IHT 5, 7.12.89; Aust 7, 8.12.89). The emergency Congress of the Party proposed for some months would be moved forward to take place in one week's time. In this moment of crisis the first round table discussions at national level began, between the opposition groups and a reform communist government lacking a communist party leadership of any kind to instruct it. They agreed that free elections should take place on 6.5.90.

The following news report covered some pressing issues and may give an indication of the mood of the time: "Government and opposition leaders in East Germany have had their first round-table meeting, called to map out plans for free elections. Lee Duffield reports from East Berlin that the two sides spent much of their time talking about how to deal with growing disorder in the country... The acting President Manfred Gerlach and the Prime Minister Hans Modrow met leading figures from the Churches and the reform group, New Forum. They said later they had concentrated on fears that crowds were getting out of hand ... The head of the National Security Bureau (formerly the feared and hated State Security Force) had already

made a public complaint that his officers and their families were victims of a wave of anger. Senior army officers have warned troops to stop attempts being made to break into military bases, to steal arms ... Amid the latest protests a big crowd in East Berlin, well over five-thousand, took over the main city street during peak hour, demanding free elections and the reunification of Germany. Lee Duffield East Berlin” (ABC radio, 8.12.89, morning bulletins).

Other developments of the week were a debate on disbandment of the former Stassi, and changes in regulations to depoliticise the Army (GW 24.12.89). Once again at a time of extreme crisis for the GDR the West German Chancellor was at work on more orderly arrangements which also would lay further groundwork for any early move to reunification. He had dropped his bombshell, the “Ten-point Plan” on steps towards reunification, formulated without consultation with any other parties or governments, at the end of November (T, IHT, Aust 29.11.89; ABC-R 5.12.89). Now he was assuring the NATO Summit at Brussels on 4.12.89 that West Germany would remain in the alliance, and agreeing that a reunification process would need to be in the context of a stronger European Community (ABC-R, T 5.12.89).

Members of the communist party achieved their sought-after period of time to regroup, at the Congress in East Berlin running more than a week (9-18.12.89); a free-for-all of rank-and-file speeches, confessions by officials, and open media access. The cost had been the abandonment of long-standing policy objectives and loss of unchallenged power to run the country. The new Secretary General, Gregor Gysi, expressed some relief at that change; the Party at last was “breaking with Stalinism”, he said. It was later re-named the “Party of Democratic Socialism”. News media noted the delegates in a “dejected” state, and obtained some revelations about the thinking of many in the communist world: Honecker sent a message regretting he had “deceived the public and himself”; a message from Gorbachev said life “cannot be shackled by dogma”; he said lies and double standards were “poisonous to socialism” and impeded its establishing democracy. While this congress drew great attention the media reports on its deliberations had to be mixed with more urgent messages from outside. On one hand the government under Modrow was striving against time to produce a technocratic solution, an economic plan and a deal with West Germany. On the other hand the noise from the street was deafening, and in a few days the mass confrontation with Kohl at Dresden would have a deciding impact. For journalists, observing and reporting the “collapse” of the SED was a matter of leaving and re-visiting the congress hall from day

to day, to keep up with the hectic pace of events everywhere else. (ABC-R 7-10,18.12.89; ABC-TV 9,10,17.12.89; Aust 11,12,18.12.89; T 6.12.89; IHT 19.12.89; GW 17.12.89)

The Leipzig demonstrations had become steadily more self-conscious as a forum influencing the direction of events. On 20.11.89 the crowds were made doubly aware of their catalytic effect by the fact of a demonstration on a similar scale, 100000 protestors, at the same time, on the streets of Prague, as the “Velvet revolution” had begun (ABC-R 21.11.89). A split developed on 12.12.89 with fighting between proponents of GDR-only democratisation and supporters of reunification, disconcerted to hear themselves called “Nazis”. Opposition leaders got the protestors to stop carrying provocative banners during the next few weeks (IHT 11,12,19.12.89, 9.1.90; T 12.12.89; 24.1.90; Aust 13,15.12.89; GW 14.1.90; ABC-TV 9,10,24.1.90; ABC-R 10.12.89). With extreme right groups including West Germans appearing late in the year an “anti-fascist” demonstration drew 250000 participants in Berlin (Aust, T, IHT 4.1.90).

The turmoil and confusion were represented in reports of myriad events. A standing ban on the singer Wolf Bierman was enforced, then decried in a public campaign as ridiculous, and overturned, ending in a large Bierman concert at Leipzig; the director of the enormous Leipzig Barnhof outlined his problems keeping the hundreds of trains running, putting up emergency plans including replacement of absent staff, gone to the West, with national servicemen; at Weimar 20000 citizens joined a demonstration, pointing out that the number was half the population of the town so well known to history; in another small city a recently-appointed SED Mayor, notwithstanding some reform credentials, was confronted and made to resign; people at Gotha in Thuringia, satisfied with their contribution to the national movement, proclaimed it “our friendly revolution”; news bulletins gave a round-up on the cities having demonstrations each night, usually at six to nine places around the country; towers along the Berlin Wall were demolished; political hoardings would be taken down from the Trabant car factory; the ultra-rightist Republican party demanded to be registered in the GDR; and matching the same dramatic action in the Baltic states a “human chain” was formed across East Germany (T15,17,21,25.11.89, 4.12.89; IHT19,20,24.11.89; Aust 14.12, 6-7.1.90; ABC-R 20-21.11.89; GW 14.1.90).

Modrow, together with the Finance Minister Christa Luft, wrote a plan for economic change emphasising market principles, withdrawal of bureaucratic planning and a tradeable currency

(Aust 15.1.90). This was to be put to West Germany with proposals for economic treaties and initial assistance in the area of DM15-billion. Though meant to be a stabilising factor it was developed in the context of inquiries which, in their reports to Parliament, revealed the so-called leading East European economy to be in a parlous state, with disastrous conditions also in the natural environment (ABC-R 30.1.90; GW 24.12.89). Accounts were coming in for the exit of millions of workers in terms of collapsing services and dramatic drops in industrial production (T 5.12.89).

In an important subsidiary issue, the powerful sports federation DTSB was found to be close to insolvency; and ambitious national sports programs, admittedly already compromised over the doping issue, were curtailed (T 25.11.89; IHT 14.12.89; GW 14.1.90; ABC-R 27.1.90). Revelations being made included details of corruption on a grand scale, followed up with sensational arrests, and the creation of a “citizens committee against corruption” - a monitoring body, in the fact of its own formation a show of disgust (Aust 8.12.89; T 2.12.89; ABC-R 5.12.89, 23.1.90; IHT 12.12.89). The corruption issue was one area where a separate East German culture or identity asserted itself. The deception, double standards and unfairness struck home to citizens of the republic founded on egalitarian principles, and so revelations of official malpractice were a strong domestic concern, receiving far more attention in the GDR than in outside news media. In terms of orthodox news values it had intense proximity in East Germany. On the very night of the announcement on the Berlin Wall, 9.11.89, the story to be written from Schabowski’s media conference was about abuse of privileges by the *nomenklatura*, East German journalists breaking out of past constraints to lead the questioning. Gunter Schabowski’s last-minute statement on travel moved the matter aside only for a short time.

Helmut Kohl’s visit to the GDR in December has been referred to often since as a turning point, in that way being placed alongside of Gorbachev’s message to the SED politburo two months before. At Dresden Kohl was cheered wildly by a huge crowd, many waving West German flags and shouting “one fatherland”. The city was Modrow’s power base but he received little attention. Reporters had arrived in a large group after the Monday protests in Leipzig the night before. Several were caught in the hectic crush of this Dresden crowd, where they heard the declaration from Kohl, “God bless the citizens of our common fatherland”. His emotional response was at least a courtesy to such a determined audience, but the experience of the moment was powerful enough to fortify the resolve of the Chancellor

and his government when they moved, not long after, for immediate reunification. Already the two German leaders had put different emphases on their talks in Dresden. Kohl, distracted from the agenda on economic co-operation, spoke of reunification in peaceful circumstances and in a framework of all European countries. Modrow when forced onto the subject rebuffed the West German proposal for federated German states, preferring to speak of a close association between two sovereign countries. His main interest was in the formation of commissions for economic co-operation, and potential West German investment in communications and transport in the GDR (T, IHT, ABC-Radio 20.12.89; Aust 21.12.89; ABC-TV 23.12.89).

By January the stance taken by the new executive, in both Party and government, as reformers ready to negotiate with other parties, including the West, was hardly being taken seriously. In the minds of the public and of partners outside, the GDR was being seen as an authority without either legitimacy or power. The fate of a disarmament proposal by Gregor Gysi was indicative. He proposed a nuclear free zone for both German republics with 50% German force reductions on both sides and a march-out of foreign troops. It was immediately disregarded by NATO saying it would consider only comprehensive agreements not negotiations on a regional basis (IHT 8.9.1.90). Modrow proposed a plan to the Volkskammer for handing it more authority, but the building in that moment was staked out by hooting crowds waving the Bundesrepublik flag (T 12.1.90). A Times article depicted a melancholy and cathartic scene, Modrow walking to West Berlin, observing the removal of the barrier, while workers cleaned up debris from the sacking of the Stassi headquarters (T 23.1.90).

The breakthrough in this, the undertaking to step down quickly from power at public behest, came shortly afterward. Modrow made an appeal to patriotic regional feeling for the GDR, calling on non-communist parties to join a coalition to “save the republic”; demonstrators called on the Communist Party to relinquish power immediately; an agreement was reached on a coalition to act in caretaker mode, before free elections, now brought forward to the much earlier date of 18.3.90. (IHT, T 23, 29, 31.1.90; ABC-R 30, 31.1.90; Aust 31.1.90). Resistance to German reunification also weakened. Modrow went to Gorbachev in Moscow and both conceded for the first time that reunification would be, eventually, inevitable; Gorbachev affirming also it would need to be a European not an exclusively German process (IHT, ABC-R 31.1.90). A last crisis, on a volatile policy issue set the seal on the evaporation of state authority. In December the government had agreed, at the round table, to abolish the

security organisation, the former Stassi, though it warned that could usher in “mob rule” and “chaos”. Regional offices were closed, but it was then proposed, in the new year, to set up a second-generation security body, to maintain protection against threats from neo-Nazis, the drug trade or terrorism (ABC-R 8.12.89, 2.1.90; IHT 8.12.89; Aust 14.12.89, 5.1.90; GB24.12.89). This revival of a “Stassi” being anathema to millions, it was denounced at the Leipzig rallies; the Stassi headquarters was attacked and ransacked; and the proposal dropped (ABC-R 11.1.90; GW 14, 21.1.90; Aust 9,17.1.90).

Modrow was publicly aware of the danger of elections to the communist government, seeking to demand at the beginning of his term that the West German Chancellor not intervene in setting election dates for the GDR (IHT 13.11.89); and telling Der Spiegel he believed he would be beaten in an open poll (Aust 14.11, 4.12.89). He called the early election date the only solution for unrest and the crumbling economy (Aust 30.1.90), but by very wide consensus the move was a death notice for his government, which would be left disabled – in day-by-day political language a “lame duck”. The brusque dismissal of Modrow’s inter-German co-operation plans, at Bonn on 13 February, came as a sign of this weakness and a demonstration that serious moves had been decided on to get reunification on terms most favourable to the West. This decision-making was new and unannounced, so nothing would be spoon-fed to news media, or for that matter to the East German delegation; both were in the situation of working out the answers on the basis of raw indicators. Modrow travelled to Bonn with 17 Ministers on 13.2.90 prepared for consultation on treaties dealing with joint concerns especially the economy and environment. Journalists at the venue, at the Christian Democrat Party convention centre, perceived an unscripted turn in the proceedings in the absence of an anticipated communique on these matters. There was the factor of information being circulated on new voter intention polls foreshadowing a huge win for conservatives in the GDR. In that case, in terms of electoral politics there would be much for Chancellor Kohl to gain from not forging a new deal with the GDR; there could be some risks in agreeing to it. Debate had started in Germany on monetary union using the Deutschmark, and a determination to go onward with this proposal indicated the trend of decision-making.

The television news correspondent John Cameron described the outcome as ultimately the Bonn government getting its way: “Modrow arrived in an unenviable situation ... he had promised those he shared power with he would not today negotiate for currency union. It’s his first visit here as East German leader and likely to be his last. He faces almost certain defeat

in the elections on March the eighteenth. It was more than plain today that East and West are unequal partners in the coming reunification, but some progress was made. They agreed to postpone the single currency issue until after the elections, but as of early next week a joint commission will start meeting to work out details of the monetary union, and that means making the powerful West German mark the legal tender for the East” (ABC-TV 14.2.90; see also ABC-R 14.2.90).

The record given here is contemporary and provides an explanation for the quick and generally peaceful death of a hitherto overbearing political regime. It was seen to occur firstly through the regime’s own failings and inconsistencies, especially its failures in creating wealth, as well as the opprobrium of its reliance on terror and the threat of Soviet intervention to preserve its stability. It occurred also because of the withdrawal of Soviet military backing; and because of the careful but constant efforts of the West German government, operating on many fronts - proffering symbols and propaganda; maintaining a constitutional national homeland and practical refuge for the emigres; engaging in diplomacy and providing money to help with external solutions, as when it reinforced the co-operation of the government of Hungary, and gave similar assistance to Poland.

Most dramatically the change came about because of the mass social movement of the East Germans, which achieved practical consensus over goals - democratic government, free movement, reunification- and asserted power by mobilising great numbers. In this emotional interregnum life itself became the life of the movement; nothing much else could be dealt with on a social scale; it was preoccupying and so became unanswerable. There were indications at all times of an awareness of the character of this power, as the power of a civil society. It would go well beyond vulgar pressure politics. While the drive to get to the West for whatever reason, from good pay to philosophical peace, provided people with strong reasons to join the demonstrations, they were seen also in great numbers following the themes of debate, turning out spontaneously, listening judiciously to leaders who might come forward - organising themselves, organising their thoughts. The many local gatherings featured high moments when a simple demand would be proclaimed, usually as a slogan, as “we are one people”. At other times there would be long hours of quiet assembly, some speech-making or a parade. The dissidents’ spokesperson in the West, Wolfgang Schenck, discussing the crowds’ insistence on some fundamental, not

placatory change, observed that political power was being transferred, “to the society” (ABC-R 8.11.89). In another version, in the break-up of ordinary routines of life, Church leaders proposed it was moral leadership the society had been lacking and should still look for. During a torrid week special religious services were located at Berlin’s Gethsemane Church, a political place pointedly re-dedicated to spiritual needs (IHT 8.12.89).

CHAPTER TEN

REVIEW OF MEDIA COVERAGE – FOUR

MOVING TO A EUROPEAN SETTLEMENT, AFTER THE BERLIN WALL

With the situation out of control in East Germany from late November, concerted international efforts were made to achieve a settlement, negotiated among the FRG and its European partners, the United States, the GDR and Soviet Union; there was summitry at Paris, Malta, Brussels and Strasbourg, and organisation of the “4+2” negotiation as the frame for settlement. Then the political settlement engineered by Kohl, a German initiative but respectful towards outside interests, was announced: his Ten-point Plan. Suddenly jettisoning “two Germanies” negotiations with the GDR, Kohl would bank on victory in the March elections in East Germany, then to move to reunification on the Bundesrepublik model in October 1990 - Germany in a united Europe.

HELMUT KOHL AND THE GERMAN REUNIFICATION PROCESS

On the other side of the “internal” German frontier the process, although immensely present in the public consciousness, was much more an institutional one managed by the Bonn government. Political leaders in the West worked hard at studying the crowds and reading the positions of their counterpart politicians in the Eastern bloc. They began diplomacy to put in place arrangements to accommodate a sweeping political, economic and social change in Europe. Coverage of this change by the news media, although dealing with the unknown, was a relatively familiar matter of following a schedule of meetings and announcements, then understanding, interpreting and reporting. For the six publications, **280** reports and features have been reviewed.

It became plain at the end of Summer in 1989 that the idea of a German reunification had insinuated itself into the flow of events. It was after all a favourite among various obvious possibilities, as one which had the special appeal of providing East Germans with quick access to the Western economy, and to protection of their rights within the West German state apparatus; it was the solution favoured by the West German government, now most actively interested in the flow of events. News features probing for explanations and

indications for the future found the leading actors most aware of the reunification issue. Typically the “spectre of a united Germany” was seen to be hanging over the proceedings (Aust 14.9.89); the cautious but frank West German diplomat Hans Schumacher, asked why his government should give such active assistance to the border crossers, would reply, “they are Germans” (ABC-TV 12.9.89). With the opening of the Berlin Wall the movement to reunification looked to be inescapable, but the debate over it would not be abandoned. Egon Krenz in a first contact that week with Chancellor Helmut Kohl strenuously denied any merger of the two Germanies could be allowed to follow (Aust 11-12.11.89). Opinion and news analysis of the time regarded it as natural that Kohl would begin to assert leadership in bringing all the parties together. Bernard Levin in the Times had described West Germany as a proven “pillar of peace and democracy” best equipped, and financed, to take this lead (T 23.10.89). When Kohl came forward with the “Ten-point Plan” in late November, it was a timely catch-up for the rightful lead player, though seen in slightly negative terms in one American view: “It has dawned on Kohl that the parade has started and he is scrambling to get back at the head of it” (Washington Post; GW 10.12.89).

Kohl had seized the moment of the opening of the Berlin Wall, telling the Bundestag one week later communism was a “total failure” and East Germans should have the option to decide for themselves if they would rejoin the West (IHT 17.11.89). He then addressed the special European Community summit at Paris, on Eastern Europe, on 18 November. It discussed the possibility of German reunification and agreed on principles for change, such as inviolability of frontiers and a commitment to the “1992” project for European unity. There was agreement on the principle put forward by Kohl, that longer-term economic assistance to East Germany would depend on democratisation – a multi-party system, voting by secret ballot and guaranteed human rights (GW 26.11.89; T 18,20.11.89; ABC-R 19.11.89; ABC-TV 19.11.89).

Francois Mitterrand the summit President had already declared, “France does not have to express any reservations concerning the reunification of Germany” (GW 19.11.89), but embarked on a public campaign to fortify that trust with undertakings, especially on future European unity. The record of diplomatic exchanges shows Mitterrand engaged closely with Mikhail Gorbachev, George Bush and Margaret Thatcher - the principal doubter over the value to Europe of a larger Germany (T 19,25.11.89). In this diplomacy the United States took an early stand that it did not share European apprehensions about Germany; would

support the general idea of reunification within an expanded European framework, and would itself expect to remain with Germany in a restructured NATO (GW 3.9.89; T 26.10.89). “In reaffirming United States support for eventual German reunification President George Bush has sought to reduce British and French resistance to the growing international role of West Germany” (Joseph Fitchett, IHT 28-29.10.89). The American position was formulated as the “Baker Doctrine” in a speech by the Secretary of State in Berlin on 12.12.89 (GW 24.12.89).

Mitterrand had obtained sufficient assurances and was able to present a “soft French line” (T18.12.89) when, in his national role and as EC President he met Bush at Martinique in December. He had accepted Secretary James Baker’s proposals on future European “architecture”, recognising that a “proper balance” would be maintained within the EC institutional framework, and that the USA would not be decoupling from Europe (ABC-TV 17.12.89; IHT 19.12.89, GW 4.1.90). There had been significant meetings with Kohl, notably at Bonn at the start of November, reflected in later statements that would link France’s acceptance of a united Germany to continuing German support for EC monetary union (T4.11.89; GW 12.11.89). It may have helped that the French public seemed rather untroubled by past anxieties over Germany, 63% favouring the idea of German reunification in a leading poll that October (GW 22.10.89). In the period under review, Mitterrand saw Gorbachev at Kiev in early December (T 7.12.89) and they continued a close collaboration during the coming year. Mitterrand maintained some pressure on the other Western allies to keep backing a collegiate “North Atlantic” approach, by making his visits to the emerging East European states, including the GDR - keeping open the possibility of more direct bi-lateral links with those countries. The French government and other parties, not least the United Kingdom, would maintain an independent interest. They remained available to help cultivate alternative arrangements when there might be a falling-out between the Eastern bloc states and West Germany, as steward of the key initiatives. “The new equilibrium of Germany must not happen at the expense of the equilibrium of Europe,” Mitterrand said, while readily proposing the reunified Germany could play a role within a strengthened European Community (IHT 11.12.89).

The Ten-point Plan given to the Bundestag in November proposed an orderly and democratic movement towards reunification but without a timetable. A prerequisite for any eventual union or federation would be an open democratic system in the GDR, with a free

vote to elect governments and approve constitutional changes. A model was offered for confederation of the two republics, to be achieved through the work of commissions in key policy fields including the economy, environment, transport, technology, health and culture. As for the region of South and Central Europe, the countries of the Eastern Bloc adopting democratic systems might move into a widened European Community. The plan drew on the debates of the preceding months. It was proposed as a “threat to none”, receiving bi-partisan support in West Germany, and the support of the United States, which noted its “shared values” especially freedom for East Germans to determine their own futures. President George Bush added his appreciation that the new Germany would be achieved on a “step-by-step” basis, saying it should be a member of NATO and the European Community, and any change in borders should be carried out within the terms of the 1975 Helsinki agreement.

There were negative responses, from the Soviet Union which said building a “common European home” would have to be a very long process; East Germany, regarding the proposal as “capitalist colonialism”, and Poland, concerned that change would mean a threat to its borders. Kohl would later explain his lack of consultation on the plan with other parties, in terms of the need to first think out what the Germans should achieve. He was to say: “It was up to us in the Federal Republic and up to me in particular ... in the next few days I decided by myself and did not consult anybody else” (1). The Ten-point Plan was not a difficult proposal to note and make public; in the event it functioned as a very influential guide, though not an actual road map to reunification. That was to be a political process and would not follow set patterns. As has been shown already, as nominated beneficiaries the East German public were becoming anxious to achieve more, and more quickly. That factor would very soon come to dominate the course of events (Aust 29.11.89; IHT 29, 30.11.89; T 28, 29.11.89, 8.12.89; GW 10.12.89).

At the Malta Summit held on 2 and 3 December, Bush and Gorbachev declared the “end of the Cold War”. Impressed by the previous month’s events at Berlin, and finding good rapport they told journalists they anticipated rapid progress on disarmament, and would work towards a treaty to cut long range nuclear arms within six months. Gorbachev pledged that the Soviet Union would never start a “hot war” against any country. Soviet disapproval of West Germany’s Ten-point Plan on reunification was not allowed to become an obstacle, though it was later revived as a public issue (T 11.12.89). The turmoil in Eastern Europe had

persuaded the leaders to have the meeting earlier than previously planned (T 4.12.89; ABC-TV 3,4.12.89). As they met the Central Committee of the East German Communist Party resigned, precipitating a fresh crisis. European issues, specifically the German question, had gone to the top of the agenda (Mary Dejevsky, summit preview, T 2.12.89), though the leaders of the two superpowers averred they were not seeking to decide the future of Europe (GW10.12.89). In prior contacts Bush had undertaken to go directly from Malta to Brussels to see Kohl, then attend a NATO summit.

At Brussels the shape of a consensus on Germany and Europe began to emerge. Bush emphasised the United States' support for stronger European integration. Kohl got backing for the Ten-point Plan as the formula for German unity, although, as the radio report quoted below would indicate, in those restless days getting agreement on what to do was still an uncertain process: "At the NATO Summit in Brussels the West German Chancellor, Helmut Kohl, has said that he's learned of continuing resistance to reunifying Germany, but will go on working to achieve it. Lee Duffield reports that rapid change going on in East Germany has been seen as a source of future instability in Europe, and possible trouble among the allies, which they have been working to avoid ... Helmut Kohl told journalists the gathering divided its time between disarmament plans and the German question ... the crisis in East Germany and his own plan for bringing the two Germanies together. He said he had repeated assurances to the allies that his program had no timetable, and would only go, step by step. West Germany would remain committed to NATO and also to European unity, through the European Community ... (ACTUALITY KOHL, TRANSLATION) ... He said that criticisms notwithstanding, some governments accepted that to Germans, unity with the rest of Europe had to be tied in with reunification of their country. The United States and France had shown understanding of it, but others had not ... Earlier the British Prime Minister, Margaret Thatcher, had said any changes in borders in Europe should wait until after a reformed system had been in place in the Eastern bloc countries, for some ten to fifteen years ... The West German Chancellor said he would be tackling the economic side of the German question, at the summit of twelve leaders of the European Community, on the weekend ... His government has promised immediate financial assistance to East Germany, to support migration and exchanges of citizens. It has offered large-scale help if democratic reforms go ahead. His plan for moving towards a confederation with East Germany would commit the other West European states to give undertakings on spending as well. The Chancellor said he would go ahead with a planned visit to East Germany in a fortnight

despite the resignation of the full leadership of the East German communist party this week. He said he was interested in government-to-government business and assumed the government in East Berlin, as opposed to the party, would be staying in office. This is Lee Duffield in Brussels (ABC-R, AM, 5.12.89).

The British Prime Minister had found grounds in the changed situation in Eastern Europe to oppose both further European integration and German reunification (T 13.11.89), stating a preference for former arrangements including a British “special relationship” with Washington (IHT 9-10.12.89). It was pointed out by British correspondents that relations had been altered by the new American President. Bush had “thrown the full weight of the United States behind faster economic and political integration in the European Community – in clear defiance of Mrs Thatcher’s known objections ... Chancellor Kohl was left in no doubt that faster European integration was the only context in which the superpowers and their allies would tolerate total German reunification” (John Palmer, Martin Walker, GW 10.12.89). The President’s settlement with Kohl in the reunification debate was to close off the options of Mrs Thatcher and other critics and assist the Chancellor to go ahead with his project.

