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**Cold War News:
a paradigm in crisis**

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Abstract

The role of the media - East and West - in the East European revolutions in 1989 has been the subject of much discussion and research. However, the focus has been on the extent to which the media directly influenced these events. There has been very little work done on the impact of the revolutions on how the western news media reported events to their domestic audiences. Yet for over 40 years, they had reported Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union within a specific, interpretative framework: "Cold War News". Suddenly, in 1989, the whole referential structure appeared to fall apart as assumptions shattered and certainties crumbled. This study, therefore, examines the impact of political revolution and crisis on 'Cold War news'. It uses in-depth quantitative-qualitative content analysis, and pays special attention to images, language, themes, and structures of access in order to reveal the nature and extent of the paradigm crisis and point up contradictions that may arise as a result.

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The thesis is dedicated to Margery.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

The role of the media - East and West - in the East European revolutions in 1989 has been the subject of much discussion and research (Cox, 1989; Chesshyre, 1990; Garton Ash, 1990; Hanke 1990; Hesse, 1990; Prins, 1990; Reich, 1990; Simpson, 1990a, 1990b; Tusa, 1990; Campeanu, 1991; Goban-Klas, 1991; Gowing, 1991; Hoff 1991; Jakubowicz, 1991). Indeed, events appeared to be happening live on television, and at such a frenetic pace, that they have been referred to as "television revolutions".¹ Yet their main focus of concern has been on the extent to which the media directly influenced these events. There has been very little work on the impact of those events on the western news media and how they reported events to their domestic audiences (Cormack, 1992; Halliday *et al*, 1992; McLaughlin, 1993).

Long regarded as propaganda organs, some official media in Eastern Europe broke away from their traditional "governmental" role to become public "notice boards" for reform groups.² Suddenly, it seemed, television in Eastern Europe was becoming a contested public sphere, an indication of underlying forces of liberalisation. However, as early as 1988, the communist government in Hungary was attempting to liberalise its economic and social system along western lines. According to Timothy Garton Ash, the reform campaign there was "conducted as much in the media as on the streets".³ In Poland, pressure for new, democratic media came from the opposition, Solidarity, as far back as its inception in 1981.⁴ The control of TV, therefore, was a key issue in the Polish election in June 1989. A leading Solidarity candidate, Jacek Kuron, campaigned for BBC-style television that would be "public", not "governmental".⁵ Television in the GDR and Czechoslovakia was able to take tentative steps into the public domain not because of new liberal policies but because the political situation was so uncertain. And in Romania, forty seconds of television - images of a faltering dictator - have entered into history as the critical moment of the revolution there. But this was no revolt by state television. The pictures were cut to save Ceausescu's face. Unlike its counterparts in the GDR and Czechoslovakia, Romanian TV was taken into the public sphere *by force*.

Each East European country underwent change and upheaval according to its own time-scale, and its own political and ideological specifics.⁶ And, as much as in the West, each had a very distinct type of television.⁷ The degree to which any one TV station or newspaper played a role in influencing revolution must be assessed according to these specifics.

In like manner, care has to be taken when assessing the role of the Western media. While their influence on the course of events in Eastern Europe has been affirmed in some quarters, it has been questioned by other commentators, including some East European reformers, and undermined by the recollections of western journalists on the ground.

The reputation of the major western media in Eastern Europe was formidable. They provided people with an alternative source of information about the world than that provided by the official media.⁸ Some writers suggest that the western media helped stimulate the revolutions. Geoffrey Cox points to the special case of East Germany, where a large minority of the population had been receiving West German television since the 1960s. He argues that it was a powerful stimulant for change because it,

carried, day after day into drab East German apartments, a picture of a society where the supermarkets offered abundance, where the people holidayed in exotic spots, where a car was something everyone had or could aspire to.⁹

But Peter Hoff reveals that as far back as the 1960s, the GDR government actually made the viewing of West German television a citizens' right, even though the citizens had already claimed their right illegally.¹⁰ Kurt Hesse sees this as a deliberate ploy by the authorities to compensate the people, both for the absence of western consumer goods and the lack of participation in the political life of the country. The plan, however, is said to have back-fired when the people received images of their country which contradicted the official propaganda given out on GDR state television. Once the people realised there was another way, they took to the streets to actively demand it.¹¹

However, Jens Reich, a co-founder of the East German reform movement, *Neues Forum*, is sceptical about the power of West German TV to send the people onto the streets. He argues that outside the main cities, in the provincial areas where the reform movement began, western television reception was poor. For him, events in East Germany were part of a "see-it-for-yourself" revolution in which the western media were reporters, not conductors, of events.¹² So to assume that after thirty years West German TV's images of capitalism were suddenly responsible for what happened in the GDR seems rather simplistic. The recollections and first impressions of some western reporters undermine these crude effects theories, too. Journalists like Nik Gowing (*Channel Four News*) and John Simpson (BBC) covered most of the east European revolutions but claim that there was nothing special about their role. They had to wait

and wonder like everyone else. Gowing remarks that,

There tends to be an assumption on these big occasions that the press is getting a nod and a wink that something is afoot, but this time we got no hint at all.¹³

While, for Simpson,

there were times when it was harder to understand what was going on, when being on the spot, than by reflecting on events in the peace of one's home, reading the news-papers and watching news on television.¹⁴

Little if any research has examined the question from a reverse angle, that is to investigate how these rapidly unfolding events influenced western journalists and their interpretative frameworks for reporting. After all, for over 40 years, news from Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union was reported within a "Cold War" framework. Suddenly, in 1989, the whole referential structure was falling apart as assumptions shattered and certainties crumbled. This study examines the impact of political revolution and crisis on 'Cold War news'. It is the first and, so far, the only systematic analysis of how British television news reported events surrounding the collapse of the Berlin Wall. The breadth and depth of this study - which features detailed case-studies over a period of five years - was only possible with unlimited access to the Glasgow University Media Group's archive of main daily news bulletins on British television.¹⁵

Chapter Outline

After laying the theoretical foundations in Chapter Two, the study will feature quantitative-qualitative content analysis of television news with comparative reference to the press. The work was carried out along two overlapping time-scales. Chapters Three, Four and Five draw from the main research sample and present in-depth analyses of how the news media reacted to a moment of crisis, that is to events and developments surrounding the fall of the Berlin Wall. Chapters Six and Seven draw from smaller samples. They trace changing news frameworks since the end of the Cold War over a longer, five-year period: late 1989 to mid-1994.

Chapter Two provides the theoretical framework for the thesis. It looks at Thomas Kuhn's idea of 'paradigm' and shows how that can be applied to dominant intellectual understandings of the Cold War and to popular interpretations such as those offered by various mass media. It uses Kuhn's theory of 'paradigm crisis' and 'revolution' as a means of theorising the collapse of 'Cold War news' as a rational framework of interpretation.

Chapter Three analyses the temporal and thematic frameworks that the news media employed to retell the history of the Berlin Wall. The main focus here is the impact such a crisis may have had on these frameworks. It looks at three television news items about why the Berlin Wall was built. These reveal assumptions about the nature of the Cold War, its causes and consequences, and the reasons why it reached a crisis point.

Chapter Four features a major case study in the Cold War news paradigm under pressure. It is based on the premise that the opening of the Berlin Wall forced a radical shift in the interpretative framework for reporting a 'Cold War news' story. This was the East German 'refugee exodus' to West Germany from the summer of 1989. When the Berlin Wall collapsed, so did the 'refugee' story. Language, image and framework were transformed so that "political refugees" became 'immigrants' or 'economic refugees'. So rather than 'fleeing' from repression, they were 'flooding' the West and causing an 'economic crisis'.

In Chapter Five, I will look at how the news filtered competing visions of the future after the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the East German state, and what it might mean for East and West. Within a year of the fall of the Berlin Wall, Germany was united on a time scale that exceeded even the most ambitious forecasts of the West German establishment. Since then, however, the optimistic picture of Germany united and prosperous has been confounded by a widening economic, social and political gulf between the east and west. Chapter Six shows how television news journalists reported the official 'version' against the backdrop of the political and economic realities of the new German state.

Chapter Seven broadens the study to examine coverage of international issues and developments since the end of the Cold War. The post-Cold War period was initially hailed as one of opportunity for peace. Yet there were significant differences in official rhetoric between visions of a new world order and hard *realpolitik*. Thus the chapter examines coverage of events such as the US invasion of Panama and the Gulf War, and developments such as the Western approach to the collapse of the Soviet Union, whereby the old Cold War consensus still seemed to persist. However it also looks at coverage of crises such as Somalia where the western consensus appeared to breakdown and the media played a more overtly critical role in pointing up western indecision and doublethink.

Sample

The principal sample for the study consists of news media output in Britain for a period of five days from the opening of the Berlin Wall on 9 November to 13 November 1989. This includes all main television news bulletins from BBC News and ITN (lunchtime, early evening, late evening) and the off-peak news programmes, *Channel Four News* (ITN) and *Newsnight* (BBC2). A parallel sample of the daily press - fourteen newspapers - covers the period 9-14 November. I include other samples of news coverage where appropriate to specific chapter concerns. This was especially so in Chapters Four, Six and Seven where I provide the necessary and relevant details of additional samples (see Supplementary Appendix, p.249).

Method

Since the study is wholly based on quantitative-qualitative content analysis it is useful to review the essential arguments and debates about the use and abuse of the method as applied to media research.

As a "research technique for making replicable and valid inferences from data to their context"¹⁶, content analysis has been widely used in research into mass media output. It has helped further understanding about the role of the media in society: how they construct or represent frameworks of interpretation about the world in general, or about controversial and divisive social issues and beliefs.¹⁷ However, from its early applications in purely quantitative and descriptive surveys of newspapers in the 1920s, it was used in later, more qualitative analyses of propaganda in the second world war. This was and still is a contested development. Critics have seen the move from pure quantitative to quantitative-qualitative analysis as a departure from an objective approach to the analysis of media messages. For instance, Harold Lasswell insisted that the quantification of symbols was the sole foundation of scientific insight.¹⁸ Yet signs, symbols and messages are not fixed in either meaning or shared experience. Even with a purely quantitative application, the potential exists for imposing one's own value-system and social categories on what is being observed.

Methods of quantitative-qualitative analysis have been used in research on media influence and audience response, and the means and processes of media production. For example, Philo used analysis of coverage of the 1984 miners' strike in his investigation into the connections between media frameworks and audience understandings and beliefs.¹⁹ Qualitative content analysis has considerable value in media research on other issues such as the conformity of the media to institutional or professional values. These might include objectivity, balance, accuracy,

informativeness, or diversity. The method can also inform a broader assessment of ideological bias in context with media claims to uphold 'objectivity' or 'neutrality'.²⁰ In the *Bad News* series, the GUMG took a quantitative-qualitative approach in their analysis of news coverage of industrial relations in the 1970s. They examined content not according to their own standards but to the institutional and professional standards of news producers. Their results showed clear evidence of ideological bias towards the powerful in society, in this case government and management.

The response from professional quarters to *Bad News* (1976) was fiercely defensive and focused on the Group's use of quantitative analysis as grounds to launch an attack on the credibility of the study. Geoffrey Cox, then director of ITN, accused the GUMG of attempting to substitute editorial control with a statistical measure.²¹ Yet this, claimed the Group, was to misunderstand the purpose of content analysis. The purpose of quantification, when monitoring the number of interviews given to opposing interest groups, for instance, was to check for imbalance. If imbalance *was* detected, even at the crudest level, "then the credibility of news coverage is challenged at the first line of defence".²² While they did not expect news producers to apply academic rigour to editorial decision-making, the Group argued that "the (editorial) rule of thumb can sometimes lead them into major distortions".²³ From academic critics such as Schlesinger came the point that the *Bad News* methodology neglected actual processes of journalistic production and the institutional and legal constraints to which these are subject. The GUMG acknowledged this was a valid point but argued that in the absence then of any synthesis of content analysis with production studies and audience response methods, content analysis could still address a much-neglected area of concern. The study of manifest media content was essential "for what is it the studied producers produce? And what is it the audience react to?".²⁴ They continue:

The spoken and visual vocabulary of news may be regarded as the outward and visible expression of newsroom codes and conventions and not as separate from them. Since the output clearly has meaning, then the production of that meaning can as clearly be studied on the screen as it can by interviewing either producers or audiences".²⁵

Nonetheless, much progress has been made since the *Bad News* series to close the gap between content analysis and other research methods. The GUMG has been directly involved in this project. A combination of production study and content analysis informed their research into coverage of the Falklands War and the disarmament debate in the 1980s.²⁶ The approach has been further developed into the 1990s with methods of researching audience belief in context with production and content. It is a

methodology with the potential to answer hitherto neglected questions about the meaning and power of media messages.²⁷

The importance of the *Bad News* project is still evident today and suggests that it is still justifiable to apply quantitative-qualitative content analysis alone to a particular problem in media research. This, for example, is quite evident in studies of propaganda frameworks in relation to US foreign policy (Chomsky 1989, 1992a, 1993a, 1993b; Chomsky and Herman, 1979^a, 1988; Herman, 1982), the 1990 Nicaraguan elections in the British media (Broadbent, 1993), nuclear disarmament (GUMG 1985, McNair 1988), the war in Northern Ireland (Miller 1993, 1994), and the Gulf war in the British media (Morrison, 1992; Philo and McLaughlin 1993a, 1993b). It has also been successfully applied to analyses of media representations of social problems. For example: AIDS in the British press (Beharrel 1993), or mental health and illness (Philo, Henderson, and McLaughlin, 1993).

One of the most important criteria for sound quantitative-qualitative research is contextualisation. Philo is sharply critical of researchers who have applied their own *a priori* categories to individual units of analysis - such as language, image, agendas, or access - and draw conclusions about what they mean and the implications this has for our understanding of news and its representation of reality.²⁸ An appropriate example of this is Chang's analysis of three major US dailies for their images of the Soviet Union.²⁹ Chang draws some contentious inferences from their coverage on the basis of a problematical method.

First, he selects a random sample of stories from the newspapers over a period of one year, January 1988-January 1989. He then sets up 12 *a priori* categories of reporting and fits news stories into these as isolated, decontextualised units of analysis. For example, he looks at coverage of the category of Soviet "Political and economic reform" and shows that it ranked second in the amount of space given to it. He points out that although only two percent of stories were "unfavourable" these received prominent front page treatment on two particular days in the sample period. Yet, he does not reveal what the stories were about and fails to offer an explanation about why they were given such coverage.

Second, Chang measured "attention scores" for each story according to six criteria on the basis of the amount space given to each story and its location. On an "attention score" of one to six, the greater the space and the more prominent the location the higher the "attention score". The problem here is that space and prominence are not

always sure indicators of news value. They can also be explained by production. As Philo points out in respect to television journalists they are, "often obliged to cover events without necessarily believing that the story will be crucial". He has in mind here television news coverage of the miners strike. Contrary to the assertions of Cumberbatch *et al* (1982), routine, daily reports on the negotiations (or the lack of) between Arthur Scargill and Ian MacGregor does not necessarily indicate an assumption that they were crucial in themselves, rather that they were waiting for what they might produce: in this case, a breakthrough in negotiations and end to the dispute.³⁰ To use my own hypothetical example, a breaking story about a US-Soviet spy row may only appear as a tiny news agency brief on the front or back page of a newspaper: yet it would be foolhardy to conclude that it was not a significant part of coverage of the unfolding story.

Third, Chang claims to measure the "direction of reporting" in terms of "Favourable, neutral, and, unfavourable" emphasis. Again, these appear to be subjective, *a priori* categories of analysis. Throughout his report, Chang uses these general "measurements" to judge news content. For example, he argues that the *Washington Post's* coverage of the medium range nuclear arms control in 1988 was "more neutral and favourable than unfavourable".³¹ Not only this, but he also interchanges these measurements with other values of "positive" or "negative". Thus, coverage of a story in different newspaper may be "more favourable" or "unfavourable", "more positive", "mostly very positive" or even "slightly negative". With this sort of approach one can only question the conclusion that the *New York Times* coverage of the Soviet Union was "basically objective and free of political prejudices and resentment".³²

Philo further argues that some studies of news set out to analyse the representation of a social problem only to look at the intricacies of news grammar and the allocation of technical resources to coverage of the story. This may provide useful research information but it does not answer the original questions. As examples of this approach, Philo refers to the work of Robert Frank (1973)³³ and to parts of GUMG's early work in the first *Bad News* volumes.³⁴

The GUMG developed a method of content analysis that works on the basis of three research questions. What are the key explanatory themes in coverage of a major social issue? How is each theme developed in its specific context? How should we assess the frequency with which each theme appears in relation to the others?³⁵ It also refers to other media sources such as TV documentary and current affairs, newspapers and specialist periodicals, and to extra-media sources such as the official documents,

reports, and press releases of interested parties. Such an approach provides us with an analytical framework that can filter out the *a priori* categories and assumptions of the researcher. This leaves us with what Philo calls a map of the debate and how its competing arguments are highlighted in the news over a sustained time period.³⁶ It can reveal significant insights into the workings of media frameworks and the impact on these of a crisis in the social world. It also points to an aspect of the method that has great relevance to this thesis and what it seeks to propose. If we approach *Bad News* in the wider and more revealing, historical context of the Social Contract and its collapse in the late 1970s, it is possible to discern a clear shift in news framework from one of consensus - whereby the contradictions in the relations between capital and labour are elided - to one of conflict whereby these antagonisms become self-evident and problematical. This would have been impossible without a sustained and detailed analysis of news content over a long period of time. The responses of the news media in 1989 to the extraordinary shift in world view in from 'Cold War' to 'end of Cold war', represent a similar paradigm crisis.

This thesis, then, proposes to apply in-depth quantitative-qualitative content analysis to a study of a news framework or paradigm in crisis. It will pay special attention to images, language, themes, and structures of access in order to trace the contours of the shift and point up the contradictions that may arise as a result.

Notes

¹ Cox (1989) Fletcher (1990) Campearu (1991)

² Simpson (1990a) Hoff (1991)

³ Garton Ash (1990:15)

⁴ Jakubowicz (1991)

⁵ Garton Ash (1990: 26)

⁶ Prins (1990), Reich (1990), Simpson (1990a, 1990b)

⁷ Campearu (1991), Hoff (1991), Hanke (1990), Jakubowicz (1991)

⁸ Chesshyre (1990), Tusa (1990), Jakubowicz (1991), Goban-Klas (1991)

⁹ Cox, G. (1989)

¹⁰ Hoff (1991:12)

¹¹ Hesse, K. (1990: 367)

¹² Reich, J. (1990: 85)

¹³ Gowing, N. (1991 : 29)

¹⁴ Simpson, J. (1990b: 6)

¹⁵ This archive was set up in 1986.

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- ¹⁶ Krippendorf, C. (1980)
- ¹⁷ Philo, G. (1993a:253-270)
- ¹⁸ op cit Krippendorf (1980)
- ¹⁹ Philo (1990)
- ²⁰ McQuail (1983)
- ²¹ GUMG (1980:407-18)
- ²² GUMG (1980:407-18)
- ²³ GUMG (1980:407-18)
- ²⁴ GUMG (1980:407-18)
- ²⁵ GUMG (1980:407-18)
- ²⁶ see also GUMG (1985); McNair (1988); Miller (1993); Williams (1993); Miller and Williams (1993);
- ²⁷ Philo (1990); Philo (1993a; 1993b) ; Kitzinger (1993)
- ²⁸ Philo (1990:162-171)
- ²⁹ Chang, W.H. (1992)
- ³⁰ Cumberbatch et al (1986) Television and the miners strike, London: BFI; op. cit. Philo (1990:164)
- ³¹ Chang (1992:79)
- ³² Chang (1992:82)
- ³³ Frank, R.S. (1973) Message Dimensions of Television News, Massachussetts:Lexington Books; op. cit. Philo (1990: 166)
- ³⁴ GUMG (1976, 1980)
- ³⁵ Philo (1990)
- ³⁶ Philo (1990:168)

CHAPTER TWO

The Cold War News Paradigm Under Pressure: Contours, Crisis, and Collapse

For forty years since World War Two, the western news media reported international relations and global politics within a definitive framework of assumptions and certainties that can be called the "Cold War news" paradigm. The subsequent collapse of the Cold War, and of Communism as an alternative system of development to capitalism, represented a crisis point for the paradigm that has yet to be resolved - whether with modifications or, more radically, with its replacement by a new paradigm. In order to theorise the dynamics of the crisis, I draw on Thomas Kuhn's concept of "paradigm" in *Structure of Scientific Revolutions* (1970). I also refer to Masterman (1972), Gutting (1980), and Harvey (1982) to specify the exact sense in which I deploy Kuhn's concept in relation to news and journalism: that is, the paradigm as a framework for puzzle-solving and as a way of seeing. I then summarise the dominant assumptions underpinning Cold war ideology and how these shaped the "Cold War news" paradigm.

Kuhn's concept of paradigm

Kuhn's idea of "normal science" sheds light on a "non-scientific", cultural practice like journalism because it identifies a community of conservative practitioners whose research, or "puzzle-solving", is governed by an orthodox canon of norms and values. Ultimate authority rests not in the canon but in the community that abides by it. Thus the abandonment of one paradigm for another in the event of a "scientific discovery" or "revolution" is dependent not so much on theoretical validity and the replicability of empirical results, vital prerequisites in themselves, but upon consensus among practitioners. Kuhn used the term "paradigm" to illustrate the dynamics of this activity but he referred to it in different senses throughout his work. Masterman identified no less than twenty-one different senses in which it could be understood, and grouped these into three categories: *metaphysical paradigms* or *metaparadigms*, *sociological paradigms*, and, *construct* or *artefact* paradigms.¹ In its metaphysical sense, the paradigm can be equated with "a set of beliefs, with a myth, with a successful metaphysical speculation, with a standard, with a new way of seeing, with an organising principle governing perception itself, with a map, and with something that determines a large area of reality". In its sociological sense, the paradigm is defined as "a universally recognised scientific achievement, as a concrete scientific achievement, as like a set of political institutions, and as like also to an accepted judicial decision". In its sense as a construct or artefact, the paradigm can be understood as "an actual

text-book or classic work, as supplying tools, as actual instrumentation,...as a grammatical paradigm,...as an analogy,...as a gestalt figure and as an anomalous pack of cards".²

However Kuhn insisted that all but two of the twenty-one senses Masterman identified were "stylistic inconsistencies" on his part.³ He stated that his concept of paradigm could be properly understood in only two senses: as "the entire constellation of beliefs, values and techniques, and so on shared by members of a given community", and as "one sort of element in that constellation, the concrete puzzle-solutions which, employed as models or examples, can replace explicit rules as the basis of the remaining puzzles of normal science".⁴

To explain the means by which normal science reproduces itself, or fails to do so, Kuhn introduces the idea of a "counterinstance", or "anomaly".⁵ The occurrence of an anomaly in normal science is not in itself a crisis. It will not necessarily invalidate established theory but it may "help create" a crisis or reinforce one that already exists. When confronted with an anomaly, then, practitioners will, says Kuhn, "devise numerous articulations and *ad hoc* modifications of their theory in order to eliminate any apparent conflict".⁶ In other words, they will undertake repair work to restore order to the paradigm. Since the elimination of counterinstances in themselves is usually a successful activity, Kuhn proposes that "if an anomaly is to evoke crisis, it must usually be more than just an anomaly".⁷ It must challenge some of normal science's most fundamental assumptions and practices. Indeed, the symptoms of a paradigm-shift within a particular community include "the proliferation of competing articulations, the willingness to try anything, the expression of explicit discontent, the recourse to philosophy and to debate over fundamentals...".⁸ More importantly, "all crises close in one of three ways": normal science may successfully complete its repair work; the problem "resists radical new approaches" and is "set aside for a future generation with more developed tools"; or a "new candidate" may emerge for paradigm with an "ensuing battle over its acceptance" among the community of practitioners.⁹ This brings us to the question of whether the Kuhnian paradigm can be applied to the production of *non*-scientific knowledge within a particular framework of interpretation.

The Cold War paradigm: intellectual perspectives

For my purposes here, I draw on sense of a paradigm as "a way of seeing" - the product of an organised and consensual routine of puzzle-solving. It can, I think, be applied to the practice and content of western liberal journalism and its end product: that is, a definitive picture of the world that supports and reproduces the dominant ideological norms and values of western capitalist society. As Harvey argues,

Kuhn's view of paradigms is geared entirely to the natural scientific enterprise, and, while it is innovatory in relating the philosophy of science to the sociology of scientific practice, it fails to make any substantive links with the wider social context. Such links would have shifted Kuhn's notion of paradigm from a mechanistic (in the sense of concentrating on the 'internal history' of science) to an interpretative-explanatory device.¹⁰

We can trace the origins and growth of the paradigm in parallel with the development of capitalism (Schudson, 1978; Hallin, 1986; Curran and Seaton 199). But if we take as a starting point the end of the second world war and the beginnings of the Cold War then we can talk of the paradigm as 'Cold War news'. To understand its nature we first have to understand the nature of its superior informant, the Cold War paradigm.

In *Deterring Democracy* (1992), Noam Chomsky argues that there are two ways of looking at the Cold War: as historical process or as an ideological construct of given assumptions. He argues that the former view leads us to appreciate the true nature of the Cold War, that is a conflict that served a functional utility for the principal combatants - the United States and the Soviet Union. It helped them pursue their geo-strategic interests not against each other but in their own spheres of influence. Thus,

for the USSR the Cold War (was) primarily a war against its satellites, and for the US a war against the Third World. For each it served to entrench a particular system of domestic privilege and coercion. The policies pursued within the Cold War framework have been unattractive to the general population which accepts them only under duress. Throughout history, the standard device to mobilise a reluctant population has been the fear of an evil enemy dedicated to its destruction. The superpower conflict served the purpose admirably - both for internal needs...and in public propaganda.¹¹

For maximum propaganda effect, it was important that domestic publics saw things very differently. The Cold War was thus explained within an ideological framework that denied historical fact or at least provided plausible explanations for real events and processes since the end of the second world war. It was explained as a conflict fought

between two superpowers on different fronts (East-West, North-South) and battlegrounds (economic, political, military and ideological). This "imaginary war", says Mary Kaldor, was the *sine qua non* of two opposing paradigms of thought - Stalinism in the East, Atlanticism in the West.¹²

Kaldor takes a critical look at the Atlanticist paradigm. She identifies several post-war developments, both in and between the US and Western Europe, that evolved into Atlanticism - an ideological framework that provided a common identity and ordered international relations. The immediate post-war period saw the emergence of a new elite from the fragments of the pre-war order. This involved the construction of a centre-right consensus, the marginalisation of radical politics, right or left, and the exclusion from political participation of popular anti-Fascist resistance movements. Atlanticist political ideology sanctified parliamentary democracy and promoted a Keynesian approach to economic planning and management.¹³ Atlanticism also informed the reconstruction of the international economic order. Essentially, this was US military Keynesianism based on the dollar system. Although promoted as market liberalism, it was characterised by inherently protectionist frameworks and institutions - GATT, IMF, World Bank, OECD. It protected the US economy from competitive markets not just in the 'Third World' but also in Europe. And its internal logic demanded that in turn these same markets should open up to US exports and investments.¹⁴ In a social context, Atlanticism was influential in the depoliticisation of labour and consumption, primarily in the US and to a lesser extent in Western Europe.¹⁵

In a military and security context, the formation of the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation had a huge impact on the post-war redevelopment of economic and political infrastructures. It also underpinned the development of a national security apparatus that could devolve power normally vested in parliament to military and security elites in Brussels or the Pentagon.¹⁶ And, crucially, the formation of NATO helped cement Atlanticism's ideological structure and coherence. In his essay, *Outside the Whale*, Edward Thompson referred to 'Natopolis', a public space in which beliefs and allegiances were tested against a 'Natopolitan ideology', an "ideology of imperialism in the defensive era of the Cold War" (his emphasis).¹⁷ Thus, for example, in the 1950's, Communism and radicalism in Britain were challenged by an intellectual and cultural counter-reformation that dismissed them as the "projections of the neuroses of maladjusted intellectuals".¹⁸ The counter-reformation, on the other hand, reproduced and nurtured Atlanticism's common sense, self-legitimising explanations of the Cold War.

Kaldor identifies three dominant intellectual perspectives that operated within the Atlanticist paradigm - *orthodox*, *revisionist*, and *post-revisionist* or *neo-orthodox*.¹⁹ She argues that they all deny alternative accounts of the conflict which might undermine it as a means of managing or stabilising international relations.²⁰ Her schema is worth summarising here since it has some significance for my discussion later of media accounts of the conflict and why these were insufficient.

The orthodox perspective investigates the origins of the Cold War and draws a burden of evidence from official government and diplomatic sources. It concentrates on the early 1940s and focuses on Soviet behaviour in eastern Europe. Its main argument is that after the second world war the west could do nothing but contain Soviet ambitions within its existing sphere of influence.²¹ Cox (1993) argues that as the Cold War moved into the 1950s and 1960s, both changes in the Communist world, and domestic debates about the consequences of the arms race and military spending, contributed to an erosion of the orthodox consensus. This one-sided perspective failed to address some searching questions about the west's part in the conflict. An emerging revisionist school sought to provide the answers with some compelling critiques.²²

Revisionist accounts focus on the immediate post-war period and argue that a general Four Power settlement in Europe would have been possible only for US policies in favour of its western allies and against the Soviet Union. The US provided huge economic and political assistance in Western Europe through Marshall Aid and the Truman Doctrine and, at the same time, exerted economic sanctions and subversive political pressure against the Soviet Union. The result of all this was to create an atmosphere of hostility in which East-West relations became polarised, and to seal the division of Europe. The impulses behind the US's Cold War policies were the promotion of an international, liberal economic order, and the imperatives of US global expansion.²³ Cox argues that revisionist accounts, like the orthodox approach they challenged, were one-sided. They ignored Soviet actions and focused almost exclusively on US behaviour, sometimes viewing it as irrational, as with Reagan's Zero Option policy. Their analysis of nuclear weapons had great explanatory power but it also suffered a number of self-defeating flaws. Above all, he argues, most revisionist analyses seemed to assume that the Cold War conflict became so systemised that nothing short of a radical overhaul of the international order could end it.²⁴

The post-revisionist approach covers both orthodox and revisionist time-scales and attributes varying degrees of blame to East and West. While a typical account might reject the need for Cold War militarisation, it would nonetheless accept the balance of power system and the idea that both sides coexisted within their own spheres of influence.²⁵ Like its competing accounts, post-revisionism worked entirely on the premise that there was no alternative to the Cold War as a system of international order and stability.