Further uneasiness over German intentions preceded the EC Summit meeting in Strasbourg, when the Chancellor began to challenge aspects of the European Commission’s Delors plan on monetary union (T 7.12.89). In the event the European Community leaders agreed that the German question, specifically the notion of including the East German economy in the EC, was putting limits on how far they could go towards tighter economic and monetary union. Debate on proposals by Mitterrand, on the timetable for monetary union, was deferred (ABC-R 12.10.89; Aust 12.12.89). The Times commented: “The Franco-German partnership which is at the heart of the EC ... is in open doubt” (T11.12.89). The summit did affirm the principle of self-determination for Germany. If it was a set-back along the way, it had left open channels for negotiation and settlement; witnesses had few doubts that reunification was taking place: “Now there is no point talking about whether the two Germanies will be reunited. The questions are when, how, in what context and with what results. The 12 states of the European Community recognised that at their summit meeting here, while hedging commitments with all kinds of conditions ...” (Flora Lewis, IHT, 11.12.89; also T 11.12.89; GW 17.12.89).

Helmut Kohl had emerged from the consultations of the week looking to be in a strong position to take control of events where, in the absence of a prepared script, his intervention might be called for. There were developments to be considered on two fronts. In Berlin the wartime allies had convened a meeting at the level of senior officials; it was the commencement of the so-called “4+2” process, whereby the division of the two Germanies, and partition of Berlin, might be officially and legally wound up. Here was another opportunity to insert the principles of the Ten-point Plan into the decision-making process (IHT 11,12.12.89; ABC-R, Aust 12.12.89). In consultations in Moscow involving Western leaders, including James Baker (ABC-TV 9.2.90), Gorbachev was able to offer a place at the table to the GDR, alongside West Germany. This agreement obviously was a matter of falling back on prepared positions, for the moment not an outright abandonment of the separate Eastern republic. Serious alternatives to the pathway to reunification eventually chosen were put forward and publicised at this time, such as proposals for a full-scale peace conference involving the four powers, (a model proposed by Steven Muller, President of John Hopkins University, in the Washington Post; GW 10.12.89). The statesman Willi Brandt suggested the revival of a 19th century German constitutional form, the *Bund* of states (GW 24.12.89).

The second development was an upsurge of demands in East Germany for union with West Germany, even direct integration under the FRG constitution. It came up strategically and symbolically at the Leipzig demonstration on Monday 18.12.89, the night before Kohl’s celebrated visit to Dresden, with the appearance of West German flags in the crowd. There had been an issue with the extreme right-wing visiting from the West, but this looked to be different. Reporters sought them out. One of the flag bearers who identified himself as a Leipzig doctor, called it common sense for the East German states to become part of the FRG, as a way to achieve what was being demanded. This viewpoint had been scarcely heard in the public campaigns; most discussion had been about federating the two republics. He gave an interview for my report on current affairs radio, quoted here in part: “A West German youth group connected with the extreme right handed out leaflets demanding a re-unified Germany, but many of those carrying West German flags said they wanted a democratic union, not the Nazi version of a greater Germany. The spokesperson for the main group, Doctor Peter Emrich, said they wanted to join the other Germany because it was democratic. They had nothing to do with extremist movements....” (ABC-R 19.12.89; see also ABC-TV, IHT 19.12.89).

The meetings that followed in Dresden and at Bonn registered a change of course. In late December Kohl had just been telling the allies that reunification was without a timetable and would go step-by-step; the demonstration at Dresden was said to have been a sign to him that history might not wait for such an arrangement; by mid-February with the GDR elections brought forward, and imminent, there was not much for a politician to do but to put aside the process embarked on with Modrow, in the expectation that his own conservative allies in East Germany would soon be in government. That is the reading provided by the mass media of the day. It looks reasonable given that the key fact, the bringing forward of the elections, appears to have come out of the desperate confrontations within East Germany, rather than being engineered by the Bonn government.

Was the Chancellor disingenuous? Modrow would later ask where the West German flags had come from at Dresden (SBS 9.11.01). West German flags appeared at Leipzig for the first time, the night before. Could they have been the same flags? The situation for correspondents had moved rapidly from covering fearful, often naïve actions in the closed-off, police state circumstances of the unreconstructed GDR, to a situation which, since the opening of the borders, had become much more like the West. It would be a clever but fairly standard campaign tactic to plant those flags as symbols, to test the idea of reunification through merger with the FRG. The flag bearers at the Leipzig demonstration did present as local family groups; their credentials were not investigated by correspondents as if dealing with regular political workers in the West.

In Kohl's recollection of the events at Dresden, he was ingenuous; he "did not know what to do; what to say;" he had had "no idea" of the passion of the crowd and improvised with his speech (SBS 9.11.01). Against the idea that he was disingenuous: the political circumstances were full of unknown factors, hardly predictable, hardly open to manipulation; the principal actors, including Kohl, were striving to act in a transparent manner, trying to be frank with the crowds, being perhaps more reliant than ever on news media for information and an outlet to give out their messages; events in any case were plainly moving in favour of "the West", presenting no need to force the issue. It is more certain that the West German leadership were feeling confident in their power, their advantageous position, and their heart-felt desire to steer the course of events towards the goal of national reunification. They would respect other interests but the outcome would have to be a matter of "self-

determination” for the Germans. In the *post mortem* discussions from the time, the British and French leaders said they had felt “steamrollered” or “run over by a tank”, in consultations such as the Strasbourg summit. The Foreign Minister, Genscher, recollected that he’d told his Italian counterpart, who had wanted to raise points on reunification: “You’re not part of the game” (SBS 2001).

EUROPEAN FUTURES

Parallel developments took place, moving to a new European architecture based on the European Community, along with invocation of the Helsinki Final Act and a collective security structure - CSCE, later OSCE. The European Community would opt to expand, and the Central East European states would begin campaigning immediately in late 1989 to join. The USA, endorsing the model, saw continuing links for itself with a “Europe whole and free”. There was foreshadowing of new, political roles for NATO.

The history drawn from media accounts - 498 articles consulted for this section on futures - indicates that the people involved in making the change had some clear ideas of where it could be leading; where the flow of events might even be directed. For this construction of a future, both in their imagination and in practical work on foundations, two main paths were indicated, the EC and the CSCE. There was a clear and shared consciousness that the experiment with the European Community was working effectively, and was available as a set of institutions already prepared, that could be adopted as the framework of a new Europe. The Soviet leader Mikhail Gorbachev was greatly involved in the search for a new security structure, promoting the “Helsinki” model, the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe.

The change began with collapsing conditions in the Soviet Union, as observed by Hella Pick in the Guardian, a “system in terminal crisis” (GW 21.1.90) affecting the entire continent; and it would be the Soviet leader who instigated questions about the implications: “Ever since Mikhail Gorbachev launched his concept of a Common European Home ...there has been discussion about the shape and content of such a dwelling ... With the developments in East Germany and the prospect of German reunification, the future organisation of Europe has become a live issue. Nobody wants a return to the instability of the inter-war period ...There are uncomfortable questions about the future of the two alliances..” (GW

19.11.89, 11.1.90). The Guardian commented satirically: “Mr Gorbachev undertakes not to impede the onrushing democratisation of Eastern Europe, as though he could stop it” (GW 10.1.89).

Soviet diplomacy had produced sufficient concessions on arms and other issues, and had built sufficient trust that by mid-November help for Gorbachev had become a common theme of daily commentaries (e.g. “Events in Germany must not weaken Gorbachev”, T 16.11.89). The Soviet leadership were enjoying new acceptance in several relationships. The Bush administration agreed in December to assist with a Soviet application to enter the Western trading system, the General Agreement on Tariffs and Trade (GATT), seen by Soviet officials as a turning away from the “economic cold war” (IHT 14.12.89); in the same week Shevardnadze was invited to visit NATO headquarters and the European Community at Brussels, where he would sign a new EC-USSR economic agreement (T, ABC-R 15.12.89; GW 24.12.89); he was encouraged enough also to suggest a grand plan for affiliating the EC, the communist Comecon system and the European Free Trade Association (EFTA) (Aust 20.12.89); and in disarmament negotiations both sides had proposed substantial cuts in conventional arms (T 18.12.89).

Gorbachev considered this the right climate to establish security guarantees for a very uncertain middle-term future, and so in a speech at Rome, proposed bringing forward the European security summit set for three years’ time: “I believe that this year’s events underscore the desirability of an all-European summit, a Helsinki-2 meeting. We could consider advancing its date from 1992 to, say, as early as 1990.” Referring to Germany in particular he said, “Certain questions which had seemed purely theoretical in the past are now assuming practical significance” (IHT 1.12.89; T16.12.89). This led to a diplomatic success, a way out of Cold War commitments which was to produce a set of new multilateral agreements in the coming years. Amid the generally positive responses, (GW 14,28.1.90), the Times referred to NATO support for the Helsinki process as the means to achieve East-West co-operation, and to handle the reunification of Germany - the country which would be the “keystone of new European architecture” (T22.12.89). In January it reported that the CSCE Conference as sought by Gorbachev would take place mid-way through the year, and provided a background article by an academic specialist on the Helsinki process. (Robert O’Neill, Professor of the History of War at Oxford University, previewed the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe, with 35 nations

including the USA and Canada. It was associated with the Helsinki Final Act, the 1970's agreement which recognised existing frontiers and set a standard on human rights. The Organisation for Security and Co-operation in Europe -OSCE- was formed as a result of the initiatives made in 1989; T 22.1.90).

The European Commission had set a 1992 deadline for its initial implementation of monetary union, and it was to follow through with that declared program. In 1989 it used the date as its logo for an on-going publicity campaign, to promote the concept of an expanding Community. This extended to recurrent advertising inserts in the European press, (e.g. "1992: the World's Rendezvous With Europe", IHT 14.12.89). The larger EC therefore came readily to mind in the quest for alternative arrangements, with the Iron Curtain being lifted, as with this commentary by Jim Hoagland: "The European Community's drive for full integration in 1992 is already changing the course of events in Europe. While Americans see a united Europe as a theoretical question ... Europeans on both sides of the iron curtain are adjusting today to the meaning for them of greater unity" (IHT 28.9.89). The American interest in the European future was connected to 1992 with the pronouncement of the so-called Baker Doctrine, at Berlin, placing a united Germany in the context of European integration; hence the comment: "After Baker's speech, the ball is in Europe's court... Mr Baker's approach is twofold: the politicisation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation and the recognition of the European Community as the European pillar of Atlantic co-operation ..." (James Eberle, Karl Kaiser, Dominique Moisi, IHT, 22.12.89).

In certain views the European Community would be undertaking special responsibilities; hence this proposal - fated to be hypothetical - for a tax to aid Eastern Europe: "In order to proclaim how much the Western part of Europe cares for the Eastern part, one must go beyond governmental aid and financial or industrial 'packages' ... A Solidarity - Democracy Tax raised by the 12 European Community members would be a powerful sign of Western Europe's commitment to democracy" (Dominique Moisi, IHT 27.10.89). Acting both collectively and in individual capacities the EC countries became major contributors to economic assistance for development and restructuring in Eastern Europe, e.g. with the formation of the European Bank at Paris on 16.1.90 with basic capital exceeding \$US11-billion (ABC-R 17.10.89); or the Group of Twenty-four Ministers raising contributions to the stabilisation fund for Poland to US\$1-billion (T14.12.89).

By the time of the Strasbourg summit, with Eastern Bloc states entering a “race to reach democracy first” (T 14.11.89), pressure increased for the EC to decide on going ahead with its own integration, and so to fill the need for a new framework – the “economic and political core around which the final shape of post-Yalta Europe should coalesce” (IHT 9-10.12.89). The response, by the end of January 1990, was businesslike, befitting the organisational ethos of the EC; although the change in Europe emerged through chaos its future might be run according to program: “It was an ambitious program to re-stimulate the building of Europe that Jacques Delors President of the European Commission submitted to the European Parliament ... for it proposed not only a new and large-scale budgetary commitment by the Community to help East European countries, but also increased diplomatic action at a combined EC level and, above all, an almost immediate start on building the institutions of political union. ‘Given the degree of commitment asked of the Community and the risk of spreading the effort too thinly, we have to have an institutional framework capable of withstanding every strain’, he explained.” (Philippe Lemaitre, Le Monde, GW 28.1.90). More broadly: “While there are some ... who still believe it possible to fashion a system of humanitarian socialism - a third way between Stalinist totalitarianism and capitalism- the signs are that the market economy and political pluralism will take over. None of this could be happening without Mikhail Gorbachev’s tacit agreement, in some cases with his encouragement ...” (Hella Pick, GW 21,1.90).

SOVIET CRISIS AND EASTERN EUROPE

*The record of the news media coverage of the time gives the same heavy weighting to the significance of developments in the Soviet Union as could be seen emerging in the later historical record. The reportage is assembled in four categories: **Arms Negotiations; Economic Perestroika; Glasnost, and the Nationalities.** Some themes or points of argument arise: In the first months of the Bush administration American policy makers, encouraged by residual hostility among anti-communist commentators, had taken a sceptical attitude towards Gorbachev’s intentions, but that gave way to trust, enabling the arms negotiations to go well. It became a recurrent theme of newspaper editorials and most Western political leaders that Gorbachev should be aided in his efforts at reform. At the same time there were practical concerns in the US administration and elsewhere about the disastrous state of the Soviet economy and violence developing in the republics. The Soviet leader, severely weakened as well by the fall of the Berlin Wall, was very exposed. Could Gorbachev beset*

by these dangers survive? Could he be a bankable ally?

Arms Negotiations and NATO

New progress was made on arms negotiations including strategic nuclear forces (START), Conventional Forces in Europe (CFE), and chemical weapons that developed after 1985; reporting of complex step-by-step negotiations for news media quickly became simplified in the new mood of trust. Arms negotiations mainly concerned the United States and USSR but the category takes in multi-lateral dealings e.g. CFE debates and NATO.

The importance of Soviet affairs in the evolution of events over the six months period is indicated by the media attention these received, with a total of **1424** reports or features included in the review (Soviet Crisis, and Gorbachev East Berlin) – against a total of **5297** for the whole project. Many of these reports, **399**, concerned direct relations between the Soviet Union and Europe, through the arms reductions process and relations with NATO. The International Herald Tribune, with its multi-national readership base and emphasis on diplomatic issues, stood out in this coverage of disarmament, providing **209**, over two-thirds of the items considered. Armaments issues had commanded central attention before 1989, for example the dealings between Eduard Shevardnadze and his American counterpart George Schultz over arms and in the lead-up to the 1988 Moscow Summit opened new territory. News reports would deal with specific points, for instance on verification, and watch the response of highly mistrustful US officials, who were zealous over detail, to concessions suddenly offered by the other side. Those matters were relegated to a much lower place in the news agenda by the massive changes of 1989, backed by mass movements of people, especially as -with the conciliatory policy of Gorbachev- agreements became easier to achieve, and caused less surprise.

A shifting of positions and attitudes in the American camp is documented in reports during August and September, when Shevardnadze went to the United States, joining James Baker at talks in Wyoming and meeting George Bush in Washington. The outcome was that the new US administration, which had been reticent, agreed to a “rejoining of the superpowers”, for a resumption of high level diplomacy, to include a first summit (IHT 24.25.8, 2-3.9, 4, 15, 18.9.89; GW 1.10.89). The administration moved to a position of “supporting Gorbachev” (IHT 9.10.89) and would reiterate that a stable relationship reduced risks (IHT

19.10.89). Co-operation since 1985 had meant that the previous season of disarmament negotiations, on CFE and START, by general consent had “closed on a high note” (GW 13.8.89), and the talks were resumed with a continuation of “confidence building” steps by the USSR in the form of unexpected concessions. These began with unilateral actions or offers, including a reduction of Soviet bases and numbers of combat aircraft in August; withdrawal of objections to the Strategic Defence Initiative, the “Star wars” program, which had been holding up progress on START; completion of the destruction of SS23 missiles under the terms of the 1987 INF accord; a run of troop reductions; decommissioning of several Whisky class submarines in the Baltic; and the dismantling of a set of advanced early warning radar stations, on the admission that they were in violation of the Anti-Ballistic-Missiles accord (ABM). The United States made concessions in return, in particular on the issue of mobile ICBMs, and was to follow with more in the formal negotiating process (GW 29.10,12.11.89; IHT 21,25,27.9.89; 25,26.10.89; T29.11.89). Hans Dietrich Genscher declared the replacement of the Lance missile to be a dead issue, in support of West German spokespersons already dismissing talk of new battlefield nuclear weapons as “laughable” (T, ABC-R 22.11.89).

The CFE negotiations at Vienna made progress on verification issues, in September and October. In the new year there were meetings of senior military officers (IHT 13.10.89, 19.1.90); a squabble over stores including ammunition left behind by withdrawing Soviet forces was resolved; and the discussions began to run ahead of schedule, amid optimism connected with the political changes in Europe, not least the scheduling of free elections in the East (IHT 6-7, 12.1.90; ABC-R 13.1.90). START talks at Geneva were recommenced amid some editorial clamour in America for that to happen (IHT 11.8.89), and resumed for 1990 with an expedited timetable, encouraged by positive outcomes from the Malta summit in December (IHT 23.1.90). There was similar progress towards reducing chemical weapons stockpiles (IHT 13.9.89; GW 1.10.89). Reductions in spending on arms were being publicly mooted across the board, in budget debates within the US Congress, and in the Soviet Union where an 8% cut in defence outlays was announced in December (IHT 17, 22, 27, 29.11.89, 16-17.12.89).

There were set-backs and moments of hesitation, as when the United States would condemn Soviet military action in Azerbaijan (T 20.1.90) or the British government as an important US ally would oppose “premature” cuts in defence spending (T29.1.90). In general,

treatments of the mood and strategic thinking of the era supported the option of diverting resources “from old threats to new needs”, in response to the radical changes in Soviet policy (IHT 11.12.89). Such responses were tempered by the concern about Gorbachev’s security in power: “The Pentagon and the National Security Council are openly sceptical of Mr Gorbachev’s chances, while the Secretary of State, Mr James Baker, and probably Mr Bush, believe that there are trustworthy deals to be done” (Martin Walker, GW 19.11.89). While the political upheavals in the USSR remained a constant concern (IHT 25.9.89), the United States accepted it had a stake in Gorbachev’s survival, and would be ready to assist him (IHT 22.1.90; T 18.10.89), as against maintaining a hope of the Cold War era that in any configuration the Soviet Union should be encouraged to collapse. The CIA helpfully provided a “reduced threat” assessment on the USSR at the start of 1990 (IHT 23.1.90). Gorbachev reciprocally had amply signalled acceptance of democratisation in the Eastern bloc though he sought to insist that for the security of the USSR the two military alliances should be retained (Aust 16.11.89). NATO had supported large arms reductions in Europe on a “sufficient defence” standard (IHT 23-24.9.89), and NATO Defence Ministers looking to a “post Wall” future, considered a theme of “co-operation over confrontation” between blocs, and a new orientation towards handling “small wars” in NATO areas of responsibility (T28.11.89).

Glasnost and Perestroika

In Soviet politics, pressure mounted against the liberalisation / democratisation policy from two sides, both “liberal reformer” and “communist old guard” forces; Gorbachev’s initiatives operated in two directions, in the form of further democratisation (e.g. parliamentary reforms; lifting of censorship), and defence of the status quo, (e.g. resisting Lithuanian secession; retaining a “leading role” status for CPSU). His position was further exposed after the losses in Eastern Europe. The six month period saw a shift from confidence in “Gorbymania” to a weakened Soviet reform leadership at home and failing international negotiating position. In the attempt to implement perestroika, economic paralysis in the Soviet Union was to overwhelm Gorbachev’s initiatives in both Eastern Europe and the West.

Gorbachev was among many to use the term “perestroika” in a generic sense, to cover the broad policy he adopted and the wild field of activity it helped to create in the Soviet Union

– the attempts at economic revival, rapprochement with the West, radical extension of human rights. Here the term “perestroika” is used for a category, referring specifically to the policy of restructuring the economy, and “glasnost” is used for the concomitant liberalisation in other areas of life. The turbulence in the Soviet Union during the particular six months period was bound to draw major attention in Western news media; in the event it was heavily featured also because of its links with the other running story on a major scale, the crisis in Eastern Europe. The record produced in this coverage -344 reports and features classified under “glasnost”, 159 under “perestroika”- shows that the witnesses of the time rated the Gorbachev policy experiments very highly, as instrumental in determining the fate of Europe as a whole, and the material contained in that record gives an indication of how the geopolitical realities would come together. Gorbachev was working with a huge backlog of problems and past wrongs to overcome, in a field of economic crisis and disturbed social and political relations. The picture presented of his *glasnost* experiment shows an attempt at bold and determined management, deploying powerful resources for reform, but inevitably failing because overwhelmed by the many intractable problems of that historical situation. In the case of free speech, removal of media controls meant that an emboldened press contributed to the turbulent debate on all fronts and brought Gorbachev himself under steady attack (IHT 3.8.89). It can be argued reasonably that his fight was for reasonableness in unreasonable times.

Glasnost produced liberalisation through myriad changes which reversed past practices and had a capacity to shock: the archives were opened on the 1939 secret treaty protocol between Hitler and Stalin, reported to the parliament as a conspiracy to control Eastern Europe (IHT 1.8.89, 30.9-1.10.89; T 26.12.89); KGB archivists opened the files on the Swedish diplomat Raoul Wallenberg, believed to have died in a Soviet prison (IHT 24.8,17.10.89; T 17,18,20.10.89); the KGB itself sought to present a new face, exposing senior officers to public questioning on live television, and producing a documentary film to put the service in a friendly light (Aust 15.9.89; T 3.11.89; IHT 14.9, 31.10, 3.12.89); it was officially admitted that an atomic bomb had been dropped near troops, in an experiment in 1954 (IHT 29.9-1.10.89); the telephone numbers of foreign embassies were publicly listed in Moscow (IHT 17.8.89); the bells at St Basil’s Cathedral pealed for the first time since the revolution (IHT 2.1.90); the government achieved a rapprochement with the Catholic Church, following Gorbachev’s visit to the Pope, and a ban lifted from the Church in the Ukraine (T 2.12.89; Aust 24.11.89); the World Psychiatric Association, after extended

debate, readmitted its Soviet affiliate (IHT 26-27.8.89, 19.10.89; 17, 18, 20.10.89); the Communist Party logo was removed from the masthead of Pravda (GW 14.1.90); Rudolph Nureyev returned to dance at the Kirov ballet (20.11.89), and a Miss Moscow contest began (IHT 7.12.89). The tragic collapse of the Kiev central post office building was extensively covered, because it was extraordinary, and because of the phlegmatic official response - a muted concession that nothing had been properly done in former times, even construction of major public buildings (T 4.8.89). Much of the symbolic management of change was prone to go awry; Genardy Gerasimov as the government publicist found himself on television trying to promote the opening of the first McDonald's restaurant, while being questioned about a savage turn of events in the Azeri crisis (T25.1.90).

In the political battles in the Supreme Soviet or Congress of People's Deputies, or within the Communist Party and bureaucracy, Gorbachev was pitted against adversaries on both sides; he was characterised increasingly in "benevolent dictator" roles (Aust 28-29.10.89; GW 29.10.89). A liberal-radical opposition faction was formed including Boris Yeltsin and Andrei Sakharov (GW 6.8.89), and was attacked by Gorbachev in the Supreme Soviet over "provocative appeals" (T 5.8.89), in a speech admitting problems with ethnic and industrial unrest but denying any cause for panic (IHT 4.8.89; GW 13.8.89). Acting in a robust, democratic political style, Gorbachev chided Yeltsin over an incident in the United States where he'd evidently got very drunk, and Yeltsin in turn attacked the General Secretary's "champagne tastes" (T20.1.90). Soon after, Yeltsin became a candidate for the Russian Presidency, promising his "revolution from below" to displace the perestroika model (Aust 26.1.90; IHT 18.9.89). Sakharov, the scientist and former political detainee, articulated liberal complaints about the pace and level of commitment of *glasnost* (GW 8.10.89; IHT 4.12.89); he had called for strikes to formally end the one-party state (Aust 28.11.89), and was attacking a law to extend pre-trial detention (IHT 27.12.89) not long before his death, which was accorded enormous attention both in the USSR and in the West. The obituaries and historical features provided a chance for Western news media to bring their public up to date on the Soviet political story; reports had tended to run in an un-co-ordinated sequence with only light backgrounding (Aust, T, IHT 16-17, 18, 19.12.89; GW 24.12.89).

Gorbachev encountered this liberal opposition through his defence of the single party status of the CPSU (Aust 28.11.89), reserved parliamentary seats for its deputies, and its "leading role" under the constitution which was preserved only in a close vote of the Congress of

People's Deputies (Aust 26.10, 15, 28.11, 20.12.89; T 12.12.89; GW 7.12.89). He continued with parliamentary institutional reforms (GW 29.10.89) and further alienated so-called conservative communists by replacing one-quarter of the Communist party politburo with reform candidates (T 21.9.89, IHT 22.9.89). The move provoked a bitter fight with the leading conservative Yegor Ligachev who accused the reform movement including Gorbachev of wanting a return to capitalism and creating havoc (T 22.9.89; IHT 23-24.9.89). The Moscow and Leningrad Communist party leaders were also removed (T22,23.11.89; GW 30.12.89). Discontent in the armed forces associated with fighting in Azerbaijan surfaced with public demands for a military union (GW 20.10.89; T 9.1.289; Aust 2.1.90).

Human rights initiatives also aggravated old guard resistance. The new press law removing political constraints was made public in September (IHT 27.9.89; T 28.9.89; Aust 29.9.89), but Gorbachev had been attacking "inflammatory" progressive newspapers (IHT 17.10.89) and there were two major disputes over press controls: the attempt to dismiss the liberal editor of Agumenti i Fakty, Vladislav Starkov, and the replacement of the conservative editor of Pravda, Viktor Afanasyev (IHT 17, 20, 27.10.89; T 19, 20, 25, 29.10.89; Aust 21-22.10.89; ABC-TV 6.11.89). Gorbachev hailed a new team at Pravda as excluding "extremists" of left or right (T 25.10.89). In book publishing a customs ban on authors was lifted, permitting the publication of Alexander Solzhenitsyn's Gulag Archipelago and August 1914 (GW 13,29.8.89; T 29.8.89). *Glasnost* saw an opening of the Soviet Union to outsiders. Members of the United States Congress, and others, visited previously closed areas at a missile site and naval base, and were taken to labour camps (IHT 18, 19-20.8.89, 30.11.89). Political prisoners had mostly all been released (IHT 19-20.8.89, 2.10.89), some to take a leading role in new opposition groups. Demonstrations in Moscow or Leningrad over human rights issues or the crises in republics were being tolerated though still subject to harassment by the militia. They would at times still be attacked, as in the case of some members of the "human chain" set up around the Lubyanka (T 24.8, 31.10, 6.11.89, 11.12.89; Aust 1.11.89). Counter demonstrations began against official marches to celebrate the Russian revolution or victory in the Second World War (T 20.11.89; GW 3.9.89). Relaxation of immigration laws permitted the beginning of a large-scale movement out of the country, initially involving special interest groups, such as Jews or ethnic Germans. In the spirit of this liberalisation efforts were made to expand tourist and business travel; new

Aeroflot services were opened to New York and other destinations in the West (GW 8.10, 3.12.89; T 4.8, 3.10.89, 13.1.90; Aust 7.9.89).

The opening process under *glasnost* included a relaxation of policy and information in relation to the outside world. Soviet news media carried frank treatments of the events in Eastern Europe including the dramatic images of the opening of the Berlin Wall, and their government's approval of it (Aust 14.9.89). The 1968 Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia was publicly repudiated in time for the gesture to be learnt of in Prague, during the Velvet Revolution (T 23.11.89; Aust 1.2.90); the advent of a non-communist government in Poland had been welcomed, along with assurances from Western governments the change would not be exploited for strategic advantage, and from Poland that it would stay within the Warsaw Pact (IHT 22.8.89).

Perestroika seen as the attempt at economic restructuring had very few major successes and very many disastrous failures. The economy already in such desperate disarray could not be re-built and re-charged in the short-term, and became the constant negative factor dragging down efforts to make changes across all other fields. The media reports consulted for this study document a constant stream of set-backs for the Gorbachev administration, whether as strikes by anxious coal miners, resistance within the bureaucracy, outbreaks of civil war with huge industrial costs, or fights in the Congress of People's Deputies over priorities for government action. Classified in different fields of activity these developments show the pattern of failure; they provide one version of a contemporary history of the failing experiment.

The largest cluster of reports, 40 recorded, deals with widespread strike activity especially in mining, where privation and neglect of workers was well documented, with bad industrial conditions, severe under-payment and confused management; compounded by government efforts to impose bans on strikes in the hope of maintaining levels of production, such moves at times being blocked in the parliament. Secondly there were reports on other set-backs that directly affected production and contributed to actual large drops in measured economic growth: important regional oil production was stopped by the Azeri-Armenian crisis, costs of the war itself in 1989 being estimated at \$US2-billion (Aust 27-28.1.90; T 28.9.89, 30.1.90); costs of the Chernobyl disaster continued to mount and the Yervan region remained devastated one year after the earthquake (GW3.12.89; T 26.10, 7.12.89);

compilation and publication of reports was allowed on industrial pollution, which turned out to be horrendous (T 16.9, 30.10.89; Aust 31.10.89); economic growth came to be measured at half previous rates (IHT 21-22.10.89; 27.10.89). In the field of economic management experimentation with currency issues became a preoccupation: devaluations of the rouble (IHT 23.8, 26.10, 27.10, 28-29.10; GW 29.10.89; T 26.10.89; Aust 17, 27.10.89); part-payment for services or products in hard currencies (IHT 11.8.89; T19.9.89); unprecedentedly high inflation (IHT 1.8.89; Aust 28.9.89).

The outside look of *perestroika* may have been helped greatly in the West by the plethora of new activities it brought, many flattering to Western economic ways.

A golf course was opened and marketed as a place for doing business; an aircraft manufacturer started feasibility work on a business jet; the Moscow Hippodrome was revamped; the Ukraine Academy of Sciences opened a management school; a British firm of solicitors set up their practice in Russia; and the Moscow Savoy was opened, said to be the country's first "five-star" hotel (IHT 3.8, 24.8, 6,16.10, 29.11; T 3.10.89, 9, 31.1.90; Aust 5.10.89). A common critique arose that the Soviet Union was lagging behind dangerously in installing computers (IHT 6.10.89). Moscow and Leningrad entrepreneurs were beginning to appear, initially profiting from new provisions to set up co-operatives; there were reports on black market activities, and complaints about the high prices charged by new enterprises (Aust 23-24.9, 2.11.89; GW 17.11.89; T 29.9.89). Consultation had started with officials and economic advisors from Western governments, with proposals for direct economic assistance (Aust 10,12.10.89; T 11,23.10.89, 1.12.89); new trade initiatives were made including the application to join the GATT (Aust 6.10, 30.11.89; IHT 19.9, 28.11.89; T 4,5.12.89); and more joint ventures were signed up for industrial undertakings, such as a new car plant to be built with Fiat (IHT 29.11.89). Optimism inspired by such international initiatives was blunted by the cautiousness and restraint of the foreign partners, all aware of the unsteady state of the Soviet state – especially as fighting degenerated in the republics.

Consumer supplies became a main focus of political and governmental activity as shortages, especially food and fuel, got worse and public distress became increasingly obvious (T 21.10, 29.12.89; GW 12.11.89; Aust 30.1.90). Two-tier shopping, giving preference to local buyers, was started in Moscow (IHT 28.8.89; GW 3.9.89). Gorbachev declared a priority on consumer production, as the "ultimate test" of *perestroika* (IHT 7.12.89; GW 24.12.89), which was reflected in the budget debated in parliament, one that declared for the first time a

spending deficit, (which however the government determined would need to be reduced) (IHT 14.9, 2, 28-29.10; 1,18-19.11.89; T 26.9.89; Aust 27.9, 4, 28-29.10.89). Losses from state farms were written off and privatisation began with moves to define private property, and recognise leasehold agreements in law (IHT 7,24.11.89; Aust 9-10.12.89; T 14.12.89). There was stolid resistance to many programs within administrative departments and the Communist Party; in many regional areas economic planning and permission procedures did not change (IHT 16.8, 21-22.10, 16.11.89; T 10.10.89; Aust 15.12.89). The armed forces (and also the space program) were feeling the impacts of reduced budgets and efforts to convert defence production to civilian uses - a large and influential sector of the economy, if not the leading sector, put into recession (IHT 15.8,18.9.89, 15.10.89; Aust 22.11.89; T 25.10, 8.11.89). Discontent, rejection and alienation were palpable in 1989 throughout the society; correspondents outside the country following the still-buoyant drive by Gorbachev to win allies and economic support would be warned by colleagues in Moscow to write in a circumspect tone (2)

Opinion polls published in the Soviet media gave a consistently sour report: rejection of *perestroika*; near-panic among citizens over the economy; public unrest accompanying strikes in industrial and mining areas; a sarcastic exhibition of shoddily made goods that drew large crowds (Aust 23-24.9, 17.10, 11.12.89; IHT 23.10, 6.11, 15.12.89; T 8.11.89).

Verdicts and analysis were provided at every point in the reportage on the dramatic conduct of the *perestroika* experiment and *glasnost*. According to this interpretative aspect of the coverage the moribund economy asserted itself as the key concern. A Times overview saw mounting troubles of all kinds together destroying the economy and so, with a vicious effect, causing social disorder: “Chernobyl and ethnic strife increase demands for change. Worker unrest continues throughout the Soviet Union with strikes in many regions by workers demanding both material and political improvements, meanwhile shortages of food and consumer goods grow worse ...” (T 18.9.89). Similarly, reports on a Congress of People’s Deputies debate had it becoming preoccupied, and taken over by urgent measures to end shortages and boost failing productivity, as the government also tried to fend off demands for independence in the Baltics and parliamentary challenges to the Communist Party monopoly of power (Aust 14.12.89). Decisions of the Congress were registered as “a major shift of economic resources toward the consumer sector ... in an attempt to stem discontent of ordinary citizens with lines and shortages” (GW 24.12.89). Martin Walker reported the presentation of the changes in a five-year program was received with

disappointment in America as a throw-back to old practices: “Moscow’s latest economic package – which puts its faith in a new five year plan rather than the free market – has dropped Gorbachev’s rating on the Washington credibility meter ...” (Martin Walker, GW 24.12.89). James Sherr found the reform program, “failing in its aims and spreading hardship and cynicism” (T19.12.89). Conor Cruise O’Brien, characteristic of observers then, was concerned that economic disasters would revive threats of nuclear holocaust: “Gorbachev the instigator of nuclear limitation may not last beyond the end of next month . He may not last beyond the end of next year. His successors may be people of a quite different stamp ... The Soviet Union in 1990 presents the spectacle of a polity undergoing great economic distress ...” (T 26.1.90).

Gorbachev as the central figure worked persistently against all odds but would admit the difficulties. He proclaimed 1989 the “most difficult year of *perestroika*” with “not a single calm day”, regretting the “complexities and political passions” of labour unrest, separatist political agitation, revived ethnic tensions and violence, and a consumer market he considered “more aggravated” than ever (IHT 4.8.89, 2.1.90). He was seen as “caught in a crossfire” (Aust 29.1.90), in his own terms resisting “populist demagoguery and nationalist extremism” (GW 3.1.289). Successes in implementing free speech had produced a problem by generating more debate, and greater expectations. The founder of *perestroika* and *glasnost* was seen as being “overtaken by many of his followers” (IHT 22.11.89). Needing to cope with forces of resistance, he was held to be acting “on the side of the reformers where he can” (IHT 22.11.89), but not achieving enough to prevent a demonstrable loss of popularity (IHT 4.8.89). Prof. Vladimir Schlapentok, a pollster in the Soviet Union before moving to the United States, identified a mood of pessimism setting in since 1988, citizens no longer willing to endure economic hardships for the sake of liberalised social conditions, and unimpressed by innovations such as the Congress of People’s Deputies: “ The elimination of fear and the great broadening of freedom of speech have failed to impress the people; they no longer hail Mikhail Gorbachev ... the people suddenly have become staunch advocates of ‘real’ democracy” (Los Angeles Times, IHT 28.8.89). In a similar reading, “ *Perestroika* has acquired an inexorable momentum of its own. Gorbachev now appears, domestically, to be responding to events and improvising policy, rather than setting the political agenda” (IHT

17.12.89). Forecasts, accurately, were negative: “Just as 1989 was the year of Central Europe, 1990 looks like being the year of the USSR – the year when every possible danger besets the empire, *perestroika*, and its leader” (GW 28.1.90).

Nationalities

Major preoccupations for Gorbachev in particular with Baltic secessionist movements and warfare in Armenia and Azerbaijan, threatened the overthrow of the Soviet President.

The independence movements of the Soviet nationalities and the descent of many areas into open warfare are always given as essential causes in accounts of the failure of the wider *perestroika* project. The heavy attention given to these processes in contemporary media treatments recognises both the unexpectedness or outrageousness of events, and the longer-term significance of those events. As with other events in the unraveling of the Eastern Bloc the Western news media provided immediate commentary and analysis to fill out the picture, to try to make the events intelligible as part of an historical process. In this connection, the weighting given to the story of the nationalities was an important contribution to understanding; the significance of what was happening was acknowledged in the prominence and volume of the coverage - with **458** news reports or features reviewed in this nationalities section.

The violent conflict between **Armenia** and **Azerbaijan** over **Nagorno Karabakh** was the most spectacular issue and attracted most coverage with **190** reports registered. These included a lavish run of explanatory maps or graphs, and video / photographs dealing with the full range of wartime happenings - street fighting, troops patrolling streets or destroying heavy barricades, poignant shots of displaced persons in refugee camps, or bewildered young soldiers in ambulance planes. It was made plain - though as is usual without exhaustive explanation- the conflict was a revival of unsolved problems from the past, ethnic enmities and national feeling, and religious antagonism with an important side issue, the demand for an open border between Azerbaijan and neighbouring Iran.

In the period under review, the trouble began with strikes and demonstrations for national autonomy in Azerbaijan, with some loss of life, and shortages of goods reported as a consequence of the disruption. In September 1989 the coverage showed this activity

intensifying; soldiers sent in for peace-keeping being brought under fire; insurgents constructing defence works, digging-in for a war; transport blockades being imposed on Armenia - especially for supplies of oil (T14.8, 8.9, 30.10.89). In October and November, amid warnings by Soviet officials of impending war a political solution was attempted by the Supreme Soviet, granting more autonomy to the Azeri republic, which did not bring settlement but enraged the leadership in Armenia (IHT 2,13.10, 29.11.89; Aust 30.11.89; T2.12.89; ABC-TV 8.10.89). In December and January the situation exploded, beginning with an attempt by the Armenian legislature to incorporate Nagorno Karabakh within its territory (IHT 2-3.12.89). Large demonstrations and sometimes full-scale rioting broke out in the capitals of both states; there was hostage taking and sabotage in Nagorno Karabakh; mobs charged border installations along the Iranian frontier, confronting Soviet troops. Western reporters observed some Soviet media outlets at this time taking sides, representing crowds as “drug-crazed Moslems” committing “barbarous actions” (IHT 2-3,6,16.12.89; 3,4.8,9.1.90; Aust 22.1.90; T 4.1.90). Russian opinion polls supported putting down an Azeri revolt against the Soviet presence (IHT 18.1.90), and during the last fortnight of January Soviet troops sent to Baku defeated Azeri fighters demanding full national autonomy. They completed the occupation of Baku with a land and sea attack to clear the port of a blockade using captured ships (IHT 25.1.90; Aust 26.1.90; T 27.1.90; GW28.1.90). “Many deaths” were reported, often 30 to 60 in single actions (IHT 15,17.1.90; Aust 15,17.1.90; T 15,20.1.90; GW 28.1.90). Baku was reported “calm” under occupation but nationalist leaders of all tendencies proclaimed that their campaigns would continue (IHT26.1.90; T 30.1.90).

Ultimately the legislatures of both republics were asserting power to over-rule Soviet laws; and the pattern was similar in the “**Baltics**” crisis, with the national communist parties and legislatures often leading the insurrection -in favour of more autonomy, then full independence- against the central government in Moscow. In this section of the coverage - **157** reports- there is a step-by-step treatment of the fast emergence of increasingly ambitious demands, involving attempts by regional authorities in **Latvia, Lithuania** and **Estonia** to negotiate change with Moscow (IHT 29,31.8, 15.9, 6.10, 23-25.12.89; Aust 2.10.89, 5,8.1.90; T25.8, 15.9.89; 4,9.1.90; ABC-TV 14.1.90); mass action by citizens applying pressure to their own governments (IHT 28.8, 23.10.89; Aust 3.11, 29.12, 10.1.90; T 24.8, 28.12.89, 10,11.1.90; GW 15.10.89; 21.1.90); and direct negotiation between government leaders and crowds including the famous public walks by Mikhail Gorbachev (IHT 12, 13-

14.1.90; Aust 27.12.89; 13-14.1.90; T12.1.90; GW 11,14.1.90), where “in his typically blunt style he dismissed talk of independence as ‘not serious, simply not serious’ ” (John Lombard, ABC-TV, 12.1.90). It was still an unresolved situation at the beginning of 1990, which would lead to serious violence - intervention by the Soviet army at Vilnius- before the three republics could become independent states in 1991.

Once again complex demographic and historical factors were present, not least the exposed situation of Russian nationals living in the three republics, who engaged in strikes and other political actions to keep their right to vote, and other rights (IHT 11,19-20.8, 6.10.89; T19.8.89GW 27.8.89); and resentment over the republics’ occupation and seizure by the USSR during the Second World War. An action under *glasnost*, the disclosure of the 1939 secret protocols in the settlement between Hitler and Stalin, stripped away any pretence of legitimacy from Soviet claims and fed the indignant clamour for a return to nationhood (IHT 28.8.89, 25.9.89; Aust 11-12.11.89; T 4.9, 14.11.89; GW 3.9.89). The Baltics episode saw Gorbachev display a “tougher side” (IHT 30.8.89) as the Soviet Union regarded the region as essential to “vital interests” (IHT 31.8.89), and at the commencement attempted to command the republics’ governments to repeal legislation for constitutional autonomy (IHT 17.8.89; Aust 26-27.8.89; T 4.9.89; GW 3.9.89). The Soviet news media was again quoted in a warped mode, flaying “nationalist hysteria” (the analysis of Pravda), “naive, dangerous, hypocritical” demands, and “extremism” (IHT 16,24,28.8.89; T29.12.89). As a counter-stroke, the famous “human chain” across the three republics demonstrated an absolutely resolved yet level-headed community commitment to reasoned demands (IHT 24.8.89; Aust 25.8.89; T 24,25.8.89; GW3.9.89), once more a demonstration of the awakening of consciousness among a broad public; a mobilisation for collective action, conscious seizing of opportunity; a mass social movement.

Campaigns leading towards a break-away from the Soviet Union, whether or not planned that way at the start, took different forms. The media record (**25** reports) indicates the revolution in **Moldova** concentrated on action by the parliament to re-establish the Moldavian language over Russian (IHT 30.8.89, 1.9.90; T 29,31.8, 1.9.89). There were strikes and rioting (Aust 27.9, 11-12.11.89; T28.8, 13,21.11, 6.12.89; GW 19.11.89); some branches of the campaign wanted re-unification with Romania (T 1,2.1.90). Gorbachev intervened in the appointment of a communist party leader for the republic (IHT 17.11.89) but in January a new movement declared its goals for full independence (IHT 17.1.90; Aust

31.1.90). The movement in the **Ukraine** - 21 reports in survey - was represented as being much to do with religion, in particular recognition of the Catholic Church, which as one Churchman observed, would set off a movement for change “like fire” (IHT 2-3.12.89). Amid wariness in the Kremlin over the possibility of a break-away movement (IHT 12.9.89), Mikhail Gorbachev had sought to ease the situation, replacing a long-serving regional party leader and personally visiting to encourage reform (IHT 29.9, 7-8.10.89; T 29.9.89; Aust 30.9.89). He even sought some assistance from the Pope (IHT 10.11.89). There were public protests to expedite legislation on the Church (T 19.9.89; IHT 27, 29.11.89), amid official affirmations it would be enacted (T, IHT 23.11.89). A Baltic-style popular front was formed (GW 17.9.89; Aust 23-24.9.89), and in January an arms-linked protest, another human chain, signaled that change would be pushed further in the Ukraine, towards independence (T22.1.90). In **Georgia** a commission of inquiry into the massacre by armed forces at Tbilisi the previous April (IHT 12.10.89) could not dissuade the regional leadership from a declaration of the right for the republic to secede (IHT 20.11.89; T 14.11.89). With tension over South Ossetia, Georgia also was perceived as “on the brink of civil war” (Aust 24,29.11.89; 9.1.90; T 8.1.90). In Mongolia, a huge crowd supporting a reform party successfully defied an official ban on rallies (IHT 22.1.90; T 20,22,26.1.90). Negotiations were entered into on the part of other groups, viz **Volga Germans** seeking autonomy or emigration (IHT 14.12.89; Aust 21-22.10.89), **Crimean Tartars** (T25.9.89) and intending **Jewish** emigrants (IHT 4.9.89; T25.9.89).

With the nationalities, more than in virtually all other cases, where the central administration under Gorbachev considered performing a managed change, it found itself checked by resistance from the communist establishment. Discussion in the Kremlin about devolution (IHT 18.8.89) and “sovereignty” (carefully explained as a different phenomenon to full-fledged autonomy - GW 15.10.89), informed a special CPSU Central Committee plenum debate on nationalities (T 18.9.89; IHT 19.9.89), though a devolution bill would then be rejected (IHT 21.11.89; Aust 22.11.89). Intense pressure existed to preserve minority rights in the republics (T 18.8.89), specifically the rights of ethnic Russians, their presence a key bonding agent in keeping together the “unruly empire” (T19.9.89). It was a common Western critique that Mikhail Gorbachev’s preference for a “pluralistic” form of socialism could not extend to accommodating the demands of the nationalities (GW 17.12.89), and Western objections to military intervention in several cases, like the attack on Baku, greatly hampered the strategy of building support for *perestroika* on the Western international flank

(IHT 8.11.89, 3.1.90; T 20.1.90; WG 28.1.90) . As a particular case, time was sought at the Malta summit to tell the Americans certain tough internal problems would require unavoidable use of force (IHT 29.11.89, 18.1.90). Ultimately outside observers would make the judgment that events in the republics had created a “crisis of leadership” for Gorbachev (ABC-TV 30.1.90); the Soviet leader driven by contending forces was caught in a cul-de-sac, an impossible situation (GW 24.9.89).

(1) Op. Cit. “The German Gambit”, SBS Television Australia, 9.11.01

(2) As with a conversation between the writer and the ABC Moscow Correspondent John Lombard at Bonn, July 1989; see also “Berlin Wall as the Turning Point”, Chapter 5 above; exhaustion of Gorbachev’s popularity in the USSR by mid-1989

CHAPTER ELEVEN

REVIEW OF NEWS COVERAGE – FIVE

CZECHOSLOVAKIA AND THE BALKANS

CZECHOSLOVAKIA

The short history of the “Velvet Revolution” belongs to the mass movement of citizens of Czechoslovakia, and less potently to news media which for its various own purposes provided strategic back-up and support services to it. It can be pieced together through 351 reports collected in this portfolio.

In the case of Czechoslovakia there was a palpable collapse of moral authority and confidence on the part of the communist regime in November 1989. The upsurge of protest activity on Sunday 19 November, with tens of thousands in the streets, acted as a signal to foreign news media to try to attend, with the mildly astonishing discovery that the frontiers were open and foreign reporters would be able to move about without interference. This extract from an end-of-year report intimates the climate of uncertainty that existed, underwritten with a certain confidence about change on its way, when the writer, arriving in Prague at night, went to Wenceslaus square: “In Wenceslaus Square, Prague, on the night of November the twenty-second, it remained altogether uncertain what lay ahead. The government was communist; the Communist Party remained under the control of its old guard, as it had done since 1968. There was only one main certainty, that huge numbers of people in Czechoslovakia wanted it to go, and very bravely were out on the streets in protest. In the city square they were meeting in large groups. I was looking for information and eventually met a student who offered to take me to the strike committee at his university. He would only give his first name, Robert. He wanted to see my credentials. He said he had orders not to bring policemen into the camp. The camp was an occupied university building well guarded by groups of students, still jumpy after the terrifying police attack on a big demonstration, five nights before. We had to show identity papers at three doors on the way in. The important thing about the visit was the atmosphere and the certainty in the minds of these students that they were in immediate danger of attack and imprisonment. To all intents and purposes the country was a police state still, on November the twenty-second ... and again, we have this sudden collapse of the old

order, and a country on the way to transforming itself. Well within a month the movement the students began has overturned the communist regime and is itself a senior partner in government ...”(ABC-R, Correspondents’ Report, 17.12.89).

That encounter produced an interview, and directions to attend the opposition planning session at the Disk theatre, which moved immediately to the celebrated venue for planning sessions and media conferences, the *Laterna Magica* (Magic Lantern) theatre; in the commanding presence of the chief translator, Anna Klimova, the following January named Ambassador to the United States (IHT 12.1.90). The students, Charter 77, the newly-formed Civic Forum and others were saying they believed they could win, by forcing free elections. They said they detected a mood of panic and over-reaction on the government side. More dramatically hundreds-of-thousands of people went into the streets each day, injecting some certainty and confidence into those assertions. It was possible to report it in these terms, within twenty-four hours of the first clandestine contacts with the opposition: “Hundreds of thousands of demonstrators have again taken over Wenceslaus Square ... The mood has gone from fear and anguish over attacks on the demonstrations by police, less than a week ago, to a feeling of optimism and great excitement ... Huge crowds at one end of the long square have been shouting at motorists to show support for the rebellion by sounding their horns. They do more than that. They shout back and lean out waving the Czechoslovak flag. Every time it happens the crowd roars. Only a few cars along a busy road did not join in ...”(ABC-R, AM 23.11.89).

Czechoslovakia produced a set-piece profile of a mass social movement beginning to form, expanding suddenly, and -while quite quickly moving to routines of institutional politics - achieving the bulk of its objectives. It built on existing knowledge or mythology about oppositionist politics, such as historic commemorative dates; it was lightly organised, resorting to publicity through outside news media or clandestine poster campaigns, because it was forbidden to set up formal structures, like the branch structures of an opposition political party; and it depended heavily on demonstrations of determined mass support for its initiatives. Reporting from Prague had charted the build-up to these events organised by an opposition movement accustomed to mobilising whatever resources would come to hand. The demonstrations, generally suppressed up to 17.11.89, were pegged on anniversaries that people would know, and which the government might, or might not sanction: 18.8.89 anniversary of the 1968 Soviet invasion (T 19.8.89; IHT 17,22,23,25.8.89; ABC-R 22.8.89;

GW 27.8.89); 27.10.89 founding day of the 1918 Czechoslovak Republic (ABC-R 28.10.89; Aust 28-29.10.89; GW 29.10.89; IHT 30.10.89); 17.11.89, commemoration of the student Jan Opletal, shot dead by Nazis (ABC-R 18.11.89; T18.11.89; IHT 18-19.11.89). Leadership was diffuse and collegiate (reported as “leaderless” demonstrations, Aust 22.11.89), since key figures like Vaclav Havel were likely to be picked up by police before expected events (as in October 1989; T28.10.89). The pressure was made to be constant, with events organised frequently, on various available pretexts, e.g. madcap street theatre trading in sarcasm or irony, at Wenceslaus Square in September (Aust 16-17.9.89; pranksters forming nascent “political parties”, IHT 30.9-1.10.89), or a public meeting on ecology (T14.11.89) - where possible in co-operation with the authorities.