Kaldor summarises the essential differences between the three perspectives. Post-revisionist accounts see the Cold War as a great power conflict, in which states sometimes act irrationally according to domestic pressures. Orthodox and revisionist approaches take more one-sided and diametrically opposed views. According to the orthodox account, US policy is thus seen as a rational response to Soviet behaviour which is itself influenced by the nature of the Soviet state. Revisionists see this relationship as more or less the other way round.²⁶ Yet, argues Kaldor, all three accounts set up frameworks of thought that,

give rise to good-bad stories which reflected and indeed served to maintain domestic differences. Even though this was far from what was intended, by the revisionists at least, the stories were used to conceal alternative interpretations which might have helped to undermine the Cold War.²⁷

Kaldor proposes a fourth approach, to think of the Cold War as "an imaginary conflict which conceals parallel but largely separate internal conflicts".²⁸ The imaginary war, she writes, "(served) to maintain social cohesion". As nationalism served to legitimise the nation-state with ideas such as "identity" and "community", so the imaginary war "specified the character of blocs and gave meaning to the sense of belonging to East and West". Identity was constructed through,

a shared social system and set of values, democracy or socialism, which was contrasted to an opposing system, totalitarianism or imperialism. Each system, at least in the imagination, threatened the very existence of the other. It was a struggle between good and evil of epic proportions. And it was sustained by a real military confrontation and, indeed, real wars in remote parts of the world.²⁹

While each bloc regulated its social and economic systems according to opposing doctrines, the imaginary war in either drew its power from popular ideas and experience. It was an identity based on abstract values like freedom and equality that were apparently more progressive than criteria of nationality, culture, or race.³⁰ This idea of an 'imaginary war' leads us to consider some of the most compelling common

sense accounts in western culture: those of the media, particularly news and journalism.

The Cold War News Paradigm

If we accept that the western news media reported and interpreted the Cold War within a paradigmatic framework, we have to make a distinction between an instrumental 'enemy image' - not historically specific to the Soviet Union during the Cold War - and the actual paradigm, the 'deep structures' of thought and action, that the enemy image served to rationalise. It would be wrong to argue that they are one and the same. The Cold War was characterised by alternating periods of hostility and *détente* and these determined the functional utility of the enemy image. But periods of *détente* did not signify crisis in the fundamental paradigm. That remained constant throughout the conflict.

The enemy image

The western media mostly constructed their imagery through the orthodox framework. They presented the Cold War as a stand-off between two superpowers with sole responsibility for danger or trouble lying squarely with the Soviet Union, "the evil empire". At its worst, the framework restricted thought and action. It was as much part of what Edward Thompson called "the deep structure of the Cold War, or the thrust of exterminism"³¹ as the nuclear arms race because it helped dehumanise the 'other side' out of existence. As Gerbner argues, the enemy image,

has deep institutional sources and broad social consequences. It projects the fears of a system by dramatising and exaggerating the dangers that seem to lurk around every corner. It works to unify its subjects and mobilises them for action.³²

The sources of the Cold War enemy image are rooted in the West's response to the October Revolution. Walter Lippmann and Charles Mertz carried out a content analysis of the *New York Times*' coverage of the revolution and found it hostile and propagandist. For the *New York Times*, they wrote, the Bolsheviks were "both cadaver and world-wide menace".³³ Popular fiction in books, on television and in the cinema promoted images of the US in simplistic adversarial relationship with the USSR: Uncle Sam versus Ivan the Terrible, the Eagle versus the Bear (an image used in a Pentagon video on the arms race), the Promised Land versus the Evil Empire. In the Soviet Union the images were reversed. The West represented the kind of economic and social inequalities that the Revolution sought to overthrow and replace. The shortcomings of the Revolution were minimised with persistent reference to capitalist exploitation and western imperialism. Throughout the Cold War, each side was

commonly depicted peering at the other over the Berlin Wall with fear and suspicion.³⁴ Such depictions were prevalent throughout the Cold War but, in an historical context, they have had a universal utility that can be applied to any external threat for the containment of the domestic populace.³⁵

Dennis *et al* (1991) show that the most negative and virulent images prevailed over relatively short periods of crisis in US-Russian/Soviet relations. A longer, historical perspective on how each side defined the other points to a more dynamic process of political and cultural conflict and struggle on all fronts of the Cold War. While the New Cold War of the 1980s saw the picture at its blackest extreme, other periods of Cold War and *détente* witnessed mixed images and shifting perceptions.

The Cold War was successful in concealing a history of more 'normalised' relations between the US and Russia as competing 'great powers', periods when they engaged in much more open economic, political and cultural exchange. Dennis *et al* work within a broad historical and comparative framework to examine changes in how the US and Russia/Soviet Union saw each other from the 19th Century. The essays in the collection are written by authors - journalists and academics - from both countries and they present a history of US-Russian/Soviet images as one of mutual fascination as well as suspicion, friendliness as well as hostility.³⁶ For example, while condemning the inequalities of American capitalism, Leninist journalism would also praise its productive forces, its technological advances and its great engineering feats.³⁷ Among the US media, images of stupid and violent Russians would mix with stories of Soviet-American cooperation and friendship.³⁸

In some cases, an "own worst enemy" factor came into play. McNair considers some of the constraints faced by western correspondents when reporting *from* the Soviet Union during the New Cold War and, conversely, the failure or inability of the Soviet authorities to shape or influence western news coverage of Cold War issues. This helped shape "enemy images" of the Soviet Union as much as the West's own political and cultural assumptions. For example, during the Korean airliner crisis, in 1983, the Soviet authorities were more concerned with presenting their version to their own people rather than competing with the US in persuading Western publics that they had a credible defence. Thus US propaganda played unopposed to more sceptical European opinion until it finally began to collapse under the weight of its own contradictions.³⁹

There was a degree also to which the 'enemy' could influence and shape its image to its own advantage. A good example of this was a new Soviet appreciation of news management strategies, such as timing and creating "exclusive" or "controversial" events for media consumption. From 1985, *glasnost* and *perestroika* in the Soviet Union brought major improvements in Soviet news management and concomitant changes in how western journalists reported the Soviet Union.⁴⁰ Not least among these was the transformation of the Soviet leader from Evil Emperor to Nice Guy. In the image-conscious West, Mikhail Gorbachev achieved 'superstar' status. Compared to his predecessors, he was young, photogenic, and charismatic. And, as he toured the capitals of the West to popular acclaim, he became a propaganda liability for the West. Take, for example, his performance vis a vis Ronald Reagan during the Moscow Summit. On the last day, he held a long news conference, speaking to the western media on all issues, sometimes without notes. The event contrasted with a poorly attended news conference at the US Embassy, where Ronald Reagan appeared to struggle with the issues and was criticised for selecting favoured US journalists for questions. The comparison was highlighted in some sections of the British news media. In Gorbachev, the BBC observed "a man in control: quick-witted, dynamic, formidable".⁴¹ ITN described his performance as "an extraordinary tour de force without a note".⁴² The *Guardian* reported that "Gorbachev was masterful and...Reagan was genially feeble, even by his own modest standards". The *Independent* judged Reagan's conference "deeply embarrassing" and "a flop", although a more sympathetic account in *The Times* concluded that his "rambling answers, inconclusive sentences, hesitations, and apparent difficulty in grasping the point of many questions" were due to fatigue.⁴³ Gorbachev's popularity and credibility rating in Europe was rising as Reagan's was flagging: the US leadership role was under symbolic assault. This was especially significant at a time when NATO planners were arguing for 'modernisation' of the alliance's nuclear forces in western Europe.

So while images of the enemy might alter according to the intensity of hostilities, or to PR strategies, the Cold War paradigm remained intact. Even during *détente*, the superpowers were still perceived as no more than "Friendly Enemies".⁴⁴ In the next section, we will see ways in which the enemy image informed media coverage of the most crucial and persistent theme of the Cold War: arms control and the nuclear debate.

The news media and the nuclear debate

Several research studies show how it was possible to understand the nuclear debate in the media on a number of levels: as a propaganda battle between the superpowers (GUMG, 1985; McNair 1988; Hallin and Mancini, 1989; McLaughlin 1989), between NATO and the peace movement (Aubrey *et al*, 1982; GUMG, 1985; McNair, 1988), or between Conservatives and Labour in the 1983 and 1987 general elections in Britain (McNair, 1988).

The development and explosion of the first nuclear weapons, argues Paul Chilton, marked a frightening paradigmatic shift in human consciousness to the Cold War world. It was,

a catastrophic jump to a new order of experience in science, politics and everyday life. In 1945, it was popular to refer to this jump as a 'revolution' which would itself 'revolutionise' human behaviour, and to communicate about such matters on the fringe of experience and imagination places strain on our symbolic systems. The language used to talk about the new weapons of mass extermination was partly a reflection of an attempt to slot the new reality into the old paradigms of our culture. It was also no doubt a language that served the purpose of those who were concerned to perpetuate nuclear weapons development and deployment.⁴⁵

To get some idea of the parameters of the framework, it might be useful to offer an example of how the nuclear debate was *not* reported. At the height of the New Cold War and the anti-Cruise missile demonstrations in the West, the *New Left Review* published *Exterminism and Cold War* (1982), an international collection of essays that set out a socialist critique of the nuclear arms race. They addressed the problem from four points of enquiry. First, "the social nature and basis of...'exterminism' - the apparent drive of industrial civilisation towards its own self-destruction in the post-war arms race"; second, "the respective roles and responsibilities of the two (superpowers)"; third, "the relative importance of the distinct major theatres of the Cold War - the Far East, Europe, and the Third World"; and fourth, "the whole nexus of problems posed by the quest for a realistic way out of the looming dangers of 'Exterminism and Cold War'".⁴⁶

The mainstream media, by contrast, offered the narrowest possible interpretation. According to their orthodox, Atlanticist paradigm, the nuclear weapon was a defensive deterrent against the Soviet threat of invasion, domination, or even nuclear annihilation. Andrew Wilson, one-time defence correspondent with the *Observer*, noted the culture of fascination with nuclear weapons and weapons technology among

the defence 'community'. The same could be applied to sections of the media. As with all lobby correspondents, journalists on the defence beat came into regular contact with officials in the 'defence community' and in many instances forged lasting friendships. They became immersed in a defence culture that, as Wilson argues, "provided the essential framework within which to pursue peace-time planning for operations involving the death of millions".⁴⁷ Within the framework, a certain language was employed to defuse the lethality and destructive power of nuclear weapons, a clinical, abstract language that Paul Chilton calls 'Nukespeak'. Nuclear weapons were labelled with anodyne names or model numbers much in the fashion of cars or washing-machines: the 'MX', 'Cruise', 'Trident'. When the enemy built better and more destructive weapons and in greater quantity they were 'escalating' the arms race. When the friendly Alliance embarked on a similar course it was simply 'modernising' its deterrent. All this had the marvellous utility of rendering nuclear weapons as anything but what they actually were: instruments of human exterminism.⁴⁸ It also had the power to shield the framework from attack by 'the enemy within'. With regard to the media this manifested itself in a hierarchy of access that excluded alternative perspectives from dissident voices.

Edward Thompson argued that news presentation of the nuclear weapons debate was "extraordinarily Cold Warish" and dominated by "old Atlanticist types like Robin Day" whom he regarded "one of the greatest threats to the survival of civilisation next to (nuclear) missiles". The caricature set up an important point about the interpretative framework within which news and current affairs mediated the debate. For Thompson, "(Robin) Day's whole tone and strategy of presentation is to imply a normal, consensual position which is pro-defence, pro-nuclear weapons".⁴⁹ Those opposed to the process of exterminism - such as intellectuals, politicians, the Greenham Common women, and CND - were labelled 'extremist' or 'unpatriotic'. If that cap did not fit - as with religious figures or establishment opponents - then they were called 'naive', 'idealistic', or 'mad'. All opposition and dissent was apparently voiced against the interests of 'national security'.⁵⁰ The Glasgow University Media Group concluded that the implicit, damning assumption underpinning news coverage of the peace movement was, 'It won't change anything'.⁵¹

Thus, with the weapons defused and the 'peaceniks' disarmed, the most controversial issues appeared to be arithmetical. Concepts of 'nuclear parity' or 'mutually assured destruction (MAD)' were underwritten by strict adherence to the rules of a crude numbers game.⁵² The debate became so abstract and quantitative that it distracted from an underlying, qualitative concept of 'first use' or the 'pre-emptive strike'. This assumed

that a limited nuclear war could be fought and won by such 'overwhelming force' that the enemy would never have a chance to retaliate. As long the public understood that the goal of arms control was to ensure 'nuclear parity' between East and West - each side having a rough equivalence of nuclear weapons - they would not think too much about what the weapons were designed for or about the capability of a particular missile over and above its counterpart on the other side. It was explained to the public that these strategies insured *against* the possibility of nuclear war and they were translated into concepts of 'no-first use', 'mutually assured destruction', or simply the 'nuclear deterrent'. Selling the nuclear deterrent to a sceptical public demanded good 'sales patter' that could persuade us that its visible flaws or contradictions were unfortunate but nothing to undermine its absolute necessity. For example, Chilton refers to a glossy PR brochure put out by the Ministry of Defence in the early 1980s to sell the virtues of the Cruise missile system. The MoD reassured 'the public' that deploying the weapon system in Britain would not make the country a special target in the event of a war because, it said, "no part of this country...will be safe from danger whether we have Cruise missiles or not".⁵³

The west could legitimise nuclear weapons in this manner as long as the Cold War prevailed but change to *détente* undermined the tactic considerably. The solution was to project 'evil' and 'instability' from unseen metaphysical forces to what was visible. Gorbachev was a 'nice guy', yes, and the Soviet people no doubt wanted peace and friendship with the West but the West had to be careful. The Soviet empire was not quite evil any longer but it had a long way to go before it could be trusted on western principles of human rights. It was also undergoing unprecedented social and economic reforms with *glasnost* and *perestroika*. That brought its own instabilities, hence the oft-quoted truism of de Toqueville that an empire is at its most dangerous when it is reforming itself from within.

Soviet uncertainty principles: from human rights to *glasnost* and *perestroika*

The Moscow superpower Summit took place in May-June 1988. This fourth meeting between Gorbachev and Reagan was to mark the ratification of the INF Treaty, concluded in Washington the previous year to reduce and eventually eradicate their stocks of medium-range nuclear weapons. The next logical step was further progress in talks for a long-range, strategic arms treaty (START), which, if agreed, would have profound implications for superpower relations and the entire basis of the Cold War. However, the talks in Geneva had ground to a halt over America's refusal to include its sea-launched missiles in the negotiations. For the US, talk about START was out. So what did the media report? At events like superpower summits, disputes over

complex issues in arms control could be eclipsed by other distracting themes. For example, the *impasse* over START at the Moscow Summit was explained with wider reference to human rights, and to the future of Gorbachev and his reform proposals.

In advance of the Moscow summit, the US news management strategy was to tap into the powerful ideological connotations that the concept of human rights carried and which easily filtered through to routine Cold War news.⁵⁴ Thus, Ronald Reagan set the US agenda for the meeting when he stopped over in Helsinki to give a speech commemorating the Helsinki Accords of 1975. Although human rights protocols formed only a part of the Accords, Reagan focused on them exclusively. He condemned the critics and accused the Soviet Union of failing to live up to them since signing.⁵⁵ On the basis of his speech, and his plan for an unofficial meeting with Soviet dissidents in Moscow, the western news media dubbed the occasion, *The Human Rights Summit*, before it had even started. "Human rights is his theme", said the BBC headline⁵⁶; "President Reagan...has put human rights at the top of the agenda", announced ITN.⁵⁷ Reagan was successful in framing the human rights theme with wider issues. BBC reported his view that "international security cannot be separated from human rights".⁵⁸ In contrast, the Soviet position was reported as a negative, ritual response to the preferred US agenda, not as an equally valid contending viewpoint. *Channel Four News* stated that it came as "no surprise to the Soviets that President Reagan should strike such a tough and uncompromising note" on human rights, yet they could only "respond predictably" with "ritual denunciations of the speech".⁵⁹

Media coverage of the Summit showed that accounts of internal Soviet affairs could be framed in a similar way. For example, some reports on *glasnost* and *perestroika* focused on their destabilising influence over Soviet politics and their impact on western assumptions about Soviet society. This in turn undermined the certainty and predictability of East-West relations and the Cold War system. As one reporter put it, "It was simpler for NATO when the Bear was always growling. The question now is how should the West react?".⁶⁰ Thus the principle western justification for its non-response to Soviet initiatives on arms control.⁶¹ Ever alert to deception from any quarter, Western think-tanks and media pundits fulfilled their designated role as watchdogs for national security. Zassoursky refers to timely publications like *The Soviet Propaganda Machine* and *Mesmerized By The Bear: The Soviet Strategy of Deception*.⁶² Caspar Weinberger, a 'Cold Warrior' with regular access to British television news, told *Channel Four News* that the Soviets were simply using new tactics, public relations, for their old unchanging strategy of "world domination" and

that it was important for the West to "keep (its) guard up".⁶³ On a similar note, the *New York Times* columnist, A.M. Rosenthal, urged US leaders to be cautious about Gorbachev, "a man who is still the dictator of the most powerful totalitarian nation in the world".⁶⁴

Conclusion: The Paradigm Crisis

The dominant news paradigm, then, was as much an ideological construct as the Cold War itself. So long as the conduct and pattern of international relations and international crises seemed to conform to the dominant assumptions underpinning the Cold war - on all fronts and in all battlegrounds - then the Cold War news paradigm was a successful means of puzzle-solving, of making sense of the Cold War. But when the Cold war system slid into crisis and collapsed, so did its explanatory paradigm. They were no longer adequate frameworks for intellectual analysis or for journalistic reportage. If we are to use Kuhn's ideas to help explain *how* the crisis came about, and to consider its implications, we again have to be careful about the exact terms of reference.

When explaining the dynamics of paradigm revolutions in normal science, Kuhn drew a parallel with political revolutions which, he said, "are inaugurated by a growing sense, often restricted to a segment of the political community, that existing institutions have ceased adequately to meet the problems posed by an environment that they have in part created".⁶⁵ And, as Harvey concludes,

It is an essential feature of (Kuhnian) paradigms that they are successive, that each absorbs the preceding paradigm and provides a new conceptualisation that can take account of all that the old paradigm could and resolve some of the anomalies that the preceding paradigm was unable to resolve. Further, the new paradigm provides a new basis for the refinement of theory, a new set of puzzles to be solved, and consequently, anomalous situations to arise.⁶⁶

But the question remains whether western public discourse has formulated "new conceptualisations" for rationalising revolutionary change in Europe since 1989. The East European revolutions in 1989 and the end of the Soviet Union were dramatic developments that brought about the collapse of the Cold War. Old certainties and assumptions - economic, political or military - became null and void. Yet, conversely, the idea of 'revolution' seems inappropriate to the West's response to the end of the Cold War. Many of the institutions and organisations set up to manage the conflict are still in existence - the UN, NATO, the EC. It must be said, though, that at the time of

writing these institutions are under considerable strain in the face of continuing economic problems and an array of global crises. To think of a 'paradigm revolution' leads us to ask, "So where is the new paradigm?". Four years after the fall of the Berlin Wall there is still no answer to that among the western media: it is a puzzle in search of a paradigm. Therefore a better way of thinking this out might be to use Kuhn's idea that "crisis alone...attenuates...the role of a paradigm".⁶⁷ This best accommodates the proposition of a paradigm collapse and the absence of a new paradigm with the power and persistence of Cold War news.

My thesis then argues that the East European revolutions of 1989 and the end of the Cold war have resulted in a paradigm crisis rather than a revolutionary shift in news frameworks. I will examine the impact of the East European revolutions on the Cold War news paradigm at one of the earliest moments of crisis: the fall of the Berlin Wall.

Notes

¹ Masterman (1972: 59-89)

² Masterman (1972:65)

³ Kuhn (1970:181); Kuhn refers to Masterman in Lakatos and Musgrave (1970) (1st ed.)

⁴ Kuhn (1970:175)

⁵ Kuhn (1970:77-78)

⁶ Kuhn (1970:78)

⁷ Kuhn (1970:82)

⁸ Kuhn (1970:91)

⁹ Kuhn (1970:84)

¹⁰ Harvey (1982:85)

¹¹ Chomsky (1992a:28)

¹² Kaldor (1992: 49-103)

¹³ Kaldor (1990: 94-95)

¹⁴ Kaldor (1990: 95-96)

¹⁵ Kaldor (1990:.96)

¹⁶ Kaldor (1990: 96)

¹⁷ Thompson (1978:26)

¹⁸ Thompson (1978: 19)

¹⁹ see for example collections such as New Left Review (ed.) (1984), Hogan (ed.) (1992), Bowker and Brown (eds.) (1993)

²⁰ Kaldor (1990: 36-44)

²¹ Kaldor (1990:37)

²² Cox (1993:36)

²³ Kaldor (1990:37-38)

²⁴ Cox (1993:44-50)

²⁵ Kaldor (1990:38-39)

²⁶ Kaldor (1990:41)

²⁷ Kaldor (1990:44)

²⁸ Kaldor (1990:42)

²⁹ Kaldor (1990:4-5)

³⁰ Kaldor (1990:5)

³¹ see Thompson, E. (1982)

³² in Dennis *et al* (1991:31)

³³ *op. cit.* Chomsky (1989: 26)

³⁴ McNair (1988); McLaughlin (1989); Dennis *et al* (1991)

³⁵ Chomsky (1989:p.28); Indeed, the enemy could reside within. Just after the Vietnam War, Chomsky wrote that:

American imperialism has suffered a stunning defeat...(but) the same forces are engaged in another war against a much less resilient enemy, the American people. Here, the prospects for success are much greater. The battleground is ideological, not military, (and)....the outcome will determine the course and character of new imperial ventures (1975:30)

³⁶ Dennis *et al* (1991)

³⁷ Zassoursky, Y. (1991); Mickiewicz, E. (1991)

³⁸ see Gerbner, G. (1991); Richter, A.G., (1991); Lukosiunas, M.A. (1991)

³⁹ McNair (1988: 80-82;95-103); the author notes that as the US version began to collapse and the Soviets finally presented their own more credible version, the western media suddenly lost interest in the story.

⁴⁰ McLaughlin (1989); when in Moscow for the superpower summit, President Reagan was scheduled to meet dissidents at the US Embassy. But the "New Mandarins" in the Kremlin announced a major news conference with the famous dissident, Andrei Sakharov, to take place a few days later, on 3 June 1989. At the same time, they set up an interview for the western news media with controversial Soviet politician, Boris Yeltsin. That evening, the main news bulletins were dominated by the dramatic attack Yeltsin made on conservative members of the Politburo. It was reported as an exciting, sensational departure from the normal conduct of Soviet politics, and as a story in its own right. Yeltsin, unknown to western publics at the time came across as a colourful personality with an interesting story to tell. His 'struggle for the people against the system' engrossed journalists and 'experts' on the Soviet Union alike. In marked contrast, Reagan's meeting with Soviet dissidents was only mentioned in a general round-up of the main summit events of the day.

⁴¹ *Newsnight* (BBC2, 22.30, 1.6.88)

⁴² ITN, (13.00, 1.6.88)

⁴³ All these press references are from 1.6.88 and cited in McLaughlin (1989: 66-67)

⁴⁴ Hallin and Mancini (1989)

⁴⁵ Chilton, P. (1982)

⁴⁶ *New Left Review* (ed.) (1982: xi)

⁴⁷ Wilson, A. (1982)

⁴⁸ Chilton (1982).

⁴⁹ In an interview with Aubrey, C., in Aubrey *et al* (1982:86)

⁵⁰ see Sabey, R. (1982); GUMG (1985; chapters 6, 8, 9, 10); McNair, B. (1988; chapter 8)

⁵¹ GUMG (1985:234)

⁵² GUMG (1895:215-229), McNair (1988:110-129)

⁵³ Chilton (1982:109)

⁵⁴ One of the most thorough analyses of human rights as a Cold War propaganda theme is Chomsky and Herman (1979). They look at the dichotomy in US media treatment of human rights in context with President Jimmy Carter's human rights crusade. They show how the reporting of human rights abuses varied according to the identity of the abused or abuser. In sum, human rights was held to be a set of principles honoured by the US and its allies and client states, but abused in the Soviet Union and its client states. Inconvenient anomalies to the framework, and there were legion, were simply whitewashed or not reported at all; see also Chomsky and Herman (1988).

⁵⁵ Reagan, though, was well known for his convenient bouts of amnesia. Journalists, Michael White and Alex Brummer, noted his failure to recall that he himself had denounced the accords when they were signed in 1975. "Summit Boost for Reagan as Senate Ratifies INF Treaty", *The Guardian*, 28.5.88

⁵⁶ BBC1 (13.00, 27.5.88)

⁵⁷ ITN (13.00, 27.5.88)

⁵⁸ BBC1 (18.00, 27.5.88)

⁵⁹ *Channel Four News* (27.5.88); see McLaughlin (1989:74-96)

⁶⁰ *Newsnight* (BBC2, 22.30, 31.5.88)

⁶¹ McLaughlin (1989:48-57)

⁶² Zassoursky, Y. (1991:18; the author does not offer full citations for these publications)

⁶³ *Channel Four News* (2.6.88); of course there was no suggestion here that the West would use public relations for similar deceptive strategies (McLaughlin, 1989:49).

⁶⁴ Chang, W. H. (1991)

⁶⁵ Kuhn (1970:92)

⁶⁶ Harvey (1982:88)

⁶⁷ Kuhn (1970:93)

CHAPTER THREE

The Cold War News Paradigm Under Pressure: History As News

In 1986, Michael Schudson argued that in dominant western journalism, history since world war two was simply assumed and required no explanation:

While a story on a development in science might reach several millennia back or a controversy over authenticating a poem by Shakespeare dig back four centuries, only two time dimensions - the human "lifetime" and the "postwar world" - are taken for granted and require no explanation in reporting on political affairs.¹

Furthermore, he predicted, editors who learned their profession reporting the immediate "post-war" era would be succeeded by journalists who began their careers in the 1960s and whose "...formative political experience was the hopefulness of the Kennedy administration, the civil rights movement, combat in Vietnam, or the antiwar movement".² As a result, the dominant interpretative framework "...will become less coherent and ideological pre-suppositions less commanding, because no consensus governs the understanding of the sixties" as one does the second world war. Schudson did, however, allow for a certain flexibility to this rule of thumb: "There is a history before 1929, obviously, but it is rarely a part of the cultural equipment of today's reporters, editors and publishers".³ The 'post-war' temporal framework, therefore, would only change through generations of journalists.

Schudson could not have foreseen it at the time but history was to become part of this "cultural equipment" within years rather than over generations. In 1986 the Cold War certainties were still in place. Three years later they were gone and the fall of the Berlin Wall seemed to symbolise their total collapse. In the first reports from the scene, journalists referred back to the origins of the Cold War and the Berlin Wall to place present events in some context. Yet there were major differences among the British news media in the narrative frameworks they employed to do this. Television news and the 'tabloid press' stayed within the cold war frame and they rarely ventured out of it to revise established perspectives. By contrast, the 'broadsheet' press embarked on a freer range. They recovered strands that had been frozen out of the dominant 'post-war' version: images from 1945 of Germany as the enemy and the Soviet Union as the ally that would have been unthinkable in Cold War propaganda. Some items referred back to the Versailles Treaty or to the Russian Revolution. Others evoked united Germany under Bismarck. One newspaper went as far back as the Holy Roman

Empire. It seemed that history was being reported as news on the night the Berlin Wall came down. This chapter is about how and why.

In Section Two, I analyse the temporal and thematic frameworks that the news media employed to retell the history of the Berlin Wall. This depended on the context and purpose of the news item and of the medium in which it occurred, although my primary concern here is with television news on the evening of 9 November 1989, immediately after the Berlin Wall was opened.⁴

Section Three looks at the use of another, more fragmented historical narrative: popular memory. Simple stories and memories of ordinary Berliners - about their response when the Berlin Wall was built, their attempts to escape, or the effects it had on their family and working lives - were mythologised in press and television news coverage. They were at once individual *and* collective acts of remembering.

Temporal and thematic frameworks for reporting the history of the Berlin Wall

Cormack (1992:50-52) looks at how the US and British press reported the opening of the Berlin Wall and argues that while American newspapers recounted the history of the Wall from the point of its construction in 1961, British newspapers referred back to its symbolic origins: Churchill's Iron Curtain speech, in Fulton, Missouri, 1946. However, Cormack's purpose is not to carry out a detailed or systematic analysis. He takes just four broadsheet dailies, two British and two American (*The Times*, *The Independent*, *The New York Times*, and *The Washington Post*) from 9 and 10 November, and points out the parameters of their temporal frameworks. The analysis in this chapter is more detailed and wide-ranging, taking in television news and fourteen British newspapers from 9 to 14 November. It reveals that while television news and the tabloid press operated within a 'post-war' framework, the broadsheet newspapers delved far back into the history of Europe as a means of making sense of the complex questions which arose from the opening of the Wall. The *Times*' leader on 11 November reached much further back than Churchill's Fulton speech to pinpoint when the Cold War started and who was to blame:

Though the Iron Curtain did not drop across divided Germany until 1945, and the Berlin Wall was not built until 1961, an Iron Curtain between the Soviet Union and the rest of Europe had existed since the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917. It was then that the Soviet State first began to wage the cold war against the West.⁵

When the Wall opened up, the prospect of German unity became a real possibility. Some British newspapers explained that present-day fears of this had been influenced by the relatively recent experience of Hitler's Third Reich rather than being informed by a much longer and more complicated historical view. Even before the Berlin Wall opened, Conor Cruise O'Brien observed the crisis in the GDR and warned of the possibility of a new German economic empire, a 'Fourth Reich' that would stretch from the west of Ireland to Vladivostok (*The Times*, 31.10.89).⁶ But after the Wall came down William Deedes argued that the O'Brien vista was based on an unreasonable fear. The post-world war two development of West Germany was encouraged with the earlier lessons of Versailles in mind:

I have long believed that the advent of Hitler and the Germany of 1933-45 owed less to the nature of the German people than to the Treaty of Versailles. Nobody reads much history now, but people ought, at this most important hour for the Germans, to remind themselves of what we did at Versailles and what then happened in Germany (*Daily Telegraph*, 13.11.89).

Such a perspective implied that the 'history of Germany' was inextricably woven into the history of Europe, its frontiers and rule constantly subject to upheaval and change. There was no deterministic impulse in the German psyche towards world domination. To illustrate this thesis, various items traced German history within a period ranging from the 9th Century with the formation of the Holy Roman Empire⁷ to the Napoleonic Wars and the Congress of Vienna, 1815⁸; from Bismarck's Second Reich, 1871, to World War 1 and the Treaty of Versailles, 1919, and ending with the Potsdam conference in 1945.⁹ For these newspapers, the opening of the Wall signified not the "end of history", as Fukuyama inferred at the time but the unfreezing of history.¹⁰ *The Guardian* warned that,

the removal of threat does not mean the removal of peril. And no one, glancing back over the miserable, milling history of Europe - *through centuries* - would, for a second, dream so (EMPHASIS IN THE ORIGINAL). (11.11.89)

The first television news bulletin to present full coverage of the opening of the Wall was the *Nine O'Clock News* (BBC1). In terms of structure and agenda, the dominant focus throughout was on the implications of the event for the two Germanies and the principal actors involved in the drama. There was only a brief glance at world reaction because that was still rather muted and vague.¹¹ The later bulletins, *News At Ten* (ITN) and *Newsnight* (BBC2), were able to present more organised and more detailed coverage of the event and its implications. The *News At Ten* featured items on reaction from Moscow and Washington. *Newsnight* opted for detailed interviews -

with only minimal reporting from the scene - in an effort to get first impression as to how the event would affect the West's historic approach to "a whole range of questions about the future of Germany and its relations with Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union".

Television news recounted the Wall's history strictly within the post-1945, Cold War temporal framework. The narratives in question all occurred in bulletins on 9 November. The *News at Ten* began with the foundations of the Wall at the end of Second World War and the beginnings of the Cold War. The *Nine O'Clock News* and *Newsnight* started with the construction of the Wall in 1961. The most significant differences arise in the thematic frameworks they employed. There were two distinct accounts. One worked clearly within the orthodox Cold War paradigm: the Wall symbolising the East-West conflict and demarcating superpower leadership roles in their spheres of influence. This was used by the *News at Ten* and *Newsnight*. The other complicated the story with an anomalous reference to the process of inter-German relations, *Ostpolitik*, that undermined the leadership roles of the superpowers. This was used by the *Nine O'Clock News*. The model of narratives illustrated in **Table 3.1**, below, highlights thematic *priorities*: thus, **Frameworks 1** and **2** are not mutually exclusive.

The *News At Ten* narrative operates within the wider temporal framework of 1945-1989 and begins tracing the symbolic origins of the Wall to the end of the second world war:

(BATTLE SCENES, BERLIN 1945) The foundations for the Communists' need for a wall were dug by Soviet troops as they overwhelmed the Nazis in Berlin in 1945.

This was a narrow version of what happened in Berlin in 1945. It omitted mention of the creeping distrust between the US, Britain and France over policy towards the Soviet Union, and their bitter wrangling over terms for a post-war settlement. Instead, it presented a simplistic picture of the Soviets overwhelming the Germans and digging in for a permanent stay. From then on, it appears the West can only defend itself from further encroachment on its territories by this new enemy. The reference to Churchill's Iron Curtain speech starts the history of the Cold War:

Reporter: Within a year, Churchill was putting its consequences into words (CHURCHILL, FULTON, 1946)

Churchill: From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an Iron Curtain has descended across the continent.¹²

Table 3.1

Narratives employed in news items retelling the history of the Berlin Wall, with reference to temporal and thematic frameworks, and to principal 'actors'.

Temporal Framework	Narrative Themes	Actors
<div>1. 1946-1989</div> <div>(1961-)</div>	<div>The Iron Curtain and the beginnings of Cold War</div> <div>Freedom and democracy</div> <div>Leadership in Europe</div> <div>The Berlin Wall as Cold War Symbol</div>	<div>Churchill's 'Iron Curtain' Speech, Fulton, Missouri</div> <div>The US President = USA</div> <div>The leaders of the West</div>
<div>2. 1961 - 1989</div> <div>(1970 -)</div> <div>(1985 -)</div>	<div>The Wall as monument to failure of Communism</div> <div>Inter-German relations, the <i>Ostpolitik</i></div> <div>Soviet & East European reform</div>	<div>The authoritarian states of USSR. & E. Europe</div> <div>Willie Brandt, the West German Chancellor</div> <div>Mikhail Gorbachev, the Soviet leader</div>

(BBC NEWS and ITN bulletins, 9-13 November 1989)

The narrative explains what the Iron Curtain represents and who is responsible for the post-war division of Europe with reference eastwards to the Soviet Union. The narrative moves from Fulton, Missouri 1946, to Berlin 1961, and the building of the Wall. This is presented as the fulfilment of a prophecy, cementing the symbols, the myths and the images that nurtured western propaganda at the height of the Cold War:

(CONSTRUCTION OF WALL) The concrete and barbed-wire wall sealed Germany's manifestation of the Iron Curtain, becoming overnight the reference-point of post-war history and the focus of both repression in the East...(PEOPLE ESCAPING THROUGH BARBED-WIRE FENCE)...and escape from it.

(MAN LEAPS FROM THIRD-FLOOR OF BUILDING IN SOVIET SECTOR INTO SAFETY NET ON STREET IN FRENCH SECTOR, BERLIN). Time after time, fleeing East Germans broke through...

(BORDER GUARD CARRIES A BODY AWAY) Time after time, they were gunned down in the attempt, fuelling the West's conviction that life beyond the Wall was dark indeed.

The journalist then evoked John F. Kennedy's speech to West Berliners on 26 June 1963, one which was designed to counter public belief there that the United States had abandoned the people:

Reporter: It was to the Wall that western leaders rallied in what they saw as the battle to contain communism.

Kennedy: Today, in the world of freedom, the proudest boast is, *Ich bin ein Berliner!*¹³

Throughout the Cold War no Western leader seriously wanted the Wall to come down as long as it helped buttress US hegemony and western solidarity. The reference to Kennedy's speech therefore underlines the extent to which the Wall served both the ideological and propagandist needs of the western alliance. It recalls the private western bluff that the Soviet Union would never take down the Wall thus making it safe to score propaganda points on the issue of its removal. When the Berlin Wall was opened, there were few references to the utility of the Berlin Wall for the West as an "Anti-Communist Propaganda Barrier". Indeed, ITN introduced its item thus:

Newscaster: For 28 years, (The Wall) has stood as a symbol of the East's determination to keep its people in, and the West's resolve to keep Communism confined behind it. (ITN, 22.00, 9.11.89)

Looking back on US foreign policy up to the declared "end of the Cold War", Noam Chomsky notes the ease with which the Reagan administration revived the rhetoric of Kennedy for very similar ends at the height of the New Cold War: to bolster US militarism abroad and distract from chronic socio-economic ills at home.¹⁴ Simon Tisdall also recalled Reagan's Berlin Wall speech. In a brief item for *The Guardian*, "America Loses One Of Its Favourite Hate Symbols", he argued that Reagan's rhetoric

was "familiar in American politics as apple pie".¹⁵ Just as familiar was the relish with which most of the western media swallowed the pie without pause for reflection.

The importance attached to the Kennedy speech also underscores the hegemonic leadership role of the US in Europe. The *News At Ten* item cuts from Kennedy to Ronald Reagan's visit to West Berlin in June 1987, a virtual re-enactment of Kennedy's visit in which he, "used it to make a prophetic challenge to the Soviets":

Reagan: General Secretary Gorbachev, if you seek peace and prosperity for the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe...come here to this gate! Mr Gorbachev, open this gate!

This editorial linkage supports the "great men of history" narrative of dominant, western historiography.¹⁶ It links past and present with images of American presidents in western Europe as they pay symbolic homage to freedom and democracy at the Berlin Wall, the Cold War frontline. This reinforces the dominant Atlanticist ideal underpinning NATO - the continuity of US hegemony in Europe (see **Photo Sequence 1**, below). *Newsnight*'s version follows an identical path. It, too, makes the strong visual link between Kennedy and Reagan (see **Photo Sequence 2**, below).

The *News At Ten* narrative then cuts to the image of the Berlin Wall being reinforced and then to a shot of Erich Honecker taking the salute at a military parade. As images of successive US Presidents at the Wall symbolise US leadership in Western Europe, this sequence links the image of an unyielding Wall with that of the unyielding East German leader flaunting military power and resisting calls for the Wall to come down. His fate, therefore, is intertwined with that of the Wall with an allusion to Humpty Dumpty:

Just 5 years ago they were still renewing it, still strengthening it, deaf to the possibility of it ever opening. It was Erich Honecker's Wall and his eventual down-fall: the man and his Wall set to decay in history together.

The film ends with shots of the Berlin Wall and Checkpoint Charlie at night, quiet, almost deserted except for security presence:

(CLOSE-UP OF GRAFFITI ON SECTION OF BERLIN WALL) Tonight, the Wall is assuming a new guise, one of endings and beginnings, (A POLICE VAN APPROACHES CHECKPOINT CHARLIE:) a guise that promises to deny the world an unpleasant certainty around which to plan the future. (ITN, 2200, 9.11.89)

In a similar vein, the Newsnight narrative recognises that the opening of the Wall could be an 'historic turning-point' for Germans reminds us nonetheless that:

(SECTION OF WALL) However intense the pressure from the West (GRAFFITI ON WALL) and however intense the emotion in Germany, (GDR CHECKPOINT) the Wall has always remained. (PEOPLE WALKING ALONG THE WALL ON WESTERN SIDE) Even tonight, it's still there and the East German regime says it's not coming down.
(*Newsnight*, BBC2, 9.11.89)

ITN's version of the Wall's history follows the paradigm logic by reinforcing the dominant images and assumptions which have informed Western propaganda during the Cold War. It traces historical progress and development in Europe along a continuous line of US hegemony (see Photo Sequence 1 below).

Photo Sequence 1: ITN, 22.00, 9.11.89

The Berlin Wall as focus of Western leadership in the Cold War



"Within a year, Churchill was putting its consequences into words"



"It was to the Wall that western leaders rallied in what they saw as the battle to contain communism"



"Reagan used it to make a prophetic challenge to the Soviets"



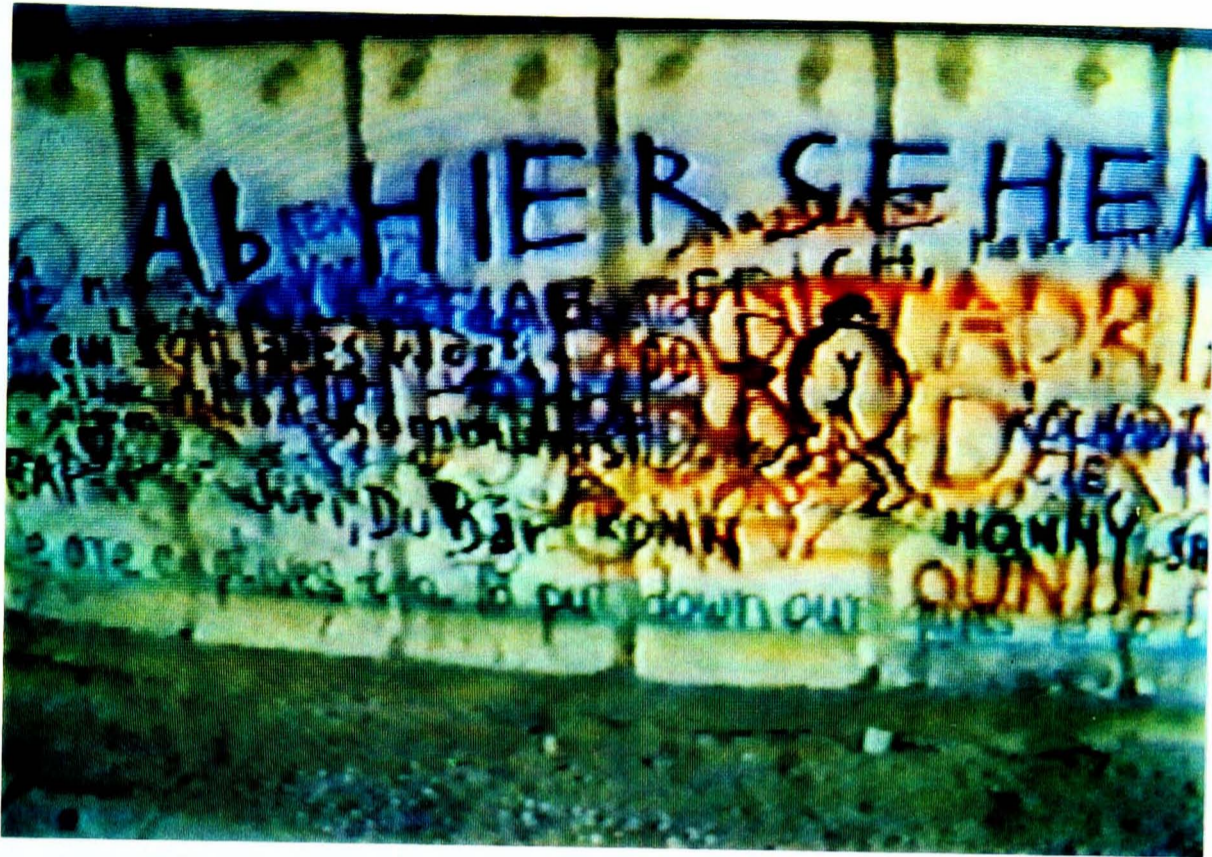
"It was Erich Honecker's Wall and his eventual downfall: the man and his Wall set to decay in history together."

Photo Sequence 2: *Newsnight*, BBC2, 22.30, 9.11.89

The Berlin Wall as focus of Western leadership in the Cold War



"For Western leaders from John Kennedy on the Wall has been a symbol of the ruthlessness and, at the same time, the failure of communism, and it's provoked a series of rallying cries"



"However intense the pressure from the West...the Wall has always remained. Even tonight, it's still there and the East German regime says it's not coming down"

The version on the *Nine O'Clock News* featured two troublesome anomalies. Like *Newsnight*, it opens within Framework 2 with the construction of the Wall. It employs familiar Cold War images to convey the meaning of the Wall as a symbol of Communist repression and the division of Germany and Europe:

(PHOTO, EAST GERMAN SOLDIER DEFECTS BY LEAPING OVER BARBED-WIRE BARRIER TO THE WEST) The Wall became an horrific symbol of the division of Europe. In the years that followed, (PHOTO, TWO PEOPLE CLIMBING OVER BARBED-WIRE FENCE) 175 East Germans died trying to escape across the Wall: (PHOTO, A BODY LIES IN TRENCH, TANGLED IN BARBED-WIRE) some were killed by machine-gun, some by mines.

It has already been shown how ITN's version reinforces the theme of US leadership in Europe by making a link between Kennedy and Reagan with reference to their speeches at the Wall. The *Nine O'Clock News* also refers to Kennedy's speech and makes a similar link, in this case with George Bush's visit to West Germany in 1989.

However this is interrupted by some troublesome references. The first was to Willy Brandt and his role in encouraging inter-German dialogue through the *Ostpolitik* of the early 1970s:

Willy Brandt, who took over as the West German Chancellor in the 1970s, *tried a new tack. He made friends in the Eastern bloc* in the hope that that would encourage freer movement for East Germans. The policy worked to a degree.

(BBC1, 21.00, 9.11.89)

The treaties and agreements facilitated by the *Ostpolitik* received extensive publicity, not least because they culminated with the Basic Treaty of 1972 which gave East Germany a level of recognition just short of official. Important, too, was the wide range of economic, political, and cultural links which they promised to forge with East Germany and other East European countries, especially the Soviet Union and Poland. In contrast with NATO's propaganda of resistance, the German *Ostpolitik* was a way round the Berlin Wall by other means than physical. It marked the beginnings of more "normalised" relations between the two countries and a degree of independence in foreign policy-making, despite the misgivings of their respective superpower allies.¹⁷

The narrative then cuts to images of Hungary opening its borders with the West:

But it was not until this year that things really changed when Hungary decided to cut down its own barrier against the West

These references to the *Ostpolitik* and to the unilateral move by Hungary mark an important break with the paradigm logic in that it undermines the notion of US hegemony in Europe. The *Ostpolitik* presents a picture of German independence and initiative which sits in awkward juxtaposition with the mythic image of President Kennedy at the Wall, boosting the morale of the dispirited and frightened people of Berlin. The reference to Hungary's new openness also undermines the notion that the changes in Eastern Europe were entirely influenced by the West. Therefore they appear somewhat anomalous in juxtaposition with the next image: shots of President George Bush in Bonn, 1989, calling on Gorbachev to tear down the Wall (see **Photo Sequence 3**, below)

President Bush's speech followed a difficult NATO summit in May. Opinion was divided over West Germany's resistance to modernisation of short-range nuclear missiles and their proposed deployment on West German soil. At the same time, Mikhail Gorbachev announced substantial unilateral cuts in conventional forces in Eastern Europe. It was a perfectly timed intervention for it undermined the NATO

argument that Soviet superiority in this area could only be compensated for by modernisation in NATO's nuclear "battlefield" weapons. The official response from the Bush administration was to portray Gorbachev's diplomacy as propaganda, designed to divide the western alliance at a difficult time. It is the same story. A new US president and a new controversy, perhaps, but the same rhetoric with the Wall as the symbolic backdrop:

Reporter: President Bush welcomed the new liberalism [in Eastern Europe] but he insisted that the Wall itself must come down.

Bush: Nowhere is the division between East and West seen more clearly than in Berlin. There, this brutal Wall cuts neighbour from neighbour, brother from brother....and stands as a monument to the failure of Communism. It must come down!

It is at this point in the narrative that the second anomaly occurs. Whereas ITN cuts from Reagan at the Wall to pictures of it being strengthened, this version cuts from Bush challenging Gorbachev to tear it down to Gorbachev hinting that it might not last much longer. ITN reinforced its juxtaposition with images of a hardline East German leader reviewing a military parade. By contrast, the BBC item preferred an image of the Soviet leader on his state visit to West Germany in June 1989: hugging a West German woman as she offers him a small gift (see **Photo Sequence 3**, below).¹⁸

The version of the Wall's history on the *Nine O'Clock News* interrupts the paradigm logic with images of inter-German relations and independence from the superpowers. It also prefers the image of reform communism and "New Thinking" (Gorbachev) to that of "hardline" communist resistance (Honecker). *Newsnight's* version features only indirect reference to the role of the Soviet leader in the bringing about the Wall's demise. A journalist from West Berlin, Jochen Werbke, recalls the days when the Wall was built and contrasts the mood in Berlin then with that at present:

Werbke: Nobody had expected that all these developments are going on that fast but we have the feeling that...after Gorbachev was in West Germany, after he was in (GDR) at the time of the 40th anniversary, that there is something going on to heal the division of Europe.

This, however, does not disrupt the paradigm in such a dramatic way as we have seen in the *Nine O'Clock News* because, as with ITN, *Newsnight* tells the story of the Wall through the images, words, and actions of successive US leaders without contradiction.

Photo Sequence 3: BBC1, 21.00, 9.11.89

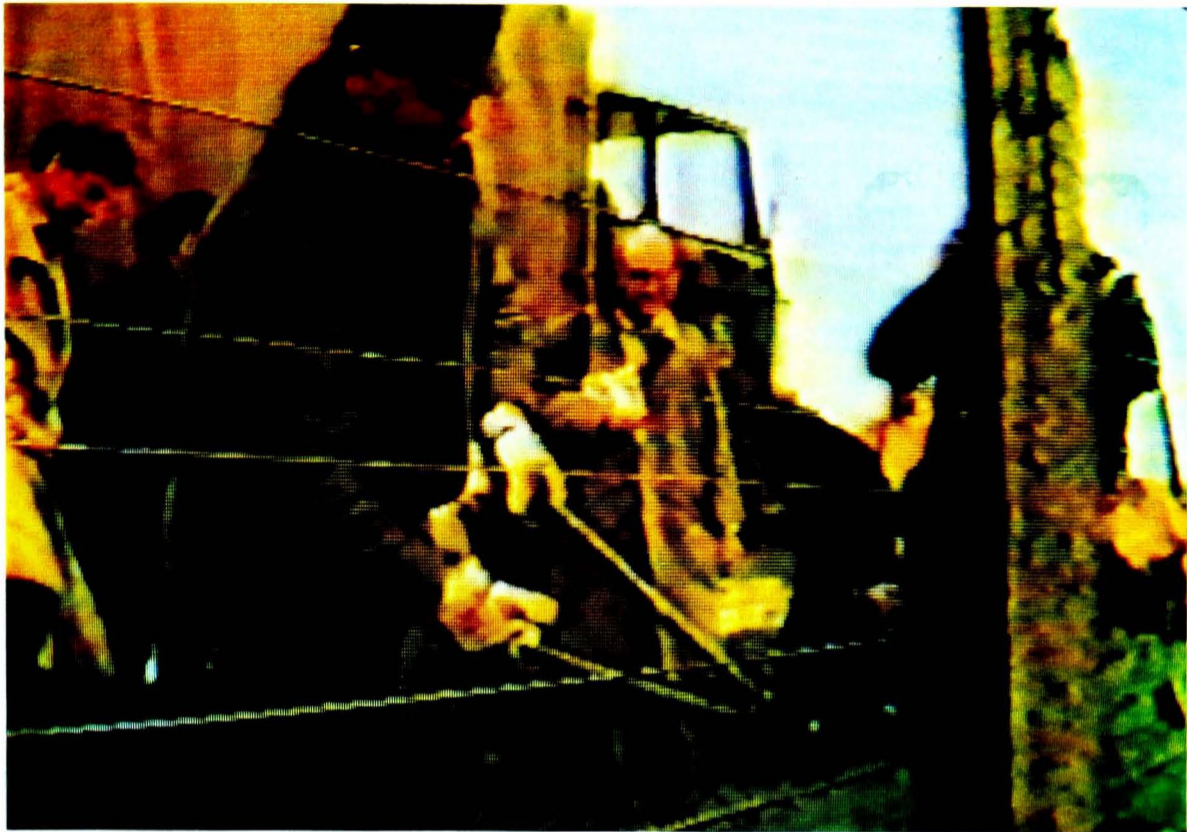
The Berlin Wall as focus of Western leadership in the Cold War: interrupting the narrative



"President Kennedy visited West Berlin...to rally morale"



"Willy Brandt...tried a new tack. He made friends in the Eastern bloc..."



"But it was not until this year that things really changed when Hungary decided to cut down its own barrier against the West"



"In June, President Bush welcomed the new liberalism...but he insisted that the Wall itself must come down".

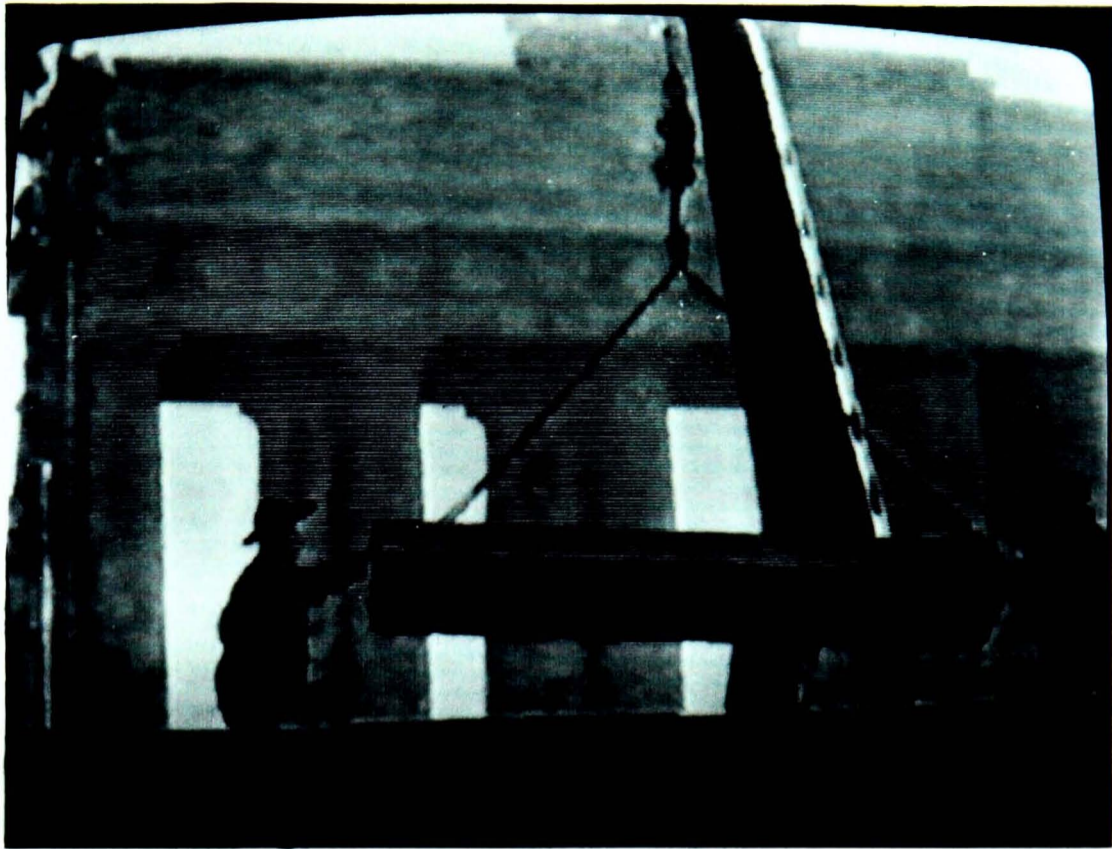


"Just two weeks later, Mr Gorbachev himself was in Bonn and he, too, hinted that the Wall might not be eternal"

On 10 November, the *One O'Clock News* on BBC was completely dominated by news from Berlin and it closed by linking past and present with an extraordinary sequence of images. The first part consists of seven black and white photographs (or film stills). These visual slices of the Wall's history are linked by *the dissolve*, a formal device which, in conventional film and television grammar, usually signifies continuity through the passing of time. Alternatively, and more probably in the context of recounting history, it could be interpreted as signifying a selective memory. The second part of the sequence consists of colour news film of the scenes of jubilation in Berlin the previous night. In total the sequence lasts for one minute and fifteen seconds. The following analysis will refer to the narrative model outlined in **Table 3.1'** above.

The first part of the sequence (**Shots 1-4**) works within **Framework 2**. In its still, black and white photography, it represents the past. The journalist-narrator speaks slowly and gravely, pausing to reflect as each photograph dissolves into another. This, we are being told, is the human cost of the Wall: those who died trying to escape are all martyrs and witnesses to the "failure of communism"¹⁹:

Photo Sequence 4: BBC1, 13.00, 10.11.89



"a symbol and a challenge to those who could not and would not accept that division..."



"...one of the hundreds of thousands who made it to the other side..."

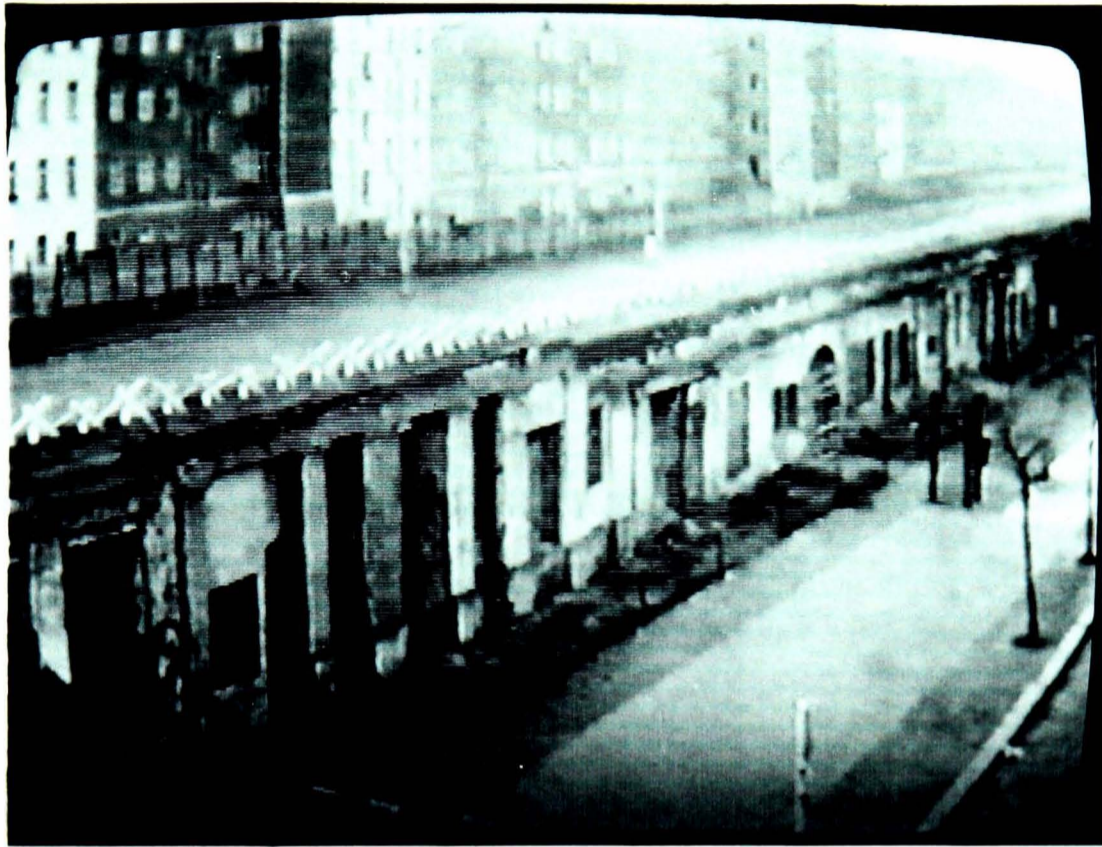


"Many others died in the attempt. To the West, their deaths represented..."