There was little problem with stated goals; the community memory of the 1968 Soviet invasion represented the grievance; and the slogan of “free elections” represented both a moral principle and a path of action with fairly assured outcomes; (a trilogy of Eastern Europe demands was listed by William Luhers in the IHT: remove the government; free elections; improve conditions (IHT 22.11.89). The hope of this movement lay in bringing out big numbers of people. If the events in neighbouring countries could stimulate optimism for change and dampen fear, people would attend. With events running daily, communication of key messages was to become more simple, by megaphone, posters and foreign (later national) mass media (T 27.11.89). With resolve, their presence in strength would seal a moral victory; their weight of numbers could be called on to paralyse daily movement, as in East Germany – an unanswerable lever of power.

On Friday 17 November police violently broke up a protest in front of journalists who passed on, in Western news media, that there were contested reports of a student being killed. This story was handled in a classic way, government denials being balanced against assertions from the crowd (IHT 19.11.89; ABC-TV 19.11.89; ABC-R 20.11.89; T 20.11.89; GW 26.11.89). One week after the opening of the Berlin Wall the incident in any case affronted public patience and stimulated public contempt; tens of thousands marched on government buildings on the Sunday night 19.11.89, beginning the mass protest movement in earnest (ABC-R 21.11.89; Aust 21,22.11.89; T 21.11.89; IHT 21,22.11.89). As for the reported death, a student told the Times, “even if it isn’t true we have had enough of what the government tells us” (T 20.11.89). In a few days reporters in the crowds found them detecting a “scent of victory” and achieving an “unstoppable” momentum (Aust 24.11.89; T 27.11.89).

Events in sequence: Daily demonstrations took place that week, beginning Sunday 19.11.89 (ABC-R 22,24,26,27.11.89; T 22.11.89; Aust 22.11.89; IHT 22.11.89; GW 26.11.89; ABC-TV 20.11.89), numbers going beyond 250000 in Prague, some guessing at double that number, leading up to a planned general strike. This activity was accompanied by the first meetings between opposition leaders and the federal Prime Minister, Ladislav Adamec - who proposed non-communist participation in the government. He was reported out of step with the communist party politburo in taking this initiative (Aust 24.11.89), later equivocating, becoming exasperated and riled with the opposition, (illustrated by a picture in the Times of 27.11.89, two sides lined up in an adversarial stance, the leaders in an angry exchange – **Photograph 3**). The mass rallies produced such incidents as the unheralded appearance of Alexander Dubcek on the platform (ABC-R 23.11.89; T 23.11.89; IHT 23, 27.11.89; Aust 24.11.89; GW 3.12.89), or a sudden loud-speaker announcement from the headquarters of the state-compliant Socialist Party that it was going over to the opposition side (ABC-R 24.11.89). The Secretariat of the communist party, including the Party leader Milos Jakes, resigned on the Friday night, one week after the violent police action that triggered the giant demonstrations. Dubcek and Havel celebrated at the *Laterna Magica* before a world audience, while groups of citizens danced in the square to “Roll Out the Barrell” (ABC-R 25.11.89; T 25.11.89; Aust 27,28.11.89; GW 3.12.89).

By the weekend the demonstrations were being televised live inside Czechoslovakia. There had been some hours of tension when orders to commence these transmissions were rescinded and the state television center suddenly closed. The wavering ended on the Saturday (ABC-R 24,25.11.89), and open broadcasting was restored, in time for an outside broadcast from St Guy’s Cathedral, where Cardinal Frantisek Tomasek made his intervention. He declared to sustained applause the whole nation wanted democracy: “Christ gives light, power and victory” (ABC-R 23, 25.11.89; “Not to stand aside”, T 23.11, 20.12.89; IHT 27.11.89). Protest activity had broken out in several parts of the country with a separate struggle being organised in Slovakia (T 30.11.89). The general strike on Monday 27.11.89 was the actual testing time for all parties; it had to be confirmed that workers in major industrial plants would join city workers and professionals. The strike call had gone out to everyone; there was otherwise no organisation. Immense numbers gathered at Wenceslaus Square, confirming - as was needed- that the general strike had begun. It stopped the country for two hours, paralysing industry and transport, except for trams and trains which advertised they were

staying on to carry citizens to their demonstrations (ABC-R 27,28,29.11.89; T 28.11.89; Aust 28.11.89; IHT 28.11.89; GW 3.12.89).

Events from that point maintained spontaneity but there was suddenly much more conventional politics going on, in the form of negotiations, which began to dominate the news. Jan Urban, a Civic Forum leader, acknowledged the inevitability of shifting under pressure from improvised mass politics to orthodox, representative political forms: “We can’t continue with this anarchist democracy, with everything based on good will and working twenty-two hours a day. We shall have to change into a proper, organised political force” (GW 17.12.89). Immediately after the strike it was revealed a vote at the communist party Central Committee had narrowly defeated moves to use troops against the demonstrations (T 28.11.89; GW 24.12.89). Communist party officials let out as well that the meeting had received a message from Moscow, where the 1968 invasion would be publicly condemned (T 5.12.89; Aust 6.12.89; GW 26.11.89), to the effect that a “sinking ship cannot be saved by old methods” (T27.11.89; also, “waiting for a sign”, IHT 3.11.89). Thereafter, following the central committee’s block resignation the previous Friday, a new party leadership group, initially headed by Karel Urbanek, attempted late and placatory reforms (IHT 25-26.11.89). The day after the strike, Adamec, heading the government, agreed to admit non-communist Ministers to cabinet (ABC-R, IHT 29.11.89). The next day Wednesday 29.11.89 the parliament removed references to the Communist Party “leading role” from the constitution (T 29.11.89; Aust 30.11.89; IHT 30.11.89; GW 10, 17.12.89).

A central committee member Vasil Mohorita, who was to play a lead role in remaking the Party on democratic lines, declared free elections would take place. A commission was formed to review the 1968 invasion, with plain intent to condemn it (ABC-R 1,2.12.89; Aust 1.12.89; IHT 2.12.89; T 2-3.12.89). Travel restrictions were lifted and the border with Austria thrown open (ABC-R 1.12.89; Aust 2-3.12.89; IHT 1.12.89). Mohorita sought a meeting with journalists to outline these initiatives and say the former leadership had wasted opportunities to make radical changes and avert the crisis. At one point there was a joke, and he interjected, “I also laugh”, proposing there was some common humour and humanity to be shared. The comment was greeted with silence but seemed also to be received as sincere and persuasive (ABC-R 30.11.89; Mohorita became leader of the reform faction at the forthcoming communist party conference, Aust 23-24.12.89).

At the end of the week Havel at the head of the opposition directly asserted the power of the protest movement, to stop the attempt at renewal and make the communist party relinquish power. News reports, like the following, indicate the political process had become transparent and was mixing styles, closed-door negotiations among leaders, together with mass power: “In Czechoslovakia the opposition says it is going back to its protest campaign, after rejecting a new cabinet formed by the communist Prime Minister, Ladislav Adamec. As European Correspondent Lee Duffield reports the campaign was suspended after the government agreed to take in non-communist Ministers, in the lead-up to free elections ... The main opposition group Civic Forum has warned it would go back to the streets if it was not satisfied ... Mr Adamec has allocated cabinet posts, mostly without much power, to two small parties formerly allied with the communists, and to three independents. Prominent opposition leaders were not included. He appointed a general as Defence Minister, ignoring demands by Civic Forum that the job should go to a civilian. The opposition has called a demonstration for Monday and has threatened more demonstrations and strikes, both over the formation of a government, and to support its demand for the resignation of the Czechoslovak President, Gustav Husak” (ABC-R 4.12.89; also ABC-R 5.12.89; Aust 4,6.12.89; T 4.12.89; IHT 4.12.89; ABC-TV 4.12.89).

Through further negotiations - including a public ultimatum from the opposition, for Husak to resign (ABC-R 29.11, 6.12.89) - the Communist Party surrendered a bloc of reserved seats in the parliament, and a new government was formed with a non-communist majority (Aust 30.11, 7.12.89; T 7,8,9.12.89; IHT 8.12.89; ABC-R 10.12.89; GW 17.12.89). Husak, who had been a leader in the 1968 accommodation with the Soviet Union, resigned after swearing in this government on 10.12.89 (Aust 11.12.89; ABC-TV 11.12.89; T 11,12.12.89; IHT 9-10.12.89); Dubcek became Chairman of the Czechoslovak Federal Assembly on 28.12.89, to “lay the foundations for development of democracy” (ABC-R 29.12.89; T 29.12.89; Aust 30-31.12.89; IHT 29.12.89), and Havel became President of Czechoslovakia the following day (ABC-TV 30.12.89; T 30.12.89; IHT 30-31.12.89; Aust 1.1.90; GW 7.1.89). Elections were set for June 1990 (Aust 13-14.1.90) and by the end of January, the new government, supported by demonstrations 20000 strong, was beginning to press the Soviet Union to withdraw all of its troops from Czechoslovak territory (Aust 30.1.90). In a footnote confirming the change of power, for all to see: The armed forces had pledged to defend the communist system (IHT 24.11.89), and so upon rumours of a military *coup d’etat* the civilian Defence Minister paraded the entire army in barracks, to ensure its commitment to the

democratic order (T 27.1.90).

BALKANS

Events in the Balkans are beyond the resources of this study but will receive mention because they are part of the one process, the collapse of the communist bloc. In particular the case of Romania will be reviewed because of the issues it has raised about the role of news media; reporting in Romania was a matter of piecing together events in a confused scenario.

ROMANIA

Romania to correspondents was a "land of lies" because of the haphazard and bizarre flow of information and misinformation experienced there during the six months of the crisis under review. It might have been expected to some degree that dependable information would be hard to come by in an under-developed land after a long period of limiting and harrowing dictatorship, in the middle of a traumatic political crisis. There appeared to be cultural factors at work as well; the mass media tradition was a propaganda tradition; the political tradition was one of sweeping rhetoric and forceful action to overcome opponents, not one of open policy development and persuasion. In August 1989 the dictator Nicolai Ceausescu asserted there was "no place for *perestroika* in Romania", and delivered a five-hour oration to a Party Congress which confirmed him in office for a new five-year term. Demonstrations at Timisoara initially in defence of Pastor Laszlo Tokes, a member of the ethnic Hungarian community at odds with the regime, sparked off police actions with several killed. Trouble spread to other cities with more killings taking place; and on 22 December Ceausescu was jeered at a rally in Bucharest, hurriedly leaving the scene by helicopter as the secret police, the Securitate, fired on the crowd. Ceausescu and his wife were detained by the Army, given a summary trial for genocide and other crimes, and executed on 25 December. An interim government, the National Salvation Front (NSF), including dissidents and former communist officials, backed by the armed forces, secured its position after some weeks of skirmishing with elements of the Securitate, and declared for democratic government including elections early in 1990.

That much is registered today as factual information, for example it draws on a standard almanac (SBS World Guide, 4th edition, pp 519-20). At the time the development of events

was wildly obscured and exaggerated, meaning a flow of alarming but unsteady tales would be reported with the news, until proper access to information, checking and review could be put into place. Rumours would get through the gate. Sources were weak and reporters could not check them directly in person. To begin with the country was generally closed to outside news media, except for some representatives of Eastern bloc news services, and in addition the borders were sealed under a state of emergency (Aust 19.12.89; T21.12.89). Journalists writing on Timosoara initially had to rely on chance witnesses leaving Romania and some despatches from the East European agencies. It was not just a matter of logistics, information not being readily to hand. It became obvious there had been deliberate or haphazard exaggeration, made worse by the exhumation of bodies from a hospital cemetery, mostly medical cases, to support claims of several thousand being killed. There was a further problem with sources of information: the National Salvation Front itself proved to be a suspect source on some points; it relied on the exaggerated death tolls because a figure of 60000 dead had been given out in support of the principal charge of genocide against the Ceausescu couple (T26.12.89). Whatever manipulation of events and published information took place, the engagement of Western news media, witnessing and questioning, was a factor in reducing it and getting the record settled within reasonable bounds, in a short period of weeks. In this report **498** media articles have been consulted.

In the early coverage, reports in the Times had dozens feared killed, and "slaughter" at Timosara (T 18.12.89); a front page story accurately suggested Romanian deaths could reach 2000, though the information was well coloured, with troops reported bayoneting adult civilians and children among those "massacred"; injuries were said to have been caused "by tanks"; Austrian television was quoted on the sighting of truckloads of bodies, and Tass news agency was involved, reporting on tourists being kept out of the area. Reporters on the story were positioned at the Hungarian border near Timosoara to pick up what casual information might come by (T20.12.89). Some reports of the time dealt with "murderous attacks" on civilians (T 20.12.89). One quoted a lorry driver in Bulgaria who had seen a video representing some shootings; troops were said to have been firing from helicopters; and more witnesses were quoted in a similar vein from Bulgarian television (T21.12.89). Estimates of 3-4000 dead at Timosoara were quoted from East and West German television but with a quote from Western diplomats that it was not yet possible to work out a figure (T21.12.89). A reporter in Timosoara was shown the mass grave and passed on the estimate of 4600 dead (T 23.12.89). A round-up of information over some days was then put together under the by-line

of Nicholas Beeston in the Times, using several sources, (T23.12.89), and such retrospectives came to be used by different media outlets to begin to regulate and adjudicate the flow (T 27.12.89).

Television chains got access to vision of the bodies at Timosoara and in the meantime covered a "bloody offensive against the pro-democracy movement", with a few people "getting out" of Romania with their own stories, e.g. a story of soldiers being shot for refusing to fire on women (ABC-TV 19,22.12.89). Similarly with radio, stories obtained from Timosoara, sourced to agencies, quoted "eye witnesses" at mass graves near the city: "... naked bodies, including those of children, some beheaded and showing marks of torture, had been found trussed together with barbed wire" (ABC-R 22.12.89). Reference was made at one point to a persistent, unconfirmed story retailed for weeks, that flights of helicopter gunships had been used by the Securitate (ABC-R 23.12.89). In more of this initial coverage, hundreds were slaughtered in attacks on protestors, according to the Australian (Aust 20.12.89); a French agency report was carried, saying 12000 were dead at Timosoara amid atrocities such as the defilement of pregnant women (Aust 26.12.89); and the Guardian Weekly, using Hungarian and Yugoslav sources, had reports on Romanian forces massacring civilian demonstrators (GW 24.12.89). The International Herald Tribune coping with the uneven flow of information offered a report "compiled by staff from despatches", e.g. including information from a returned Yugoslav traveller, on "brutal clashes" in Transylvania. There was a Tass report on troop movements in Bucharest, and a round-up from "foreign witnesses" in Romania, together with "reports trickling out through Hungarian radio" (IHT 18,19,20,21.12.89). A careful yet disparate report on 22.12.89 used the Tanjug agency, Tass and Budapest radio, along with a US State Department comment, that "a massacre of undetermined proportions" had taken place at Bucharest, with "no reliable figures on demonstrations." The estimated death toll of fifty looks to have been accurate given all the circumstances. Talk of helicopters firing rockets again received mention (IHT 22.12.89).

Apart from this issue of uncertain sources, a second problem was the balcony scene at the communist party building in Palace Square, where the live coverage of Ceausescu's rally was cut off amid shouting and sounds of gunfire; enough to cause a general news alert, not enough to know what had happened. The effect was that the famous sequence of pictures of Ceausescu, his facial expression changing, would be immediately used but not with a complete description of his flight and the aftermath (e.g. "defiant Ceausescu harangues the

rally ..." T 22.12.89). The supporting copy, drawn from diverse sources, was generally accurate although imprecise about the exact incident; the pictures would be used again, tellingly, when the events were put together retrospectively (as for the Washington Post, IHT 29.12.89; ABC-TV 31.12.89). A third problem was with the National Salvation Front, the members of which were in danger at first, and were forced to improvise in gaining authority. This body exercised effective control of events with the Army, proclaiming an ultimatum for the surrender of "terrorists" from the Securitate and mopping up resistance. It settled the question of what had become of Ceausescu after his disappearance on 21 December (provoking rumours about a flight to Yugoslavia or China), by releasing a communiqué on his execution with the video of the event, on 25.12.89. It equivocated on the numbers of civilians killed in disturbances, a spokesperson at one point arguing for a misunderstanding, claiming that the interim government had said 60000 casualties, not deaths (T2.1.90).

Its gesture in digging up a Bucharest park as an emergency cemetery in hindsight may have been untowardly alarmist, though at the time trucks were bringing bodies three at a time and over 100 prepared graves were steadily being filled (ABC-R 29.12.89, 1.1.90; also IHT 27.12.89; Aust 28.12.89). Bad impressions could be created. One executive member of the Front called Casimir Ionescu visited a large group of journalists who were urgently looking for official information, to give a media conference on behalf of the provisional government. He appeared to have been badly frightened, claiming it had become necessary to move around the city in a tank to avoid assassins looking for him. He endorsed some of the wilder stories, that 100 helicopters had attacked troops, and said assassins using silencers and night-vision goggles had murdered half the NSF at a meeting, after someone suggested turning off the lights as a security measure. The offering as one of the first addressed directly to journalists on behalf of the NSF could not be ignored, but reports had to be kept sceptical in tone (ABC-R, 27, 30.12.89).

This review has focussed on the problems with coverage in what was a turbulent setting, in order to admit for consideration the idea that the news itself, if wrong, might cause distortions in the pattern of events. Yet, if information fed into the news system was mischievous or capricious, it was also neutralised by the deployment of certain standard journalistic practices. The first of these was to place reporters on scene and monitor information as directly as possible, which was completed as more journalists got into the country. Secondly, in the handling of news, information that exaggerates tends to look suspect and will be worded with

qualifiers, and / or juxtaposed with other information so it is de-emphasised. This was done with the earlier news about Romania in most cases. If information has to be used advisedly in this way, it is likely to be re-checked later, especially if part of a running story, and if wrong, it stands to be corrected. In Romania the fact of wrong information being passed about, especially the exaggerated death figures, and notably the bad prank or dirty tricks with the exhumed bodies at Timosoara (if that's what it was), was itself taken up as a news story. This was more than simply correction of a story. The misinformation matched the character of the place and time; a country emerging in great confusion from a famously bizarre if grotesque dictatorship. More significantly the question of the misinformation also went together with claims being made, that Romania's revolution was not so much a popular revolt as a *coup d'etat*.

In most versions of the *coup d'etat* scenario, elements in the communist administration, especially some like Ion Ilescu who had fallen out with the leadership, enjoyed links with the Soviet Union, notably links through the Army, and some contacts with Western governments. They had the core of the National Salvation Front ready when, under the influence of the revolt throughout Eastern Europe, people rebelled against Ceausescu. Removal of the dictator would be done by the Army but mass media support for the operation would be useful, and in the communist world that would be contrived news shared out by friendly agencies, including those owned by reformist communist governments. The preferred scenario of the Eastern European governments, to convert the party to a democratic model and remain in power, would be achieved. The NSF denied any contrivance and pointed to its own close-run installation, and the near-annihilation of its leadership group, in a television building under armed attack. There were known links with the outside, e.g. the French Foreign Minister was aware of an internal opposition to Ceausescu, but this evidence was only circumstantial. Members of the public who had been in the streets vehemently affirmed that for their part, the action had been spontaneous. The possibilities were well-canvassed, especially once correspondents had arrived, using well-informed sources, viz diplomats in the capital, (Joseph Fitchett, IHT 4.1.90; NSF denial IHT 5.1.90; rumours and conspiracy theories a tradition IHT 5.1.90; connections of General Nicolae Militaru T 28.12.89; Moscow's "tacit approval", T 4.1.90; a "happening or a plot?" GW 14.1.90; military links to USSR, Aust 9.1.90; NSF spokesperson on the popular revolt, ABC-R 4.1.90).

The reporting on the Romanian crisis established the essential information from the start, identifying who was doing what, despite the confusion on the ground. For example it was realised the Army had moved to support a popular insurrection and was fighting the Securitate. This is from a radio report on the day of Ceausescu's overthrow: "There has been continued fighting in Romania between army units and security police loyal to the ousted communist leader Nicolae Ceausescu ... The government resigned after Mr Ceausescu fled Bucharest, the capital, by helicopter. A group called the National Salvation Committee, which has the support of senior army officers, has declared itself the provisional government and says it will work towards calling elections" (ABC-R 22.12.89). The day by day situation in the street could be monitored, for instance from the television broadcasts of the NSF at its headquarters in the television centre, Studio 4 (IHT 23-25.12.89; T 29.12.89). On 22 December Securitate forces made a counter-attack (ABC-R 23.12.89). On the day of the demonstration and shooting at Palace Square enough pool material was obtained from a scattering of reporters close to the scene to establish immediately the main outlines, which were to be filled out later, e.g. the detailed Times report on the shooting taken from a Yugoslav reporter (T 23.12.89). Conventional reporting on the ground confirmed news stories of the week, e.g. people with gunshot wounds from the demonstrations gave interviews on what happened (ABC-R 29.12.89); a hospital doctor, Radu Bof, said he was treating wounds from bullets aimed by trained marksmen at the temple, backbone or throat (ABC-R 1.1.90).

Correspondents obtained and published fresh information pertaining to the veracity of information being provided by local sources. The director of the International Red Cross relief operation for Romania, John Grinling, disclosed in an interview for ABC at Budapest on 27.12.89 that his trucks were not finding the thousands of destitute and injured people they'd been led to expect; some were returning with their cargoes of blankets, foodstuffs and medicines (ABC-R 28.12.89). Something was amiss in the story of massacre and horror which had begun to prevail; which would call for investigation, exposure and corrections. This suspect quality in the story was discussed among correspondents at the time, with the observation that the East European agencies - Hungarian, Russian and Yugoslav in particular- were providing most of the information. In these conversations it was suggested that they were capitalising on their established presence in the area and working to be recognised as part of the Western "free flow" media world. It was not realised or suggested then that they actually might have been making up elements in the story. However the corrections began quickly. A Times review challenged the figure of 60000 dead and

concluded that casualty figures generally for Romania appeared to be “a great deal lower than claimed” (T 28.12.89). In other revisions: a sceptical treatment of the death toll at both Timosoara and Bucharest (IHT 29.12.89); a Timosoara pathologist telling RTL television the bodies in the mass grave were from the hospital morgue (“Timosoara’s mass grave ‘was faked’”, T 26.1.89); a further correction of Timosoara exaggerations, (Mary Battiata in GW 7.1.90); a report with diplomats saying there had been fewer than 5000 deaths, NSF still maintaining 60000 (Aust 1.1.90); the figure of 60000 called a “myth” (Aust 4.1.90); an NSF member asserting there were fewer than 10000 dead (Aust 10.1.90); casualty estimates revised to 7000, while the flood of external medical and other aid built up to a surplus (ABC-R 2.1.90).

Critical treatment of news brought the scope of coverage within the normal range of believability. As with every case under review, after the initial outbreak of struggle, the protagonists in the drama felt some pressure to negotiate settlements and install more organised and regular political relations. The NSF announced plans for elections, eventually set for 20.5.90 (Aust 25.1.90), and began registering political parties to contest them (Aust 1,2.1.90; ABC-R 1.1.90; T 4,6.1.90). It brought the wrath of an aroused public upon itself, in the cities at least, when it decided to contest the elections as a new party; Ministers were confronted by crowds of protestors (Aust 9, 26.1.90; T 13,15.1.90; GW 14.1.90; IHT 24,25.1.90; ABC-R 24,25.1.90). It determined to ban the Communist Party and conduct a referendum on the death penalty, then reversed the decision, saying the Party would be tolerated and the death penalty reinstated; complaining it had made wrong decisions under intimidation (T19.1.90; GW 7,21.1.90; IHT 13-14,17,19.1.90; Aust 20-21.1.90; ABC-R 13,14.1.90).

Crowds of government supporters were then mobilised in counter-demonstrations, creating incendiary scenes in the capital (T 29,30.1.90; ABC-R 29,30.1.90; IHT 30.1.90). Many of the instigators of popular revolt against Ceausescu, liberals and the right wing, now saw themselves by-passed and being confounded by his successors. In part-compensation, a round table was organised, following on from the other East European states, to provide for dialogue in the approach to the elections (Aust 30.1.90; T31.1.90; IHT 31.1.90). Some of the “other” stories on the agenda in Romania, post Ceausescu: a round-up of Ceausescu family members, most being state officials, including the dictator’s aged mother in law; exposes on the luxury lifestyle of the couple, and tours of the gim-crack palace erected to their glory; permission to

the weather bureau to begin issuing true reports, a previous injunction to consider morale factors being put aside; and, perhaps as a sign of civil society returning to assert itself, identities outside of politics - the gypsy nation, Dracula, Vlad the Impaler- would be heard from once again, in supplementary coverage for the interest of the public in the West.

YUGOSLAVIA

In 1989 there was ample “in theory” knowledge of the ethnic and national tensions within Yugoslavia, which had papered over some of its worst difficulties with the joint Presidency arrangement, following the death of President Josip Broz Tito. Authoritative backgrounders were being written on Yugoslavia (e.g. assessing the likelihood of ethnic conflict in particular in Bosnia-Herzegovina) but the degeneration into civil war and atrocity was not foreshadowed in general news coverage in 1989. Ample information on file would not provide news; there had been few demonstrative break-outs of animosity to show what was coming to Yugoslavia, since the Second World War, and Yugoslavia was being lightly reported. When events arose that would generate news, like the beginnings of serious trouble in Kosovo, they were seized on and quickly reported. All who had glanced at recent history understood that the situation throughout Yugoslavia could degenerate into a violent extension of the break-down of the communist system elsewhere. As the idea of change had been demonstrated to people, through the example of Central Eastern Europe, a revolution of some kind became a recognised possibility, though it could not be said how it might take place.

However a total of 77 reports were recorded which showed divisions opening by late 1989 on mixed ideological and national issues – a preparation of the lines of battle. Demands for constitutional change by Slovenia, including options to secede, were denounced by federal and Serbian state officials (T26,28,29.,9.89; ABC-R 27.9.89; IHT 28.9.89; GW 8.10.89); there were demonstrations commenced in Belgrade (T 29.11.89), which caused Slovenia to close its frontier against columns of Serbian nationalists (Aust 1.12.89; T 4.12.89); and a declaration by the federal Presidency that it would intervene to “preserve Yugoslavia’s integrity” (T5.12.89). Similarly a call by the Communist Party in Croatia for moves towards a multi-party system was opposed by Serbia (Aust 13-14.10.89; T 24.11, 12.12.89; ABC-TV 22.12.89), and opposed also in a declaration by the armed forces (T24.11.89). At the same time rebellion and repression had begun in Kosovo, with systematic removal of ethnic Albanians from official positions and violent suppression of demonstrations, bringing several

reported deaths (IHT 3.11.89; Aust 29.1.90). There were 19 reports on such events in Kosovo mostly during January 1990.

The January Congress of the federal communist party, the main forum for debate among the six republics, covered in 16 reports in this survey, produced an acrimonious split over the secession issue, and over draft plans for both free elections and ending the “leading role” of the Party (IHT 16-17.12.89; T 20.1.90; ABC-R 20.1.90; Aust 23,24.1.90; GW 28.1.90). Slovenian delegates walked out after abusive exchanges with the Serbs. In most of this coverage Yugoslavia was viewed apprehensively, though as an imponderable: “Once the most open communist country, Yugoslavia now finds itself at the tail end of East European reforms ... Yugoslavia is the forgotten East European socialist country. It did not figure in the spectacle of the 1989 revolutions and is still governed by an unreconstructed communist party. Only Albania shares this dubious distinction” (T 19.1.90). If Yugoslavia appeared quiet on a day when shooting continued in Romania, with continuing accounts of the last hours of Nicolai Ceausescu dominating the news, some editorialists and others had begun looking ahead with a certain prescience and foreboding: “Like Poland, Yugoslavia becomes a laboratory in which the logic of drastic and rapid reform will be put to the test. But unlike Poland, Yugoslavia could, if things go badly, fall apart under the strain” (IHT 28.12.89).

ALBANIA

The news from Albania could be classed as a preparation for journalists and their market for what might eventuate. **Seventeen** reports documented some tentative pronouncements on future reform, suggesting a local “*perestroika*” (Aust, T 26.1.90); there were profiles on leading politicians and other background material, and information about government action against small demonstrations and other “unrest”, denied by the state authorities (Aust 21.12.89; IHT 12.1.90; T 13.1.90).

BULGARIA

Bulgaria, seen as a Soviet client state and a reputed backwater for news, produced a sudden surprise with the dismissal of the long-standing Communist Party First Secretary and Head of State Todor Zhivkov on 9.11.89 – the headline given special treatment amid news of the Berlin Wall, e.g. a strap across the top of the masthead of the IHT (IHT 11-12.11.89; ABC-

TV 10.11.89) Coverage involving **114** reports and features monitored the upsurge that lay behind the change, with an outbreak of street campaigns, on a theme of “economic disaster and ethnic strife” (GW 31.12.89), against a communist “reform” government proposing urgent concessions.

The script might have been prepared in Central Eastern Europe. Demonstrators besieging the parliament building, 50000 strong (IHT 4-5.11, 9-10.12.89; ABC-R 15.12.89, 15.1.90), would call for “glasnost” and “democracy”; crisis meetings of the government and Party would endorse media freedoms (GW 29.10.89), disband the secret police (GW 3.12.89), approve free elections for the following May (T 18.11.89; GW 17.12.89), abandon the communist monopoly on power (GW 26.11.89; Aust 29.12.89, 16.1.90; T. IHT 16.1.90), order the expulsion from party membership, and trial for abuse of power, of the former leader and his close associates (ABC-R 14.12.89; 19.1.90; T 14.12.89; Aust 6-7.1.90), and convene a round table with opposition groups to organise the transition to electoral democracy (T17.1.90; Aust 25.1.90). The situation of Bulgaria’s ethnic Turkish – Moslem minority came into dispute, covered in 29 of the reports about Bulgaria. Strong elements in the emerging opposition were against the extension of democratic rights to that population; there was an exodus of frightened people to Turkey, and some serious violence, before a special round table discussion produced a pact on future relations (ABC-R, T 13.1.90). The contradictions revealed by the “Turkish” conflict would add to the disorder and disarray in Bulgaria amid an enduring crisis in its economic sector. A by-product of the Bulgarian “*glasnost*”, of interest to Western news media (6 stories), was the opening of files on the 1970’s “poison umbrella murder” of a Bulgarian defector in London, with inconclusive results early in 1990.

CHAPTER TWELVE

REVIEW OF NEWS MEDIA - SIX

ANALYSIS AND REVIEW

*The news treatment of the events and processes of the era was made complete with an on-going pragmatic analysis of causes and trends. An array of significant expertise was deployed to help make sense of the crisis on the day, through editorials, feature articles or broadcast commentaries. These came in a rush from the beginning of November 1989, the event of the Berlin Wall alerting all to the fact that the changes under way were epoch-making and called for serious thought. In the outcome the record shows that a credible reflective treatment was made available, not very divergent from later published accounts and arguments about the collapse of the Eastern bloc. From this, a case might even be made that a skilled and educated reading of the news may provide the bulk of what is needed, to discover and obtain an explanation of major happenings in the world. Issues to do with the position of the news media itself also received attention and an indicative selection of that introspective commentary is included here. Altogether **401** articles and reports were consulted for this section.*

Position-taking

News media provided access to stakeholders and interested parties. Among these, the NATO Secretary General, Manfred Woerner gave a wary analysis, cautioning the Western powers against “reducing defence spending too soon” and “unilateral disarmament”, calling for a “period of calm” (IHT 10.10.89; ABC-R 11.10.89; T 9.11.89). In the background to this position-taking, urgent thought was being given to how the institutional arrangements might be adapted to accommodate a new order of power relations; for example George Brock in The Times , in late November, questioned whether NATO forces would be able to remain in a reunited Germany (T 29.11.89). Martin Bangemann, a German politician and EC Commissioner wanted limits to “interference” from outside Germany, and less pressure that would force a distinction in choice between German reunification and European integration (T7.11.89). Roy Denman, former EC representative to Washington, perceived the breaking up of empire, linking it to the European idea; the time had arrived for a new Europe commencing with the EC projects for a single currency and single market (IHT 11.10.89). The British Prime

Minister Margaret Thatcher, as a leading figure unhappy with the changes taking place, would hold conferences with her international counterparts then make public proposals that expressed her misgivings, e.g. that strategic regional imbalances should not be created; Europe was at risk of becoming destabilised; inaction was advisable, to create a “period of calm”; Gorbachev should agree to a “measured approach” (IHT 11-12.11.89; T 18,21.11.89, 6.1.90).

Sources identified with the American foreign policy community made well informed, prominent contributions to the debate. Francis Fukuyama, Deputy Director of the State Department Policy Planning Staff, published his facetious essay proposing the triumph of liberalism and “end of history” (Washington Post, in GW 31.12.89; IHT 15.12.89). A duel took place between George Kennan and Henry Kissinger; the former insisted that the situation in Europe being “dicey”, the collective powers should intervene to assist with a solution, preferably development of the EU model, with a three-year moratorium on moves to German reunification in the meantime; Kissinger considered the Germans should determine their national future and that in any event the trends under way could not be stopped (IHT 14, 15, 23.11.89; debate coverage from Baltimore Sun, in IHT 25.1.90; Aust 20-21.1.90). As Kennan had been the influential writer “X” advocating containment policies in the 1950’s, a new writer “Z” appeared, a senior figure in the State Department, suggesting that Gorbachev’s policies would fail - “all paths of communist reform lead to an impasse”- and as the “will to power” failed, a civil society would emerge (IHT 5.1.90; T 11.1.90; GW 21.1.90). Earlier Richard Cheney expressed scepticism as to the capacity of Gorbachev to deliver on further reform proposals (ABC-R 31.10.89); and the Deputy Secretary of State, Lawrence Eagleburger, foreshadowed further attempts at reform by the Soviet leadership could prove “too destabilising to be sustained” (IHT 16-17.9.89). It is noteworthy that these negative appraisals were being made openly in parallel with the mateship being experienced by Gorbachev with the Americans at Camp David or on Red Square.

Themes

Gorbachev under study. Among topical themes being addressed in this coverage, the precariousness of Gorbachev’s domestic position exercised the interest of many writers, aware that his concessions to the West might soon be devalued. Amid the intense study of Gorbachev:

Susan Strange, a Professor of International Relations, urged much larger short-term financial aid from the West, if Gorbachev was to survive (IHT 24-25.1.90), a position promoted heavily by the IHT in editorials, e.g. since August, see IHT 21.8.89. Several commentaries saw the Soviet reform experiment doomed; the Swedish economist Anders Aslund considered he would certainly lose office because of the “deplorable state of the Soviet economy” (IHT 31.1.90); an article in the Japan Times supported an argument that for the same reason his “days were numbered” and a “real elite” would take over (In IHT 6-7.1.90); and a former CIA advisor, Graham Fuller, concluded “Gorbachev will fail in the trials ahead; the odds against him are simply too great” (IHT 29.9.89). In the analyses of his political manoeuvring, The Australian in December had identified the three main themes, liberalisation at home but with a conservative position on preserving the Union, and courting Western economic aid in return for concessions on armaments (Aust 12.12.89); in Le Monde Daniel Vernet saw the West German leadership concerned about how its moves for reunification might damage Gorbachev’s position (GW 19.11.89); Jacques Amalric saw it was mainly the disastrous collapse of the Soviet economic system that forced a decision by the General Secretary to “cut his losses” and give up Eastern Europe (GW 19.11.89).

Doubts and fears were prominent among initial responses to the change sweeping Eastern Europe, and would persist, not routinely explained in a factual way, seemingly a response - among statesmen, the public, writers in the news media - to contemplating the unknown. Stephen Rosenfeld of the Washington Post identified “powerful forces which asserted themselves” in both East and West to “make sure things would not go too far” (IHT 12.1.90), and reproved East and West leaders, journalists or academics who “clucked nervously” over the anti-communist revolution (IHT 9-10.12.89). Other commentaries reflected the nervousness, e.g. suggesting that the victory of Solidarity in Poland might provoke a “second Prague”; that the change in Eastern Europe would “threaten alliances”; reforms happening too quickly would “destabilise the old order before the new one could be established”; such changes would bring on a “sudden destabilising collapse”; the democratic changes in any event “would have a long way to go”; and with the German question again at the heart of European affairs it was “no time for reckless talk about reunification” (T 21.8; 29.12.89; GW 19.11.89; IHT 12.9; 9.10; 9.11.89).

The revolt in Eastern Europe was explained in psychological terms in several commentaries. Citizens committing to the mass social movement of the time were seen most of all as having

“lost their fear”, had “lost the habit of obedience”, had “no trust in the communist party leadership” and had acquired the “courage to criticise”, so that a “civil society” was beginning to emerge (T19.10; 7, 28.11.89; Aust 11-12.11.89; GW 7.1.90). The Times end of year review declared 1989 the “year of people power” (T27.12.89); the same diagnosis made in most quarters, e.g. that the “East German public compelled the opening to the West” (IHT 17.11.89). Jim Hoagland in the Washington Post saw the empire having “lost the will to rule”, foregoing the option of violence under pressure from the crowds - reinforcing the evident conclusion of Gorbachev that suppression of dissent in Eastern Europe would be “not worth” the reign of terror it would invoke (GW 23.11.89). A week after the opening of the Wall, observers of institutional politics, again at the Washington Post, found “both German governments struggling to regain control of events” (GW 19.11.89).

Other themes of debate included the idea of **German reunification**, grasped as an immediate possibility by the start of November: see Josef Joffe, reunification as a logical consequence of democracy (T 9.11.02); Nicolas Rothwell, reunification as an offer of “profitability and nationalism” (Aust 1.11.89); or Theo Sommer, Die Zeit, identifying political pressures working against reunification, with possibly still a “long slow road to a people free, whole and united” (GW 10.12.89). Discussion of futures raised discussion of the **Helsinki accords**, with historical treatments of the process and support for the Gorbachev position of an all-Europe security conference: Robert O’Neill, sporadic existence of the CSCE (T22.1.90); US Senator Joseph Biden, backing the 35 nation conference (IHT 29.1.90); Times editorial, the Helsinki Final Act, European integration and German reunification (T 22.12.89).

Comprehensive commentaries

Several lengthy considered commentaries were published in mid-crisis, taking stock of developments and normally giving a prospective outline for the future. Professor Peter Reddaway from George Washington University described a “crisis of legitimacy” in the Soviet Union: “In the world of Mikhail Gorbachev history is marching backward. The forces of nationalism and religion are rising, the socialist dominoes of Eastern Europe are falling, and a growing number of Soviet republics are in turmoil. Communist economics are an acknowledged failure, a winter of discontent is at hand and much of the party’s self-serving history is now a grudgingly admitted lie ... It is a crisis with no apparent resolution. In contrast to the peoples of Poland, Hungary and East Germany, the Soviet people have not yet

internalised the values needed for negotiating the rocky road to democracy and the free market ...” (“For Gorbachev, a Crisis With No Solution”, IHT 27.11.89). An appraisal by Prof. Frank Knopfmacher in The Australian also dwelt on the issue of legitimacy, contending the change in Eastern Europe derived directly from the Soviet position against intervention. Local regimes were “totally illegitimate”, the *nomenklatura* “running a racket”; confronted with mass action, and alternative formations like Solidarity in Poland, they had been unable to act (Aust 1.1.90). The IHT in an editorial likewise subscribed to the interpretation that the revolution in Eastern Europe began in the USSR (IHT 2.1.90, “The Year of Revolution ... This revolution began in the Soviet Union ...”).

The former British Prime Minister, James Callaghan, at the start of 1990 declared German reunification inevitable and endorsed Kohl’s initiative through the Ten-point Plan; but in reviewing the positions of other political leaders in Europe, he deplored their reluctance in that moment to systematically prepare a future: “It is unlikely that events will wait for these cautious politicians ... There is no time to lose if Western leaders are to agree proposals for managing change. First, there must be no appearance of foot-dragging by the Western powers on the principle of unification, if it becomes clear that the people of both parts of Germany wish it ... Second, the security fears of the Soviet Union (and of Poland) will need to be addressed ...” (“Step Forward You Architects of Europe”, T 5.1.90). Dominique Moisi from the IFRI, considering the mixed reactions of “elation and foreboding” among Europeans, who were faced with the certainty of German reunification in an otherwise uncertain future, and took a reassuring line; a balance of interests would prevail, e.g. France and the United Kingdom together provided a counter-weight to an expanded Germany (IHT 23.11.89, “A Newborn Europe is Nothing to Fear”). At the end of the period under review, Jeane Kirkpatrick, previously US envoy to the United Nations, provided a summary, exploring the four major processes which would seriously shift the foundations of East-West relations in post-war Europe: reform within the Soviet Union; the democratisation of Eastern Europe; progressive integration of Western Europe; and the movement towards reunification of Germany (IHT 30.1.90, “As Europe Changes Durably, Some of the Instability is Welcome”). Some of this writing remained strictly topical. At the height of the exodus through the Hungarian border, the IHT carried disclosures on confidential exchanges of information among the Soviet Union, West Germany and the United States as to the intentions of the government of Hungary (IHT 18.9.89, “Soviets Didn’t Raise Any Objections To Open Frontier: Budapest Told Moscow of Intentions, Washington Was Also Kept Informed”); Thomas Kielinger of the Rheinsicher

Merkur, at the end of October, appraised the reform initiatives being attempted by the replacement SED government in East Berlin, judging “the reforms will not be enough”, to appease protest and save the regime (ABC-R 1.11.89).

News media in the news

News media are not notably self-conscious, or at least have not traditionally indulged in much reporting about themselves; but the obviously intense engagement of media in the crisis in 1989 produced some variation from that rule. Media services from all sectors had come under strain by the end of 1989. The monitor completed for this survey showed an increasing overlap of the same agency stories beginning to be used by various outlets, in the time-lags that occurred as relays of correspondents moved to catch up with the latest disturbances. The difficulties in Romania have been recounted, and along with the striving to correct wrong information some aspects of the media battles fought over that country made it into the coverage. An IHT front page story on growing scepticism about published death tolls had a companion report on the successes of international radio services in keeping up a flow of information from outside. Despite attempts at censorship, news of the collapse of authority in Central Eastern Europe had become well known: “ ‘Everybody knew,’ Rosana Baban, a doctor, said. ‘Everybody knew from the radio’. Shortwave broadcasts from Radio Free Europe, the BBC, Deutsche Welle, Voice of America and Radio France International undermined the Orwellian repression ...” (“After the Battle, a Cone of Silence Dissolves and Doubts Begin to Swirl”, IHT 29.12.89). Several commentaries reviewed the situation at the Bucharest television centre, under armed attack; the piecing-together of the interrupted television sequence, Ceausescu confronted at his own rally; and the televising of a video from the execution of the Ceausescu couple (Aust 27.12.89; IHT 28.12.89).

Failure of censorship, the impossibility of locking out news and information, had become obvious, although people in the protest movements were still short on information on many late developments, which they sought from the Western correspondents. A Times editorial noted the trend; countries could not be isolated, people “heard the truth” by radio and the telephone, it said (T 23.12.89). Similarly it was reported that concentrated efforts had been made in Czechoslovakia to exclude news of the crisis from outside, meeting with complete failure (IHT 27.11.89); and as in Poland, Czechoslovakia and East Germany, the dissident movement in Bulgaria registered a break-through in public participation once it succeeded with its demand to

be given access to broadcast (Aust 22.11.89; GW 26.11.89). The international radio services so essential to this opening-up of Eastern Europe became the subject of debate, on one hand receiving authorisation to increase their broadcasts for the duration of the crisis, on the other being advised to expect cut-backs once the main work of circumventing state censorship was done (T 10.1.90; feature on RFE headquarters at Munich, costs, range of services, agenda setting; Alistair Fraser, "Raising the West's Voice?").

Relations among Western news media and communist authorities paled as an issue in 1989, the state authorities becoming beset with many other problems. There was tension however in East Germany during October, the state media proclaiming the Gorbachev protests were the work of "hooligans provoked by the Western press" (IHT 9.10.89); together with the expulsion of foreign media (ABC-R 9.10.89). The Times correspondent Anne McElvoy spoke to veteran journalists and learned about a sudden improvement in reporting conditions, during the change in East Germany: Secret service men in anoraks no longer intimidated citizens wanting to speak with a television crew, who observed, "people do not avoid us now" (T 21.11.89).

Correspondents were certainly conscious of the importance of being on site. In one instance, readers of the front page news about the Dresden Barnhof riot were told that regretfully "details were sketchy because Western journalists were not present" (IHT 6.10.89).

Despite investing heavily in the East European story as a sensational change and historical breakthrough, news media had to report that interest was flagging in their home markets. After the initial sensations audiences would drift off, putting limits on continuous, long-running live broadcasts or repetitive, opulent pictorial treatments in the press. In the United States the long open-ended broadcasts lost ratings to parallel drama programs. In one analysis, all television was being perceived as "entertainment" to some degree, with the news meeting strong competition in that field ("The Berlin Wall Now Gets a Chance to Improve Its TV Ratings", IHT 12.12.89). In another view, only audience members with fairly strong historical backgrounding would have reason to stick with the coverage for extended hours ("When History Hurts the Ratings", IHT 5.12.89). In the words of one network official, while Gorbachev had become a "mythical figure", viewers tuned out from live coverage of those extraordinary moments of history, including the Berlin Wall; "it just didn't play", (Haynes Johnson, "American Viewers Prefer Illusion", GW 17.12.89; also T 4.12.89). News media sought to extend their involvement beyond hands-off / arms-length reporting, in some ways. The newspaper, The Australian, launched "Dear Friends", an exchange of published letters

with people in the newly democratised areas (Aust 27-28.1.90). A researcher from the Annenberg Washington Program, and former Director of the BBC, David Webster, arguing that public pressure on democratic governments drew heavily on media exposure of problem issues, campaigned for technology transfer to Eastern Europe to ensure the new democracies would be appropriately equipped to achieve their communication needs (“Television: Live History, With Leaders Following”, IHT 12.12.89).

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

CONCLUSIONS

CRISIS AND NEWS MEDIA

The episode of the collapse of the Eastern bloc, reviewed here during its most intense period of activity, over six months during 1989-90, was a time of crisis whereby the assumptions and relations of several decades - political, economic, social- were suddenly overturned, to produce a highly uncertain future. It had been a widely sought-after change within the East European countries; the break with the Cold War past was dramatically symbolised by the main event, the opening of the Berlin Wall, and the desire of millions to leave their past and move on could be seen to have been represented by the mass exodus of citizens out of East Germany. Movement politics played an important part, and a special part of this study has been done with reference to literature that attempts to document and theorise the phenomenon of mass social movements, as a way to understand the wave of change. In the absence of democratic institutions and even traditions of a civil society where change could be brokered, the inchoate movements drew on folk memory of past movements and on shared, mostly unuttered, but well-understood resentments among the people. They also drew on the availability of news media, as a resource for communication; as a shield; and, when it came to backing demands on a communist regime with threats of further massive, highly-publicised demonstrations, an instrument of power.

News media are identified in this study as forming a major element in the process of change. They are given a restrictive definition allowing the account of their involvement to focus on plain facts as to what they did and what they published. News media are treated simply as the journalists' sector of mass media in general; a relevant sector in this case because the subject under discussion was a huge news story, for the duration enhancing the contribution of news and current affairs to the general publishing effort. The study concentrates on practitioners, principally news correspondents, as representing the news media. They are able to give an account of themselves and provide information or evidence to support their assertions about the role which mass media had to play. Where the news media are considered as institutions or organisations, corporate aspects are restricted here to a mention of the large-scale deployment of resources commensurate with an ongoing, major news story. Media organisations provided staff, production resources and abundant space and air-time, even though sustained audience interest was never guaranteed. Where, as business organisations, the newspaper companies

concerned may have greatly approved the collapse of communism, the review of contents shows their publications were preoccupied with establishing facts and making a reasoned appraisal of what was taking place; there was little time or space for “dancing on the Wall”. In regard to published artefacts, i.e. “mass media” treated as media products, addressed to audiences: This study has dealt with products and audiences within the framework of its interests, being, to establish the main outlines of the history of the change in Eastern Europe, and the relevance of media coverage to what was taking place. Accordingly, where publics are concerned, it has concentrated on the character of the mass social movements and the way they would use and depend on media services; and as for media products themselves, it has concentrated on factual content and interpretative commentary, as a measure of the utility of the Western news media in establishing agreed accounts of how the crisis evolved.

AIMS AND OBJECTIVES

Reproducing a credible account of the collapse of the Eastern bloc

It has been argued in the text that three discrete accounts have been obtained from separate sources, those being the journalists’ retrospective testament; a selection of the media coverage surveyed in detail; and other sources mostly published during the ten years following the period of crisis. It has been proposed that these do not differ over essential facts, causes and effects, but concur on main points of interpretation. They are found to contain ample evidence to permit an investigation of uncertain knowledge, such as the issue of the suppression of the Leipzig protests, which may resolve doubts or at least provide material for further disinterested debate. There is agreement over the impetus received from Mikhail Gorbachev and his reform policies, especially policies on relations with the West and autonomy for the East European states. The impending collapse of the Soviet Union, through economic distress, structural failures and alienation of the nationalities is identified as the essential background, suggesting the break-up of that empire was an inexorable process that pushed everything else ahead of it. There is consensus at this time over the relatedness of other events such as the election of the Solidarity-led government in Poland, then the opening of the Hungarian frontier, and fall of the Berlin Wall. On all accounts the making of a post-Cold War settlement for Europe was an outcome of co-operative if not concerted activity, with Helmut Kohl as the most prominent facilitator. The settlement entailed agreement that Germany would be reunified, subject to it being a member of NATO and of an expanded European Union. The Soviet Union emerges in the analysis as the

principal loser, unable to sustain competition with the West; unable to convert goodwill in relations with the West into vital economic support, and in its perceived weakness, unable to stave off a drastic loss of bargaining power over proposals for the European future – especially after the revealing fact of the fall of the Wall. While after little more than a decade, more is yet to become known, reviews being made to date have refined not changed the view of the facts on the ground in 1989-90. The tendency of the diverse efforts to reach an understanding of what happened is confirmatory rather than contentious, and that raises a central point of this dissertation: news media, while ordinarily disclaiming very substantive historical roles, are ever involved in unfolding events, they deploy large resources, and being engaged in an aggressive search for facts, in a transparent process, can most often open the door to the *truth about* what happened.