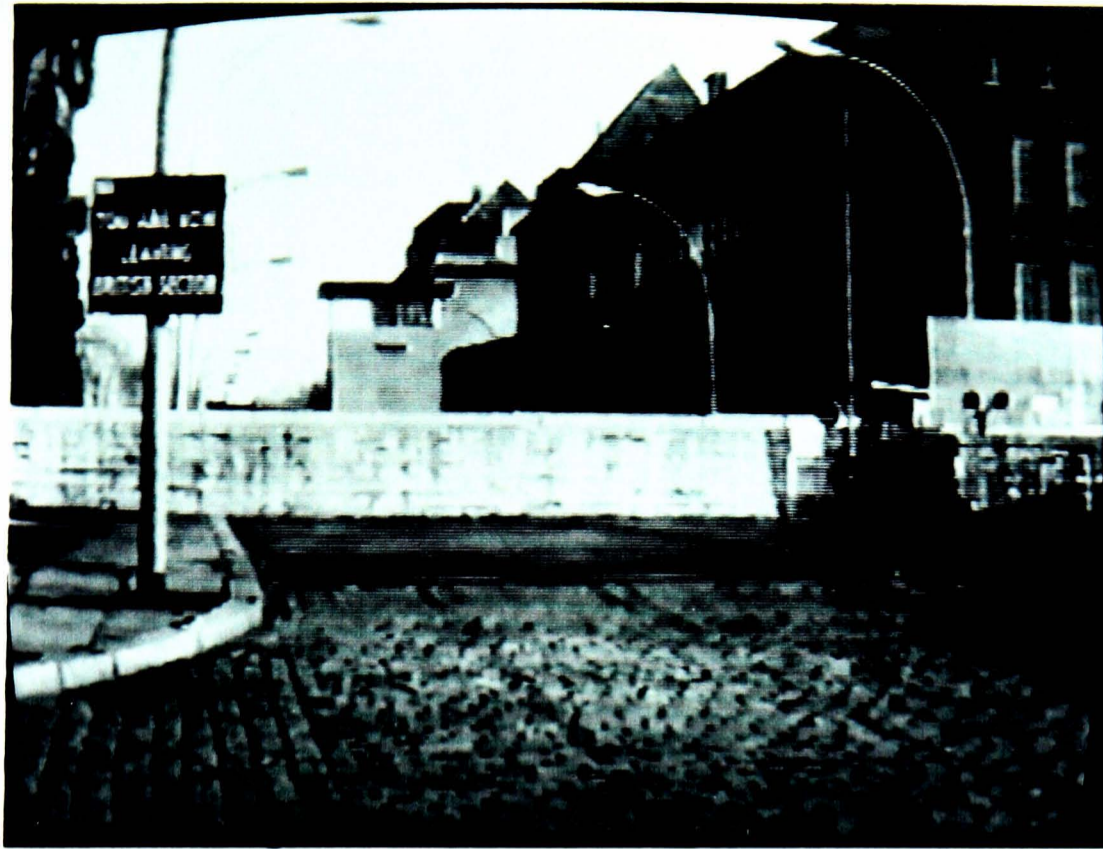


"...the ultimate failure and the ultimate condemnation of the Communist system"

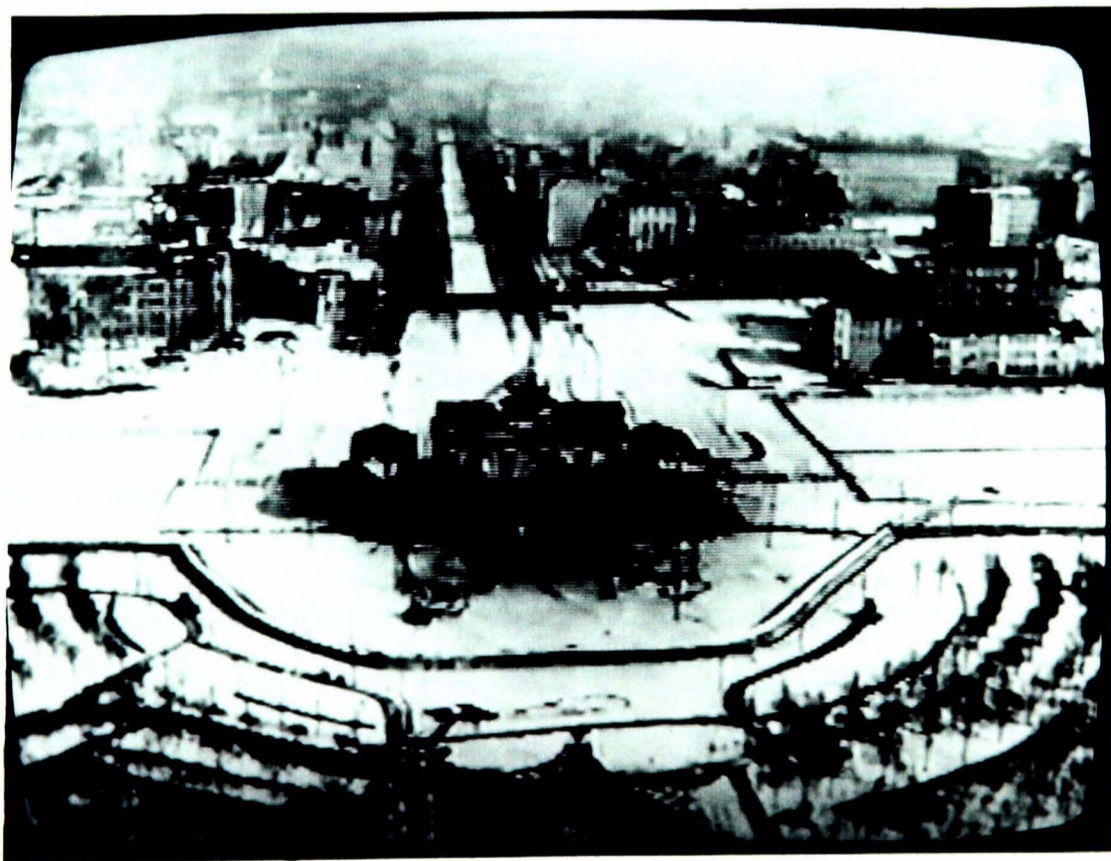
The narrative then moves into **Framework 1** (Shots 5-7) and defines the Wall's meaning in context with East-West relations - as *the* symbol of the division and confrontation of the Cold War:



"The Wall was the physical manifestation of what Churchill had called, more than 20 years earlier..."



"...the Iron Curtain, descended across the continent"



"The Brandenburg Gate became the crossing-point between East and West, a crossing which until last night was forbidden to so many millions"



The shot above is important in that it links these representations of past with images of the present. The story is thus brought to a definitive close by way of a 'seamless', therefore 'unproblematic', link with the past. The last segment moves back into **Framework 2** with images of the celebrations round the Berlin Wall just after it was opened.

So far, I have illustrated how the news retold the Wall's history through clearly discernible narrative passages. However this was not the whole extent of historical references. As I will show in the next section, news reports featured other more fragmented historical references to make sense of the incredible events taking place in Berlin, particularly the narratives of popular memory.

The Wall in popular memory: remembering and remembrance

On BBC *Newsnight*, two politicians, key political players in Britain's role in the old Cold War drama, recalled how they came to be in Berlin at a previous, critical point in the city's history. They connect their memories of Berlin in the past with their hopes for the future:

Heath: I was here a fortnight before the war broke out in 1939...I was here just after the Wall was built, in 1962, and coming back now it's a tremendous change...But the problems are there and now we have to start on the process of solving the problems.

Healey: I,...like Ted,...was here before the war, and I was here after the war during the first blockade and then the second blockade, and to me it's the end of an epoch. It's the end of the post-war age and the beginning of a new age.

Throughout coverage, there were many examples of politicians, journalists and 'ordinary people' standing back from the Wall and from the party in Berlin, and remembering. They relived the day the Wall went up with memories of where they were, what they were doing, and how they reacted. These memories made for good stories but they should not be dismissed as trivial 'human interest'. Instead, they form an integral part of a meta-narrative, a particular story of the Wall.

Stories of personal recollection were more common in newspapers than on television news. Some reveal how effective and deep-rooted Cold War ideology has been in the collective memory, shaping our assumptions about the divisions between East and West, between Communism and Capitalism, or persuading us that justice and right has always dwelt West of the Berlin Wall. *Halliday et al* argue that these personal testimonies have a mythological function, one of ideological catharsis and edification.²⁰

Reporting the beginnings of the Wall: journalists remember

A common recollection among journalists who worked in Berlin at the time was the prevailing mood of fatalism which followed the decision to build the Wall. Leslie Collit remarked on how the act of standing at the Wall amid the scenes of jubilation made his memories of the city in 1961 seem all the more poignant. He described the experience as "like seeing a 28 year-old film run backwards".²¹ W.L. Leutkens was Bonn correspondent for the *FT* from 1958 to 1969. He remarked that "The worst thing about the Berlin Wall and all that went with it was how easy it was to accept, however reluctantly".²² The Berlin correspondent for *NDR*, West German radio, told *Newsnight* about the mood in the city when the Wall went up, and about the widespread sense of betrayal among the people :

Werbke: We thought, "This is the end of it". We expected, of course, the Western allies to do something about it but, for political or other reasons, they didn't...but suddenly the city was divided...
(*Newsnight*, BBC2, 9.11.89)

Adam Kellet-Long of *Reuters*, recalled how he reported the beginnings of the Berlin Wall in 1961. He described the first moments in the style of a Cold War thriller:

A red torch flickered under the Brandenburg Gate as I drove down a deserted *Unter den Linden* towards the main crossing point between East and West Berlin in the early hours of Aug 13, 1961. It was a border policeman waving me down. He strolled casually over and declared : "I'm afraid you cannot go any further. The border is closed".

These were momentous words in Europe's post-war history. [...] I returned to the office...and sat down at the teleprinter to file a message to head office in London : "The East-West Berlin border was closed early today".

It was a world scoop by eight minutes.²³

Breaking out: East German stories of escape and freedom

The effect of the sudden sealing of the border on the city and its people is a familiar theme in Cold War folklore. In the years since then, the western news media have relished and recycled those stories of families separated, of love across the divide, of alienation between West Berliners ("Wessies") and East Berliners ("Ossies"), and of those heroic escapes and tragic near-escapes across the barbed wire and minefields. The act of recovering them from the taken-for-granted past is like excavating the collective memory : the impact lies in the sudden surprise of revelation.

The *Daily Telegraph* (11.11.89) told the 'fly-on-the-wall' story of two East Berliners, Juergen Junike and his son Alf, who visit West Berlin. It is a story of memory, ritual, and recognition. Father and son symbolise the two generations of Berliners affected by the divisions imposed by the Wall. The narrative conveys some idea about the kind of sacrifice the old was prepared to make for the new. Juergen recalls,

how the birth of his first child stopped him leaving in 1961. The baby was due on August 13, the day work began on the Wall. But it was two days late. By then, the Wall was up.

Through the words and actions of the two characters, the narrative constructs a certain picture of East Berliners - thus, by extension, East Germans or all East Europeans. They are seen as people who have lived in fear, over-awed by authority, paranoid about security, guilty about everything. These are all clues as to the long-term effects of living for twenty-eight years behind the Wall. As they move through the various barriers and passport control points, father and son sit nervously, waiting to be caught for being in the West - somewhere they still think they should not be. But like all East Germans that day, they get through with little problem. The son is overcome by this strange new sense of freedom - "I can't take it. We're speeding through West Berlin now" - and he still checks his visa stamps to see if he is allowed

to be there in the first place. When they cross into West Berlin and see what they only ever heard about, their reaction seems melodramatic:

"So this is what West Berliners look like!" called his son, as the Trabant edged through the crowds.

"It has been so long", Mr. Junike sighed. Tears rolled from his eyes.

"I can't take it in, it is driving me mad," his son cried out.

The report leaves Juergen and his son as they drive round a suburb of West Berlin trying to find the home of a relative. All along, Juergen swears to himself that he recognises this place, yet he gets hopelessly lost. These responses are presented as the emotions and confusion of long-term prisoners who are suddenly released. They get over-emotional and excited about the ordinary, the mundane. Their reactions accentuate everything that is different about 'them over there' from 'us over here'. Their story is like that of thousands of other East Europeans as they take up their new freedom to come to the West. They are the strangers, not us. The Iron Curtain was coming down but the barriers it represented for over forty years remained.

Stories by or about ordinary people who tried to *escape* over the Berlin Wall, and their fate in doing so, have occupied an important place in the Wall's mythology and draw from a plentiful reserve of cultural themes. *The Great Escape*, *Colditz*, *Papillon*, or *The Birdman of Alcatraz*, are movies which work around very different themes from that of the 'long-term prisoner released', referred to above. They are about people who refuse to accept their imprisonment and plan their escape against the odds, aware that 'they might not get out alive'. The excitement of the story is provided by the ingenuity of 'the plan' and the efforts to conceal it from the authorities - an essential focus of evil in the *genre*, personified by 'nasty Nazis' or 'evil prison governors'. Our emotional involvement is encouraged through identification with the hero (rarely a heroine). Everyone can share in his humanity, his death-defying will to be free and live 'happy ever-after'. Alternatively, as in *The Great Escape* the escape movie might end in tragedy with the death or re-capture of the hero just minutes away from freedom, so highlighting the ultimate evil of the regime. But isn't this Hollywood entertainment rather than hard news values? Maybe. But as told in the newspapers and on television news, some of the 'true' escape stories from the days of the Berlin Wall echo similar universal themes and rely on the same set of literary values.

The *Sun* saluted,

THE BRAVE WHO MADE IT - Great escapes by balloon and high-wire (10.11.89).

In an item for the *Daily Telegraph*, Clive Freeman summoned up images from Hollywood escape movies and Olympic games as he remembered how hundreds of people successfully made it across the Wall:

Many have reached freedom safely. They have sprinted, scrambled and swum across, often under fire.

Some tunnelled their way out. Others used trucks as battering rams to beat the Berlin Wall.

Some made it out by light aircraft.

Two enterprising East Germans winched their way across the Wall on a cable slung between rooftops. (11.11.89)

These images and themes are certainly evident from a detailed reading of two news items. Both occurred on 13 November - one on BBC News (Ben Brown) and the other in the *Daily Mail* (Anna Pukas).

For BBC News, Ben Brown reported that,

East Germans, now free to cross the Berlin Wall, are also free to learn about its history for the first time. Many head straight to the Checkpoint Charlie Museum which chronicles the exploits of those who risked everything to get to one side of this city to the other. (BBC1, 13.00 & 18.00, 13.11.89)

Once in Checkpoint Charlie Museum, visitors would see one of the most famous photographs from the days when the Wall was being built. It is of an East German border-guard leaping over a barbed-wire barricade to defect to the West. The *Daily Mail* told the story behind the photograph. The reporter identified the man and returned with him to the spot where he made the fateful jump. The original photograph is printed alongside one showing him re-enact his escape.

Conrad Schumann had lived the moment in his memory again and again. It was an instant frozen, not only for him, but in the mind of every person with any shred of awareness who was alive 28 years and 90 days ago.

The memory is relived over and over and it is shared with "every person...who was alive". It is the exact memory of people who literally count the days: "28 years and 90 days". An eye-witness, Herr Fritz Busse, watched the dramatic escape from the balcony of his home on Bernauerstrasse. The *Mail* set up a meeting between the two men:

Mr Busse...clasped Schumann's hand and said, "I knew you were going to do it. You were nervous, pacing up and down, looking very agitated. I just knew you would jump and I willed you to have enough courage."²⁴

However, the most pertinent question to arise from this story is whether or not the *Daily Mail* journalist was simply imposing her own rhetoric, moulding Schumann's recollections to fit within her interpretative framework? That is, was she using him to say something about the people of East Berlin? The language she used suggest that she was. Take her view of what the photograph of Schumann's escape symbolised and note the deliberate mythic dimension in her use of the capital 'M' for 'Man':

The pictures of the momentous leap encapsulated for the free world in a single action the determination of Man to be free.

The story assumed some surreal elements when Schumann relived the moment he jumped. He told how "...there was suddenly a police car waiting to take me away. I don't know how it got there. It had not been there a minute before. Someone must have warned them".

Then, another fortuitous apparition on the scene. Two photographers (and, not mentioned in this item, a film cameraman), vied to photograph the momentous moment in history they weren't supposed to know would happen. But they both took a photograph and ended up fighting over the developing rights. Amazingly, for a man who the reporter said had "just seconds before being bundled into the police car", Conrad Schumann answered their call to come and settle the dispute. So it was that this "thin-faced Communist border guard, aged 19, ...a shepherd's son from a village near Dresden" showed vivid awareness of his place in history and the onerous responsibility attached to it:

"But even in those confused moments, I knew the enormity of what had just happened. I told them, 'What you have just seen is now part of history and no individual has a claim on history. Such moments belong to everyone'."

It is difficult not to conclude that Schumann was used by the reporter as a ghost character to speak her words and to convey her sentiments as a means of constructing a universal story about escape across the Wall. Otherwise, the amazing coincidences (the police car and the photographers arriving at the very moment Schumann jumps) and the incongruous characterisation (frightened young soldier as altruistic philosopher) make the story seem rather implausible.

The BBC item also used one character to tell its escape story. Domenico Sesta was introduced as an escapee who made it to West Berlin. He was at once depicted as a man to be trusted: "a prosperous building consultant". Not only did he escape and lead a successful new life but he also used his talent and ingenuity to help others do likewise:

Twenty-seven years ago, he was building a tunnel underneath the Berlin Wall, an extraordinary escape route from East to West. It took 5 months to dig it. It was 140 yards long and it was ingenious. Twenty-six refugees crawled through to emerge into a new life.

In both language and plot, the story holds a wider significance in Cold War mythology:

But (Domenico) cannot forget that this Wall has claimed its victims. And those like (him) who risked their lives and survived will always remember those who did not. (BBC 1, 13.00, 13.11.89)

In a similar way, the *Daily Mail's* story of Conrad Schumann moved from an individual act of *remembering* towards a collective act of *remembrance* :

(Schumann) stopped to watch French troops sawing down an iron gate, the last obstacle in clearing a 20ft gap in the Wall. The gate was covered in crosses and black wreaths, each commemorating someone who died trying to make the same crossing. Schumann could watch only for a few minutes before tears again filled his eyes. He was thinking of how he could have been the one to pull the trigger on those desperate souls.

To honour those who died trying to cross the Wall is to remember not only who they were but what they died for. An agency story about one of these people, Peter Fechter, is taken up by the *Glasgow Evening Times* (13.11.89) and *The Daily Mail* (14.11.89). As in the story of Conrad Schumann, the over-arching symbolism is more apparent than biographical detail:

Peter Fechter was 18 when he was gunned down by East German border guards...and left to die...

His agonising ordeal was a symbolism of the cruelty of the Berlin Wall and the people who guarded the sinister barrier.

The *Daily Mail* version gives the tragedy an added dimension, highlighting the hidden effects of these deaths on the wider community:

His death broke his father's heart, and seven weeks after burying her son, Frau Fechter attended her husband's funeral.

Both versions of the story put Fechter's death into context with all people killed trying to cross the Wall in its 28-year existence. The version in the *Mail* ends by noting that the last death occurred only seven months previously, in February 1989. By doing so, it brings the deadly legacy of the Wall into the sharp focus of recent memory amid the celebrations that weekend. Indeed, it was a weekend that coincided with Remembrance Sunday and this was by no means lost on newspaper and television journalists :

The dramatic and historic events taking place in Germany and eastern Europe lent an added poignancy to the annual Remembrance Sunday service at the Cenotaph in London yesterday (*The Times*, 13.11.89).

The historic events in Germany gave an added dimension to the Service of Remembrance at the Cenotaph (*The Telegraph*, 13.11.89)

John Young (*The Times*) and Maev Kennedy (*The Guardian*) canvassed the views of war veterans on what was happening in East Germany. Their items demonstrate the power of oral history as a method of recovering aspects of the past which in some ways contradicts the accepted version. What is most apparent about the majority of views expressed in these items is not hatred and fear of the Soviet Union, the Cold War enemy, or delight at seeing the Wall come down, but fear and apprehension about the re-emergence of a united Germany:

"I think everyone should be free," ...a veteran of the Italian campaign said. " I don't think we will ever go back to the situation we saw in pre-war Germany. I think Russia and the east European countries are coming round to our way of thinking."

Mr Fred Whybrow,who landed in Normandy on D-Day, said, "I think it's good that the barriers are coming down, but I have no wish to see a united Germany with the same aspirations as it had between the two wars. We have seen it at first hand and I don't want to see a repetition. The whole idea of the division of Germany was to prevent it ever happening again."

(*The Times*, 13.11.89)

The Arnhem veteran saw no good news, only a threat to everything he had fought for, in the torrent of people flowing through the Berlin Wall.

"Half of them are KGB, and I wouldn't trust the other half," he said bitterly.

"I was in the war," the poppy-seller said to explain why he could not go along with the media insistence that this was a good news story.

(The Guardian, 13.11.89)

This perspective was largely absent from television news references to Remembrance Sunday and the events in Berlin. In Berlin or at the Cenotaph, in London, the events of the past week had a highly charged relevance. ITN's lunchtime bulletin that day (13.00, 12.11.89) featured two items which made the ironic link between celebration of the end of the Cold War and remembrance of the horrors of world war two. In the first item, the second world war is framed as the war that divided Germany and Berlin. With the opening of the Berlin Wall, a symbol of that division, the people can come together at last and remember those who died during the war. By doing so, they can begin to come to terms with a part of their history which they have never been allowed to forget. The report ends with pictures of a service in a Berlin church where,

they also remembered the dead of the last war. The war had left this city divided. Today, Berliners believe the old divisions can be forgotten.

The next item in the bulletin begins at the Cenotaph in London. Remembrance Day in Britain is marked by an annual ritual with a powerful ideological function: it reminds people of the freedoms they take for granted and for which a "million Britons died". That it coincided in 1989 made it all the more poignant:

After a week when the world has been talking about freedom, here, and throughout Britain, people remembered those who gave their lives for freedom. It's 75 years since the start of the Great War, 50 years since the start of World War Two. A million Britons died. (ITN, 13.00, 12.11.89)

Both items interpreted Remembrance as a national rather than international ritual of remembrance and reconciliation. There is no sense of connectedness between the two, rather an historical, ideological and cultural blindspot that avoids the history of enmity between the two countries. Awkward questions go begging: 'Who fought in the Great War?', 'Who fought in World War Two?', 'Who was the enemy in both conflicts?'

BBC News appeared to get away from the problem by placing this nationalist ritual in context with similar rituals all over the world:

Newsreader: Services of Remembrance for those killed in wars and conflicts since the first World War *have been held around the world...*

Reporter: ...the act of Remembrance for the nation's war dead went ahead this year paralleled by the developments in Berlin that many hope may close a chapter in the history of the great conflicts. (BBC1, 18.25, 12.11.89)

Reports also chose to draw an ironic contrast between Remembrance and celebration:

At 11 minutes past 11, on the 11th day of the 11th month, when all of Europe remembers this century's wars, Germans drink champagne on what was no-man's land as one of the last legacies of the second world war is dismantled. It's a day a man can tell his son (FILM, MAN AND BOY), "This was the Berlin Wall!" (BBC1, 21.00, 11.11.89)

The reference to father and son is a familiar symbolic link, the two representing the old and new generations. The old points to what is becoming history so that the new will remember. This construct is repeated the following day, Remembrance Sunday:

There were those who'd never remember a divided city (FILM, CHILDREN) and those who'd never forget (ELDERLY WOMAN). So, once again, the centre of Berlin has been reunited in a flood of people, memories, and tears. (BBC1, 18.20, 12.11.89)

Conclusion

The fall of the Berlin Wall marked a critical moment when television news could have revised the orthodox history of the events leading to its construction. Instead, they largely reaffirmed the orthodox account, reinforcing rather than questioning the old assumptions and certainties of the Cold War. A year after the Wall came down, the Cold War was declared over and Germany was reunited yet the US leadership role in Europe persisted as a powerful theme. Ronald Reagan visited Berlin on 12 September 1990, the same day the Four Plus Two met in Moscow to sign the Treaty on Germany allowing German reunification. For ITN, his visit evoked his 1987 speech but it also served as a symbolic seal on imminent German reunification:

In Berlin today, the former US President Ronald Reagan who, three years ago, called on the Soviets to tear down the Wall returned to the place where he made that speech. He could not have known then that in such a short space of time he would be walking through the Brandenburg Gate in what will be a united Germany. (ITN, 13.00, 12.9.90)

Less than four years later, the US leadership role was under fire over indecision and bungling in crises such as Bosnia, Somalia, Rwanda and, most immediately, Haiti. President Bill Clinton paid a visit to Berlin and played on the symbolism of the city's recent past to reassert his Kennedy heritage and the US's role in the world. ITN linked his visit with Kennedy and Reagan before him within an explicit 'US leadership' framework:

Reporter: US-German relations are exceptionally good. President Clinton may hope his speech this morning may usurp Kennedy in the affections of the German people.

Kennedy: In the world of freedom, the proudest boast is "Ich bin ein Berliner!".

Reporter: President Reagan stood on the west side of the Brandenburg Gate and called for German unity. Today one of his successors made an historic journey through that Gate from the old west side to the east. (ITN, 12.30, 12.7.94)

The BBC reported on "a speech at the Brandenburg Gate that consciously echoed John Kennedy at the height of the Cold War", in which Clinton "spoke in German to celebrate the collapse of the Berlin Wall and the new relationship between a united Germany and America". The reporter watched the President as he walked through the Brandenburg Gate with Chancellor Kohl:

Reporter: And as the historic steps were taken, memories were evoked of Mr Clinton's young Democratic presidential predecessor who visited this divided city 31 years ago:

Kennedy: As a free man, I take pride in the words "Ich bin ein Berliner!"

Reporter: Speaking to 1994 Berliners, President Clinton was able to pick up the linguistic lead but put it in a modern context.

Clinton: *Berlin ist frei!* Berlin is free! (BBC1, 21.00, 12.7.94)

However, as shown in my analysis of the British press and the *Nine O'Clock News* item, the framework is by no means inviolable. German unity and the continuing momentum towards some form of economic and political union in Europe will put under increasing pressure. Time will tell if and when the framework shifts to 'German leadership in Europe'.

In Chapter Four, I analyse the reporting of a 'typical' Cold War news story: the exodus of East German 'refugees' to West Germany. I look at the story from its beginnings in the Summer of 1989, through the mounting crisis inside the GDR, and to the critical moment on 9 November when the East German government took the shock decision to open the Wall. I show how this one action and its consequences transforms a story that was good news for the West to one that is bad news.

Notes

1 Schudson (1986 : 87)

2 There are a few problems with this. Schudson's recollections of the 1960s seem more grounded in myth than in history. Therefore, they provide a shaky reference point with which to make predictions about how a maturing generation of journalists will interpret world events. He forgets that the radical politics of the 1960s were always marginal and were met with a concerted reactionary backlash from the centre. The less challenging, and more innocuous, features of "the hippy culture" have been appropriated by liberalism. Schudson also confuses the successes of the civil rights movement in effecting political change with success in gaining wide popular acceptance, which has been less startling. The end of the Vietnam War was brought about less by the antiwar movement and the media than by military defeat, and a breakdown of the liberal consensus in Washington (Hallin). As for the "hopefulness" of the Kennedy administration, that was couched in rhetoric rather than real politics; see Chomsky (1975)

3 Schudson (1986:88)

4 The analysis draws from the principle samples of television news and the press described in CHAPTER ONE

5 Writing in *The Telegraph*, the historian Norman Stone put current events in Europe into the context of 1917 (11th November). He warned the West to "Beware The Trap That Lenin Laid", and argued that the west's euphoria over the changes in East Europe, and its love-affair with Gorbachev, should be tempered by the fact that the Soviet leader is a convinced Leninist who, by his own admission, recently read Lenin's *The State And Revolution* "compulsively". From this he concluded that Gorbachev's foreign policy, therefore, must surely be influenced by Leninist ideas of world revolution; his concessions to the countries of Eastern Europe and the West could be his way of giving them enough rope with which to hang themselves.

6 see Chapter 5

7 *The Guardian*, *The Independent*, 11.11.89

8 *The Telegraph*, 10.11.89; *The Guardian*, 11.11.89

9 *The Guardian*, *The Times*, *The Independent*, the *Daily Mail*, 11.11.89; *The Daily Telegraph*, *The Guardian*, the *Daily Mail*, 13.11.89

10 Fukuyama (1989)

11 Indeed, the American news anchorman, Dan Rather, described George Bush as "relaxed as a pound of liver" when giving an *ad hoc* press-conference in Washington; Brodie, I. "Bush 'Relaxed As A Pound Of Liver' over Berlin Wall", *Daily Telegraph*, 13th November 1989 (see Chapter 5).

12 This is consistent with a item on News At Ten from 11th September 1989, when Hungary opened its border with Austria :

Churchill: (FULTON, MISSOURI, 1946) From Stettin in the Baltic to Trieste in the Adriatic, an Iron Curtain has descended across the continent...

Reporter: Following Churchill's prophetic words, East and West continued to grow apart. (ZOOM, WATCHTOWER) As the Curtain came down, the fences went up. A fortified border system to keep people in and Western influences out was built.

(CONSTRUCTION OF WALL, BARBED WIRE FENCING) Later, at the height of the Cold War, came the Berlin Wall but even before it was finished (B & W ARCHIVE FILM, GDR SOLDIER LEAPS OVER BARBED-WIRE BARRICADE) people were risking their lives to get out; some succeeded but many died in the attempt (GDR BORDER GUARDS CARRY BODY AWAY).

13 The Independent gives the correct context of Kennedy's speech but chooses its own interpretation with the heading, "Kennedy was ein Berliner" (10 November 1989)

14 Chomsky (1992a: 21)

15 *Guardian*, 11 November, 1989; see Luostarinen (1986)

16 McArthur (1980)

17 Whetten (1971), Schulz et. al. (1982), Spanger (1989), Young (1991); Spanger, (1989: 67) recalls how, at the height of the New Cold War, c.1982-84, the two Germanies shared much in common in their outlook, particularly their misgivings about being used as frontline battlefields in the event of a limited nuclear war. Their instinct for survival, Spanger argues, provided them with a compelling motive for mutual cooperation, and to act as go- betweens for the superpowers; assumed roles which were not altogether appreciated by the USA and Soviet Union at the time.

18 In a bulletin the next day, BBC News featured an item on the history of reform in East Europe from the Prague Spring in Czechoslovakia, 1968, to the present day (BBC1, 18.00, 10.11.89). It works within **Framework 2** (Table 4.1 above) and moves from "the people versus repression" theme of the 1960s to the rise of Solidarity and its suppression in the early 1980s. It, to, makes a positive link between the election of Gorbachev as Soviet leader in 1985, and his New Thinking in foreign policy, including that towards the East European allies, and the dramatic re-emergence of Solidarity in Poland as a party of government. If framed within the wider **Framework 1**, taking in the basic East-West conflict, the interpretation would have been rather more problematic. After all, New Thinking in Soviet foreign policy was an integrative approach. Gorbachev saw East European reform as being imperative if real rapprochement with the West was possible. And he saw nuclear and conventional disarmament as being crucial for the transferral of resources from the military to the civil economy.

19 Although the voice-over was the newscaster's, the piece was a pre-recorded insert; the loss of sound at the beginning appears to have been due to miscuing. A different version was narrated by Peter Sissons when closing *The Six O'Clock News* that evening :

And that was *The Six O'Clock News* on Friday, 10th November, the day the Berlin wall began to crumble.

(1. ARCHIVE, PEOPLE ESCAPING THROUGH BORDER FENCE) At one time, people risked their lives to get across it,

(2. STILL, MEMORIAL SHRINE) and many didn't make it...

(3. VTR, LAST NIGHT'S SCENES AT THE WALL) But last night, it was different as a new generation celebrated the freedom that many thought would never come

(4. VTR, MAN STANDS ON THE WALL, DEFYING ATTEMPTS BY EAST GERMAN POLICE TO FORCE HIM DOWN WITH WATER-CANNON)

(5. VTR, WILLY BRANDT MINGLES WITH THE CROWD AT THE WALL) And Willy Brandt, who was Mayor of West Berlin when the Wall was built, returned there...He described what was happening as a quiet revolution...

(6. VTR, TWO WOMEN HUG EACH OTHER, CRYING) ...which would leave behind the division of Germany.

(7. THREE-SHOT OF A MAN IN HIS LATE 50s, EARLY 60s, A YOUNGER MAN IN HIS EARLY 30s, AND A GIRL IN HER EARLY 'TEENS. THREE GENERATIONS LINK PRE-WAR AND POST-WAR HISTORY. NEWS SIGNATURE TUNE. THE SHOT IS STILLED AND FADES. NEWS TITLES) (BBC1, 21.00, 10.11.89)

20 Halliday *et al* (1992: 63-65)

21 *FT*, 11.11.89

22 *FT*, 11.11.89

23 *The Daily Telegraph*, 11.11.89

24 Almost a year later, as German Unity Day drew near, the story turns up again on an ITN bulletin:

The first East German soldier to escape to the West as the Berlin Wall went up *has for the first time returned to the spot where it happened* (EMPHASIS MINE). (ITN, 20.45, 30.9.90)

Even though he performed an re-enactment of his escape on the very spot for the *Daily Mail* photographer back in November 1989, ITN reports that because the Wall had now disappeared, "it took him a moment to find the exact spot". Not only that, but we then see Mr Busse standing on his balcony on Bernauerstrasse :

Then, a coincidence! This man had also watched the escape back in 1961 from the same balcony. (BUSSE RUNS DOWN TO MEET SCHUMANN ON THE STREET) It was a joyful reunion.

In a world in which information is exchanged between different media, sometimes for very different purposes, it may be no surprise to see the Schumann story being recycled this way. But when the news - especially a major provider of "reliable and accurate news" like ITN - recycles old stories and creates an illusion of originality, coincidence and newsworthiness, can it be trusted to report more serious events and issues?

CHAPTER FOUR

The Cold War News Framework Under Pressure: Reporting the GDR 'Refugee Exodus'

This chapter features a major case study in the Cold War news paradigm under pressure. It is based on the premise that the opening of the Berlin Wall forced a radical shift in the interpretative framework for reporting a 'Cold War news' story - the East German 'refugee exodus' to West Germany from the summer of 1989. The work is structured in two parts.

Part One begins with the problem of definition. Who is a 'refugee' and who is not? By what criteria is refugee status determined and by whom? What are the implications of this problem for media representations of 'the refugee'? Particular attention will be paid to the use of language in constructing the image of the East German 'refugee'; and to how the developing political crisis within the GDR was used as a dramatic backdrop against which to explain the movement of people. The analysis will draw from news coverage of a comparable 'refugee' story, that involving the Vietnamese 'boat-people'. I will argue from this that the image of the East German 'refugee' in the news was a rather fragile construct based on contradictions and unquestioned assumptions.

When the Berlin Wall collapsed, so did the news story of the 'refugee exodus'. Part Two shows how the news defined the story as one of political refugees before the Wall came down to one of 'immigrants' and 'economic migrants' after the event; how reports doomed the East German state to extinction before and then depicted it as a place of hope for economic and political reform after; and how the news presented West Germany as an Aladdin's Cave of western capitalism before and then a place of scarce economic resources after.

Sample

To track this shift in explanatory framework, I analysed the patterns of coverage during three periods when the 'exodus' was building up - that is, from September through to November 1989 (Sample Periods 1, 2 and 3). These were then compared with the main sample of coverage, Sample period 4, when the Wall opened.

I also analysed the language and images used in the news to describe the Vietnamese 'boat people', and the explanations given for their decision to leave their homeland. This provided a useful comparison and contrast with coverage of the East German 'exodus'. Crisis stories about the 'boat people' were contextualised with a focus on the long-term, *everyday* realities of 'the refugee problem' in Hong Kong, especially the living conditions prevailing in the detention camps.¹

PART ONE

Reporting the East German "refugee exodus": A problem of definition

The United Nations and organisations such as the British Refugee Council have found it difficult to set down a universally acceptable definition of 'refugee'.² As a label, its use by the news media has been equally problematic. Joly identifies a largely negative portrayal that serves,

to reinforce the underlying paradigm on which government policies on asylum are based: refugees are first and foremost perceived and presented as undesirables - illegal immigrants, potential terrorists and drug dealers.³

However, this only refers to the mediation of restrictive, official definitions. Joly does not consider the possibility that even these can vary according to the political or ideological context. For example, in contrast to the precise criteria that inform legal and administrative definitions, public understanding of the word "refugee" has been influenced by wider factors such as historical precedent or cultural experience. Religious and humanitarian principles of sanctuary or safe-haven embrace the needs of the helpless victim of events⁴ as much as the political asylee.⁵ It has been argued, therefore, that between general and specific definitions there is room for confusion and unsatisfactory choices:

This is still the emphasis today, as in press references to the victims of famine in Africa as 'refugees'. When conceptualised in this manner, the term covers a large and varied universe of oppressed, suppressed, malcontent, and poor persons whose movements can be attributed to conditions commonly considered as 'push' factors that produce migrations. But a good indication of why this definition is not satisfactory is the distinction in the press of many Western countries between 'genuine' and 'false' refugees.⁶

The process of media definition, then, needs to be explained not only by considering professional routines, but also by taking a wider view of dominant ideological and international contexts of the different "Western media", and of the stories they report. The East German 'refugee exodus' to the West was hailed as 'testimony to the failure of Communism'.⁷ In framework, then, it was a Cold War story. It also served dominant news values in that it was 'unexpected' and 'sensational', and dramatic, with a plentiful stock of 'good' TV images. Thousands of people were leaving their homes and their friends and relatives in the GDR for 'a better life' in the 'free', 'democratic' and 'more prosperous' West Germany. The choice of label 'refugee' to describe the people appears to have been informed by a combination of ideologies - political (Cold War) and professional (news values) - rather than by the routine,

bureaucratic criteria used by western immigration authorities.⁸ The use of the label 'refugee' was therefore assumed without question and became the dominant definition. Yet in different political and economic contexts the label 'refugee' can be contested.

At the same time, more Vietnamese people were arriving by boat in Hong Kong. They were labelled 'economic migrants', more often 'boat people', who should be turned back home. Theirs was a Cold War story, too, but for the media it was neither new nor unexpected. It originated in a Cold War conflict of the distant past, the facts and consequences of which have since been rewritten or absented from western discourse.⁹ The story of the Vietnamese 'boat-people' has thus been depoliticised and explained as a 'humanitarian problem' - not for the people themselves but for the host country. With the passing of time, their story has only been considered 'news-worthy' when they become a 'problem' for the authorities in Hong Kong or London. the crucial difference in this case was the lack of consensus between the different interest groups.

The alternate use by the media of the labels 'refugees', 'boat-people', or 'economic migrants' results from a struggle for definition between public spheres.¹⁰ The Hong Kong authorities represent the administrative-legal sphere that makes definitional choices according to restrictive rather than universal criteria. International human rights organisations and refugee charities make their definitional choices according to wider, humanitarian criteria. However, the news media claim to operate according to the professional ideology of objectivity whereby they attempt to balance opposing definitions. In reporting the 'problem' of the Vietnamese in Hong Kong, the news tried to 'balance' definitions such as 'refugees', 'emigrants' and 'boat people' with each other. This served to legitimise bureaucratic rather than cultural or humanitarian needs in that the refugee status of the Vietnamese boat people was always put in question.

A look at the words that the news used to describe the East German and Vietnamese migrants reveals significant definitional choices. At its simplest, the Vietnamese were mostly described by journalists as "boat people" (Table 4.1, below), while the East Germans are called "refugees" (Table 4.2, below). But the comparison also shows that a wider lexicon of words was drawn from by journalists when constructing the image of the Vietnamese. The language used to construct an image of the East Germans carried little ambiguity. The label "refugee" was almost automatically applied.

Table 4.1
NEWS CONSTRUCTION OF THE VIETNAMESE "BOAT PEOPLE" STORY
Language used to describe the Vietnamese

Definition	Number	%
Boat People	72	60.0
Refugees	24	20.0
Illegal immigrants	7	5.8
Genuine refugees	3	2.5
Political refugees	3	2.5
Economic refugees	3	2.5
Aristocrats	2	1.7
Asylum-seekers	2	1.7
Poor people	2	1.7
Economic refugees	1	0.8
Immigrants	1	0.8
Total	120	100

Sample: Main BBC & ITN Bulletins on
13 June 1989, 5-12 September 1989
(For Full Details, see Supplementary Appendix, p.249)

Table 4.2
NEWS CONSTRUCTION OF THE EAST GERMAN "REFUGEE EXODUS"
Language used to describe the East Germans BEFORE the Berlin Wall opened

Definition	Number	%
Refugees	199	91.7
Emigrants/immigrants	8	3.7
Tourists	3	1.4
Holiday-makers	2	0.9
Newcomers	2	0.9
Arrivals	1	0.5
Economic refugees	1	0.5
Economic migrants	1	0.5
TOTAL	217	100

Sample: Main BBC & ITN Bulletins on
10-12 September 1989, 5-8 October 1989,
2-4 November 1989
(For Full Details, see Supplementary Appendix, p.249)

Images of refugees

When we match these definitions with the reality of each situation, even as represented by the news media themselves, problems begin to emerge. Images of thousands of happy East German holiday-campers heading not home again but to 'a better life' in the West made for 'good television'. But they did not fit in very easily with the image of a 'refugee' by whatever criteria, whether those of the United Nations or the British Council for Refugees. Yet the news label "refugee" was simply assumed and it alternated with the tag "tourist" without apparent difficulty:

Refugees are still coming into (Hungary). Many fly in from East Berlin as tourists but head straight from the airport to the camps...They've been well looked after, with lessons for the children and excursions to the zoo, for example, to keep up their spirits. (BBC 1, 18.25, 10.9.89)

In the warm sunshine here, the atmosphere is almost like a holiday camp...The refugees will only stay...for two or three nights. Most are keen to find work and permanent homes as soon as possible and the government is pledged to give them considerable financial and practical help in organising their new lives.

(BBC 1, 13.00, 11.9.89)

Reporter: (MAN HUGGING PEOPLE) We'd met this man in a Budapest camp, last week. A ballroom-dancing teacher, an admirer of the English, and a man with a long held ambition that can at last be fulfilled.

Man: We are going to Blackpool!

(ITN, 13.00, 11.9.89)

Rarely did these sort of image prompt journalists to remark on how exceptional this was as a 'refugee story':

This is a refugee camp unlike any other because it's a place of hope, not of despair it's a place where families dream of reunion. (ITN, 22.00, 11.9.89)

The sense of elation and hope felt by these East Germans was not misplaced. They were availing of the new opportunities afforded by the changes affecting most of Eastern Europe. Yet, quite unlike other East European immigrants to West Germany, they were guaranteed automatic citizenship under Basic Law and given priority over West German citizens in housing and job markets.

In sharp contrast to this coverage, the news represented the new arrivals of Vietnamese 'boat people' to Hong Kong with images of crowded camps full of miserable people. Even for those Vietnamese who did acquire official status, "the basic realities of life" were somewhat different from the 'official' East German 'refugees'. A BBC journalist describes one official camp as "more relaxed", with the refugees "free to come and go, and to find work in Hong Kong". He concludes to camera:

These are the aristocrats of Hong Kong's Vietnamese refugees...with nothing left for them to do now except wait and wait. Some have waited for their new country for more than five years, reading in letters from friends and relatives abroad of a brave new world which still lies just beyond their reach.

(MY EMPHASIS)

(BBC 1, 18.00, 11.9.89)

Most of the Vietnamese refugees were reported as people who presented the British colony with a serious 'problem'. The authorities claimed that they could no longer cope with the numbers wanting to stay. They demanded that the international community accept larger quotas of Vietnamese 'asylum-seekers' or agree to the necessity of repatriation, forcible if necessary.

In September 1989, BBC News carried a series of reports on Hong Kong as it moved closer to 1997 and its transfer from British to Chinese rule. Some reports focused solely on the boat-people and the conditions they suffered in the detention camps:

Cholera, the deadly companion of dirt and malnutrition, came to...the latest of Hong Kong's growing collection of refugee camps. There's no running water here, no sanitation, and several of the policemen who run the camp are feared to have contracted cholera themselves.

(BBC 1, 13.00, 7.9.89)

Cholera has been confirmed, and cases of malaria, dysentery, and suspected meningitis have also been found.

(BBC1, 13.00, 10.9.89)

Sympathy for the Vietnamese people in these camps was by no means absent in the reports; sometimes there were hints of criticism at the way the problem was being approached:

Hong Kong and other countries are threatening forcible repatriation. Tough talk. But in reality, such measures would have devastating consequences for all involved.

(BBC 1, 13.00, 5.9.89)

However, the reporter's concern here was broached *outside* of a wider, political context. He rightly took account of the immediate suffering of the Vietnamese 'boat-people', but not of the inconsistency and injustice of the official policy which put them in that position.

The difficulty here does not lie in the contrasting media images of East German "refugees" and Vietnamese "boat-people" *per se*. The problem is that those images did not appear to inform the process of defining who were refugees and who were not. One way of illustrating this is to look at how the news explained why such people - Vietnamese or East German - felt compelled to leave their country at all.

Reasons for leaving

Once the political and economic push factors influencing the East German 'refugee exodus' were established in the news, they were assumed, implied or absented as the story became routine. Evidence from the quantitative analysis shows this clearly. The summary of coverage for all three pre-Wall samples in Table 4.3, below, records 42 references to political motives and 15 references to economic motives, a difference that suggests the degree of legitimacy attached to each when constructing the refugee image. When broken down according to each sample period, we can see from Table 4.3 that these references were most concentrated during the initial period of coverage, with references to economic motives dropping off to zero by Sample Period 2.

Table 4.3

NEWS CONSTRUCTION OF THE EAST GERMAN REFUGEE EXODUS
STORY

Statements in the news referring to motives of East Germans for leaving the GDR

Number of statements referring to...	Sample Periods			
	1	2	3	TOT
Political motives	22	8	12	42
Economic motives	15	0	0	15

Sample: Main BBC & ITN Bulletins on
10-12 September 1989, 5-8 October 1989,
2-4 November 1989
(For Full Details, see Supplementary Appendix, p.249)

Economic motives

Economic "pull factors" in the East German exodus were reported only in the first sample period, with 15 references compared with 22 references to political motives. Indeed, they are absented altogether by October when the exodus is reported as a routine story (see **Table 4.3**, above).

The Hong Kong authorities accepted as refugees only those who could prove their eligibility under the United Nations' guidelines. Those who failed were defined as 'illegal immigrants' and faced forcible repatriation. The majority failed the test and the official reason why was internalised in a report from BBC news:

Most of them now come from North Vietnam, travelling in *the simple hope of a better life in a country richer than their own*. (MY EMPHASIS)

(BBC 1, 18.00, 11.9.89)

ITN explained why East Germans were leaving their country in such numbers:

For the refugees at (this) camp, this morning, the initial euphoria was over and it was now time to face the basic realities of life and get a job... Wages can be four or five times higher than in East Germany; *the prosperity of the West has been, for many, a major factor in coming over*. (MY EMPHASIS)

(ITN, 13.00, 12.9.89)

Some of the few East German 'refugees' actually interviewed on TV news held high hopes for a better job and access to West Germany's more highly developed consumer market. Material considerations were apparent even among the very young. Three children told ITN why life in the West is better:

1st Girl: There are many shortages in East Germany. You can queue for a long time and end up with three bananas.

Boy: Here in West Germany, you can buy a car very quickly. In East Germany, you have to wait fifteen years.

2nd Girl: Here, I will be able to play tennis. In East Germany, it is very difficult because there are not enough courts. (ITN, 13.00, 8.10.89)

While an economic and social 'showpiece' in East Europe, certainly a strong economy in global terms, the GDR was always unfavourably compared with the stronger Federal Republic of Germany. This was a routine comparison in Cold War propaganda, serving as a metaphor for the wider implications of the East-West divide.¹¹ In this context it was recalled to explain why West Germany was such a big attraction to the East German "refugees":

(MAP, FRG-GDR: CAP., "HOW THEY COMPARE") East Germans look enviously towards their prosperous neighbour. There are 61m West Germans, more than three times the population of East Germany (17M) That's reflected in the size of their Gross National Products (FRG-\$697 bn, GDR-\$168 bn.). After tax, a West German family takes home \$24,000 per year, twice as much in wages as a family in the East. 83% of families in the West have a car; in the East, fewer than half do (8%). Nearly every family in the West has a phone (97%); only 7% do in the East. However, the mass exodus has been motivated by more than just material greed.¹²

(*Newsnight*, BBC2, 11.9.89)

Political Motives

It was of course important for the news to stress the point that the East Germans were political refugees first and naturalised West German consumers much later. Otherwise, the refugee label would appear completely transparent and impossible to support. Throughout news coverage of East Germany's political crisis, the exodus of its people was reported as a decisive catalyst in forcing the Communist Party to making concession after concession until finally opening the country's borders with the West, including the Berlin Wall. References to the history of the Wall were common-place in news reports. These were used to show that escape across the Wall had been a feature of East German life, one that undermined its credibility on the international scene and led to the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961. As discussed in more detail in Chapter Three, stories and images of people risking their lives for freedom were believable if not universally acceptable accounts and were subsumed into western, Cold War propaganda. For example, one report linked past with present with black and white archive film:

(FILM 1961: BUILDING OF BERLIN WALL) For 28 years, the Berlin Wall's kept most of them in, the most striking image of repression in a regime where there's no real vote, (FILM, 1989: SECURITY POLICE FILMING BBC NEWS CREW) and where the secret police were a worry even for East Germans under care in Hungary.

(BBC 1, 18.00, 11.9.89)

Another news item featured clips from a newsreel film entitled, *Berlin, The Prison Wall* showing images of concrete and barbed wire (*Newsnight*, BBC2, 11.9.89). Elsewhere, the prison image was brought up to date in an attempt to explain why so many East Germans were leaving for West Germany:

Jochen Kater, a musician, says East Germany is a gigantic prison from which he has now escaped.

(BBC1, 13.00, 11.9.89)

Apart from these explicit denunciations of the GDR's political system (6 references out of a total of 42; **Table 4.3**, above), all other references to political motives are general, sometimes vague allusions to 'freedom', 'freedom to travel', 'lack of political participation', or 'disillusionment with promises of reform':

Gerhardt Meier says he wants to be free to live in the country of his choice.

(ITN, 13.00, 11.9.89)

The exodus...can largely be interpreted as a rejection of the inflexible policies of...Erich Honecker.

(*Newsnight*, BBC2, 11.9.89)

(GROUP OF EAST GERMANS SPEAKING TO CAMERA IN GERMAN) These East Germans can't wait for the reforms at home. (FOCUS ON ONE MAN:) "Reforms will take twenty to thirty years," he said, "By that time I'll be forty or fifty years old. That's no good for me".

(ITN, 22.00, 2.11.89)

However, news narratives were not limited to the personal testimonies of the East German emigrants, or even statements by news reporters; such inputs were not paramount to legitimising the motives of the refugees as being primarily political and humanitarian. Rather, it became evident that the legitimacy of the refugee story was being built *within the wider framework of reporting the developing crisis in East Germany*. This pattern of coverage began to emerge during the second sample period, 5-7 October 1989, when the GDR marked the 40th Anniversary of its foundation as a state. The occasion had many ingredients to make it a top news story in the western media. The Soviet President, Mikhail Gorbachev, was invited as Guest of Honour. Mindful of his presence, the government decided to seal all its borders to prevent any more citizens departing. It also knew that the burgeoning reform movement would try to use Gorbachev as a powerful symbol of reform, and so it attempted to deter embarrassing street protests. On the eve of his arrival, the BBC reported,

a warning delivered to...opposition groups that they face *a Chinese-style crackdown* if they continue to challenge the Communist government. (MY

EMPHASIS)

(BBC1, 13.00, 5.10.89)

The image of thousands of East Germans fleeing the country as the government contemplates a Tiananmen Square solution carried considerable potential as a means to legitimise their status as political refugees. The story was developed in a film report from East Berlin. Opening with shots of a wreath-laying ceremony attended by "An honoured guest..., a member of China's inner leadership", the report suggested that the bonds between China and East Germany were more than just ceremonial:

The East German leaders strongly supported China's ruthless crackdown on its opponents during and after the Tiananmen massacre.

The reporter interviewed the reform leader, Werner Kratschell, who received the warning on the telephone from an unnamed government official:

Kratschell: He said to me, 'If the groups want to touch the socialism in our country, please remember in China!'

Reporter: Do you think it was a deliberate warning?

Kratschell: It was, yes.

Reporter: For you to pass on?

Kratschell: Yes. And I know that there are, or I feel that there are lot of very military steps that are prepared...

Reporter: To crush them?

Kratschell: Yes.

The allusion to Tiananmen Square was also used to close the report, with film of Honecker and his Chinese guests of honour in the East German *Volkskammer* (parliament):

Honecker is an elderly man who, like China's leaders, sees his life's work threatened. But it's uncertain if he would take such extreme measures as they or if he could muster enough support inside the Communist party to try.

Despite the reporter's misgiving about the likelihood of the threat being carried out, the theme was developed throughout the day so that by late evening it was presented as a direct cause of the latest "exodus" of East German citizens. This was most evident in the development of headlines from bulletin to bulletin. At lunchtime, the headlines refer only to the exodus:

More refugee trains have arrived in West Germany after forcing their way through crowds of East Germans who tried to get abroad. There were screams and tears of joy as the trains reached journey's end. (BBC1, 13.00, 5.10.89)

The headlines on the *Six O'Clock News*, referred to both stories but only *implied* a cause and effect relationship:

Thousands more East German refugees arrive in the West...(FILM, GDR MILITARY PARADE) and the East German government warns its dissidents: "Remember What Happened In China!" (BBC 1, 18.00, 5.10.89)

By nine o'clock, though, the relationship was fully developed with the headlines :

Thousands more East Germans escape as their government threatens a Chinese-style crackdown. (BBC1, 21.00, 5.10.89)

Another important connection was not reported in this account: with all borders sealed, no East Germans could have left the country, crackdown or none. Those headlines did not reveal that the East Germans seen arriving in the West by rail had left their country *before* the crackdown threat was issued. They had been waiting in the West German embassy in Prague for permission to go to West Germany. When it was agreed that they could go, it was to be on sealed trains that had to take a roundabout route back through the GDR. Had this connection been made, of course, it would have undermined the notion that the Threat of a Crackdown was triggering another 'mass exodus'.

News reports referred to Gorbachev's state visit to China in May of that year to support the Threat of Crackdown theme. This was principally because of its coincidence with and symbolism for the 'pro-democracy' protests:

The organisers...are very conscious of the parallels with China. When Mr Gorbachev went to Peking, this year, the communist authorities were at first too preoccupied to deal with the street protests and then responded by gunning down thousands of their own citizens. Here in Berlin, they want to keep protest off the streets and channel it through a political process. (BBC 1, 21.00, 6.10.89)

The threat of a crackdown was maintained in the news even after the forced resignation of Honecker on 18 October. His successor, Egon Krenz, ruled out the possibility of a Tiananmen solution to East Germany's upheavals, and promised reforms instead. Nonetheless, the biographical sketches of Krenz in news reports emphasise his past as a feared hardliner in the Ministry of Interior :

Emerging as the new head...is Egon Krenz.... He looks affable but is *deeply unpopular*. (He's) shown *no sympathy for reform* ...and now *controls the feared security forces*. His most recent task has been *congratulating the Chinese on their handling of dissent* and his appointment will be seen as an attempt by the conservatives to put a man in Honecker's mould in charge of East Germany. (MY EMPHASIS) (BBC1, 21.00, 18.10.89)

What emerged from the coverage, then, was a powerful dramatic backdrop against which to situate and make sense of the story of the "exodus": a picture of an increasingly isolated country, its people either leaving in droves or taking to the

streets in protest. In contrast, the background to and the motivating factors behind the movement of 'boat-people' from Vietnam to Hong Kong were almost absent from news accounts.

Demotivating the Vietnamese refugee

The story of the 'boat people' is not so recent as that of the East German 'refugees'. Having captured the attention of the West at a critical juncture in Cold War history - the closing stages of the Vietnam War in 1975 - the 'boat-people' were at first welcomed to the West.¹³ Fourteen years later, in 1989, they were still confined to detention camps, mostly in Hong Kong, without legal rights or representation, and in conditions that breached recognised codes of international human rights law.¹⁴ The authorities used a screening process to determine 'refugee status'. It was based on restrictive political criteria according to how many people could be accepted and at what rate. Largely, this was the framework within which the news reported the new arrivals:

To the largely unsympathetic world, people who escape from (Vietnam) aren't refugees or victims of Communist repression - they're economic opportunists.

(BBC1, 13.00, 5.9.89)

They're already separating those they consider to be in genuine flight from those who are simply in search of a more comfortable life.

(BBC1, 13.00, 10.9.89)

However, the news story of the day was about the problems the immigrants had been causing for the Hong Kong authorities. It was within this interpretative framework that questions of refugee status were worked out and the answers legitimised. In the samples used for this study, only one item referred to the original causes and consequences of the Vietnamese migrations to the West:

(ARCHIVE NEWS FILM, SAIGON, 1975) It was the fall of Saigon that started the exodus of boat-people from Vietnam and which continued as the Communists consolidated power in the south of the country.

(RECENT NEWS FILM, HANOI) Now the exodus is from cities like Hanoi, in North Vietnam, which is suffering severe economic problems. The authorities see the refugees as a convenient bargaining-point for getting badly needed Western aid.

(*Channel 4 News*, 10.6.89)

Even though Vietnam is now one country, the historical division between communist North and non-communist South was maintained in this account. The first migration was from the South, from the effects of war and the consolidation of communist rule. It is implied that the push factors were humanitarian and political. The second migration was reported as being from the north, the birthplace of Vietnamese communism, an economic backwater and another example of 'the failure of communism'. It is implied that the push factors influencing this latest movement are economic opportunism and political manipulation. By establishing a very clear-cut temporal boundary between past and present, the item excluded some rather awkward realities of the interim period: for example, the total US economic blockade against Vietnam might help explain the reasons why the people so poor in the first place.

The report did not account for the long-term negative effects of the Vietnam war on the Vietnamese people and on the country's once viable economic infrastructure.¹⁵ In fact, at the time of the above report, Vietnam was still classed as an official enemy of the US and subject to comprehensive economic warfare. Under 'Trading With The Enemy' legislation, no country or international body within the American sphere of influence could trade with or assist Vietnam economically or otherwise without itself suffering negative sanctions. An end to the US embargo is conditional upon the release of American MIAs - troops Missing In Action - or positive confirmation of their death. Most US allies, including Britain, regard that as an impossible condition for Vietnam to meet; some question whether it was ever expected by the US government in the first place.¹⁶ Without such vital information, news statements like the following inferred that Vietnam's economic problems are self-inflicted and depend on Western benevolence for a solution:

some observers believe the only real answer is for countries to work with Vietnam to persuade people not to leave home in the first place.

(BBC1, 13.00, 22.6.89)

Giving political asylum is one thing, coping with Vietnam's poverty is altogether different. That's the line Britain took at a conference on the boat-people at Geneva earlier this month.

(BBC 1, 18.00, 28.6.89)

An alternative view?

Only one, marginal attempt was made to raise the contradictions in official policy. The British Foreign Secretary, John Major, was interviewed from Washington by *Channel Four News* (11.9.89) about the exodus of East Germans. The journalist, Jon Snow, asked him :

Are you at all embarrassed at the thought that Britain is involved in perhaps forcibly repatriating Vietnamese refugees- economic refugees - at the same time that West Germany is accepting refugees from East Germany?

Major denied a connection and referred to the emergency UN conference in Geneva, 13 June 1989, as an example of how the problem was being addressed at international level. He argued that a screening process would help determine whether the boat people were "economic migrants" or "political refugees".¹⁷ The journalist pressed further:

Snow: Are you sure, though, that their East German counterparts aren't simply 'economic migrants'? Aren't the two very parallel?

Major: I don't think...there is a direct relationship between the two. In terms of the, ah, *economic migrants* in Hong Kong, (It) is internationally agreed...that non-refugees should return to their country of origin. That is not a uniquely British position. (MY EMPHASIS)

The problem of course is with the definitions, 'economic migrants' and 'refugees'. The journalist did not challenge Major on how he arrived at this distinction. Furthermore, had *Channel Four News* researched official British statements on the Geneva conference on 13 June, to which Major referred, they might have discovered quite a glaring contradiction in policy. Britain's Foreign Secretary at that time was Geoffrey Howe. He was reported by the BBC as having dismissed the right of the 'boat people' to automatic refugee status on the grounds that,

many of those now fleeing Vietnam are not political refugees at all but *people seeking a better standard of living*. (MY EMPHASIS)

(BBC 1, 21.00, 2.6.89)

When expressing delight in September about what was happening in Eastern Europe, John Major viewed the mass exodus of East Germans as proof positive of the failure of Communism and of the GDR "to provide *a decent standard of living* for its people".

Alternative views were available in the press. Bernard Levin pointed out the duplicity behind John Major's statement and included it in his "extensive collection of politicians' weasel words".¹⁸ Hugo Young argued in *The Guardian* that Britain's policy towards the Vietnamese had a hidden agenda. It was designed to prepare public opinion in Britain for the future policy towards those in Hong Kong who carried British passports: no entry.¹⁹

Summary remarks

There was, then, adequate evidence available to television news that would have highlighted the parallels between the two cases. Instead, the news accepted highly questionable official definitions. The term *refugee* was used with little problem in the news language when depicting East Germans seeking a better life in the West. The term used to describe the Vietnamese seeking the same was *economic migrant*. The Vietnamese could also have fitted the political and ideological criteria, but they posed a threat to western (British) interests and, to an extent, occupied a peripheral position away from a key focal-point of the Cold War: Central Europe. Their propaganda value, therefore, was minimised.²⁰

Consider the implications of a news report on the East Germans if it was informed by the dominant paradigm. The following reconstruction uses phrases taken from the reports on the Vietnamese boat-people:

These East Germans aren't refugees or victims of Communist repression; they're economic opportunists travelling in the simple hope of a better life in a country richer than their own.

Such a movement from one paradigm to another would undermine the interpretative framework, 'Communist East Germany in crisis: refugees' flee West', as opposed to, 'West faces flood of immigrants from East Germany'. As I will be show in Part Two, the problem became more than just an abstract academic theory when the Berlin Wall opened.

PART TWO

Reporting the East German 'refugee exodus': a problem of framework

The migration of East Germans to the West continued throughout the following months and contributed to the internal political crisis in their country. When the Berlin Wall was opened on Thursday, 9 November 1989, an estimated 'four million' East Germans visited West Germany during the first weekend.²¹ The question of how many would seek citizenship of the Federal Republic caused considerable unease, and political rhetoric in the West changed from 'The refugees are fleeing from a failed system' to 'They should return home to build democracy'. I will now show that the news media in Britain followed this shift of framework with no apparent problem, effectively debunking their own story of the East German 'refugee exodus'. In many ways it shows how fragile the refugee construct was in the first place.

The methodological approach here develops from that used in Part One. I will begin with a look at the language and images employed by the news media to see first how *their* perception of this movement of people changed. For the most part, I will pay detailed attention to how the shift in *public discourse* about West Germany was organised and mediated through television news and the press. Statements by journalists, official sources, and interviewees were grouped according to how they perceived the 'refugees', their motives for leaving, and the effects of their movement on their own country and on West Germany.

Until this period, West Germany was represented in the news as an efficient economic superpower that was well able to absorb thousands of refugees. However, just as the Berlin Wall was opened, the country was reported to be experiencing chronic unemployment and housing shortages. It not only had to accommodate its own people but also a large pool of immigrant 'guest workers' from other countries of Eastern Europe, northern Africa, and from Turkey. Resentment was growing among those ethnic groups because the Federal government in Bonn was seen to be giving unfair priority to the East German newcomers. This was an injustice that, many argued, was being taken special advantage of by the Far-Right. It needed to be dealt with urgently. The 'influx' of East Germans was now a 'problem' and one that had to be considered in context with West Germany's other economic ills.