Representation of developments by news media

The constant presence of news media in the form of groups of correspondents and television crews has been remarked on many times in accounts of the crisis under review. This was a highly controversial group to be counted into the situation, in numbers, in the fact that they were informed and it would seem obsessively interested in all aspects of the crisis of the day, and that they were feeding reports directly into mass media received not only in the West but in the East itself, where events were being played out. The particular Western journalists included both regulars stationed in East European cities, who had local knowledge, contacts and languages, and correspondents from Western cities who had regular dealings with government leaders there. To the mind of an embattled communist leadership this would be the next step to tolerating free range activity by Western intelligence services - which in a few cases it probably was. So the crisis had created something of an open game, debasing the old covert intelligence currency.

This physical presence and agitated behaviour of journalists made for an intimate association between news media activity and the enactment of the crisis at every stage. With the breakdown of control, of fear, of confidence on the part of the communist leadership - processes described at some length in the text - it was as if the lid had been prised off the top of the East European world exposing public life inside to full view. Street confrontations, planning sessions, acts of repression, committee meetings, negotiations, declarations, demands and concessions happened in an environment of rude transparency. As was described in the case of

Czechoslovakia and Romania in particular, the setting had changed immediately from sealed borders and overbearing controls within the country to open entry and open news gathering, unaided but unfettered. In addition, with the growth of mass movements, developments had moved out of doors and onto a simpler plane. The phenomenon arose of dissident groups declaring their objectives and negotiating positions in public; in the case of Civic Forum in Czechoslovakia, running from committee sessions, to the negotiating table, to the mass demonstrations, to large media conferences - sometimes not strictly in that order of protocol. In East Germany a demand would materialise in the crowd, among whom would be standing the journalists, as with the very significant progression from "We are the people", to "We are one people". Then the additional phenomenon arose of periods of most intense crisis, abounding in agitated activity, with no discussion or debate. The negative manifestation of it was the week or two of violence in Romania; the positive manifestation was the week of celebration of the human spirit in Berlin.

Working in both kinds of environment was generally familiar territory to reporters who could always manage to attend or obtain a fair record of the proceedings. So much was coming out in the open; information generally would be most difficult to hide. The novel situation for Eastern Europe, disorder producing raw information, was amenable to media operations geared to transmit material in a rather raw form after a minimum of hasty processing. In the outcome the world received direct treatments of the process which came in all its colour and excitement, the pictorial and sound record in particular, but which was factual, and supported by explanatory commentaries pitched to the presumed receptiveness and good understanding of a regular audience. Among aims of this research, the task was to assess representation of the crisis by news media, in terms of informational content - fact and opinion. The review of news media contained in this dissertation checks the coverage in some detail against the current received account, finding it broadly intact. It addresses the known cases of error, like the exaggerated stories of massacre in Romania, which were normally handled in a circumspect way, or afterwards corrected assiduously. It shows news media transmitting the images, sounds, words in quotation, principal events in the narrative, in a form, much as they would occur to the actual participants, and at nearly the same time. News media became part of an open situation and exploited this circumstance to deliver a dependable and intelligible representation in plain terms; where that happens, those with access who would give it their attention might be well informed.

Movements versus institutions

The phenomenon of mass social movements arising and striving for the initiative in the Eastern bloc crisis has been central to this account. News media have been described as changing over from standard operating procedures, as participants in conventional political management, to improvised coverage, in order to keep up with the more chaotic activities of the mass campaign. Such coverage was much closer to the myth of news gathering as picking up gems of information by chance from plain folks around the town. It was a practice which had always survived but would produce much less -hour for hour, dollar for dollar- than investment in the coverage of institutions. In fact the pattern of political relations in 1989-90 appeared as something of a tug-o-war between the mass revolt, and institutional power relations, as the way to bring about an eventual settlement; with news media following the pattern.

At times the political agenda would be dominated by the mass movements, and coverage would be dragged to that side, indicating a shift in the character of the political crises then unfolding. Members of a political establishment - senior government or party office holders, their civil servants including diplomats, intellectual advisors, suborned interest groups like the official trade unions in the Eastern bloc - would then take action to sort out confused situations just created by turbulent mass action. They would seek to reclaim the initiative, and nullify, counter or at least weaken demands established by the mass movement. That would shift the initiative back to the arena of institutional politics, pulling the attentions of journalists back over to its side. The coverage despite these oscillations would continue to make progress along its path, developing the narratives and explanations. In the crisis, news media, forced to follow the action where it occurred, constructed credible versions of real-world events.

For examples, in certain phases mass action occupied the agenda, and demands articulated, one way or another, by the public *en masse*, would need to be paid attention to, understood, explained, as the highest priority. This occurred with the exodus of the border crossers from East Germany in September; the spontaneous demonstrations in East Germany, first during the Gorbachev visit to East Berlin in October, and then in cities throughout the republic, especially Leipzig; the exultant partying accompanied by still more movement across the frontier, following the fall of the Berlin Wall; the Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia, and the angry demonstrations in Romania. Each time journalists would scramble to get to the scene of most action; battling uncertainty; looking for facts and reasons why, in informal, confused settings.

Institutional politics could then be seen reclaiming the agenda. This was the organised, formal business of party and state management in the Eastern bloc; of parties, elections, parliaments and executive government in the West; and of international relations. Poland experienced a mixed solution, where mass opinion forced a power-sharing deal in the form of restricted elections, that unexpectedly brought victory for the opposition, necessitating a change to actual parliamentary government. Conversely, a decision by government in Hungary, in collaboration with other states, and out of respect for a policy change on international rights obligations, produced the opening of frontiers, and so the mass exodus from the GDR. Within East Germany, from the fall of Erich Honecker, party officers, embattled in the face of mass protests, sought to retrieve the initiative, enacting leadership changes and making concessions to public demands through the legislature and state apparatus. Similar attempts were made in Czechoslovakia, a new communist party leadership in a short interlude proposing reforms while unsuccessfully seeking to back away from power-sharing with leaders of the mass movement. More potently in the formal institutional world, the West German government under Kohl commenced systematic work to order and control the agenda in the immediate aftermath of the celebrations at the Wall. This activity was almost always in the form of negotiation at government-to-government level, whether with East Germany, the USSR, Poland or the West. The meetings were sometimes confidential and arrangements such as financial aid to Hungary would be kept under wraps for a time; but in the main all such activities were accompanied by systematic and open communication management.

In West Germany, the rest of Western Europe and the United States, communication management meant organised provision of information and access for accredited mass media, in a context of well-worn mutual understandings. In Eastern Europe efforts would be made to influence Western news media, through limited special access to officials for briefings; admission of news teams on restricted visits, as with the temporary visas for the Fortieth anniversary celebrations in East Berlin; or exclusion of such teams from the territory, as on the same occasion. For the outside news media, dealing with the institutional political world in the Eastern bloc yielded little, as there was no culture of negotiated communication management and the regimes in office in any event were losing power; so the initiative was located elsewhere. Finding the news in the East became an issue of side-stepping the moribund state authority to look for answers out in the crowds.

Eastern bloc leaders underwent a process of conversion in handling their own mass media.

Gorbachev actively incorporated a media effort in his campaign for reform, in the account given by Schafers, conferring directly with editors and consulting elaborate survey research tracing public opinion and messages (1). Government in Eastern Europe began the period of crisis in a controlling posture. Typically Western reporters in Warsaw after a media conference would see their Polish colleagues go into a separate room to receive instructions from Jerzy Urban, the government spokesman. Dismantling of this command system formed part of the general undoing of state authority, for instance as witnessed by the anti-corruption campaigns of the press in East Germany, and live television coverage of the demonstrations throughout the region.

Validity of coverage

A further aim of this study has been to find a measure of the validity of the news coverage put under review. The perspective of this research has been a production-side one, that of the practitioners on the ground and their affiliates. They had the responsibility of finding information of public interest where it was hidden and scarce, in the absence of a civil society habituated to free flow of ideas, facts and opinions; or, of determining main points of significance - immediate or potential - among a plethora of open activity. The standard applied in judging the effectiveness of their efforts is widely acknowledged within the professional cadre and among general publics. Factors listed as having imposed strongest demands on the performance of news media were accuracy in establishing facts; prescience in knowing the flow of developments well enough to anticipate events and be ready in attendance; management of high volumes of material against time under critical scrutiny; and coping with the extraordinary, as with the extreme upsurges of public emotion, the “periods of intense crisis”, of which the week of euphoria over the Berlin Wall was an outstanding example, (*See* correspondent interviews; “News Values, Application of News Values”, in “Interviews”, Chapter 3 above). Such news values are upheld among the public as well as journalists. Where news media are praised, or criticised as in the case of formal complaints to tribunals like the Press Council, frequently the same values are invoked, especially accuracy or lack of it in handling basic facts, and “sensationalism” or otherwise in the treatment of volatile situations.

Again, the accounts consulted here work together towards supporting a general conclusion. The journalists’ panel was critical, insisting on two points: first, that news coverage is limited in

depth and scope, and does not have the charisma or conceptual strength to make public policy or lead society; second, while journalists can obtain public trust through accuracy and transparent inquiry, they are fallible and as open to being misled as most other bodies of people. Therefore errors will occur. The members of the panel were also sceptical of the insights and sense-making capability of others, such as the governments and political leadership of Eastern or Western Europe. They could detail broad success for the coverage of the day on the “news values” criteria given above, concurring with Wells in his interview, that the news media “did not fumble colossally”. Evidence is presented in the journalists’ accounts of being able to achieve general truth in reporting at a factual level throughout the crisis; unearthing of information that would quickly turn out to be significant; and identifying trends on time, whether in the realms of subtle institutional politicking or ungoverned mass activity on the streets. They aver that they got it right, and have good grounds, in being able to point to the collected record contained in the coverage of the time, and to later historical writing.

The second account, the short history including material from “testimonial” sources, appears to absolve news media from much responsibility by relegating it to secondary or derivative roles in the narrative. There are sections, for example, on “use” of mass media by Gorbachev, or his exasperation with “malicious” media operations obstructing government; an historian considered the Western news media working in Czechoslovakia provided a few “good” questions, “concentrated minds” and provided some protection to dissidents (2); the “black heavens” radio broadcasts from the West were credited with keeping alive dissident movements, and keeping publics properly informed on the outside world, during times of repression. In the third study, the survey of media content taking in six major outlets, the separate services while seen to be providing different emphases and sourcing their material independently, also check out against one another, i.e. while at times co-operating, it would not be in actual collusion; they would of course compete; and yet they frequently obtained and affirmed the same essential facts, which would lead to agreement in their reflective journalism also.

Interventions by news organisations and practitioners

News media as public or private organisations, as a cadre of practitioners, or considered as media products, in a free society may attain their goal to function autonomously. The notion of autonomy is the key to actions which will be taken by media organisations or journalists to maintain their own interests. The principal goal is to ensure freedom to operate on the ground

and gather news, to have free channels of communication during the production process, and freedom to publish. As reported in this investigation the news media were active and disruptive, and would affect many situations. For instance they would push across national frontiers and demand access to telecommunications facilities; then they would contribute a dramatic physical presence at demonstrations, as a corps of witnesses, relaying images of protest around the world - greatly complicating the position of the embattled communist governments. However these kinds of activities - the commitment of large mobile teams in the field; representations to governments to include media services in any deals on relaxation of border controls; major outlays of cash to ensure a steady flow of words, images and sound - can be seen as passive in an important sense. The objective was expressly to be able to deploy an open intelligence gathering operation, and to prepare and publish news products, without censorship or controls beyond outside normal restrictions accepted in the West, (such as constraints regarding personal safety and security, defamation of character or transgression of civil rights). The benefit then to the news media would come indirectly as a result of the unhindered operations they had been able to achieve.

This was not activity primarily to engage in political processes as conventional stakeholders, to obtain outcomes that would directly satisfy material interests of the organisations, or media professionals, or particular groups of paying clients. Their ideological designs likewise were principally to get liberal conditions in which to operate. Put another way, by tradition media businesses and professions, like all others, will do what they consider necessary to secure their corporate interests and professional prerogatives. However interest in changing society will be restrained, in the main extending just to obtain guarantees of their ability to operate. They will act in a restricted sense as corporations or an interest group, but do not themselves operate more generally to assert power, to get their own ideas implemented and imposed on society as a whole, as political movements. This perceived reality lies behind the insistence of the journalists' panel that they were able to work in a disinterested way. Discussion of this point will usually continue along the line that the news media seek to "market the truth". The argument will continue that in fact they will need to work autonomously of outside interests, and even their own immediate interests, to avoid distortion of the product. It is a *dictum* open to challenge, but the evidence tendered here, specifically the testimony of the panel of journalists, represents the argument fairly.

Study and understanding of crises; the reconstruction approach

The study up to this point has produced many observations on the way that news media work, highlighted in times of an historical crisis because of the intensity of the situation and intensified news work it brings. These observations are now brought together to form a framework for understanding historical developments through adopting the perspective of news media involved in those developments. It is proposed as an outline for a model to apply in many cases. The collapse of the Eastern bloc is the case study this time, but the principle of study through news media might be applied to other episodes, such as the East Timor crisis 1998-2002; or September 11 and the intervention in Afghanistan. It can be labeled as “historical reconstruction through media”, because the researcher using this method would work to reconstruct what took place through study of the operations of news media during the crisis. The term “operations” extends to an overview of the research, operational planning, field activities and production work of media practitioners; their informed reflections; and the content of their news products. Much of this work will be empirical; in any event there will be stress put on questions of evidence and verification, establishing facts and striving to show linkages - cause and effect - to demonstrate how things have occurred. It is different to the more literary concept of “deconstruction” that concentrates on ways of interpreting the published news. An investigation using a reconstruction model could be imagined as something like the present study but structured and refined so as to focus precisely on set variables - information contained in categories that could be applied in every case. It may be explained by considering characteristics of news media, and characteristics of journalists.

News media are much strengthened as a resource, and more credible as a prism for understanding the world, due to their deployment of new communication technologies, and to globalisation in the corporate area, giving them a bigger range, permitting operations in many areas and time zones, and good access to information, (be it formal information stored in libraries or divulged by governments, or informal information off the streets). By 1989, as related in this study, changes in broadcast technology alone had greatly undermined the hopes of communist governments to prevent information entering from the West *via* outside radio and television; communication satellites made reporting work ubiquitous, independent of state facilities on the ground and very fast; automatic telephone exchanges helped especially with the *logistics* of news gathering, as reporters could stay in contact with base - which foreshadowed the mini-revolution with cell phones. A prime outgrowth of this technological change has been a radical shift in the intellectual process affecting journalists along with all others. It was

characterised by Palmer in his interview as being a move towards “finding out”, in preference to maintaining more generalised “understanding” of the world. Greatly enhanced and accelerated research is possible and made to order for media operations, which have been leaders in the employment of new systems for searching out information and maintaining databases; and as always, unlike research institutions of other types, they deliver reports instantly (or at least overnight) to vast and highly diversified clienteles.

At the same time the liberal tradition has been maintained, especially transparency of operations. News gathering and publishing by definition is an open process, by its internal logic driven to publish not only as first priority, but as the end in itself. For instance, as indicated in the previous section, news organisations feel they have a direct, even pecuniary interest in acting disinterestedly, because they sell intelligence, made available to all comers. In the example of a medical discovery, a pharmaceutical company looks towards a cure for disease and financial gain for itself as a result of its commitment to research and development; a newspaper is rewarded already and only, by letting the world know of the discovery – for the world to do with the information what it will. Unlike the pharmaceutical company, it has no prospect of reward if the information is withheld from publication. Pronouncements of Western media interests, typically the International Press Institute (<http://www.freemedia.at>), represent them as inherently liberal in disposition; a position calling to mind the notion of JS Mill himself that discovery relies on conditions of free inquiry to proceed at all well. Media organisations are further strengthened through their expanded global reach. As corporations they are bigger each decade and operate increasingly on a trans-national scale (3). Speculation about globalisation has to be tempered by considerations of cultural factors working against a functional “single world” (4) but the scale of operations and ease of transmission of information available to formations like AP, CNN or BBC World is unprecedented.

Whatever power ever accrued to media organisations would be enhanced by their development in recent times, especially with the application of computer based technology since 1980. It is proposed here, as part of the discussion of a new model for examining historical situations, that the large volume of information and rapidity of its transmission have created a phenomenon, in the form of exaggeratedly well informed, informative media, dispersing continuously an unprecedented large amount of unprecedentedly diverse information. It is in other words a new resource for discovering what is taking place in the course of a crisis, such that news media in the past would not have been, because slower, publishing only intermittently, less ubiquitous,

more controlled, and leaner in terms of volume of output. The possibilities of this resource are even more promising when it is considered that the plethora of information obtained and published is also being handled and prioritised in an open process - offered virtually free in a very useable form, amenable to checking. The review of contents given in this study was intended as a demonstration of the quality of this flow of information; information that is ready selected, checked, weighted, graphically illustrated and highlighted, embellished with argued commentaries.

A point should be made about the instant archiving of all major services, with very large volumes of material published since around 1995, easily accessible from remote locations. News media products have not previously been so available for reference, checking and cross-comparison; to put it another way, they have not been so valuable as resources, nor so accountable in keeping their products easily to hand. Collections have not before been put together so efficiently and without delay. The situation might be compared with 1955 when Australia had effectively no archives from radio and television, and researchers using newspaper stacks normally would have to make copies by hand at the storage location. (For example the Lexis Nexis commercial database contains full text articles from over 30000 newspapers, agency services, magazines or journals; “source local” on <http://web.nexis.com/sources/>). Importantly, media materials, as reports, are styled to highlight main points and the preference of journalists is to make them transparent about how the information came to light. This makes for easy reference and possible easy checking.

So far this argument says that enhanced news flows will provide convenient and valid material for use by historians. It develops now by including media practitioners in the consideration. It is proposed that journalists are being thrust into more central roles during historical crises, because of a general enlargement of the information or communication component in economic production or public affairs, and because of the expanded mass media presence in crisis situations. News media are more evident and more active, and their products more dramatic and ready to hand, because, at base, developments with systems -particularly developments in communications technology - have made this possible. Thus an analogy might be made between the events of a major crisis, such as the faltering of communism in Eastern Europe, and a major football game: In the former case news media can be seen functioning like the big screen in the latter. The reporting crews and apparatus are everywhere in the situation, not part of the game, but intimately involved in the action - from the boom cameras over the stands, to

the broadcast commentators, to the camera operators on the field, to the microphone pinned to the referee's jersey. The action replays on the big screen are part of the experience of the game even affecting key decisions by the judges as well as confirming for spectators at the ground what they have just seen. So it has become with crises in the world at large; news media have a ubiquitous presence which requires that they be factored into the conduct of events, as with timing of announcements to reach maximum audiences, and their products can be checked almost immediately as an indication of how the game is being played out.

With journalists so elaborately equipped as they are today, their capacity for surveillance and processing so productive, and their output so constant, then monitoring and examination of their operations stands to provide a short route to comprehending the historical situation. This process of monitoring and examination is called "reconstruction" because it would need to be critical in approach. Rather than a reading of what journalists have produced day by day, it should go further into the interstices of the production process, so as to come to understand the subject matter of it more thoroughly. Accordingly there should be a watch and evaluation of what the journalists thought and did, *together with*, what they produced - and also together with some form of control such as a review of the same story, or part of it, from a composite of non-media sources. This is a proposal for obtaining and evaluating instant histories. It says that mass media as sources are much better than in the past, because the means of news gathering are more powerful and penetrating. It implies also that the slow process of exposing original sources over time, a more orthodox construction of a history, may be helped by having available these advanced media-sourced accounts, for instance as a respectable guide for where to look. It notes that traditions of transparent operation and free flow of information have not been discarded with the advance of communication technology, but stand to be enforced by the capability of systems to find out more and carry a greater volume of reportage.

The profile of journalists then becomes of interest. Do they in fact function in ways amenable to study, to indicate which were the prevailing influences at a particular time, which alternatives existed, or which facts became most important in determining the outcome of events? It can be inferred from the 1989 study that the following ways of operating, of journalists, can be considered as factors in a "reconstruction" exercise. **Recording:** News as a first draft of history sees facts being established, and provides a cumulative archive for reference, the earliest and usually only strictly contemporaneous record of events. **Messages:** News carries messages, as in the examples of the use of Western radio services by Solidarity in Poland, or the dependence of

Civic Forum on media for dissemination of its messages in Czechoslovakia. So much to do with these messages -their content, the manner of their sourcing to news media, the fact of who provided them or for whom they were intended- will be of material interest. However such involvements will be intermittent and the service is always conditional. Messages may be transmitted today, but not tomorrow, depending on how the news day is perceived by the media outlets concerned, and this conditionality lends support to the journalists' position that mass media as institutions or a professional cadre do not initiate actions or seek to participate directly in central decision-making.

Disclosure: Information found by news media may be seen to have many uses, e.g. informing the mass movements in Eastern European cities of events in neighbouring states, or providing witnesses against acts of violent repression. **Framing:** The term applies to the organisation of social knowledge and experience, marking out boundaries for the range of encounters to be considered, analogous with a frame separating a picture from its background (5). Journalists like others will frame their world and while their work is transparent, and work for which they can be held to account, they are in a very privileged position in being able to put up matters for public view; to play some part in agenda-setting for the community as a whole. This leads into the general argument that news media may function as an effectual leader in promoting lines to interpretation, the readings to be given to events, which in turn might affect outcomes.

There will be debate over these processes. For example, relevant issues are raised by Hall and others, concerned with hegemony, stating, "the practices of television journalism reproduce accurately the way in which 'public opinion' has already been formed in the domains of political and economic struggle; how it has been structured in dominance there"; arguing that in the case of reporting of the news, complexities of social or political situations are made to appear as the "simple substance of the 'here-and-now' of witnessing". (6) Practitioners as represented by the group interviewed for this study might agree with the first proposition to the extent that reportage can be expected to reflect power relations in society; some also admit to struggling over the witnessing task, as in the example of Brayne analysing Milosevic in Yugoslavia, and his concerns over how he might pass on the signs he was reading. The practitioners generally will adopt the position that they work as professional witnesses; deny direct purposive engagement in political decision-making, and tend to eschew power-seeking on their own account. They may not dispute being involved in reproducing structures of dominance, in the cultural domain, but would reject complicity in any contriving of it.

At the same time they will dismiss the notion of their being unwitting participants in such processes, being highly socially aware as individuals, in the nature of their work. Journalists will accede to adopting a framing approach to obtain and pass on an interpretation of a part of life, but reject the idea of it being composed in a way to steer opinion. Most would consider that information and opinion transmitted in media reports will be influential, e.g. when used by participants in a political row, but would see it as another case of information like information from many other sources, put into use on the initiative of the user, not on the instructions -open or implied- of any party within mass media. They would be carriers of the news not the generators of it, and in addition would consider the public in receiving news to be sceptical and knowing, at least in some respects, though vulnerable in others. The public will have psychological defences. The journalists will argue that in representation of the news, overwhelmingly their product will be an unmystified, unreified, transparent one-to-one treatment giving verifiable fact and open reflection on points. News and features, the familiar standard formats, will be available for audience members or readers to test for themselves. In this view members of the professional cadre know quite well what is going on, as to how media products might produce certain effects, but see those effects as qualified and limited.

It is a starting point to consult the attitudes of practitioners in this way. To go further in using a production-centred approach to studying news media, it would be necessary to make a more detailed inventory of journalists' characteristics and quality. The ideas collected around the notion of conventional news values, as discussed in Chapter 3, will be indicative of what the practitioners are seeking to do in their work, for instance ideas of objectivity and reporters keeping themselves out of the story, common sense, limits to the responsibility of the messenger for what the world perpetrates. Analytical treatments such as Tuchman's view of news operations being beholden to routines and institutional power (7) will be a useful part of it, along with external investigations of journalists, for instance a psychological study of human reasoning applied to them as a group. In that case strategies involving deductive or inductive reasoning may both be found in use; and journalists' powers of judgment might be assessed as well (8). The factor of accountability should also be included in assessments of how news media operate. Accountability mechanisms tend to be weak, although there are signs of change. For instance there has been increasing use of writers' by-lines over a period of decades, supplemented now with email addresses - offering quick feed-back to a natural person tagged with responsibility for what has just been published. It seems reasonable to ask for more

accountability from a cadre of practitioners themselves prone to lift the lid on otherwise secluded business or private affairs in the community. Accountability and commitment to dialogue with the investigators would seem essential to a project for reconstructing news gathering situations as a window on any general process of history.

The production-side approach imposes a demand for credentials on the part of the researcher. It is a tool suitable to be used by practitioners or others with demonstrated knowledge of the workings of media systems, such that they can fall back on knowledge of organisational or professional cultures, knowledge of procedures and values employed in locating and handling news, and regular access to personnel or records. The reconstruction approach may provide an avenue for routine self-accounting and self-regulation; and perhaps if it is developed, industry or professional bodies like the MEAA and IPI could be exhorted to adopt it for those purposes. A review using this approach not only takes a self-conscious look at the coverage of a particular episode in history, but can extend the coverage itself from news and features to add more slow-paced, retrospective, analytical, historical accounts. That would be in a tradition of journalists publishing books out of the coverage of major events, especially war correspondents reviewing their campaigns (9). The outcomes might assist in relations among news media and a critical public by showing how mass media operate and why the news comes out the way it does.

Components of the “reconstruction” approach

One aim of the present study included a proposal for employing knowledge of news media to assist with the study of crises, and the concept of going back over the news-making process, reconstructing it, has been put forward in response. This process of reconstruction would require at least a systematic debriefing of journalists and investigation of their operations; a detailed review of media contents concerning the historical episode under study, and consultation with other sources of information. Standard routines for such studies might be developed over time as a number of situations came to be reviewed and reported on. **Characteristics of a reconstruction approach** would include: production-side perspectives, seeing media operations from the inside looking outward; major volumes of information and reportage to be considered as opposed to limited sampling, consistent with the powerful information-handling capacity of communication technologies in use by news media; transparency of media operations, such that

reporting practices and material produced can be effectively checked; immediacy, with information coming available through open channels at all times; thoroughness, given the management of information in volume, taking in information of diverse kinds; and availability of other sources for cross-checking, for instance checking raw documents referred to in the news coverage, such as media releases, texts of speeches or company search reports.