Two rhetorical 'voices' dominated public debate on the issue: an ambiguous voice from the centre (Federal government in Bonn), and a negative voice from the periphery (at local government level). Essentially, it was a public struggle to redefine "the exodus". The lines of conflict were drawn between official government propaganda ("No one will be turned away") and unofficial government pragmatism ("The cost can be sustained no longer"); and between official, central government propaganda (again, "These are our people") and local government panic ("These people must go home").

That there *was* such a struggle was more evident from press coverage than on television news. The implications of how these statements are structured in the news can be understood by summarising the strands of discourse that underpin each category. They were grouped under general thematic headings according to : perceptions of the East German migrants; the effects of their movement on the country they were leaving, East Germany, and on the host country, West Germany; the motives of East German migrants for leaving; and the scale and continuity of the exodus. The details of these statements and their principal sources are provided in Appendices 1 and 2 at the end of this chapter.

The shift of emphasis in television news from the great welcome given to the East Germans to a clamour for their return home is highlighted below in **Table 4.4** which covers samples of television news taken *before and after* the Berlin Wall opened.

This before and after comparison shows a decrease in the number of statements of welcome for the East Germans (from 17 to 10), and an inverse increase in those statements suggesting that the East Germans should return or stay at home (from 12 to 23). More dramatic was the emergence of the idea that the exodus might have negative effects on West Germany from none in samples before the Wall opened to 29 in the "post-Wall" period (**Fig. 3.4**). Overall, 40% of statements in the "post-Wall" period focused on negative aspects of the exodus for both East and West compared with 22.6% in the "pre-Wall" samples combined.

Table 4.4
NEWS CONSTRUCTION OF THE EAST GERMAN "REFUGEE EXODUS" STORY
Comparative analysis of statements in British TV news referring to exodus BEFORE and AFTER the opening of the Berlin Wall.

Number of statements referring to...	Before	After
1. The need for E.Germans to return/stay at home	12	23
2. The need to welcome E.Germans	17	10
3. Negative effects of exodus on GDR	33	10
4. Positive effects of exodus on GDR	0	0
5. Negative effects of exodus on FRG	0	29
6. Positive effects of exodus on FRG	15	2
TOTALS :	77	74

Sample: Main BBC & ITN Bulletins on
10-12 September 1989, 5-8 October 1989,
2-4 & 9-13 November 1989
(For Full Details, see Supplementary Appendix, p.249)

These patterns of coverage are not particular to television news. A summary of press coverage of the 'problem' in the 'post-Wall' period (Table 4.5, below) shows similar patterns. Of a total of 154 statements counted, 81 statements referred to the negative impact of the exodus on West Germany (52.6%), while another 29 stressed the need for East Germans to stay at or return home (18.8%); 15 statements noted the negative effects of the exodus on the GDR's economy and society (9.7%). In short, 125 statements (81.1%) suggested that the exodus wasn't such a good thing after all.

Here again, a qualitative analysis of this coverage revealed important differences between press and television. Television news reported public opinion about the influx of East Germans within the restrictive time frame of the present. This excluded awareness of a qualitative shift in opinion since the period before the Berlin Wall opened. That examples of this were found in the sample of press in this period suggests that this was not beyond the bounds of possibility for television news reporters.

Table 4.5
NEWS CONSTRUCTION OF THE EAST GERMAN REFUGEE EXODUS STORY
Analysis of statements in the British press referring to exodus AFTER the opening of the Berlin Wall

Statements referring to...	Number	%
1. The need for E. Germans to return/stay at home	29	18.8
2. The need to welcome E. Germans	15	9.7
3. Negative effects of exodus on GDR	15	9.7
4. Positive effects of exodus on GDR	0	0
5. Negative effects of exodus on FRG	81	52.6
6. Positive effects of exodus on FRG	14	9.1
TOTAL :	154	100

Sample: 13 British daily newspapers on 10, 11, 13 & 14 November 1989
8 British Sunday newspapers on 12 November 1989
(For Full Details, see Supplementary Appendix, p.249)

This quantitative summary has outlined the prevailing pattern of coverage. The remainder of this chapter is taken up by a detailed qualitative analysis of this shift in news framework, although other quantitative patterns will be highlighted where appropriate. The analysis of the changing perception of the 'refugee exodus' by the news media is kept in context with how they reported related events in the GDR and West Germany, and on the wider international scene.

From Exodus to Flood

Before the Wall opened, the dominant perception of the migration of East Germans was of mass 'exodus' from imprisonment. Table 4.6 lists the words used in the news to describe the movement West during this period. It provides an indication of how embedded the image of "the exodus" became in relation to alternatives such as "the flood". Nearly 80% of words counted connoted escape.

Table 4.6
NEWS CONSTRUCTION OF THE EAST GERMAN REFUGEE EXODUS STORY
Words used to define the movement of East Germans to the West BEFORE the Berlin Wall opened

Word	Number
Exodus	85
Flood (and synonyms)	35
Flee	22
Escape	19
Emigration/Immigration	10
Refuge	2
Haemorrhage	1
Dash	1
Bolt	1
TOTALS	176

Sample: Main BBC & ITN Bulletins on
10-12 September 1989, 5-8 October 1989,
2-4 November 1989
(For Full Details, see Supplementary Appendix, p.249)

Right from the beginning, the exodus was reported as great news for the West and bad news for the East, a feature of coverage that was most evident in the way it reported 'the facts and figures' about the extent of the phenomenon. Here are some headlines examples from the main sample periods. They reveal a consistency of language and image, and show how routine reporting of the extent of the 'exodus' emphasised the theme of crisis in the GDR from its beginnings in September:

Thousands of refugees have been arriving in the West. It's the biggest exodus from the Eastern bloc for more than 30 years. (BBC1, 18.00, 11.9.89)

Through to October :

Jubilation on the border as thousands of refugees ride into freedom... (ITN, 17.40, 5.10.89)

President Gorbachev has arrived in Berlin as thousands of East German refugees flee the country's communist regime... (BBC1, 13.00, 6.10.89)

And up to November, just before the Berlin Wall was opened :

Up to a million demonstrate in East Berlin for reform. Special trains bring thousands more refugees to the West. (ITN, 22.00, 4.11.89)

The benefits of the exodus for the West in general were also explained within an explicit propaganda frame :

it means *jubilation* for these refugees but more *humiliation* for the East German government and for the hard-line regime of Erich Honecker. (FILM, "REFUGEE" CARRYING CHILD WRAPPED IN BLANKET) Pictures like these are as *embarrassing* for the government in East Berlin as they are *heartening* for Bonn. (MY EMPHASIS). (BBC1, 13.00, 5.10.89)

By November, the framework for reporting the 'exodus' began to show signs of strain. For example, a degree of variability entered the language used to describe the East German migrants :

The first of thousands of East German *immigrants* have arrived in Bavaria from Prague. (MY EMPHASIS) (*The World This Week*, Channel Four, 4.11.89)

The statistics used to underline the extent of their movement, and thus the extent of the crisis for the GDR, were also inconsistent. In a lunchtime bulletin on 4 November, a BBC journalist reported that,

Thousands of would-be emigrants...are taking advantage of what's being termed metaphorically as a gaping hole in the Berlin Wall. (BBC1, 13.00, 4.11.89)

By late afternoon, she revised this to,

hundreds are taking advantage of...a gaping hole in the Berlin Wall. (BBC1, 17.00, 4.11.89)

Such strains in the interpretative framework became unsustainable when metaphor became reality. The terms of reference had changed and a new framework was constructed to accommodate them. After the Wall opened, the natural disaster metaphor of 'the flood', replaced that of 'the exodus'. A survey of press coverage over this five-day period reveals the prevalence of this perception across all media perspectives and formats: conservative and liberal, 'broadsheet' and 'tabloid'. *The Independent* reports on how local authorities in West Germany "Prepare For New Torrent Of Refugees" (10.11.89). Glasgow's *Evening Times* used the flood metaphor in the most positive sense when it reported how "Floodgates open on a *tide* of joy" (10.11.89).

The shift of framework on television news is summarised quantitatively in Table 4.7, below. In the 'pre-Wall periods', the news legitimised the label "refugee" to describe East Germans migrants in context with coverage of the mounting political crisis in the GDR. This was most evident during Sample Period 2 as the GDR marked its 40th Anniversary. The words "flee" and "escape" were most frequent in this period, peaking at 19 and 10 occurrences respectively. Reports from Dresden told how,

riot police were stoned by angry crowds as the railway station was sealed off to prevent any further people *escaping* to the West. (MY EMPHASIS)

(BBC1, 13.00, 5.10.89)

The themes of escape and flight framed this item from ITN which began by saying that the country's,

fortieth anniversary celebrations have been overshadowed by the *flight* of East German refugees to the West. (MY EMPHASIS)

Within such a framework, the Guest of Honour, Mikhail Gorbachev was arriving amid a,

political crisis that's led to thousands of young East Germans *fleeing* this country.

(ITN, 13.00, 7.10.89)

As the Wall opened, the language changed dramatically. Only 24% of words counted in this period connoted escape and refuge. Instead, the dominant image was of a natural disaster. The people became a living flood that threatened to "swamp" the West and so it had to be "stemmed" by closing the "floodgates".²² This flood metaphor was sustained throughout reports with related words like "wave", "torrent", "tide", "tidal wave", "surge", "pour", and "stream":

Thousands of East Berliners are still *pouring* across the border...*streaming* back and forth. (They) *flocked* into the West...*surged* through the open gates. (They) are *pouring* through to take a look at the West. (MY EMPHASIS)

(BBC1, 13.00, 10.11.89)

Just 30 hours ago, East Germany threw open her borders and *a cautious trickle of people soon turned into a flood*. (MY EMPHASIS) (ITN, 22.00, 10.11.89)

They've opened the *floodgates* and here, at Checkpoint Charlie..., *a great human tide is flowing out. They're pouring out* of here by car and on foot. (MY EMPHASIS) (Newsnight, BBC2, 10.11.89)

Other words were less common or had never been used to report the 'exodus' before the Berlin Wall opened. Their occurrence, therefore, was significant for that. For example, "flock" connotes the idea of a movement motivated by instinct rather than by political considerations. Thus, BBC reported on how, *the stream turned into a flood wave* as more than 50,000 East Germans *flocked* through Czechoslovakia.(MY EMPHASIS) (BBC1, 21.00, 9.11.89)

Table 4.7
NEWS CONSTRUCTION OF THE EAST GERMAN REFUGEE EXODUS STORY
Shift in perceptions of the movement of East Germans from periods BEFORE AND AFTER the Berlin Wall opened

Words	Before	After
Exodus	85	15
Flood	35	61
Flee	22	7
Escape	19	5
Emigration/Immigration	10	6
Flock	0	7
Influx	0	6
Invasion	0	4
Haemorrhage	1	2
Refuge	2	0
Dash	1	0
Bolt	1	0
TOTALS	176	113

Sample: Main BBC & ITN Bulletins on
10-12 September 1989, 5-8 October 1989,
2-4 & 9-13 November 1989
(For Full Details, See Supplementary Appendix, p.249)

The word "invasion" carries more ominous connotations and implies the need for a defensive response. It is something to be controlled if it is friendly, repelled if it is hostile or threatening. In the first days after the Wall opened, it was the former:

Two million East Germans crossed onto Western soil...over the last 3 days...And Berlin is bracing itself for a similar *invasion* next weekend. (MY EMPHASIS)

(ITN, 13.00, 13.11.89)

It also occurred in another context. During the Cold War, the border between East and West Germany was seen by both superpowers to be the first line of defence against mass invasion by enemy forces. For a BBC reporter, the present situation is ironic indeed :

Americans, posted to guard the frontline of the West, can only watch *the strange invasion* from the East. (MY EMPHASIS) (BBC1, 13.00, 13.11.89)

The word "haemorrhage" occurred in reports on the effects of the "exodus" on East Germany. Again, it implies the need for urgent action to halt the process. In this example from BBC News, the opening of the Wall is explained as,

a desperate measure by (the) communist government to try and stop the *haemorrhage* of people to the West. (MY EMPHASIS) (BBC1, 21.00, 10.11.89)

Overall, the language of crisis or disaster in this context depersonalised the East Germans as an anonymous mass to be directed and controlled. As such it became central to the shift in the news towards a negative framework for understanding the phenomenon. The change of public opinion in West Germany was explained as a response to an urgent 'problem', not as a desire to repatriate the very people whom the country welcomed with open arms only a week before. Suddenly, the 'good news' about East Germans deserting communist tyranny for democratic freedom became 'bad news'. The warm and unreserved West German welcome was replaced with 'squabbling' and 'panic' at state and local government levels. There appeared to be a dramatic collapse of the national consensus.

The 'disaster'/'crisis' framework also accommodated the theme of abnormality and helped reporters explain why a mass return was essential for a return to normality. The superpowers and their allies were worried. They liked 'stability' and 'normality' on agreed terms. In this respect, the disaster framework was not just specific to the issue of the 'refugees' - it framed the entire coverage of the events in Berlin that weekend. The 'before-and-after' model of analysis highlights the problem this created for reporting. It also demonstrates considerable differences of emphasis and framework

between television news and some sections of the press, particularly the 'quality broadsheets'.

The great welcome

Stories about the great welcome given to the first East Germans to arrive in West Germany reinforced the most positive features of western societies - 'freedom' and 'democracy'. A BBC reporter enthused about the efficiency of the West German welcome. The East Germans were given a warm welcome, put in temporary accommodation, and provided with a job and a new place to stay. Unlike notorious Stalinist bureaucracy, western organisation moved along with smooth efficiency, not in the least intrusive or overburdened with red-tape:

(RECEPTION CAMP, WEST GERMANY) It has to be a tribute both to the authorities and the local people here that within the last 24 hours some 10,000 East Germans have been absorbed into this corner of Bavaria with no apparent hint of discord or chaos. And they're ready and willing to receive many thousands more.

(BBC1, 13.00, 12.9.89)

At first, it was thought that the new citizens would fit in easily, that they had so much in common with their western compatriots there was little to be concerned about. Dr. Adrian Hyde-Price, an 'expert' on East European affairs, told the BBC that the East Germans would have fewer problems settling down than ethnic Germans from other East European countries because they were German speaking and,

Hyde-Price: often very hard working. A lot of them are quite well trained, and they have a commitment to try to form a new life in West Germany.

(BBC1, 13.00, 11.9.89)

It was also reported that the exodus was proving quite providential for West German employers. The Prime Minister of Bavaria, Max Streibel, declared that West Germany needed the East German 'refugees' and that there were up to 400,000 jobs on offer (*Channel Four News*, 11.9.89). And, according to a BBC report, the Federal Republic was suffering a shortage in skilled labour, even in the most advanced 'hi-tech' industries:

(FILM, BMW ASSEMBLY LINE, MUNICH) The vast BMW factory...employs about 250 former East Germans. The technology is vastly different from anything they're used to but like many other industries here, the company is desperately short of engineering and electrical staff. It has begun courses to help workers from the Eastern bloc adapt to the latest technology.

(BBC1, 13.00, 12.9.89)

Newsnight highlighted the central, historical role of the industrious East German worker in having built the GDR into the most successful East European economy. But while these skills are "desperately short" in the West, they are "harnessed" in the East:

There are no queues in East Germany. Unlike in other Warsaw Pact countries, there's plenty to buy despite centralised control. The great German work ethic has been harnessed by the state. (11.9.89)

(*Newsnight*, BBC2, 11.9.89)

Other reports implied that the general lack of the advanced skills among the new arrivals from the GDR was no object:

Most of them are young, some are unskilled for Western technology, but many are being recruited for jobs after weeks of anxious waiting (ITN, 22.00, 11.9.89)

Their youth, their German qualities of hard work and commitment, and their enthusiasms were enough. Indeed, a BBC News item reported that work was being found for East German 'refugees' even when their skill is surplus to requirements:

West Germany has a surplus of teachers. This week, the government started a new training course to help teachers from East Germany learn to work in Computers or Commerce.

It soon became apparent from the report that this was as much about 'them' being taught to *live* as to work according to 'our' way:

Reporter: The first lesson? How to manage their own financial and domestic affairs. (CUT TO COURSE ORGANISER:)

Course Organiser: They came from a country where they do not have to decide a lot of things in their lives...Most of the things...are decided by...government or the Party. And they come to West Germany and have to decide, "Do I take this appointment?", "Do I buy a car or a bike?", "How do I behave?"

(BBC1, 13.00, 12.9.89)

A few days after the Wall opened, the *Sunday Express* reported that West Germany was reluctant to accept teachers and academics at all, never mind retrain them for business: "Educationalists point out that the last thing West German parents want is a wave of teachers with 'totally different values to ours' " (12.11.89).

Reporting negative aspects of the "exodus" for West German economy and society

Although the exodus continued throughout September and October, the news did not report it to the same extent. There was a decline in the number of references to the positive aspects of the exodus for West Germany's economy and society (from 12 references in Sample Period 1 to none at all in Sample Period 3); and to the welcome given to the East German "refugees" (from 13 references to 2). However, this does not necessarily indicate a significant shift towards more negative coverage. The routinisation of the story over a period of eight weeks - a very long span in news-time - saw a decline in the depth and breadth of coverage. Routine news items were shorter, reporting only the 'facts and figures' about the extent and continuity of the exodus. Special focus items on the story were restricted to *Newsnight* (BBC) and *Channel Four News* (ITN).

A qualitative shift towards negative coverage did not become evident until just before the Wall opened. *The Independent* conjured up images of panic as "beleaguered" officials struggled to cope with what they described as "a national state of emergency" (10.11.89). It reported Allied plans for a dramatic airlift of East German refugees from West Berlin to the Federal Republic of Germany should the numbers of people wanting to stay increase. *The Independent* also quoted a West German newspaper, the *General Anzeiger*, warning East Germans that, "West Germany is no economic paradise" (11.11.89). By the beginning of the new week, television news stated that,

The street parties are old news. For refugees and their hosts, reality struck today. (ITN, 22.00, 13.11.89)

Television news referred to popular anxieties about the 'exodus' almost immediately after the Berlin Wall was opened up. The BBC noted that,

some West Berliners have warned that already there are shortages of jobs and housing. What's welcomed internationally may not be so popular locally.

(BBC1, 21.00, 9.11.89)

Television news reported the West German government's official and unofficial reactions but did not remark on their contradictions. For example *The News At Ten* led with the headlines,

West Germany's Leaders Say, "No one will be turned away!"

It then reported Chancellor Kohl's statement that,

it was in the interests of both Germanys for East German citizens to feel free enough to want to stay at home (ITN, 22.00, 9.11.89)

The press were more sensitive to the ambiguous 'push and pull' rhetoric of both government and opposition. *The Telegraph* reported on how, "West Germans Fall Out Amid Calls To Halt Influx" (10.11.89), and described the situation as an embarrassing "dilemma" for government rather than a contradiction in policy. The German journalist Josef Joffe remarked in *The Times* on "the ponderous circumlocutions" of politicians at *federal level* as they tried to reconcile the "dilemma" (9.11.89).

By 13 November, the story of how the country was barely able to cope with the numbers coming across had become prominent. Both *The Times* (13.11.89) and ITN were framing the story as "The Refugee Problem". ITN went so far as to suggest that West Germany's economic problems were *caused* by the influx of refugees rather than complicated by it. It reported that the federal and local authorities,

are wrestling with the problems of unemployment and housing that *that influx has brought about*. (MY EMPHASIS)

The federal government was beginning to count the cost of its widely praised generosity:

Every East German is given 35 Deutsch Marks. The West German government has given away 130 million in three days. (CONSTRUCTION OF PREFAB HUTS) They're preparing for the next wave but hoping it won't happen, and *they're reassessing their costly dreams of reunification*. (MY EMPHASIS)

(ITN, 22.00, 13.11.89)

Two local government officials in Berlin appeared in items on all 4 main ITN bulletins, and on BBC *Newsnight*, to say that the city could no longer cope with the numbers of East Germans who wanted to stay in the Federal Republic. One claimed that:

Manager, Refugee Reception Centre : There are too many people in a very short time. That's a problem. And they all want to be registered, they all need accommodation. (ITN, 13.11.89)

The press focused more on long-term negative aspects, mainly the problems of assimilating the East German "refugees". Of particular concern were the political divisions and social tensions that the influx of people was causing, including the fear of a backlash from the Far Right. The press also provided a wider impression of how public opinion in West Germany was changing against the East German "refugees". This was widely reported in the 'broadsheets' and two of the 'tabloids' (*Daily Mail*, *Daily Express*). The high circulation 'tabloids' (*The Sun*, the *Mirror*) confined themselves to a routine reporting of the 'facts and figures' of the movement of people; their coverage focused more on positive human interest angles on the opening of the Wall.

The East Germans took on a new guise in the *Financial Times* (FT) when it reported that "West German Parties Continue To Squabble" over how best to achieve "the integration of East German *emigrants* into West German society". Elsewhere in the same edition, concerns are voiced on both sides of the Berlin Wall as "Immigrants and Hosts Ponder the Economic Fall-out" (13.11.89). *The Daily Telegraph* turned a well-tuned ear to a philosophy familiar to British politics when it quoted a Bavarian politician complaining that "West German labour exchanges were too ready to hand out unemployment benefit to the newcomers instead of encouraging them to look actively for work. The East Germans should be told that they had duties as well as rights in their new home country" (10.11.89).

A less subtle undercurrent of opinion came to the surface when the press sought out the views of West German citizens. *The Sunday Express* (12.11.89) cited the Minister for Intra-German Relations, Dorothy Wilms, who claimed that 50% West Germans feared a national crisis because of the continuing influx of East Germans. To illustrate the nature and extent of that fear, it reported that:

Elderly and middle-aged people top the list of the unwanted. "We don't want all these old folks coming here to scrounge on us," said bank clerk Ossie Zommer, "East Germany keeps the money they've paid into their pensions and we have to support them."

A university research fellow in Bonn told *The Guardian* that she would never marry "one of them", an East German. She said that, "The people over there have been brought up in a completely different culture and I've more in common with the French and other West Europeans, even you British!" Another student saw events in East Germany as "a revolution of selfishness". He said that the people were "more set on travel and shopping, not politics" (14.11.89).

Popular resentment about the continuing migration of East Germans appeared to be linked to the fear that the Far Right would benefit. A housing official told the BBC about a shortage of housing stock in West Berlin and warned that,

There is a fear that...when more people are coming that this could give more votes to the right-wing parties. (Newsnight, BBC2, 13.11.89)

Indeed, in an earlier bulletin, the BBC reported that this is more than just a possibility:

The Far-Right have made gains *because* of the flood from the East. (MY EMPHASIS). (BBC1, 21.00, 10.11.89)

On both BBC and ITN, the Labour Party leader, Neil Kinnock warned in general terms about the destabilising effects of mass movements of people on the European Community. BBC News reported that,

These problems will affect Britain- the refugees are now Common Market citizens and could come to Britain. (BBC1, 13.00, 10.11.89)

A Labour foreign policy spokesperson was more specific about its short-term impact on West Germany. In an article for Scotland's *Sunday Mail*, George Robertson asserted that, "The refugee flood to West Germany is producing a right-wing backlash" (12.11.89). According to *The Times*, the Fascist threat was being used by Egon Krenz to destabilise West German society. This would, "...so worry NATO that German reunification could be shelved....clearly a factor in Herr Krenz's thinking" (11.11.89). Yet, other news sources suggested that the "right-wing backlash" thesis was being overstated. *Newsnight*, for example, reported from West Berlin that,

It's not the right-wing extremists who are worrying the coalition of Social Democrats and Greens running West Berlin's city government. They're far more upset by the reference to German reunification made right here...by Chancellor Kohl himself.

(Newsnight, BBC2, 13.11.89)

The Daily Telegraph reported that the extreme right-wing Republican Party was just as aware as any other party that this was no ordinary "refugee problem". It was therefore trying to "reconcile its policy of 'Germany for the Germans' with the influx from the East" (10.11.89).

In many respects, public debate in West Germany was following the same discursive patterns as that in Hong Kong about the Vietnamese boat-people. Distinctions were being made between "refugees" and "immigrants", "Germans" and "ethnic Germans", "Germans" and "non-Germans". And just as in Hong Kong, these distinctions were largely accepted by the British news media without question. ITN, for example, reported that :

(FILM, PROTEST BY TURKISH WORKERS) West Berlin still has problems integrating its *Turkish immigrants*, and the Turks showed today they won't give up anything for the *East German refugees*. (MY EMPHASES)

(ITN, 22.00, 13.11.89)

The Times reported the controversy surrounding the views of Herbert Schmalsteig. He was Social Democrat Mayor of Hanover and vice-president of the Federation of West German Towns and thus spoke for the peripheral view that was upsetting the party atmosphere and 'good news' theme of the events in Berlin. He appealed for an end to the influx of "refugees" and made a clear distinction between "Germans" from the GDR and "ethnic Germans" from Poland and the USSR. The reporter summed up Schmalsteig's argument that "the mass exodus of ethnic Germans was provoking a malaise among West Germans, who were becoming jealous, aggressive and antipathetic towards the new arrivals". It may be argued that the reporter was simply quoting a point of view but, later in his report, he reproduced the same fine distinctions between Germans. He remarked that the problem with "these people" from Poland and the Soviet Union was that they did not speak German, whereas Germans from the GDR did. They "often have no comparable skills to enable them to find a good job" and "are used to a low living standard and a way of life which does not fit in with the more prosperous West German standards" (11.11.89). The focus on the negative aspects of the exodus for West Germany's economy and society was central to how the news framed the story of the Great Return. However, this does not imply a complete absence in news accounts of contradictory messages.

Reporting positive aspects of the "exodus" for the West German economy and society

There were, for example, predictions that the intake of East Germans would trigger a great consumer boom and stimulate further growth in the country's economy. These were most evident from press coverage, in which 14 references appeared over the six-day sample (Table 4.5, above). Some newspapers resolved the apparent contradiction by interpreting talk of economic bonuses as *long-term prospects* that should be balanced against the short-term crisis. For example, the *Daily Telegraph* conceded that "Although West German economists predict that the influx of East

Germans could actually have a positive effect on the economy...its immediate negative social consequences are already being felt" (11.11.89). While reporting that "Exodus Fuels West German Shares Boom", *The Times* warned that "in the short term, it is widely acknowledged that the *immigrant masses* will put a huge financial burden on the government, increase unemployment and cause some *turbulence* in the smoothly-running, low-inflation economy" (11.11.89; MY EMPHASES).

Other accounts were less equivocal in their forecasts, and appeared in the same newspaper as those advising a cautious outlook. For example, *The Independent* reported how, "The wave of emotion...struggled in the hearts of the politicians with the fear that an already hard-pressed West Germany cannot cope with a massive increase in the flow of refugees" (11.11.89). However, on page 12, we find an item headed "Influx Promises Economic Boom For Bonn", in which Peter Torday, the Economics Correspondent, explained "why East Germany's loss should turn out to be West Germany's demographic gain". He argued that the cautious forecasts of "reasonable growth, moderate inflation and continuing record trade surpluses" would have to undergo some radical adjustments in light of events in Berlin. "Literally overnight", he said, "the outlook has been altered - possibly for years to come - to encompass booming growth, rekindled inflation, and a considerable and permanent reduction in the country's trade surpluses". The reporter was remarkably confident as he wrote out his prescription for an economic boom, making only slight allowances for the patient's circumstances. He reckoned that since "the East German refugees will have to find jobs...a construction boom to house them is set to ensue, fuelled in part by an DM 8bn (£2.6bn) housing investment programme". The long-term prognosis? "The resulting upsurge in consumer demand and in construction will probably ensure that the West German economy expands by more than 4 per cent next year - perhaps the fastest growth rate in Europe".

So what of the many reports that the East German immigrants were adding to the worsening unemployment situation? Torday had all angles covered. He revealed that there was no real unemployment problem as such, rather a series of bottlenecks in various sectors of the economy. The jobs were always there, he said, but no one to take them. But now "the arrival of 200,000 immigrants is likely to break down the bottlenecks...in the labour market; although there are two million people out of work in West Germany, there are hundreds of thousands of jobs available. And the chief obstacles to falling unemployment are mobility and skills, qualities which the new arrivals possess".

However, the item offered another reason why these jobs were not filled before the East German "refugees" arrived: they were relatively low paid jobs that a majority of West German citizens were unwilling to take up. The opening of the Wall, it emerged, was seen by many industrialists as marking the beginnings of a neo-colonialist golden age. A senior economist from West Germany's powerful *Deutsche Bank*, argued that the opening up of Eastern Europe was "the equivalent of the discovery by Europe of Latin America, exploiting cheap labour and cheap supplies". *The Independent* journalist closed with the prediction that the rest of western Europe would benefit from the off-shoots of the boom. Europe could rest easy. "Expectations of ebbing economic growth or even recession probably have been banished for years".

A closer look at other media reveals underlying contradictions in and qualifications to this theme. On 13 November, two days after Torday's item, *Newsnight* reported that,

the Deutsch Mark continues to be weak. *Dealers are nervous about the implications of the events in Berlin for the German economy.* The pound rose at 2.94(25)DM, up by three quarters of a pfennig. The pound has made steady gains against the German currency as recent events have unfolded. (MY EMPHASES).

(*Newsnight*, BBC2, 13.11.89)

The next morning, the *FT* featured a report headlined, "Euphoria Spreads To The Stock Markets". The item suggested that such euphoria would soon wear off but "for the moment, television pictures of eager East German visitors snapping up goods in the shops gave many shares a new impetus" (14.11.89).

The spectacle of consumerism among the newly converted East Germans seemed to fascinate many journalists and commentators. It was easy to find examples of how the news celebrated this as a vindication of western capitalism. Yet when working according to the new rubric, The Great Return, the news also reported that the prices in West Berlin/German shops were *too high* for most East Germans to afford. On 10 November, BBC News reported how the scenes in West Berlin highlighted the economic distortions of a western capitalist enclave in the heart of a Communist state. The people roamed the city's finest shopping streets, and were given directions to the best stores offering the best deals:

The problem is, they can look but they can't buy.

(BBC1, 18.00, 10.11.89)

However, in a report the next day he relayed a very different impression:

The first big queue is for West German money, a free gift to all East Germans of 100 Marks, about £35. In the end, the banks ran out and had to borrow from department stores. Those wanting to spend money today besieged western shops. There are goods they have never seen before, except on television, and ways of paying for them unheard of under Communism. And give-away gimmicks from a supermarket chain! Bags of chocolate and coffee!

(BBC1, 17.00, 11.11.89)

The ITN journalist, John Suchet, followed a "typical" East German family "From East To West" for a day-trip to the shops. He continually stressed that they could "only look and dream", before returning to their homes and work in the GDR:

To the Kurfurstendam now, West Berlin's most famous shopping street that Simone has seen on TV, read about in the papers, and *dreamed of*. And *dream* was all she could do. (MY EMPHASES)

The reporter followed the family around the fashionable and expensive Ku'damm stores. The clothes and the 'trainers' were reportedly beyond their budget but they eventually found a 'pound-stretcher' store and something they *could* afford for their son:

But sweatshirts at £5.50 are still too much. Braces at £1.50, though - that's perfect! In fact, they'll buy him two!