Functions of a reconstruction exercise would include: definition of terms of reference for an investigation, to make a prism for viewing the historical process through the media experience of it; setting up investigative procedures to review news media practices, media contents and other sources; within that framework, application of diverse research methods including ethnographic techniques, contents review and document search; checking; and reflexive and frequent reviews of findings and conclusions. **Other considerations.** Reliance on transparency and access to sources rules out use of this style of inquiry in the case of controlled news media outside the liberal democratic tradition. Suitability of this approach in the case of Western news media subject to censorship during military operations would need to be decided on a case-by-case basis. Consideration should be given to broadening the scope of a reconstruction-based inquiry, especially, since the approach is so heavily biased to the production side, by partnering it with an audience-centred approach. The model based on media use as social action proposed by Renckstorff et al has been mentioned in this context in Chapter 2 above; with that in use both audience members and journalists may be engaged as subjects of studies. Further use should be made of existing knowledge of mass social movements as part of that investigative process.

(1) *See also*, Gorbachev, “News Media Engagements”, Chapter 4 above; also Gorbachev’s liberalisation policy, Op. Cit. Reddaway and Glinkski pp 123-4

(2) Op. Cit. Garton Ash 1993 pp 93-94

(3) *See* Herman and McChesney Op. Cit., *also* Herbert J, Practising Global Journalism: Exploring Reporting Issues Worldwide, Oxford, Focal Press, 2001

(4) Op. Cit. Reddaway and Glinkski; Globalisation with contrasting outcomes: cultural and economic imperialism, and political subversion, *versus* cultural enlightenment, political goodwill, education about human rights, p 77

(5) Saunders D, “Frame”, in O’Sullivan T, Hartley J, Saunders D. Montgomery M, Fiske J, Key Concepts in Communication and Cultural Studies, 2nd edition, London, Routledge, 1994, p 122; *see also* discussion on framing, Chapter 2 above

(6) Hall S, “Encoding / Decoding”, in Hall S, Hobson D, Lowe A, Willis P (Eds.), Culture,

Media, Language: Working papers in Cultural Studies 1972-79, London, Routledge – CCS, Univ. Birmingham, 1992, p 147

(7) Op. Cit. Tuchman 1974, 1997

(8) *See* Holland JH, Holyoak KJ, Nisbett RE, Thagard PR, Induction: Processes of Inference, Learning, and Discovery, Cambridge Ma, MIT Press, 1986

(9) Torney-Parlicki P, “The Australian Journalist as Historian”, in Curthoys and Schultz, Op. Cit. p 245

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

SUMMARY OF THE ROLE OF NEWS MEDIA

By 1989, the role of news media in witnessing, chronicling and interpreting the world had become accentuated by the retention of news values, such as establishing facts as first priority, and by technological change provoking increased media activity. News services had become commonly accessible in the East and were used heavily by the protest movements, which -upon the weakening of state power- depended on the publication of reports of their activities, and on the presence of journalists and cameras at demonstrations, to encourage public participation. The news media would be seen to operate as autonomous institutions, employing their proclaimed value systems to give an account of the crisis, one which would take into consideration the competing perspectives of the crowds, and authorities East and West. The location of news media in contact with protagonists placed them close to the centre of decision-making, though they would eschew direct involvement in it. As providers of an exhaustive and contemporary account, the news media became a resource for study of the crisis situation; and a general argument is made, that such situations in future may be studied through a method involving reconstruction of media operations.

News media in the crisis of 1989-90 became carried along with epoch-making, inspirational events far beyond the ordinary scope of day-by-day operations. These media - considered as organisations, their products and their personnel- subscribed to agreed values, the orthodox liberal “news values”, and so in response to a radically shifting situation maintained the perspective of **witnesses, chroniclers and interpreters**. In doing this they sought to work autonomously of other institutions. They also sought to avoid engagements where their own actions would produce events on the ground and ordain outcomes of those events. However, while the professionals who were informants for this study could convincingly argue that they operated without the intention of becoming protagonists of history, their involvement was seen to have had certain impacts.

These derived first from the **wide availability of news to audiences**. There was much news and information available to be consumed, citizens in Eastern Europe being confronted with media products generated in East and West over a long period. Mass media, of its nature, is designed to become physically available to many people at once,

and it can be expected therefore that large numbers will be factoring-in what they see and hear in the news when making life decisions. However news media interests, for instance as represented by the journalists consulted in this study, will say that this does not mean manipulation. Rather it would be a question of free and educated individuals coping and deciding for themselves, not succumbing to mischievous messages that might come in with the news, advertisements, features, services and entertainments.

Second, developments in communication technology have created and built up the additional phenomenon of an imposing **media presence on the ground** at virtually every moment of a crisis. For at least the last forty years the standard kit of reporting operations has become ever more affordable and readily available to more individuals or news bureaux, whether camera or other recording equipment, or communication and transmission facilities such as access to satellites, and not least computers. Such equipment would deliver always higher productivity in terms of the volume and technical quality of information generated, transmitted for use, produced and distributed. There was greater output, and it sped up. Satellites and telephony have been mentioned as main examples. Consequently more personnel and more equipment may be put into the field at once, at a crucial time, generating disproportionately more output, so that by 1989 the media presence itself would have to be considered as a factor in making the change that occurred. Those taking part in the mass social movements that year showed an awareness of the media presence, rank-and-file members drawn to participate by broadcast images and calls to join up, leaders quick to declare their positions and offer prepared messages for transmission by journalists.

Evidence such as the review of media contents presented in Chapters 7-12 above shows that Western news media organisations proved well able to keep pace with events in the very disrupted circumstances of 1989. News media with their focus on working autonomously became **framing agencies** in their own right, choosing perspectives and deploying their news values to identify the events, processes and ideas set to be most important to the change taking place. Here in telling the story of the change they would be brokering the versions that emerged in the “framing contests” of governments and movements in the East. They would also be informing on the manoeuvring of authorities in the West, who worked to steer the thoughts of all parties to solutions along the lines of, disconnection of the Soviet Union from its hitherto dominating position in Eastern Europe,

German reunification, and a new architecture for Europe built around the “European idea” and future EU.

Consistent with the observations that have been made on the deployment of new technologies, refinement of news gathering activity and proliferation of news, the investigation now completed has produced a representation of **news media as themselves forming a resource for on-going study of crisis situations**. In this investigation, a panel of journalists has exposed the modes of work and thought they use in coverage, particularly during major crises, holding consistently to a standard of news values - such as the need to establish main facts in every case, as first priority. The study has shown the adaptability of news media in complex situations, as when events forced the reporting exercise away from conventional news-gathering to engagement with mass social movements. With the review of media contents, it has shown the extensive reach of reportage that could be obtained and presented, providing factual reports and a critical review of the developments in the collapse of the Eastern bloc, in very quick time.

Generalising on these observations, media formations are seen as structures well equipped and competent to watch, document and evaluate processes of history, because of the expertise of personnel deployed to conduct comprehensive surveillance and interpret findings; the exercise of habits of thought promoting thorough transparency, both transparency of operations in managing news and information, and transparency of the content, the information itself made freely available; capacity to handle and reduce enormous volumes of material, brought to present high levels by the deployment of most advanced communication technology; and the instantaneousness of the operation, including proficient and thorough overnight archiving of media contents. The product is selected, treated and evaluated, in that respect being different to information in original form kept in general databases. As news material it is easily open to the wise practice of checking, with recent, raw sources still to hand, having been prepared in a tradition of identifying sources of information to the maximum, in the name of credibility for the daily product.

The proposal arising from these considerations is in two parts: (a) Because of the growth of contemporary news media through corporate and technological change, and due to perpetuation of their reportorial values or traditions, news media act in independent contact

with all groups of protagonists, though not as direct actors in the power game in their own right, and so they have a place close to the centre of all activity, central to the resolution of historical crises. (b) A systematic review of news media operations and products, developing into a working model, can be employed for the purpose of analysing and understanding developments in the natural, outside universe. "News media" as a professional cadre or community will put the transient interests of current news operations first, but through their finding out - witnessing, chronicling and interpretation of happenings- they can provide also a working means for better comprehending the world.

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Australian Broadcasting Corporation, Ultimo, NSW. ABC Radio, news and current affairs; ABC Television news and current affairs; archive search of items by topic, 1.8.89 – 31.1.90

Features and news reports; selected from more extensively quoted items in the text:

“Pinning the Pivots of History”, Ben McIntyre, from The Times, in The Australian – Higher Education, 30.1.02

ABC Australia television news, John Cameron, 14.2.90, Modrow-Kohl at Bonn 13.2.90; “Modrow arrived in an unenviable situation ... a joint commission will start to work out details of the monetary union”

“As Europe Changes Durably, Some of the Instability is Welcome”, Jeanne Kirkpatrick, International Herald Tribune, 30.1.90

“Snowballing Developments in the East Sow Confusion Among the Twelve”, Philippe Lemaitre, from Le Monde, Guardian Weekly, week ending 28.1.90

“A System in Terminal Crisis”, Hella Pick, Guardian Weekly, week ending 21.1.90

“Raising the West’s Voice? At the height of the Cold War millions of people throughout the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe tuned in to radio stations funded by the CIA ...”, Alistair Fraser, The Times, 10.1.90

“Step Forward Now, You Architects of Europe”, James Callaghan, The Times, 5.1.90

“Reform in Yugoslavia”, leading article, International Herald Tribune, 28.12.89

“Prague Nearly Went the Chinese Way”, John Gittings, Guardian Weekly, week ending 24.12.89

“After Baker’s Speech, the Ball is in Europe’s Court”, James Eberle, Karl Kaiser, Dominique Moisi, International Herald Tribune, 22.12.89

“New Challenges Face Civic Forum”, John Bloomfield, Guardian Weekly, week ending 17.12.89

“American Viewers Prefer Illusion”, Haynes Johnson, Guardian Weekly, week ending 17.12.89

“Television: Live History, With Leaders Following”, David Webster, International Herald Tribune, 12.12.89

“US Urges Faster EC Integration”, John Palmer and Martin Walker, Guardian Weekly, week ending 10.12.89

“The Hurricane of Change”, Hella Pick, Guardian Weekly, week ending 3.12.89

“US View: Soviets Wrote Off the East”, Thomas L. Friedman, International Herald Tribune, 1.12.89

“For Gorbachev, a Crisis With No Solution”, Peter Reddaway, International Herald Tribune, 27.11.89

“A Reborn Europe is Nothing to Fear”, Dominique Moisi, International Herald Tribune, 23.11.89

“How a ‘Chinese Solution’ Was Averted”, Craig R Whitney, David Binder, Serge Schoneman, New York Times Service, International Herald Tribune, 20.11.89

“Moscow Welcomes Collapse of Wall”, Jonathan Steele, Guardian Weekly, week ending 19.11.89

“All the Old Certainties Are Gone”, Guardian Weekly, week ending 19.11.89

“The Berlin Wall Crumbles Into History”, Guardian Weekly, week ending 19.11.89

“Krenz Defied Order to Fire on the Protestors”, Ann McEvoy and Ian Murray, The Times, 18.11.89

“Mitterrand Plans Strategy to Keep EC in the Front Line”, Phillip Jacobsen, The Times, 15.11.89

“The People Are Winning But They Need Planning”, Flora Lewis, International Herald Tribune, 13.11.89

“The Wall Comes Tumbling Down”, The Australian, 11-12.11.89

“The Iron Curtain Torn Open: Berliners Cross the Wall to Freedom”, Anne McElvoy in East Berlin and Times Foreign staff in London, The Times, 10.11.89

“East Germany Opens the Berlin Wall”, Serge Schemann, NY Times Service, International Herald Tribune, 10.11.89

“In the Gamble, A Symbol Falls”, Joseph Fitchett, International Herald Tribune, 10.11.89

“Krenz Clears the Way for Democratic Election”, Nicholas Rothwell and agencies in East Berlin, The Australian, 10.11.89

ABC Australia current affairs radio, AM, 10.11.89, Lee Duffield, “After twenty-eight years the Berlin Wall has become an irrelevance ...”

ABC Australia current affairs radio, PM, 10.11.89, Lee Duffield, “Many East Berliners are beginning a new day with plans to do what they thought they would never manage – go over to the West ...”

ABC Australia television news, 19:00, 10.11.89, Ian Henderson, “In an historic night in East Berlin tens of thousands of East Germans have breached the Wall ...”

“The Curtain Lifts: Will the Cast Stay? George Schopflin asks if Krenz’s historic decision will be enough to stem the flood to the West and save the socialist state”, The Times, 10.11.89

“Krenz Gives Go-ahead for Mass Exodus”, Nicholas Rothwell and agencies, The Australian, 6.11.89

“Europe Confronts a Wish Fulfilled: Problems Raised by New Influx Are Spreading Beyond the Berlin Wall”, Craig R Whitney, International Herald Tribune, 6.11.89

“Bush’s Aim: Reducing Resistance to Bonn Role”, Joseph Fitchett, International Herald Tribune, 28-29.10.89

“East German Plan to Allow Free Travel”, Nicholas Rothwell, The Australian, 21-22.10.89

“What Kind of Europe Will It Be?”, Jim Hoagland, International Herald Tribune, 28.9.89

“Soviets Didn’t Raise Any Objections to Open Frontier: Budapest Told Moscow of Intentions, Washington Also Kept Informed”, Jim Hoagland, International Herald Tribune, 18.9.89

“How the West Can Help Poland Make Democracy Work”, Sylvie Kauffman interviews Poland’s Prime Minister designate [Tadeusz Mazowiecki], from Le Monde, Guardian Weekly, week ending 3.9.89

“The Big Moment in Eastern Europe”, Zbigniew Brzezinski, Guardian Weekly, week ending 27.8.89

“Poland Presents West With Aid Dilemma”, Bradley Graham, Poland, Guardian Weekly, week ending 27.8.89

GLOSSARY

CFE	Conventional Forces in Europe; arms negotiations
CPSU	Communist Party of the Soviet Union
DW / DWE	Deutsche Welle; German international radio service
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany; West Germany, then Germany after 3.10.90
GDR	German Democratic Republic; East Germany
ICFTU	International Confederation of Free Trade Unions

Nomenclatura, Nomenklatura

Elite elements in communist societies. Names on a list of jobs requiring the approval of Central Committee or state cabinet for appointment; together with their immediate dependents

APPENDIX 1 - Chronology

Various chronologies compiled after 1990 were used as a guide and generally agree on the salient events. One given by Garton Ash (In Europe's Name) is close to the main standard and is adapted here with some omissions and inclusions. Events are marked () where the writer attended to observe as a news correspondent, e.g. at the Schabowski news conference in East Berlin, 9.11.89; and Dubcek with Havel reporting on the resignation of the Central Committee, at the Magic Lantern Theatre, Prague, 24.11.89. It is given as a conventional historical timeline not addressing the integration of mass media activities into the process.*

1988

31 August	Strikes in Poland lead to a meeting between General Ceslaw Kiszczak and Lech Walesa, foreshadowing the Round Table talks with Solidarity.
1 October	General Secretary Gorbachev becomes state President as well.
24-27 October	Kohl in Moscow.
11 November	Solidarity demonstrations in Warsaw. (*)
7 December	Gorbachev to UN General Assembly; principles of freedom of choice, renunciation of force...Sees Ronald Reagan and successor George Bush.

1989

15 January	Vienna CSCE review conference ends with detailed outcomes. (*)
16-18 January	Polish communist party reaches agreement in principle on restoring legal recognition to Solidarity.
2 February	End of MBFR talks in Vienna after 16 years.
6 February	Round Table talks begin in Poland.
10-11 February	Hungarian communist party considers reassessment of the 1956 revolution and plans for a multi-party system.
21 February	Vaclav Havel sentenced to nine months imprisonment.
24-25 February	Protests suppressed in Poland but communist party offers Solidarity formal recognition; Walesa urges acceptance. (*)
19 March	In Vienna, beginning of new NATO - Warsaw Pact talks on conventional arms; also CSCE security talks.

4 April	Polish Round Table talks end with agreement on legal recognition for Solidarity and the “semi-free” elections. NATO 40 th anniversary commemorative meeting at Brussels. (*)
17 April	Legal recognition of Solidarity.
2 May	Hungary begins dismantling “iron curtain” on Austrian frontier.
29-30 May	Nato 40 th anniversary summit, Brussels. (*)
4 June	First round Polish parliamentary elections. (*) Tienanmen Square massacre in Beijing.
12-15 June	Gorbachev in West Germany; Bonn <i>Rathaus</i> balcony appearance; West German – Soviet “Bonn Declaration”. (*)
13 June	Round Table talks begin in Hungary.
16 June	Ceremonial reburial of Imre Nagy and associates in Budapest.
18 June	Second round of Polish parliamentary elections; Solidarity-led opposition wins all seats available to it in the lower house (35%) and 99 of 100 in the upper house. In the EC, direct elections to the European Parliament.
6 July	Gorbachev addresses Council of Europe in Strasbourg. (*)
7-8 July	Warsaw pact meeting in Bucharest ends with a declaration rejecting interference in the internal affairs of any state.
9-12 July	President Bush visits Hungary and Poland.
14-17 July	French Revolution Bicentennial celebrations Paris; G7 meeting at Paris hears Kohl proposal for economic aid to Hungary and Poland, and Gorbachev message for integration of Eastern Europe into world economy. (*)
19 July	General Jaruzelski elected President of Poland.
July – August	Growing numbers of East Germans escape via Hungary to Austria, or take refuge in West German missions in East Berlin, Budapest and Prague. FRG government initiatives, contacts with East Berlin, from Bonn. (*)
24 August	Tadeusz Mazowiecki installed as Polish Prime Minister. (*)

25 August	Hungarian PM Miklos Nemeth and Foreign Minister Gyula Horn have talks near Bonn with Kohl and Foreign Minister Genscher, on border policy, economic assistance.
9-11 September	Founding of GDR's New Forum opposition group announced.
10-11 September	Hungary opens the frontier to Austria for East Germans and an estimated 50000 cross that way before November.
12-14 September	Border crossers concentrate in transit camps around Passau. (*)
21-22 September	Shevardnadze meets Bush in Washington and visits James Baker in Wyoming.
30 September	Appx. 6000 East Germans in the Prague West German Embassy are permitted to take special trains to the West, running through East Germany.
2 October	Crowds continue building at Leipzig Monday protests, about 15000 strong this night.
1-5 October	Appx. 1500 East Germans in the Warsaw West German Embassy are permitted to leave for the West.
1-5 October	A further 7600 East Germans in the Prague West German Embassy are permitted to take special trains to the West, running through East Germany.
5-7 October	Gorbachev arrives in East Berlin for GDR's 40th anniversary celebrations; warns Politburo against being "left behind"; demonstrations for freedom in several cities are broken up, including the East Berlin "Gorby save us" demonstration suppressed in front of Western news media. (*)
9 October	Estimated 7000 in Leipzig protest; gathered security forces hold back; talk about a "Chinese solution".
10 October	The Hungarian Socialist Workers Party dissolved and reconstructed as a democratic socialist party.
15 October	Vaclav Havel prevented from travelling to receive a peace prize from the German book trade in Frankfurt.
16 October	Over 100000 at Monday demonstration in Leipzig.
18 October	Erich Honecker resigns, succeeded by Egon Krenz. (*)

23 October	Proclamation of the new Hungarian republic, new constitution, in Budapest. Appx. 300000 demonstrate in Leipzig. (*)
28 October	Demonstrations in Prague for 71 st anniversary of independent Czechoslovakia are broken up.
30 October	More than 300000 demonstrate in Leipzig.
4 November	Massive demonstration in East Berlin, up to one million; thousands more leave via Czechoslovakia.
6 November	Leipzig demonstration estimated up to 500000.
8 November	Bundestag resolution on Poland's Western frontier.
9 November	Opening of the Berlin Wall. (*)
10 November	Resignation of Todor Zhivkov in Bulgaria.
13 November	Hans Modrow appointed GDR Prime Minister; in Leipzig "test" whether the public would be mollified by concessions, well over 300000 continue the campaign, demanding free elections. (*)
16 November	Hungary applies to join the Council of Europe.
17 November	Prague police suppress a demonstration commemorating Jan Opletal. student killed by the Nazis, provoking the peaceful "Velvet Revolution". In East Berlin the Modrow Government proposes a "treaty community" with West Germany.
17-24 November	Prague demonstrations leading to general strike, resignation of communist party Politburo, and negotiations with the non-communist opposition on forming a new government. (*)
18 November	EC special summit in Paris on Eastern Europe. (*)
20 November	Monday demonstration in Leipzig includes calls for German unity
28 November	Kohl publishes his "10-point plan" for German unity and European integration.
2-3 December	Bush-Gorbachev Malta summit.
3 December	Egon Krenz, Politburo and Central Committee of the communist party resign.
6 December	Mitterrand - Gorbachev meeting in Kiev. Krenz resigns state offices.

7 December	Round Table talks start in East Germany. (*)
9 December	EC Strasbourg summit reaffirms German right to self- determination.
10 December	President Gustav Husak swears in new Czechoslovak government led by non-communists then resigns presidency. More than 50 000 people join a pro-democracy demonstration in Sofia. The East German communist party -SED- starts a special congress leading to reformation as a democratic socialist party under new leaders; and officials of the four military powers in Berlin start meetings on the “4+2” process for ending post-war partition of Germany. (*)
16-18 December	Kohl in Hungary.
16-17 December	Second round of SED Congress. (*)
18 December	FRG flags at the Leipzig protest, demands for “reunification”, <i>wer sind ein Volk</i> . (*)
19 December	Kohl in Dresden, speaks of a “united fatherland” to crowds shouting “Deutschland! Helmut!”, in demonstration for unity; he makes an agreement with Modrow on moves towards a “treaty community” of the two German states. (*)
20-21 December	President Mitterrand makes a state visit to the GDR.
21 December	A Bucharest rally turns against Ceasescu who flees the capital.
22 December	Opening of the Brandenburg Gate.
25 December	Election of Alexander Dubcek as President of the Czechoslovak parliament. Execution of Nicolae and Elena Ceasescu in Romania.
26-31 December	Romania violence, provisional government consolidates. (*)
29 December	Vaclav Havel elected President of Czechoslovakia.
30 December	Polish parliament declares the renamed Republic of Poland and approves the “Balcerowicz Plan” for economic transformation.

1990

11 January	Gorbachev visit to Vilnius, opposing the independence movement.
28 January	East German Prime Minister Hans Modrow and the Round Table agree to bring forward Volkskammer elections to 18 March.

30 January	Modrow in Moscow with Gorbachev.
1 February	Modrow presents plan for “Germany, united fatherland”.
7 February	Bonn government forms its “German unity” cabinet committee and starts discussions on German monetary union using DM.
8-10 February	James Baker discussions in Moscow include using the “2+4” format for negotiating a German settlement.
10-11 February	Kohl and Genscher in Moscow; Gorbachev agrees to reunification.
13-14 February	Modrow in Bonn; Kohl disregards the “treaty community” proposal, to proceed towards direct accession of the Eastern <i>lander</i> to the FRG. (*)
24-25 February	Kohl and Bush meet at Camp David.

APPENDIX 2

Interviewees; journalists and other informants

Interviewed at Bonn, Cologne and Frankfurt-Mainz January 1998: **Werner Dollman**, Managing Editor, ZDF Television, Mainz, was formerly in charge of special foreign programs; **Dr Elke Hockerts-Werner**, Home Editor, WDR Television, Cologne, had for some years before the crisis been producer of the magazine program made in East Germany, *Deutscher Alltag*; **Dr Henning von Lowis of Menar**, Producer, Deutschland Radio, Cologne, covered the wall events as a field reporter and was then based as a correspondent in Rostok; **Dr Alexander Kudascheff**, Editor in Chief, Deutsche Welle German Program, obtained an assignment to work independently as a radio reporter in East Germany during the final month of the crisis; **Thomas Kielinger**, consultant, formerly Editor, Rheinischer Merkur, Bonn, provided extensive commentaries for English speaking as well as German outlets; **Dr Hildegard Stausberg**, Director, Deutsche Welle. Shorter interviews were obtained from **Claus-Dieter Gersch**, Political and Economic Editor, German Programs, Deutsche Welle, Cologne, and **Dr Irene Quaile-Kersken**, Features Editor, English Program, Deutsche Welle, who worked on production managing a flood of reporting from the field. Non-journalists: **Botho Kirsch**, formerly Head of Russian Service, Deutsche Welle Radio, Cologne, (retired);

Dr Sabine Bergmann-Pohl, Parliamentary Secretary for Health, Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), formerly President, Volkskammer of the German Democratic Republic (GDR); **Dr Reinhard Schafers**, Senior Adviser, Office of the Chancellor, Federal Republic of Germany.

Interviewed at Brussels, London and Paris, February 1999: **George Brock**, Editor in Chief, The Times, formerly Times correspondent Brussels; **Mark Brayne**, European Regional Editor, BBC World Service Radio; **Philippe Chatenay**, Correspondent l'Evennement, previously Le Point; **Malcolm Downing**, Assistant Editor, BBC News; **Tommie Gorman**, Europe Editor, RTE (Irish) Radio and Television; **Geoff Meade**, European Editor, the Press Association (UK); **Barry Moore**, Bureau Chief, AFX News (AFP), Brussels; **John Palmer**, Director, European Policy Centre, Brussels, previously Europe Editor, The Guardian; **Daniel Vernet**, Director International Relations, Le Monde, previously Editor; **Martin Walker**, Europe Editor, The Guardian, previously Moscow correspondent; **Sarah Ward-Lilley**,

Assignments Editor, BBC News, previously Assistant Producer; **Walter Wells**, Managing Editor, The International Herald Tribune; **Bruce Wilson**, Chief European Correspondent, The Australian. Non-journalists: **Dr David Childs**, Prof. Emeritus, German Politics, Nottingham University; **Dominique Moisi**, Deputy Director, French Institute of International Relations (IFRI), Paris; **Niko Weghter**, Spokesperson for External Relations, European Commission, Brussels.

Interviewed at Brisbane and Sydney, March-April 1999: **Philippe Naughton**, Bureau Chief, Reuters, Sydney, previously Bonn, Berlin Correspondent; **Nicolas Rothwell**, Correspondent, The Australian, previously Europe Correspondent.

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APPENDIX 3

Follow-up questionnaire for interviews

The questionnaire used in face-to-face interviews was adapted to be sent to an additional six journalists who could not be interviewed directly for various practical reasons, to broaden the range of contributions. Replies were received from one of the additional six, and five of the persons interviewed returned questionnaires or volunteered additional comments. This new material was taken into the report as prepared on 30 April 2002. For instance Mark Brayne, who had been developing his expertise in psychoanalysis and related fields, including work on trauma and journalists, contributed further comments on journalists' use of framing devices. Kudascheff said he had worked "wherever the revolution took place", and reiterated the view it was a revolution of popular mass movements. The late comments generally reaffirmed earlier statements.

22.2.02

This is to ask for help with contributions to doctoral research being carried out by me on the involvement of mass media in the collapse of the Eastern bloc in 1989, including the opening of the Berlin Wall.

As part of the work I have conducted interviews with journalists and others in Europe whose work was related to those events, and I am hoping to augment the interviews now with some further information obtained through a survey questionnaire.

The idea is to ask you to reflect on the coverage of the time and comment on the way that news media carried out their functions and/or the part played by media in the general historical situation.

As a guide, the questionnaire document enclosed gives an outline of the main considerations being reported on in my study.

It has seven questions set up to allow for flexibility, inviting open-ended, written responses.

The idea is to have a panel of journalists considering the points raised, which can be

quoted overall as informed judgment on the issue of media involvement in the crisis in Eastern Europe.

The dissertation is in the advanced drafting stage; I would hope to receive questionnaires by the end of May so as to incorporate the contents before submitting the thesis, hopefully in the middle of this year.

I apologise for not being back in contact with you sooner and for any inconvenience in replying within the present time frame.

For questions, I am contactable as follows: email l.duffield@qut.edu.au; tel. direct +61 7 38641360, or 33670621; FAX 38641810.

Thank you again for your consideration and for any assistance with this project.

Yours sincerely

LR Duffield

Research project

The project is to review the role of news media in the collapse of the Eastern bloc in Europe, in particular the episode of the opening of the Berlin Wall.

The problem for study is the diverse and uncertain way news media operate. For example in the case of Czechoslovakia, the Velvet Revolution would not have been the same without the involvement of international news media, but news media did not make this revolution happen; it did not have the initiative in driving it along.

Review of history and media engagement in the historical process

As to what took place, a very rough outline of the historical process and causes would be as follows: Mikhail Gorbachev had an essential role. While under constant pressure from failure of the Soviet economy, and from secessionist movements in the Soviet republics, which defeated him in the end, he was looking to positive relations and assistance in the West, and was not prepared to intervene to save the East European governments. It became widely known in Eastern Europe that he was taking this position on non-intervention, in part through media coverage of events, and it emboldened people to join a mass rebellion. Economic decay and consumer poverty, police control, and the long-term threat of Soviet intervention used to under-pin the regimes had caused deep alienation between publics and communist governments. This was reflected in a loss of legitimacy for these governments, and their inability to govern when confronted with large

demonstrations and strikes; inability also to exclude packs of news media and prevent them operating. The round table and June elections in Poland resulted in Solidarity heading a coalition government in August, setting a leading example for the entire region.

An ascendant reform faction in the Hungarian communist party conferred with West Germany, receiving economic assistance for Hungary in the process, and opened the Western frontier, precipitating the exodus of East Germans in September. This movement of population, and forty days of massive protests, especially in Leipzig, over-turned the GDR. In East Berlin, there had been Gorbachev's October visit, precipitating demonstrations, and then the mass social movement took over during the week the Wall was opened, 9.11.89 - with conventional institutional forces, including news media and governments, lagging behind the spontaneous actions of the crowds. More conventional politics had to take over next. Chancellor Helmut Kohl became man of the hour, setting up arrangements with government leaders in Moscow, East Berlin, Paris, Washington or Warsaw, for German reunification. There was strong public support, at the ballot box, for absorption of the GDR into the Federal Republic of Germany. An open understanding was reached with the Western allies that Germany would stay in NATO and an expanded European Community; so the EU became the architecture of a new Europe - to a great extent as a result of the collapse of the Eastern bloc. The Velvet Revolution in Czechoslovakia was clearly a mass social movement; the insurrection in Romania was more like a coup d'état with mass public backing. The change in Albania and the break-up of Yugoslavia amid civil war would be for the future.

It is proposed in the reporting on this research project that globalisation of news media and telecommunications was already an influential factor in 1989. To begin with old media controls were greatly weakened, with radio jamming effectively ended, TV and radio broadcasts from the West regularly penetrating the bloc countries, satellite transmission, and automatic telephone exchanges operating in capital cities. Packs of journalists were more numerous, and probably more aggressive than ever before, with more advanced equipment - especially satellite uplink stations on trucks.

How do news media operate in an historical crisis such as the collapse of the Eastern bloc?

Interviews to date

Interviews have been conducted with 24 correspondents who took part in the coverage in Europe in 1989, with questions about news values, and what they understood to be the influence of their work in the working-out of the situation. Reference has been made to certain theories applying to news media.

1. Mass social movement theory sees groups that do not have permanent organisations relying on media attention to keep up their profile and help them communicate with supporters.
2. There is literature on the idea of framing, suggesting journalists participate in the organisation of social knowledge and experience, marking out boundaries of what will be considered, as in a frame. This suggests a limited, certain kind of view, with news media

functioning as a leader in ways of interpreting what is happening. It can be taken further with ideas of hegemony; here journalism will reproduce the way opinion has already been formed “in the domains of political and economic struggle”, reflecting the outlook of dominating groups.

3. Also considered, standard writing on news values sees journalists working on the following lines:

Documenting and keeping a dependable record

Transmitting messages

Witnessing (including the possibility of protecting exposed protestors)

Analysing and interpreting the process

Attaching importance to being on location, on time, to make direct observations

Operating with speed

In interviews to date; where the functions suggested in 1 and 2 might be acknowledged to some degree, it is seen as being without journalists contriving to themselves initiate action or exercise power in society on their own account.

In the interviews, journalists are most comfortable with 3, describing ways those “news values” and functions would be applied, with news media tending to be independent institutions separate from other interests like industry or government. Journalists interviewed to date tend to disavow any responsibility for the outcome of events, though accepting responsibility for not misrepresenting what takes place. A premium is placed on “common sense” as a guiding principle and way of operating.

Questions

This is an open-ended form of inquiry and the first step is to ask for commentary on the above outline.

(1) Is the historical summary valid? What changes should be made?

(2) How did journalists find that they operated, in terms of working with social movements that were important in the “revolution”; “framing” exercises; and the more standard “news values”? Examples?

There were said to be many successes, malfunctions and omissions.

Examples of those:

Some media reviews in the last ten years have asserted that reports on the announcement by Gunter Schabowski, of the opening of the Berlin Wall, confused the issue and - as a case of intervention by media on its own account in “real” affairs - actually set off the mass exodus that night. This would not necessarily be seen as a bad thing but would be a deviation from standard practice. Journalists have generally contended that they represented the announcement in a factually correct way with due sense of its full significance; i.e. the coverage was actually very successful as it was accurate but not “interventionist”.

Corrections had to be made in the Romania story especially over the exhumation of dead bodies in Timosoara and elsewhere, wrongly represented to the journalists as being persons killed in the streets - part of a general exaggeration of numbers. Most journalists considered the corrections timely and adequate; some remain dissatisfied about the episode.

Some journalists accredited to the European Commission considered it took too long to realise that the Eastern Europe story was turning into an issue for all Europe, to be resolved within the EU system. This was seen as a case of unawareness and unpreparedness, on the part of the political leadership and bureaucracy as well as the journalists.

(3) Can you give information on particular coverage issues of this kind (as above), “good” or “bad”, which you encountered?

(4) On balance, how would you rate the engagement of the news media, including your own involvement, in covering the crisis in Eastern Europe in 1989?

(Please tick one)

Most essential to the process

An important part of the process

A significant part of the process

Not really significant to the process

Totally incidental to the process

Please add any further comments on this point.

(5) How would you rate the performance of the news media, including your own performance, in terms of your preferred values in evaluating news coverage?

(Please tick one)

Very effectual and successful coverage

Generally useful, interesting coverage

Serviceable coverage

Weak, confused and / or rather undependable

Misleading and / or mischievous

Please add any further comments on this point.

(6) How would you now judge your own work from that time?

(Please tick one)

Very successful and satisfying to look back on

Assured work done at a good standard

Adequate work

Rather deficient journalistic work

Unsuccessful work causing some shame and regret

Please add any further comments on this point.

(7) Please add any further comments which come to mind in relation to this project.

PLEASE NOTE: Interviews given to date have been on an identified basis. Please indicate here if you do not want to be identified in the report on the questionnaire responses ()

Thank you for your participation.

APPENDIX 4

Announcement on Thursday night 9.11.89 at East Berlin, and the reactions

GUNTER SCHABOWSKI; radio interview, broadcast 1999: “After I’d been talking for about an hour I thought well the press conference is over and I nearly left out my final points. But I did remember and I began shuffling around in my papers, and as I did so, I looked up at the world’s press and said, oh yes and I want to inform you that the party has decided to open up the border to enable people to travel. After a second of stunned silence the questions started coming, and two questions made me hesitate. One journalist asked when, and I looked at my notes again and read out, with immediate effect. And then the second question was whether this included Berlin, and I had another moment of doubt because suddenly I realised we hadn’t informed the Soviets. But our draft had said that it was included so I just shut my eyes, plunged in head first, and explained that it did indeed include Berlin ... Well, I thought, it’s too late; the Soviets can’t do anything now anyway”, Op. Cit. “We Are the People”, episode 3, Producer Misha Glennie, “The Europeans”, ABC RN, 17.10.99.

THE TIMES. *The lead story on Friday morning 10.11.89 fastened on the essential fact of citizens being permitted to leave, and was cautious about the fate of the actual Wall, saying it had become “irrelevant”. This economical article included historical settings and some notes on the running political story, East Germany’s campaign of reforms.*

The Iron Curtain Torn Open. Berliners Cross the Wall to Freedom. In an historic announcement which rendered the Berlin Wall irrelevant, East Germany declared last night that its citizens could leave the country at all crossing points through the Wall and over the 1000-mile border with West Germany. Herr Gunter Schabowski, the Politburo member responsible for the media, said that the new ruling came into effect immediately - 43 years after Winston Churchill proclaimed, in a speech in Fulton Missouri, that an “Iron Curtain” had descended across Europe. Herr Schabowski also promised “free democratic and secret elections” and admitted for the first time that East Germany was “a pluralist society in which there are a variety of interests which we did not previously recognise...” (Anne McElvoy in

East Berlin and Times Foreign Staff in London, T 10.11.89).

THE INTERNATIONAL HERALD TRIBUNE. *This coverage on Friday also highlighted the sweeping nature of the change, with exit from the country to be made possible through all crossing points and visas to be granted freely. Again there were insufficient grounds to proclaim actual tearing down of the Wall, so the wording indicated that the need for it was gone. The lead story reviewed the political situation with the exodus out of hand, and took in late copy from agencies which had spotted the masses of people beginning to storm checkpoints. The wide significance for a new Europe was noted. The story was juxtaposed with an interpretative feature seeing the Wall decision as a desperate move to deal with the two-sided political problem of dissent at home and exodus out of the country.*

East Germany Opens the Berlin Wall. East Germany declared Thursday the end of restrictions on emigration or travel to the West, thus effectively abandoning the Draconian effort to seal in its people that created the Berlin Wall. Giving way to a swelling flight through temporary openings in the border through Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Poland, the East German leadership announced that permission to travel or emigrate would be granted quickly and without preconditions, and that East Germans would be allowed to use any crossing point into West Germany or West Berlin. (About 100 East Germans started flowing into West Berlin through the checkpoints late in the evening, according to the police and witnesses, the Associated Press reported from Berlin). (Hundreds of West Berliners stormed the Checkpoint Charlie crossing to force their way to East Germany early Friday, Reuters reported. East German border guards were finding it difficult to hold them back).

“We know this need of citizens to travel or leave the country,” said Gunter Schabowski, a member of the Politburo who made the announcement at a press conference Thursday evening. “Today the decision was made that makes it possible for all citizens to leave the country through East German crossing points.” Mr Schabowski also said the decision ended the agreement to let East Germans leave through Czechoslovakia or other countries. The flow through Czechoslovakia reached flood proportions on the weekend ... The immediate reason for the decision was evidently a recognition by East Germany’s embattled authorities that they could not stem the outward tide by opening the door a crack and hoping that rapid changes at home would lift the urge to flee. They now seem to hope that an open door would quickly let out those who were determined to leave, and give pause to those who had doubted the

sincerity of the government's pledge of profound change. The broader significance, however, was to figuratively dismantle a barrier to human movement that had become the premier symbol of Europe's and Germany's division into hostile camps at the end of World War II ... Mr Schabowski, however, said the Wall would not be coming down. "There are other factors for the existence of the Wall other than travelling," he said, suggesting that its fate depended on broader questions of relations between the two Germanys and between East and West (Serge Schemann, NY Times Service, IHT 10.11.89).

In a Gamble, a Symbol Falls. East Germany's decision to let its people go is a desperate gamble by the new leaders in East Berlin to reassure opinion about their intentions and staunch the flow of refugees to the West, diplomats said Thursday ... (Joseph Fitchett, IHT, 10.11.89).

THE GUARDIAN WEEKLY. *The newspaper had a full week to prepare its coverage and settled on the vast numbers taking advantage of the breach in the Wall, which had become so transgressed it was safely said to be "crumbling". The newspaper also provided a well-considered front-page essay perspicaciously treating the event as the end of the Cold War, a signal for reunification of Germany on strong democratic, and economic foundations, and expansion of the European Community as the context for that development.*

All The Old Certainties Are Gone. Europe seems to be a different place this week. All the old certainties are being reassessed since the East German authorities on Friday (*sic*) bowed to growing public pressure and allowed their citizens to cross the Berlin Wall. An estimated four million East Germans had crossed the formerly sealed borders of East Germany by the weekend to enjoy a taste of freedom in the West. But the vast majority trooped back home again after a brief but exhilarating glimpse of life on the other side ... (Manchester Weekly Guardian, week ending 19.11.89)

The Berlin Wall Crumbles Into History. They crossed with incredible joy, amazement, tears and good humour. They sang and sparkled above, below and beside the Berlin Wall. It was one of those very rare, absolutely electrifying moments when the ordinary lay people take over and all the professionals -from prognosticators to border guards - get quietly out of the way. From the sidelines we should now be thinking big, electric thoughts about a future where so much, as yet barely definable, is possible. Germany is on the verge of reunification in spirit

- never mind too much yet about the jurisdictional details. Something will take shape, probably closer to confederation than a merging of frontiers and institutions. The process under way simply sweeps aside the natural hesitations of history (from Mr Genardi Gerasimov in Moscow ... to the ex-army paper seller up the road) about seeing one Germany once again. It also sweeps aside with only a touch-wood percentage of remaining doubt, any real chance of tanks or troops or anyone else standing in the way. The crumbling of the Berlin Wall also signifies definitively ... the end of the superpowers' cold war in Europe. Those flickering black and white images of the Berlin air-lift can go back to the film archive room. Europe has emerged from the post-war transition which was no less transitional for lasting over four decades. The long-obvious truth is now openly revealed. Politics, internal and external, not weapons, kept Europe divided ... There are shades in many minds; of course there are shadows. But West Germany, over forty years, has developed the most prudent of democratic credentials, the most wise and cautious of voting patterns. Germany with its entirely new human face is the formidable economic power on the European - and world - scene. If reunification is a challenge, it can only be met by more and wider European co-operation. As the horizons widen even 1992 begins to appear a somewhat limited concept ... (Manchester Weekly Guardian, week ending 19.11.89)

THE AUSTRALIAN. *As an Australian daily it was in a bad situation with time zones but led with a strong front page story obtained earlier with Schabowski foreshadowing free elections. While sensational news was breaking on morning radio and television this was a more conventional political story, but had Rothwell correctly judging that elections would mean defeat of the Communist Party. On the following day the newspaper enthusiastically caught up with the story of the celebrations underscoring a dire political crisis.*

Krenz Clears the Way for Democratic Election. The end of East Germany's communist party Government seems certain to follow a commitment by the new Politburo to democratise elections and the legalisation of the main Opposition party. "We can accept the challenge," said the Politburo's new spokesman, Mr Schabowski, amidst the greatest political upheaval in the country's 40-year history ..." (Nicholas Rothwell and agencies in East Berlin, The Australian 10.11.89)

The Wall Comes Tumbling Down. The Berlin Wall - the most enduring symbol of the Cold War and communist repression - is being washed away by the dramatic tide of Eastern bloc

reform that is changing the course of 20th century history. In a desperate gamble to maintain communist rule, the East German leader, Mr Krenz, threw open his country's frontiers ...
(From staff reporters in East and West Berlin, Australian 11-12.11.89)

ABC RADIO. *The following are the writer's scripts for hour-by-reports as the story unfolded. The first is taken from Schabowski's news conference, identifying the fact wrapped in official language, that East Germans could leave - making the Wall irrelevant. It includes the political point that the move was driven by the double-edged crisis of protest and the mass emigrations. A cut of actuality from the news conference was provided in the earlier reports. As dawn approached in Berlin the story became one about the mass movement and celebrations, in time for late afternoon current affairs and evening news bulletins in Australia. As crossing points became choked the coverage was divided, myself on the East side, and a colleague from London, Peter Cave, on the Western side picking up the wild celebrations there. (Comparing notes, he'd been most impressed with one man who started the pick axe attack on the Wall, working day and night; and a fat man with a bottle of sekt, crying constantly, greeting all and sundry.)*

ABC current affairs radio, AM, 10.11.89. After twenty-eight years the Berlin Wall has become an irrelevance. People in East Germany have been given the right to leave the country if they want, by crossing the Wall. Lee Duffield was at a news conference given by a communist party politburo member Gunter Schabowski: The sensational news was kept to the end of a long briefing for journalists on the emergency meeting of the communist party's Central Committee - held to debate the political and economic crisis. Mr Shabowski casually announced there had been a change to travel regulations, so that East Germans leaving without special visas, were no longer limited to Eastern Bloc countries. That obviously meant the end of the pretence that the flood of people still heading for the West were going on trips to Czechoslovakia. He said the government and party believed that if people could decide to go for themselves, they would have less of a problem of conscience. If they were free to go, more would stay. Under pressure he said he had to return to the continuing meeting of the Central Committee. He said he could not take questions. There is no doubt that the explosion of protest in East Germany -with hundreds of thousands taking to the streets- had as much to do with the decision as the mass exodus. Opposition leaders had been demanding exactly the move that has now been decided on; before they would accept the government's reforms as genuine, and co-operate with its decisions. There was an element of panic in the way it was

done - the new politburo of the communist party (chosen on Wednesday) recommended the move as one of its first steps. The Council of Ministers (acting as a caretaker body since its members all resigned) approved it as an interim law. Formal regulations have been going through Parliament. Journalists have been assured that police now have instructions to give all citizens travel papers on request. East Germans learned that they were free to go as Mr Schabowski was speaking - his news conference was televised live. Earlier he had said that members of the present senior leadership of the Communist Party were admitting and living with the errors of the past. The old law forbidding free travel had been one of the biggest errors. At least two hundred people are known to have been killed by guards along the fortified border between the two Germanies, since the Berlin Wall was built. The Wall itself is to remain if only for the reason always given in the past, that it keeps out bad Western influences like drugs. It may not be there for long. This is Lee Duffield in East Berlin.

ABC Radio, evening news bulletins 10.11.89. Thousands of people in Berlin have spent their whole night awake, crossing between East and West. Lee Duffield reports from East Berlin that the crowds indulged in a huge all-night party, to celebrate the decision of the East German authorities, to open the Berlin Wall: As news of the announcement spread big crowds gathered at the main checkpoints along the Wall. On the Western side hundreds stood on top of it, and greeted people from the East, as they arrived, with champagne. East Berliners had been told they would need visas, which would be freely available to all. But the rule was waived, and people who'd been pushing their way into border posts were let through. State radio said the new rule would come into force today. The Mayor of West Berlin Walter Momper has asked citizens from the other side to put off their visits for a few days because there might not be enough facilities to cope with the influx. Lee Duffield Berlin.

Supplementary copy; used various outlets. There have been wild scenes at the Berlin Wall with crowds of young East Germans rushing at the barrier. Lee Duffield reports from West Berlin that East German border guards used water cannon to stop them, but in places they were able to climb over: The turmoil was set off by East Germany's announcement that it was ending restrictions on travel to the West. Crowds quickly gathered at the main checkpoints along the Wall. About one hundred people who had visas awaiting approval were allowed to cross. Others were told they would have to wait for some hours until government offices had opened. Many couldn't wait. The move to open the Wall was approved by an emergency meeting of the Communist Party Central Committee, called to debate the country's political

and economic crisis. At Checkpoint Charlie a big crowd on the Western side pushed into the Eastern sector as far as a high barricade guarded by police. Further along near the Brandenburg Gate a big crowd in East Berlin rushed towards the Wall. Some were seen being helped over by people on the other side. Others were stopped by police using a water cannon. Parts of West Berlin have been in turmoil. At two o'clock in the morning thousands of cars were driving about, in places causing traffic jams. People out in the street said they were waiting to welcome arrivals from the East.

ABC current affairs radio, PM, 10.11.89. Many East Berliners are beginning a new day with plans to do what they thought they would never manage - go over to the West. Many others have already done it, taking advantage of a chance to cross over, and spend the night on the town. Lee Duffield reports from East Berlin: So many East Berliners felt they could not wait for the new system of travel permits to come in, they mobbed the border crossings. The police let them through and that was the beginning of an all-night celebration. Towards dawn they were straying back, many accompanied by friends they had made on the other side. Several had taken bicycles so they could tour the town. A large number of families kept their children up so they could have the experience and remember the occasion. (ACTUALITY FAMILIES; STUDENT) Even the adults were saying they would never forget the sudden change in their lives. It has gone eight o'clock in the morning here now, opening time for the government offices that give out visas for the West. They have been told to refuse no-one. Open-access without papers, to cross the border, is being closed down, ahead of what the authorities are expecting to be a new wave of people traveling across. Lee Duffield in East Berlin.

ABC TELEVISION. *While television services joined the live coverage of the euphoric scenes throughout the world, it was more than twelve hours to the main evening bulletin in Australia on 10.11.89, which therefore provided a comprehensive wrap on events. The following is an outline summary taking in the stampede; some politics of the situation with the government's loss of control, and its hopes to stop the outflow of citizens; the status of the Wall, as "all but torn down", and then historical backgrounders and reports on international reactions.*

ABC Television News, 19:00, 10.11.89 In an historic night in East Berlin tens of thousands of East Germans have breached the Wall which has divided their city for three decades. The

stampede came as the East German regime gave up its forty-year battle to lock its people away from the Western world, announcing unrestricted passage across all its borders. Impatient Berliners couldn't wait for daylight, streaming through the checkpoints as soon as they heard the announcement on television. Reaction around the world has been swift and we have reports from East Berlin, Moscow and Washington. First to Ian Henderson reporting from the Berlin Wall on the biggest gamble taken by the East German leader Egon Krenz in a week of extraordinary reform moves.

The leading report from Ian Henderson used the overwhelming images of celebration among “joyous tens of thousands”. In the “night of the big break-out”, checkpoints had “finally buckled before extraordinary public pressures ... authorities wanted them to wait but like so much in today's East Germany they simply lost control”. Chanting crowds besieged tourist offices for exit papers. In the West, East Germans were given a “tumultuous welcome”. The Berlin Wall had been “all but torn down”; a “distant dream had come true”. On the politics and mechanics of the decision; the report indicated the “bombshell was dropped almost as an aside by a politburo member Gunter Schabowski”, and a cut was incorporated in the report from an interview given by Schabowski indicating a hope that people would be persuaded to stay: “People will become convinced more and more it will be better for them to stay here ... because the processes of reviewing our society are beginning to show results”. Part of an interview with Krenz followed, announcing the special Party Congress to be held the following month, where he was to “put his leadership on the line”. The report concluded with a reference to the reunification issue beginning to loom very large, to the backlog of reports on economic damage being done by the mass exodus from East Berlin, with a suggestion that the night's events, “will be decisive either as (Krenz's) master stroke or as the final blow to East Germany's crippled economy. Tonight was history in the making and it belonged not just to East Germany but to a people symbolically reunited”.

A background piece took in archive material including the speeches by John Kennedy, Ronald Reagan and Winston Churchill.

Moscow report from John Lombard. The Opening of East Germany's borders is the remarkable end of a process begun in East Berlin just four weeks ago, when Mikhail Gorbachev told his German allies they must implement reforms, and must do it on their own: The report reviewed the encounter where the Soviet leader told Erich Honecker that East

Germany was “out of step with the Soviet Union and must have its own perestroika”. Events were not necessarily the deathknell of communism. Soviet television was reporting on the events in Berlin, making “little effort to hide the drama”.