The reporter maintained the up-beat, good-news theme, throughout. Looking down from a balcony on a crowded street, he reflected on how incredible it all was :

It's extraordinary! This is probably the busiest shopping day that West Berlin has ever known! Just look at the crowds down there! The irony of it is most of them are East Berliners and they simply aren't buying anything! For East Germans, West Berlin is a city to look at and *dream*. (REPORTER'S EMPHASIS)

Finally, we heard what the East German family thought of it all :

Would they like to come and live in the West? "No! The people aren't as friendly here as in the East." And how on earth would they find a job? They're happy for life in the West to remain (ZOOM, CLOSE-UP, CHILD SLEEPING) - *a dream*.

(REPORTER'S EMPHASIS) (Last Days Of The Wall, ITN, 14.00, 12.11.89)

According to the *FT*, however, the "Shopping bag becomes flag of freedom for visiting East Germans". John Lloyd reported "on a tide of consumption as East Germans celebrated...by shopping until they were broke on their forays into the capitalist West". In contrast to John Suchet, Lloyd implied that money was no object for East Germans with a nose for a bargain. Their shopping bags were from West Berlin's most famous stores and they were loaded with "*Sonys* and *Panasonics* and *Phillips*: home computers and audio tape-recorders and CD-players and toys for the kids...Oh what joy, to shop until you're broke!" (11.11.89)

The Independent must have sent its reporters to a very different Berlin for they presented a different and rather more drab version of reality for the East German consumers who visited the city that weekend. They didn't 'shop until they were broke'. Far from being loaded with hi-tech booty, they returned home at the end of the day carrying "plastic bags containing their modest purchases - cheap Western products, small electronic gadgets, special offers put on by shops - for their money would not run to expensive goods" (13.11.89). Even though the West German government gave each East German 100DMs (£35) to spend, it is difficult to accept that they could afford to buy expensive goods as those mentioned in Lloyd's report. Unless, that is, they met up with the same West German business man whom the *Daily Mail* saw "...handing out sheaves of 50-Mark notes to the crowds of sight-seeing East Germans in (a) hotel lobby. 'I just wanted them to have some hard currency so they can enjoy the city while they are here,' he explained" (11.11.89).²³

Reporting negative aspects of exodus for the GDR's economy and society

As shown, there was a considerable shift of attention from the positive to the negative effects of the exodus on West German society when the Berlin Wall opened. A similar pattern of coverage emerges if we look at how the news media reported the impact of the 'exodus' on East Germany. There was a shift in focus here from concern with how the exodus was paralysing a moribund political apparatus to how it was hurting the East German people who had chosen to stay at home. This shift of focus originated in the news during Sample Period 3 - just *before* the Berlin Wall opened.

At the height of the 'exodus' in September 1989, television news examined the likely impact it would have on the government. In Part One, I showed how the media portrayed the GDR as a hardline Stalinist state that was resistant to *perestroika*-style reform and isolated within the Warsaw Pact. As its people left for the West in their thousands, the government had to choose between stopping the "exodus" or allowing

it to continue in the hope that it would be temporary:

The only way to stop the flow is for the...government to close its borders with its East bloc neighbours, but that might be seen as the ultimate sign of political failure. (ITN, 13.00, 11.9.89)

The question is whether Mr Honecker will now have to give in to Soviet and West German persuasion or continue to resist change and so risk a further drain on his population? (BBC1, 18.00, 11.9.89)

When the GDR celebrated its 40th Anniversary in October, the news reported it as being a mere side-show,

as long as the *real* news...continues to be dominated by the flight of refugees to the West (REPORTER'S EMPHASIS). (ITN, 22.00, 5.10.89)

By the beginning of November, however, reports from the GDR began to look at the human cost of the 'exodus':

East Germany's health service is facing a crisis because more than a thousand doctors and nurses have joined the exodus of refugees. The authorities have been forced to set up an emergency system of medical aid...

The refugees are young, many are skilled. East Germany is losing the people it needs most. (ITN, 17.40, 3.11.89)

One week later, hours after the Wall opened, ITN featured similar, more detailed reports from Leipzig on the detrimental effects of the exodus not only on the city's health service but also on industry and education:

All the hospitals here are having to cope with chronic staff shortages, as doctors and nurses join the exodus to the West. It's the patients who are suffering as wards are closed, operations cancelled. (ITN, 20.45, 12.11.89)

Although East Germany's in the top-twenty league of industrialised nations, without its skilled workers the economy is set to slide. (ITN, 13.00, 13.11.89)

Reporter: Those (East Germans) like this teacher who did return were anxious about what they would find at work, this morning.

Teacher: We've got lots of problems at school. A lot of children are not coming back, at least five in every class, because their parents have gone to...West Germany. On Monday...I expect a lot more won't come...

(Channel Four News, 13.11.89)

The *Daily Mail* also took up the story as it revealed "The Sad Truth About This Exodus" for those in East Germany who decided to remain (14.11.89).

The 'refugees' return

With East Germany suffering from a drain of its skilled workers and West Germany no longer coping with so many, the return home of the people became good news. Although most East Germans went back without persuasion or force, there were several problems with the way in which their return was constructed as a news story. Some of these arise out of the use that the news made of official statistics. The certainty with which pre-packaged reports managed official and unofficial statistics belied the uncertainty and confusion of the real situation. Reports obscured the fact that significant numbers of East Germans were *still* crossing over to stay in the West. Another problem was the sudden legitimacy of the East German state. West German officials, including Chancellor Kohl, and western leaders such as Bush and Thatcher, implored the East Germans to return home and rebuild their country. No one including the news media seemed to acknowledge that this represented quite a remarkable U-turn. Up until the Wall came down the GDR was the 'bankrupt' state that could not exist outwith the prevailing socialist system of economy and politics. This section will examine these aspects of coverage in some detail.

Statistics

My principal concern was with the use of statistics and numerical expressions in reporting the numbers of East Germans crossing over to the West and then returning, and the numbers of those preferring to stay on a permanent basis. I systematically listed every reference to these statistics and discovered serious confusion and mis-reporting of official and unofficial estimates. I argue that this feature of coverage was central to the construction of the 'refugee crisis' story and its subsequent normalisation in the news.

Most of the statistics were derived from official West German estimates and East German statements about applications for exit-visas and travel visas.²⁴ These were constantly confused and resulted in some glaring inconsistencies between and within news reports. Some items took the total of applications for travel and exit visas and implied that that was the number of East Germans crossing into the West. However, not all East Germans were granted such visas and not all those who received them actually used them. Some people applied for exit visas but changed their minds and stayed at home after the Wall came down. Reports also confused the

figures for people crossing over to West Berlin and those for people crossing into West Germany along the main frontier. As a result, we were variably informed that four million or two million or 1.5 million, or even as few as 800,000 East Germans had crossed or were crossing over. The figure for people wanting to live in the West ranged from 30,000, downwards to 8,000 (or "a few thousand"). This is a recurring problem with the way the news media construct a certain version of 'reality'. It raises the question of how statistics are used and represented in any social discourse for a particular purpose, be it figures for mass migration, industrial disputes, the economy or health.

Potter *et al* (1991) examine the problem with reference to how television documentary and current affairs in Britain handled a debate (in 1988) about the actual extent of success and advancement in cancer research. The core arguments in this debate depended a great deal on statistics and how these were expressed and presented to the public. Thus, Potter *et al* were concerned with "quantification as rhetoric", that is "how practices of quantification and the construction of numerical versions are marshalled in the course of arguments".²⁵

The Glasgow University Media Group (1985), and McNair (1988), have shown how the distortion of statistics by sources and the news media themselves entered reporting of the Zero Option/START talks between the superpowers during the New Cold War, 1981-84. However, McNair also offers instances when journalists challenged these statistics and, therefore, the claims for which they were used to support. The GUMG identifies a similar use/misuse of statistics in the reporting of the miner's strike in Britain, 1984-85, to support the British Coal Board's claim that there was a "Drift Back" to work by miners.²⁶ The tendency for the news media to report official or uncorroborated information during post-disaster situations has been noted in several studies.²⁷ Kitzinger and Miller found serious exaggerations and inconsistencies in media estimates for the numbers of people in Africa infected with HIV or suffering from AIDS; these, they argue, suggest "a cavalier approach" by journalists to the story which serves to reinforce underlying cultural assumptions about the origins and spread of HIV.²⁸

Following are some examples of how the mis-reporting of statistics affected the story of the return home of most East Germans. There was a considerable disparity between the confusion among journalists in Berlin and the empirical certainties of packaged news accounts. Take, for example, the following edited extract from a live conversation from BBC news between the newscaster in London and the reporter on

the scene, in West Berlin:

Newscaster : And presumably, we have *no clear idea* of how many people in the last 24 hours have come across with the intention of staying? *It must be dreadfully confused?*

Reporter: It is *a very confused, very chaotic situation*...it's hard to know how many are coming to stay and how many are going back, but certainly there are dozens and dozens coming in every hour. (MY EMPHASES)

(BBC1, 13.00, 10.11.89)

In a live conversation between journalists, such confusion might be expected. Indeed, it could be accepted as an accurate representation of the prevailing situation in Berlin. However most television news coverage of the events in Berlin was composed of scripted studio links and pre-recorded, structured film reports. The formal, professional and ideological constraints which package news so tightly came into play to construct a less fallible version of an uncertain reality. The situation is reported in terms of "facts and figures". Absent is the confusion about who was coming and who was going back. The following statements come from pre-recorded film reports and show the news to be more definite about the figures for those staying in the West and those going home:

Only a thousand of the masses who've crossed so far have failed to return.

(ITN, 22.00, 10.11.89)

Headline: More than a million cross to the West but almost all go home at nightfall

(ITN, 21.50, 11.11.89)

While reporting that "the West German authorities stopped counting" after the first 10,000 East Germans crossed into the West (BBC1, 13.00, 10.11.89), the news maintained the exercise. The reporting of figures in the news texts in this sample became so routine that inconsistencies and exaggerations can not be written off as insignificant, as mere narrative 'colour'. They conveyed a certain meaning about what was happening. At the beginning of the weekend these statistics were used to convey the magnitude of the crowds in West Berlin and also the extent to which the events there were "abnormal". Television news reported on the basis of estimates and predictions for overall numbers. The general extent of the influx was conveyed using terms such as "thousands upon thousand" of East Germans, "millions of" people, with qualifiers such as "may have", "could", "more than" or "up to". Used in context with the "flood" metaphor, the end result is quite effective in conveying the sense of abnormality and emergency:

Thousands of East Berliners are still pouring across the border...West Germany may have to accommodate up to a million more refugees

(BBC1, 13.00, 10.11.89)

As literally hundreds of thousands of East Germans arrive over the next few days, this is potentially almost as big a crisis for Bonn as it is for East Berlin.

(ITN, 13.00, 10.11.89)

The tabloid press went further by expressing the flow of people as a rate: the *Mirror* put this at "400 young refugees an hour" (9.11.89), while *The Sun* settled for "300 emigrants an hour" (9.11.89). This had the effect of stressing the extent and urgency of the "problem".

By Monday, the reporting of figures focused on the trends towards a general return of East Germans to their own country. This tied in with the way in which the news 'wrapped-up' coverage of events in Berlin. Reports were presenting a picture of another sort of return: to near-normality, calm and order. Statistics were expressed in percentages or fractions with the effect of minimising the scale of the problem:

Reporter: Very few of the thousands who have crossed, so far, have failed to return.

*Newscaster:...*more than 2 million East Germans crossed onto Western soil...and, remarkably, *at least 99%* of them came back here to East Berlin. (MY EMPHASES)

(ITN 13.00, 13.11.89)

It's estimated that *only 2%* (of East Germans) do not plan to return. (MY EMPHASIS)

(*Channel Four News*, ITN, 13.11.89)

News accounts also referred to these figures when calculating the likely cost of the general welcome to the West German authorities. On that basis, it was implied that such cost was so great that it could not be sustained in the present economic circumstances. An ITN reporter calculated that,

The cost for the West German government is enormous. East Germans get £35 when they cross: *4 million have done so*. That's *about (£)130 million* given away in the past three days. At the British (Army) refugee centre, they're preparing for the next wave. *The West Germans are now hoping that these family rooms won't be filled*. (MY EMPHASES)

But how does that calculation stand against a later remark by the newscaster that,
Two million East Germans crossed onto West German soil for the first time over
 the last three days. (MY EMPHASIS) (ITN, 13.00, 13.11.89)

Similar disparities occurred on *Channel Four News* and *Newsnight* that evening. The
 Channel Four newscaster opened with a West Berlin government estimate that,
 a quarter of the entire population of East Germany have now crossed into the
 city: that's *four million people*, of whom 8,000 have actually stayed.

This was followed by a film report which undercut the newscaster's figure by half:
 Of the *2 million* people who crossed the border in Berlin, this weekend, only a
 few thousand stayed. (MY EMPHASES) (*Channel Four News*, 13.11.89)

Later that evening, *Newsnight* opened with the news that "a million and a half" East
 Germans visited West Berlin over the weekend:

By far the majority of people have gone home but *30,000* have stayed in the
 West.

A news item then reported that:

six thousand of those who've arrived since last Thursday have decided to make
 the break. (13.11.89)

That the great majority of East Germans were returning could not be disputed, but
 many still chose to live in the West and their numbers were significant. On the basis
 of the news' own logic, the problems they were 'causing' remained and the situation
 was far from 'normal'. For example, on *Newsnight*, the journalist Julian O'Halloran
 reported from a refugee reception camp in West Berlin, four days after the Wall
 opened. He dismissed the Great Return thesis as an illusion:

Because the vast majority of East Germans who came to West Berlin in the last
 five days were day-trippers or weekenders, the impression's being created that
 the flow of real, permanent refugees to West Germany has dried up. But what's
 going on here proves that is either an optical illusion or wishful thinking. The
 hundreds of East Germans in this building came within the last 52 hours and
 they're now filling in forms to settle here, with no intention whatsoever of
 going back East. (*Newsnight*, BBC2, 13.11.89)

This was supported in an item from the *Daily Mail* (14.11.89) which argued that "The Great Return" story did not alter the fact that over 200,000 people left East Germany since the beginning of 1989 and were causing problems for the host country. The *Times* reported that the Federal Republic had to assimilate 900,000 immigrants in nine months (13.11.89). However, while Julian O'Halloran was right to call it "an optical illusion", it was one that was in part created by the news media and which could have been avoided.

These were just some of the most glaring variants concerning the reporting of figures, their accuracy and their sources. This served to obscure the true scale of movement to the West and back again. Far from being a petty issue, the mis-reporting of statistics - whether official or estimated - determined how the overall story was understood. While on a very basic level, reports of four million East Germans receiving visas failed to distinguish between who was staying in the West and who was returning to the GDR. However, in context with the wider issue of 'the refugee problem', these same statistics supported the crisis theme, justified the use of disaster metaphors like "the flood", and legitimated the calls for urgent action to persuade most East Germans to return. There was, however, the question of what exactly they were to return to.

The GDR is dead. Long Live the GDR

Just before the Wall opened, the German journalist Josef Joffe wrote in *The Times*, that the reforms already underway in the GDR were not stemming the exodus, rather encouraging more people to leave (9.11.89). The *Daily Mail* looked at the exodus from the East German side of the Berlin Wall and featured a brief item headed, "Reforms, But They Still Pour Out". However, this idea was soon jettisoned by commentators when the implications of events for the West became apparent: a possible mass exodus far exceeding anything seen so far. Suddenly, the idea that reforms in the GDR might keep people at home began to gain currency. Two days after the Wall opened, the *Daily Express* reported how Krenz's "Promises Of Reform Stem The Human Torrent" (11.11.89).

It was now a viable proposition to encourage reform if it would keep the East German people at home. A survey of the press shows a clear emphasis on the need for return, with a total of 29 statements as against 15 statements of welcome for the East Germans (Table 4.5, above). We can see how the emphasis on a return to the GDR represents a shift in theme by looking at television news across our four samples before and after the Wall opened. Table 4.4, above shows a reversal in the

number of statements welcoming the East Germans (from 17 to 10 statements) and those hoping for a general return home (from 12 to 23).

During the early stages of the "exodus", in September, any anxieties that may have existed were cast aside. The prevailing mood was one of euphoria and welcome. In Sample Period 1, only two voices suggested that it might be preferable for the people to stay at home: the Prime Minister of Bavaria (*Channel Four News*, 11.9.89) and the British Foreign Office (BBC1, 13.00, 12.9.89). In both cases, however, this was qualified by a call to the GDR to introduce the type of reforms that would encourage its young people to stay. In coverage of the GDR's 40th Anniversary (7 October), the news reported only two statements urging East Germans to return to or stay at home. Both were attributed to Mikhail Gorbachev. But this has to be considered in context with the assumption in the news that the Soviet leader was going through the motions of giving public support to his East German counterpart, Erich Honecker.

During Sample Period 3 (2-4 November), the news reported a new "wave" of refugees heading west via Prague and Warsaw. They were portrayed as mostly young people who had run out of patience for reform. There were 8 statements in the news favouring a return to East Germany in this period. However, these all originated with East German leaders anxious to halt the exodus by showing how serious they were about reforms. Over this eight-week period, therefore, any western anxieties that may have existed about a continuing influx of East Germans were certainly not apparent from British television news coverage. This of course needs to be taken in context with the general scepticism in the media that East Germany could be reformed. 'What were the people to go back to?', was a common refrain.

The return of East Germans to their own country, to what they regard as home, was not a new phenomenon. When the exodus was at its height in September, the news reported that many East German holiday-makers in Hungary were not joining the exodus but going back home. Their numbers however were reported as having little significance:

Newscaster: The Hungarians say a further 16, 000 East Germans have crossed the border from Czechoslovakia and many continue onto West Germany. But at the same time, it said, 26, 000 *East German tourists have decided to return home.*

Reporter: Not all East Germans are taking advantage of Hungary's open border. Thousands of those who've flocked to the holiday camps every year are going back as normal, *although that will probably be of little comfort to the government in East Berlin.* (MY EMPHASES) (BBC1, 13.00, 12.9.89)

It seems odd that 26,000 people returning home should be regarded as offering "little comfort" to their government. This is a very presumptuous statement to make in the absence of any understanding why those people wanted to return and what they thought of those who were leaving for West Germany. A week before the Wall opened, ITN reported on latest movement of East Germans, this time through the newly opened Czech-West German border. The journalist was sceptical about an example of *glasnost* in East German news coverage of the exodus, reporting that, television wasn't showing its viewers refugees heading West, rather *model East Germans* enjoying the new travel rights (INTERPRETS INTERVIEW WITH WOMAN ON GDR TV) "We just want to go shopping, have a good cup of coffee, and have a look round. That will be marvellous for us!" (MY EMPHASIS) (ITN, 13.00, 2.11.89)

After the Berlin Wall was opened, and everyone was granted free travel to the West, some journalists seemed surprised that most East Germans were "model citizens" returning home after a day out in the West. This was derived from an assumption that most East Germans would leave the country given the first free opportunity:

I think it's pretty clear many are going to come back. And they see East Germany as their home and they want to help rebuild it. (*Channel Four News*, 10.11.89)

But these were not people abandoning their country. Most were simply heading for the night-out of their lives. (BBC1, all bulletins, 10.11.89)

After the weekend party in the West, it's back to work for the East Berliners. (ITN, 17.40, 13.11.89)

Headline: East Germans are still coming west - most think home's best. (ITN, 22.00, 13.11.89)

Those East Germans who wanted to stay in the West, no matter what reforms were passed in their country, were warned about the hazards and pitfalls of life in the West. A local government official in West Berlin appeared on four ITN bulletins on 13 November to imply that life in East Germany wasn't so bad after all:

What we think is that people will prefer their nice houses in East Berlin to a bed in one of our gymnastic halls

The *Glasgow Herald* reported a warning from the West German Interior Minister, Wolfgang Schaeuble, who "warned that every refugee must realise that he will have to live in inadequate housing for a fairly long time, *in conditions probably worse than he had at home*. In other words, the green grass on the other side of the fence may well prove less attractive than the red grass back home" (11.11.89; MY EMPHASIS). This was the same man who welcomed East Germans with open arms hours after the Wall opened, promising that "No one will be turned away!".

Throughout the Cold War, the western news media played on distorted comparisons between life in the West and in the East, using the two Berlins as convenient metaphors. Not only were these images presented to people in the West but transmitted across the Wall into many East German households as truthful and reliable representations of reality East and West.²⁹ Now, they were being asked to look at the western media another way:

(They) know that their western magazines only tell part of the story. A new generation must now make up its own mind. (ITN, 17.40, 13.11.89)

Conclusion

It may be possible to argue that the patterns of coverage I have analysed so far simply represent an inevitable media response to an emerging problem. In fact, the 'problem' of 'ethnic-' and 'non-German' immigrants, and the debate over West Germany's 'open-door' immigration policy, became news not because of its sudden occurrence but because of its renewed relevance. Consideration should be given to some news items on the East German "refugees" from the summer of 1989, before the exodus reached its peak. Their recovery serves to remove the last sinews of legitimacy from the whole story of East German "refugee" exodus and support the argument that those people should never have been labelled "refugees" in the first place.

When Hungary opened its border with Austria in May 1989, its Warsaw Pact allies protested about the lack of consultation. The official Western response was one of approval but in a brief reference to the affair, *The Times* noted an underlying unease about its future implications. Western euphoria about "a huge exodus" of East Europeans from a "crisis-ridden" Communist system was tempered with caution as it became obvious that the West's long-term interests were under threat. It seemed that

the "twitchy Austrians, already faced with thousands of refugees in overflowing camps, (were) privately grumbling that the removal of the fences (would) cost them more for stepped-up patrols" (3.5.89).

Given the extent of publicity surrounding the East German exodus, it would have been difficult for West Germany to enforce restrictions. The story had great propaganda value but it bore little relation to public opinion in West Germany about "the immigrant problem" there. In August 1989, ITN qualified West Germany's 'traditional' open-arms policy:

West Germans have worked hard to rebuild their country in the years since the war. This year alone, they're being asked to share that wealth with over 400,000 refugees from Eastern Europe. According to political observers here, the immigrant issue remains the single most important challenge to Chancellor Kohl's political future. All the refugees will have to be found employment and housing. And, for the first time since the Berlin Wall went up..., the people of west Germany are beginning to ask themselves just how long this open-door policy can be sustained. (ITN, 13.00, 25.8.89)

Even during Sample Period 1, when coverage was at its most up-beat, there was a note of foreboding of things to come:

East European Expert: It's much easier...for the Federal Republic to absorb refugees from East Germany than it is for ethnic Germans from other parts of the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. (BBC1, 13.00, 11.9.89)

More than 75,000 refugees have already arrived...this year and...many of them will find it difficult to adapt to such a completely different society. (BBC1, 13.00, 12.9.89)

So, in a similar logic to the 'disaster story' rubric on the news, appeals for urgent action to solve immediate problems depend to some extent on doom-laden warnings of worse problems to come if nothing is done.

The way this shift in political rhetoric was reported reveals some serious inconsistencies and confusion in news media accounts. If the story had been reported as one of economic migration in the first place, there would have been little problem. But it was not. On the whole, the news media followed the dominant rhetoric about the East German exodus from the very beginning and accepted its turnabout without serious inquiry. In doing so, they inadvertently gave lie to their original premise: that this was a "refugee" story and, as such, that the "refugees" were "fleeing" a country without hope for reform.

Notes

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- ¹ **Sample 5: BBC & ITN bulletins, 13.6.89.** Emergency session of the United Nations High Commission for Refugees in Vienna on 13 June 1989. This was convened on request of Britain and Hong Kong who wanted approval for a programme of "forcible repatriation" of Vietnamese "refugees".
- Sample 6 : BBC (& 1 ITN) bulletins, 6.9.89 - 12.9.89.** Reports on the Vietnamese boat people evacuated from one overcrowded detention camp in Hong Kong to another because of an outbreak of cholera. These were part of a special series of reports on Vietnam by Brian Barron.
- ² The United Nations considers a "refugee" to be :
- Any person who owing to well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of...nationality and is unable to avail...of the protection of that country; or who, not having a nationality and being outside the country of...former habitual residence, is unable, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to return to it. (The UN Convention Relating To The Status Of Refugees 1951; in Joly, 1990, p.4)
- ³ Joly (1990: 26)
- ⁴ Zolberg *et al* (1989 : 270)
- ⁵ White and White (1983:122), Loescher (1989:16)
- ⁶ Zolberg *et al* (1989: 3-4); the authors do not clarify what they mean by "the press" here. The term is too often used as a catch-all description of quite diverse news media. Are they referring to print or broadcast journalism, or to both? To 'quality' newspapers or 'tabloids'? Each is a distinct form with its own particular news values and editorial priorities; and each yields a variable degree of open space in which dominant views can be contested (Schlesinger *et al*, 1983). I make this point here because the news media in Britain were not entirely consensual in their definitional choices when constructing the story of the East German "refugee" exodus.
- ⁷ John Major, *Channel Four News*, 11.9.89
- ⁸ see Zetter (1991) for an overview of the problems attending bureaucratic rationales for labelling migrants as "refugees" or "non-refugees".
- ⁹ Chomsky (1975)
- ¹⁰ Zolberg *et al* (1989), Zetter (1991)
- ¹¹ McNair (1988)
- ¹² For some examples of how these sort of assumptions informed images of and comparisons between East and West Germany in the news during the early 1980s, see McNair, (1988: 31-35); and for examples of how it was possible to extend beyond the Cold War paradigm for a broader perspective on the East German state, see McNair (1988: 31-35), Childs (1969, 1983), Steele (1977), Scharf (1984)
- ¹³ White and White (1983: 116-133)

¹⁴ A forceful critique of conditions in the camps was presented in "The Final Betrayal", a documentary in Channel Four's *Critical Eye* series (13.10.91). It gathered its evidence from human rights lawyers and former officials in the camps. One lawyer suggested that conditions for the Vietnamese boat people in Hong Kong were so bad that they may soon need refuge *from* the colony. He argued that refugee law is rendered meaningless when those seeking protection are harmed or endangered.

¹⁵ Dimbleby, J., "Trading With The Enemy" in BBC2's foreign affairs series, *Assignment*, 3rd March 1992

¹⁶ Ibid.; Dimbleby cited Amnesty International estimates of the number of persons Missing In Action in the Vietnam War as about 2,000 Americans and some 300,000 Vietnamese. He pointed out that the Vietnamese government has so far made no demands of the US to find these people or confirm them dead.

I found only one reference in the news samples to the US embargo. This was a recommendation to the US administration that it should end on the basis that the Vietnamese had done all they could to trace MIAs. It came from Chair of the All-Party British-Vietnam Group, Jim Lester, Conservative MP (*The World This Week*, Channel Four, 10.6.89)

¹⁷ A refugee described his experience of this screening procedure in "The Final Betrayal" :

(SUBTITLES) The...interview is like being on trial in court. The officers in the immigration department don't understand the plight of the Vietnamese. They ask only two or three questions from a set list, then they adjourn. They just write us off after a few weeks. I think a lot of people in the camp are uneasy because even if they've evidence and good reason for leaving, the Hong Kong government still refuses them refugee status.

The lawyers in this film were united in their criticism of the screening process, rejecting it in turn as "...a travesty of justice", a process with "...massive defects", such as the denial to the refugees of proper legal representation. In face of such odds, they argue, it is hardly surprising that so few boat-people are accepted as refugees.

¹⁸ Levin, B. (1989)

¹⁹ Young, H. "Comradely deal on the refugees", *The Guardian*, 9 November 1989

²⁰ An exodus of thousands of ethnic Turks from Bulgaria to Turkey began from the end of May 1989 and throughout the year. The people were leaving after repeated attempts by the Zhivkov government to assimilate them into Bulgarian culture. Across the border in Turkey, they were accommodated in tent-cities by the Islamic Red Crescent. Again, the case is similar in some ways to that of the East Germans. A comprehensive survey of bulletins for June 1989 yielded only four news items on the story, all of these on ITN.

²¹As I show later in this chapter, such estimates are problematic and need to be taken with considerable reserve when used in context of the refugee story in the news.

²² Two newspaper cartoons picked up on the flood metaphor to comment on events in Berlin; see *The Sunday Times* and *Scotland on Sunday*, 12.11.89

²³ The contradictions inherent in the 'triumph of capitalism' theme were apparent in the reporting of all the East European 'revolutions' in 1989. This is discussed in McLaughlin (1993)

²⁴ The *Observer* reports that those visas issued at the GDR-FRG border - the majority - allow unlimited travel for 6-month period (Mark Frankland, "A Dream Of Freedom", *Observer*, 12.11.89).

²⁵ Potter *et al* (1991: 334)

²⁶ *Coal Board News*, GUMG video

²⁷ Waxman (1973), Scanlon *et al* (1978), NRC (1980)

²⁸ Kitzinger and Miller (1991:8)

²⁹ see Chapter One

CHAPTER FIVE

The News After The Wall: Options for Change

Introduction

George Kennan was one of the primary definers of the Cold War paradigm of understanding the world after the second world war. In an article published in the *Guardian*, he conceded that the paradigm was rapidly collapsing. He advised against a rush to German unity because of two problems with the "world order" as he saw it: one short-term, the other long-term. In the short term, there was the problem of preserving stability in Europe. If this could be achieved, people could then address the long-term problem of building completely new security structures for the whole of the continent of Europe, "to replace the old one so deeply impregnated with Cold War assumptions that are no longer applicable". He concludes by offering a blue-print paradigm for a new world order: "We must prepare instead for a searching examination of the ways in which Europe's security is to be achieved in an age where the great enemy is not the Soviet Union, but the rapid deterioration of our planet as a supporting structure for civilised life".¹

Most people, however, did not look that far ahead. It seemed a difficult enough task to prescribe immediate remedies. Just after the Berlin Wall opened, Jeremy Paxman remarked that it took,

something of a leap of imagination to realise that there are some people - politicians, industrialists and, above all, generals - who've been watching the scenes in Berlin with a feeling other than joy in their hearts because the events of the last few days raise enormous potential questions.

(BBC2 *Newsnight*, 10.11.89)

He might have had in mind Cold War strategists like Admiral William Crowe, a former chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, who summed up the loss of Cold War certainty for western security interests in a submission to the US Congressional Joint Economic Committee. "This", he said, "is a time of very uncertain strategic transition. The future ain't what it used to be".² But Paxman might also have added "journalists" to his list of suspects. Amid such uncertainty, they reported public opinion in East and West about the way forward for both Germanys after the Wall. This was in context with two concurrent key developments: the reforms in Eastern Europe, and the political and economic integration of the European Community. In this chapter, I will look at how the news filtered competing visions of a 'New Germany' and what it might

mean for East and West. Some reference to relevant press output will help set a standard of comparison.

Three options for change dominated the news discourse in this initial period. These set out what might, could, or should happen in the two Germanys 5 to 10 years after the Wall opened, and are quantified in **Table 5.1**, below.

Option One was that East Germany should press ahead with reforms and hold 'free elections' as soon as possible. **Option Two** was that, for the sake of stability in Europe, German reunification could only come about in the distant future. A whole range of questions had to be addressed first. In the meantime the two Germanys should remain within their existing 'spheres of influence'. These two options were favoured by diverse interest groups, for their own particular reasons: the governments of the GDR, the Soviet Union and Britain, the East German reform movement, and anti-European federalists. **Option Three** was for German unity but only within Western economic and security structures. Its proponents were the governments of West Germany, the US, and France, and pro-European federalists. Apart from those sources which actively proposed one or other of these Options, there were others that were more ambiguous or circumspect. So while a British politician might talk in terms of German unity in an article in the press or on television news, he or she might not actually favour it as an option. Yet his or her input could not be ignored on that basis: it is part of the discourse and is treated as such in this analysis.

Method

The principle aim of my analysis is to provide quantitative and qualitative profiles of official and elite opinion in the immediate aftermath of the Wall's collapse.

The first task was to check each reported statement in every bulletin in the sample for relevant references to the options outlined above (506 statements in 39 bulletins). It is important here to make a clear distinction between *reported statement* and *reference*. For example, in a statement to the media, a foreign minister might refer to **Option One**, the need for reform in the GDR, and then to **Option Two**, the view that the two Germanys should remain separate countries. These were sometimes but not always interdependent therefore I counted them as two separate references. In my qualitative analysis, I ensured that they were kept in their proper political context and in context, too, with how they occurred in the news item.

The second task was to categorise sources according to a) government or non-government representatives, and to b) country of origin. So, for example, we can see from **Table 5.1**, below, that there were 66 references from all East German (GDR) sources to the need for reform in the GDR. Furthermore, **Table 5.2**, gives a break down of this figure to show that of these 66, 23 originated in statements by East German government sources.

Preliminary results

Table 5.1, below, summarises the quantitative profile of references by sources to particular options. We can see at once that in these terms, the news reported the general weight of opinion at the time to have been in favour of a slow, cautious response to the 'German Question'. What we cannot see from the table is how the news reported the merits and demerits of each option, and whether there was a definite preference for one in particular.

Table 5.1: Visions of a new Germany
Short-medium term options for the two Germanys after fall of the Berlin Wall as debated on BBC News and ITN, 9-13 November 1989 (References from reported statements, direct statements, and interview responses)

- OPTION 1: Radical reform in GDR
- OPTION 2: Two Germanys should remain separate
- OPTION 3: German unity within existing western economic and security structures

Governments, non-government officials, political commentators and experts,
British news media

OPT	GDR	FRG	US	USSR	FRA	GB	NATO	EC	TOT
1	66	13	2	10	-	18	-	-	109
2	10	4	6	12	3	9	1	-	45
3	-	16	2	-	3	14	2	1	38

As a quantitative summary, it hides significant qualitative differences. If we break the profile down according to statements by government, non-government, and media sources, and look at their specific frames of meaning, a different picture emerges. So while **Table 5.1** might tell us that the GDR was the greatest source of references in favour of reform, and against German unity, it does not reveal how this breaks down according to government, reform, and other non-government sources. How differently did the news report the government's position on reforms from that of the reform movement? I will now present an analysis of how TV news dealt with each of these options and the degree of legitimacy afforded the various arguments for and against them.

Option One: Reforms in the GDR

When the Wall came down, officials East and West wished for a cautious, step-by-step approach to the way ahead. Governments, reformers, and experts advocated reforms and free elections in an independent East German state as *the* prerogative. **Table 5.1**, above, shows that it was the most predominant option reported in the news at the time, with 109 references in statements by governments, opposition politicians, and specialists. Each interest group had its own very specific reasons for its choice and so it is the purpose of this section of the analysis to show how each was reported and explained by the news media.

As with the refugee exodus story, TV news coverage of the reform debate in the GDR marked a complete turnabout from the framework adopted up until the Wall came down. Then, reform was reported as all but futile in a state that was in terminal decline.

Before the Wall: the 'end-of-the-GDR' theme

The assumption that East Germany could not survive without socialism was consistent throughout the three sample periods taken for this section of the analysis:

The exodus...could put into question the entire future of a state and its government. (BBC1, 21.00, 11.9.89)

The exodus and the pressure for reform are undermining the Communist regime and, by implication, the very reason for East Germany's existence.

(*Newsnight*, BBC2, 11.9.89)

(THE EAST GERMAN) state has only its hard-line ideology and the Berlin Wall to keep it from the other Germany in the West. (ITN, 13.00, 6.10.89)

This state...is an historical accident trying still to convince itself and the world of its legitimacy.
(*Newsnight*, BBC2, 6.10.89)

While questioning the legitimacy of the East German state, and throwing its future into doubt, the news reported the reform movement as a well-intentioned, admirable, but ultimately transient expression of popular discontent. Routine news items reported the aims of the reform groups in general terms: "greater democracy", "real reform", "political freedom", or "political participation". These, of course, are open to a wide interpretation. The minority audience news programmes - *Newsnight* (BBC) and *Channel Four News* (ITN) - pointed out that the reform movement was one of diverse groups that proposed radical reform within existing state structures. This broad agenda sat awkwardly with the assumptions underpinning the 'collapse of the state' thesis. The dissolution of the state and unification with West Germany were part of an agenda essentially set by West German sources.

Newsnight and *Channel Four News* featured four special reports on the nature and extent of the reform movement, one each during two of the three sample periods : the GDR's 40th Anniversary, and Honecker's resignation. The first *Newsnight* item (6.10.89) reported on the continuing crisis of government in East Germany. The newscaster introduced it directly after referring to the rapid reforms that were transforming government in Hungary:

Well, clearly, that kind of progress towards Western-style democracy will be a long time coming in East Germany. At a time when so many have been fleeing that country, David Sells has been meeting some of those who want to stay behind and reform their system from within.

One of those people was Wolfing Ullman, a Protestant theologian, and member of reform group *Democracy Now!* He told Sells that for his group and others, Mikhail Gorbachev was a symbol of the fact that:

Ullman: Socialism and Marxism is still a movement and alive, not only that structure of power, of using power, and of despotism.

Nonetheless, the journalist placed more emphasis on the negative version of socialism as being a structured system of repression. He conceded that the GDR had its economic successes but that these were nothing when its people were being "treated like puppets in a pageant, forced to act out a vision of socialism dreamed long ago by the old men who now rule this land". He then turned to the dissident

writer Stefan Heym who offered ways in which the present situation *differed* from that of the past:

Heym: And now I think the government would have had a chance to change things, to make here a socialism that people would like,... that would be part of their own course instead of a socialism you would like to run away from.

The report went on to look at the street protests for reform, which were growing throughout the country, and identified in this a shift of the public mood away from wanting to leave to wanting to stay and change society:

Sells : Why do you stick to socialism?

Heym: I think because we haven't really tried it yet. What we've had in practice...was Stalinism, Stalinist structures of government,...of dealing with people. So, I feel that as I set out in my life to help make socialism, I should continue now. It's not socialism that's failed! It's that particular form - Stalinism - that is bankrupt now.

Channel Four's *The World This Week* marked East Germany's 40th Anniversary with a special focus on the continuing crisis. This was how the programme was introduced:

Today is the 40th Anniversary of the founding of East Germany, and what should have been a celebration for its ageing leaders has turned into a major crisis. For as thousands of its citizens struggle to leave, East Germany faces possibly the greatest ever threat to its existence. We'll be asking Germans from both East and West the question, "One Germany or two? "

(*The World This Week*, Channel Four, 19.00, 7.10.89)

After headlines on the latest situation in the country the newscaster introduced the special report with these remarks:

It's no longer clear that the East German state can continue in its present Stalinist form. As this becomes ever more evident, voices calling for reunification are getting louder, and the time-table shorter.

This qualitative leap from questioning the future of the state in its present form to suggesting German unity excluded alternative possibilities such as East Germany continuing as an independent entity. The subsequent film report reinforced the view:

East Germany is not a nation-state. Its only *raison d'etre* is its ideology and, as this looks increasingly under threat, the question of reunification is increasingly on the agenda in West Germany.

The item ended with a prediction that,

Whatever their fears, both East and West may be forced to address the question of German reunification sooner than they would like to.

The newscaster then interviewed Franz Loeser, East German dissident and former Party (SED) member. She asked him if German unity was a good idea?

Loeser: Well, it may be a good idea but an illusion because reunification won't stand at the beginning of social change in East Germany. If at all, it will be the result of a rather long process of social change...and the most important...is the democratisation of East Germany.

Loeser argued that there was a struggle within the Party between hard-liners and reformers, which was more important than that between the government and the popular reform movement. He estimated that the pro-reform faction would win through within the next two years. Asked what reforms such a faction would contemplate, he thought that democratisation would be the most likely route. If the Honecker group could be ousted quickly, then East Germany had a good chance of becoming a 'Western-style' socialist democracy. If, however, the hard-liners survived too long, a reactionary and more radical shift to capitalist democracy would take place.

The newscaster finally asked him:

After reunification, I'm jumping a long way ahead. You said it might come. Do you think it *will* come, actually?

Loeser: Well, I think if you have a capitalist form of democracy, then there's no justification for two Germanys. If you have a socialist democracy, then there is justification.

Nonetheless, it was difficult to tell from most reports that such a power-struggle existed within the communist party, or that the reform movement wanted to build a 'western-style' socialist democracy, not to scrap their own country. We were led to believe that the party and government was one and the same, an unyielding monolith sliding to destruction. The media worked on the 'end of the GDR' thesis right up until the Wall was opened when the government's reform proposals were still being reported in a very sceptical light:

The Communist authorities know if they're to survive, the exodus must be stopped but for that the elections must be free and the chances then can't be high.

(BBC1, 13.00, 9.11.89)

Mr Krenz and his new colleagues have been forced to accept *a taste of democracy* - swallowing it whole is another matter. (ITN, 13.00, 9.11.89)

The East German government position

The decision to open the Wall made little difference to the media view of the government. It was reported as a gesture of abject surrender rather than serious progress with reforms:

East Germany has finally given up trying to control its people.
(BBC1, 21.00, 9.11.89)

It almost seems the last throes of the East German leadership.
(BBC2, *Newsnight*, 10.11.89)

News bulletins routinely reported government statements and announcements. There were 23 references to reforms (see **Table 5.2**, below): free travel for all, free elections within a year, an emergency Communist Party conference to debate the Party's leading role, and an investigation into the activities of the STASI, or security services. However, both their viability and credibility were kept in question and real analysis of what they might mean for the population was exceptional.

Table 5.2: Visions of a new Germany
Short-medium term options for the two Germanys after fall of the Berlin Wall as debated on BBC News and ITN, 9 - 13 November 1989 (References from reported statements, direct statements, and interview responses)

OPTION 1: Radical reform in GDR
Governments

OPT	GDR	FRG	US	USSR	FRA	GB	TOT
1	23	7	1	7	-	8	46

The government proposals were mainly reported in two ways. They were sometimes portrayed as desperate moves by a desperate leadership:

The Party's central Committee men arrive to examine the *wreckage* of what had been an unshakeable power structure. (ITN, 13.00, 9.11.89)

(The) *exhausted and discredited* leadership has given up to the inevitable.

(BBC2, *Newsnight*, 9.11.89)

This did not look like a planned move by the Communist authorities but rather *another panic response* by a government giving way to the parliament of the streets.

(BBC1, 21.00, 10.11.89)

Or they were seen as part of a daring gamble in a high-stakes game of chance:

For the new East German leadership, this represents a new *high-risk strategy* that will lose them some people.

(ITN, *Channel Four News*, 10.11.89)

No socialist government has ever before *gambled* its future quite like this.

(BBC2, *Newsnight*, 10.11.89)

On Monday 13 November, the Party elected a new government and a new Prime minister with a proven track record of reform. The tone in news reports changed from one of pessimism and cynicism to that of optimism and caution about the reforms and their chances of success. Suddenly, the East German parliament, the *Volkskammer*, was coming to life as a democratic forum to elect a Gorbachev-style prime minister:

The East German parliament is making *historic, democratic* changes tonight. It's had an *unprecedented secret ballot* and for the first time elected *a non-communist Speaker*.

(ITN, 17.40, 13.11.89)

For the BBC reporter, Brian Hanrahan, the developments in ^{parliament} were cause for surprise and some incredulity:

Until now, the...parliament simply reflected the views of the Communist Party but, today, its members arrived to find that their *opinions were being eagerly sought* and they began talking as though they might insist on having them *taken into account!*....Inside, there was *an outburst of democracy!*

(BBC1, 13.00, 13.11.89)

However, ITN's reporter remained unconvinced, pointing out that:

The vote was by secret ballot in a transparent box

(ITN, 17.40, 13.11.89)

The prime-minister elect was Hans Modrow, leader of the Communist party in Dresden. He had a record of reform that won him considerable credibility in the eyes of the western media. His image as a senior East German communist was certainly more

positive than that of his colleagues in the Politburo. The press portrayed him as "one of the most progressive figures in the leadership"³, and a "pragmatist".⁴ The *Times* ran a lengthy profile on Modrow, "the man West German feels it can do business with....the Gorbachev (sic) of his country....respected as a trained economist". He was also "a man who, privately, is witty, irreverent and charming" behind the public mask of an "apparatchik".⁵ A similar image of Modrow can be gleaned from television news:

(The) charismatic Mr Modrow...the only senior Communist with sufficient public support to carry off the job. (ITN, 13.00, 13.11.89)

(A) leading reformer...often at odds with the central leadership...he's encouraged the pro-reform demonstrations. (BBC1, 13.00, 13.11.89)

(A) leading reformer...who has genuine public support. (ITN, 17.40, 13.11.89)

Modrow's expected to want to take his country down the road of reform. (BBC1, 18.00, 13.11.89)

(The) only Communist politician with the charisma and the popular support to capture the confidence of restless East Germans. (ITN, 22.00, 13.11.89)

It was exceptional, though, to find extended analysis of what government reforms actually entailed even when initiated by the "charismatic" Hans Modrow. Only three reports from the mainstream bulletins in this sample took the Party up on its rhetoric to see what it meant in practice. One was by Nik Gowing (*Channel Four News*, 13.11.89), and the other two were by Olenka Frenkiel (*Newsnight*, 10 and 13.11.89). In addition, there were three extended interviews with East German government officials. In their tone and the extent to which they accessed voices supportive of the leadership, they were less dismissive and more positive than most.

Nik Gowing reported on the proceedings in parliament on 13 November and saw some signs of hope in Egon Krenz's address to MPs urging them to vote on behalf of their constituencies, not according to the Party line:

Those words...have never before been heard from an East German leader. They are a beacon for the future, although no one yet knows whether a genuine pluralism will be permitted between any political groups who choose to stand in elections. But the first signs, from what's only the second-ever live transmission of a parliamentary session on television, did give hope:

MP: Let's look truth in the eye! Our country, the GDR, is in crisis!

MP: We have no time! The new beginning must start now! And we must all be ready to serve with humanity and tolerance...(Channel Four News, 13.11.89)

Most notable in this context were Olenka Frenkiel's feature reports. The first sounded out reaction at Party grass-roots to the government's decisions (10.11.89). She found confusion and scepticism about the exact intentions of the government and its chances of success. They thought that the government needed to go much further by constructing a legal, constitutional basis for reforms:

Reporter: The Politburo's answer to these sceptics came this afternoon when... they made it very clear that many more radical measures were still to come.

Krenz: (ADDRESSING PARTY RALLY NEAR THE WALL) We're promising a revolution - economically effective, democratic, morally clean, and for everyone....

Reporter: And...the extent of that revolution has been presented to an incredulous nation - a pledge of free, democratic, universal elections by secret ballot; an enquiry into corruption among senior bureaucrats; and a redeployment of 1200 of the hated security police...down the mines. (BBC2, *Newsnight*, 10.11.89)

Frenkiel's other report was from Dresden, the political constituency of Hans Modrow (13.11.89). At an early point in the film, we see Modrow at a public rally, sharing a political platform with the city's mayor, Wolfgang Berghofer. Frenkiel describes them as "two handsome communists" with a "vision of the new socialism, to bring back the masses to the Party". The Mayor is said to be "hugely popular with the young, even those who reject what the Party saw as its divine right to rule". A young woman invites the journalist into her home and, with her two friends, explains why this is so. Mayor Berghofer, they say, represents their best hope for positive reform in their city and country:

Inviting a Western television crew into your own front room without official permission would, a month ago, have been unthinkable but now the rules have changed.

The journalist then put the interview in context with wider political and economic change:

(FILM, HI-TECH FACTORY FLOOR) As the country embarks on its own economic *perestroika*, free debate is not just permissible, it's *de rigueur*. Here, in Dresden's PENTACON camera factory, in what on day may be East Germany's Silicon Valley, upwardly mobile factory managers beg to be allowed to develop their own marketing strategies instead of slavishly following a central plan.

(BBC2, *Newsnight*, 13.11.89)

Note how the language of *glasnost* and *perestroika* - "the rules have changed", "free debate" - is therefore tied to the language of western social and economic progress - "silicon valley", "marketing strategies", "upwardly mobile managers". But the journalist points out other significant sign-posts that suggest that reform has a long and difficult route to follow. She explains that the regional Communist newspaper "struggles to explain such new heresies to its readers" but is "much more confident to quote a clear warning from...Hans Modrow: (HEADLINE) '*Reformen, Ja! Chaos, Nein!*' ". In other words, reform yes but on government terms. Frenkiel also raised the question of the STASI, the security police, "whose brutality and denunciations have ruined the lives of thousands". She interviewed two such people, a father and son, both of them scientists. But instead of recalling their past experiences at the hands of the STASI, they talk about what they want for the GDR in the future. Significantly, their views closed the report, without the conventional concluding piece by the journalist:

Father: There must not be a mixture but a certain type of unification between socialistic, basic rules and what Western people call democracy and freedom. And this I think is a very new feature in the political field...

Son: The people must demonstrate their opinions, their power, their strength, to fight for a better country.

(BBC2, *Newsnight*, 13.11.89)

The report was followed by an extended interview with Hans Modrow who expanded on the government's reform plans for the future. Clips or "soundbites" from the interview were featured on the early evening bulletins on BBC1. It is only one of three examples of extended access to an East German government voice, the others occurring on *Channel Four News* when the newscaster, Jon Snow, talked at length to an economic adviser to the Politburo (10.11.89 and 13.11.89).

In his special reports for *Channel Four News*, Nik Gowing spoke to 9 East German workers (only one of them a woman) about what they thought about the whole situation and the government's proposals for reform. These were the people who would have the final say so their opinions on their country's future mattered:

Some had not even tried to go to the West....Others, at (an) electro-mechanical factory, had been across. There were no second thoughts about returning to work, today. They had not even considered staying in the West....The workers, who have long been the bedrock of this socialist state, are now prepared to give the new leadership time to prove they really are reformers. They say the final proof of that will be when the Communist Party actually produces a genuine political pluralism.

(Channel Four News, 13.11.89)

Their appearance in this context was significant for another reason: most appearances of 'ordinary' East and West Germans in the news were 'vox pops', simple expressions of joy and wonderment at what was happening.

In summary, then, these examples are exceptional, most of them coming from the extended news programmes which allow space much deeper analysis and discussion, and offer access to oppositional or alternative viewpoints (Schlesinger *et al*, 1983; McNair 1988). The general and overwhelming framework was that reform proposals from the leadership were dubious since they came from "hardliners" who were "desperate", "calculating" or just gambling away their positions of authority. What then of the reform movement's image in the news? How were they viewed as political actors and how were their proposals explained within the prevailing framework?

The reform movement view

We have already seen how the reform movement was represented before the Wall came down: as a group of naive professional people who believed they could build a 'new socialism' in an independent East Germany. The problem remained after the Wall was opened. The opposition was largely seen as one group, *Neues Forum*, whose representatives played a peripheral role in the drama. By Monday 13 September, they had all but disappeared from the scene. This was in spite of a promising start. The *Neues Forum* held its first press conference in a small artist's studio in East Berlin a few hours before the Wall opened. The scene was presented as one of spontaneity and chaos, an event that signified the startling pace of change underway in East Germany, and all over Eastern Europe:

(NEUES FORUM PRESS CONFERENCE) But most remarkable were the shambolic events which took in this apartment block in a run-down part of East Berlin...The small artist's studio was bursting with television crews...so *this cutting-edge of democracy* was forced to decamp in pandemonium to a backyard for the very first news conference by New Forum (MY EMPHASIS).

(ITN, Channel Four News, 9.11.89)

(NEW FORUM PRESS CONFERENCE) And today has seen *the beginnings of normal politics* here. Members of the New Forum *opposition group*...stepped out in public. No matter that it was a shabby, suburban backyard, they were out in the open, *setting out an alternative policy*. (BBC1, 21.00, 9.11.89)

In some respects, this image of the reformers fulfilled their own stated aims. They saw themselves as facilitators (rather than agents) for change. One of *Neues Forum's* spokespersons told *Channel Four News*:

Michael Goebal: *We don't want to be a party*. We think now we have a good chance to change something in the GDR.... (Channel Four News, 9.11.89)

But their provisional agenda backfired days later when the government announced its intention to hold multi-party elections in 1990. *Neues Forum* balked at the prospect of an imminent election campaign. The group had none of the financial resources or organisational structure of the Communist Party. They wanted more time and they made their feelings known through the news media. The response on British television news was to pick up on the irony of their position:

Suddenly, it's the reformers who want to slow the pace of reform.

(BBC1, 18.00, 13.11.89)

The news media therefore did not see reform as a long-term proposition in the GDR, either before or after the Wall was opened. The government was not to be trusted and the Communist system was reported to be at an end. As for the reform groups, they brought the crisis to a head with their street demonstrations and were well-intentioned, but they were ultimately unorganised by the standards of western parliamentary democracy.

In contrast to the situation *before* the Wall opened, pressure for reform also came from sources outside the GDR. The principal advocates were the governments of West Germany, the Soviet Union and Britain. This though did not represent a real consensus. The motives and the way in which the media reported them were quite different.

The West German government view (FRG)

As shown above in Table 5.3, there were 7 references in statements by West German government sources that advocated reform for the GDR. These were viewed only as *short term, transitory measures* to stem the refugee exodus and clear the way for unity in the near future. For example, Chancellor Kohl promised substantial economic aid on condition that Krenz push ahead with a reform programme. BBC reported this on its three evening bulletins on 11 November. Throughout the same sample period, though, the news also reported *nine* statements by the West German leader about the historical inevitability of German unity. From this perspective, reform was never seen as an end in itself:

Kohl is sticking by his five conditions for a better relationship with East Germany: a free press, free elections, and so on. A better relationship is a long way short of reunification, of course, but it would be an important start.

(BBC1, 17.00, 11.11.89)

Non-government sources, of course, could put the case much more explicitly. The journalist Thomas Kielinger told *Newsnight* that reform would hasten the inevitable:

Kielinger: We need to liberalise East Germany first....but...at the same time the reunification process will also develop further momentum and develop rather quickly!

(BBC2, 9.11.89)

Of all official sources outside the GDR, the governments of Britain and the Soviet Union were the most emphatic proponents of the reform option: but they saw it only as a means of keeping German unity at arm's length. Within the prevailing news media framework, there the similarity ended.

The same but different: the British and Soviet view

Both Britain and the Soviet Union stressed the importance of allowing the East German people to decide for themselves. The British government spoke about freedom and democracy on the march in East Germany and throughout Eastern Europe. The Soviet Union praised the East German government for taking the road of *perestroika*. Despite these similarities, the news reported the two sources within different frames of reference: the British government was pronouncing from a position of principle and strength (eight references), the Soviets from a position of fear and insecurity (seven references).

On the evening of 13 November, Mrs Thatcher made a scheduled foreign policy speech at the Guildhall in London that was widely reported by the news media. It was previewed on all ITN and BBC News bulletins and then analysed and commented upon afterwards. The essence of her speech was the need for caution in the West to events in Eastern Europe. With a touch of doublespeak, she told her audience that, "The speed of reform could put the goal of democracy in danger". She urged that 'free elections' should take place in the GDR first and that East Germans should build their own democracy with Western economic aid. The impulse behind this stance was reported as constructive diplomacy rather than national insecurity. Eleanor Goodman, the political editor for *Channel Four News*, thought it was 'obvious' to see what Mrs Thatcher was getting at:

Mrs Thatcher *obviously* doesn't want to do anything to undermine...President Gorbachev and, indeed, she's been in contact with him...and reassured him that she isn't trying to court Germany. (Channel 4 News, 13.11.89)

For some, the idea that Mrs Thatcher could break up the Warsaw Pact and "court" Germany was "daft".⁶ There were certainly other ways of looking at Britain's attitude. Many press accounts suggested that Thatcher's public rhetoric belied Britain's own fears and insecurities about what was happening in Eastern Europe. *The Guardian*, for example, reported that the government had "diverted extra intelligence resources to watch developments in Europe as the pace of change overturns traditional assumptions, depriving Whitehall of a coherent response". What really worried "officials" was that "Mrs Thatcher is unprepared and unsure about how to react".⁷ A *Sunday Times* item suggested that the events in Berlin helped deflect public opinion away from a turbulent period in Thatcher's premiership.⁸

In contrast to their view of British policy, the news media reported the Soviet government's position as being insecure and in need of assurances. On the surface, the Soviets were reported to be quite relaxed and open about the dramatic events in East Berlin:

In Moscow, there's no sense of crisis or crisis management...because at this stage the Soviet leadership believes the shake-up in East Berlin is a much needed change for the better. (Channel Four News, 9.11.89)

The official line today was that while the speed of developments came as a surprise, Moscow was not alarmed by that. (BBC1, 18.00, 10.11.89)

Yet these same reports interpreted this as the Soviets putting a brave face on a very bad situation. Unlike the Prime Minister, they were running scared:

Events in East Germany are being viewed with more alarm (in Moscow) than the changes in any other Warsaw Pact ally. (ITN, 22.00, 9.11.89)

But *the fear in the Kremlin* must be that events may be running out of control and military loyalty may be endangered. (BBC1, 18.00, 10.11.89)

Furthermore, reports framed the Soviet Union's position on the GDR against the background of current unrest in some of its republics, especially in Moldavia where Soviet troops were deployed to quell 'nationalist unrest'. News bulletins kept a close watch on developments there throughout the period and in one instance a newscaster made a more explicit link between Moscow's attitudes to events in Berlin and the military intervention in Moldavia:

The Soviet news agency, TASS, has welcomed the dismantling of the Berlin Wall as positive and important. But as they welcomed the reforms in East Germany, more nationalist unrest was reported in one of their own republics:

(BBC1, 17.00, 11.11.89)

The implication here was that it could not afford to be too liberal in its attitude to Eastern Europe because this would set a bad example to those republics - the Baltics, Armenia, Georgia - wanting more independence. *Channel Four News* broached the problem quite explicitly:

The other imponderable for Mr Gorbachev is what effect this will have on his own people. Today, as always, they are queuing up at the American embassy in Moscow for visas to emigrate. They want out of the Soviet Union. So, too, do the people of the Baltics, of Azerbaijan and Armenia: for them, the Berlin Wall is a powerful symbol. "It would be good if it could happen here", one man said (10.11.89).

The *Nine O'Clock News* reported that such sentiments would meet with a less liberal response from the Kremlin than that afforded to Eastern Europe:

The Soviet Union has taken a benign view of the changes so far but, tonight, it warned that it would take a different attitude to similar moves inside its own borders. The Kremlin ordered the republics of Latvia, Lithuania, Estonia, and Azerbaijan to drop the new laws they passed to give themselves greater independence.

The item drew very clear and definite conclusions from this, suggesting that, in the final analysis, the official Soviet attitude could not be taken at face value:

The contrast between Mr Gorbachev's *laissez-faire* attitude in Eastern Europe and his hardline at home will increase the discontent that's been building up here [in Moscow], and an explosion of unrest within the Soviet Union, or a loss of control in Eastern Europe, could give Kremlin conservatives the excuse they've been seeking to jettison *perestroika* (10.11.89)

Option Two: The two Germanys should remain separate

The German Question and the Fear of Germany

The German Question - 'Should Germany be reunited?' - was one of the major unresolved issues of the post-war period. Yet while it informed much of East-West relations during the Cold War, both sides preferred to leave it unanswered, paying lip-service to the ideal of unity some time in the distant future. The US current affairs magazine, *Newsweek*, devoted a seven-page cover story to a re-examination of the German Question: "The Two Germanys: When will the Wall come down?".⁹ The journalist, Michael Meyer said that to visit the Wall was "to witness not only the cold war past, but also to see a symbol of the future. Everywhere there are signs of a new realism, as if to say: this is the way it is and this is the way it will be...The two Germanys will never again be one". Meyer concluded with an emphatic declaration: "The German Question is dead".

The framework of the item reveals much about why it appeared. West Germany's NATO allies were in a panic about its unilateral policies towards the East, particularly the Soviet Union. Anglo-German relations were becoming particularly strained over the proposed modernisation of short range nuclear missiles. Worse still, it seemed that public opinion in West Germany was clearly supportive of the government line. The country could no longer serve as a site for NATO's nuclear missiles, as the West's frontline in a future war with the Soviet Union. The question on western minds was what would happen to NATO and the EC if West Germany should drift away towards neutrality, even unification with the GDR? Meyer argued that no one really wanted German unity or neutrality: it would be a complete disaster for the East as well as the West. To reinforce his argument, he highlighted the controversial views of the West German historian, Arnulf Baring. Baring had just published a book called *Unser neuer Groessenwahn* (or Our New Megalomania) which argued that Germany needed to stay within the established security framework, i.e. within NATO under United States

leadership. Meyer selected a certain strand in Baring's argument which is couched in a very confessional third person plural. For example, Baring thought the idea that there could be a new, united and neutral Germany was symptomatic of the old German megalomania, a dangerous confusion of superiority and inferiority complexes. "We Germans", he wrote, "are developing an exaggerated image of ourselves....There is a powerful urge to overestimate ourselves, to rationally believe we Germans can move mountains". Within the interpretative framework of Meyer's article, Baring's reflections take on a somewhat different meaning from that intended: if the Germans can't trust themselves, then the West can't trust them. Meyer concluded that although they "no longer have the power to plunge the world into misery", they "do retain the ability to hurt (themselves) - and the (Atlantic) alliance". He admitted that Baring's views were rather extreme yet he still gave it prominence over mainstream German opinion which - from a US perspective - dared to challenge the idea that the West needed to 'modernise' nuclear defence at all costs.

The new Bush administration moved to solve the crisis with its own public relations campaign. It aimed to put the case for 'modernisation' in a way palatable for German tastes. Rather than bully and cajole the Germans into conforming - which was Margaret Thatcher's strategy - Bush played the 'good cop' role, playing-up Germany's economic prowess and leadership potential. Germany would become greatest among equals in Europe and the United States' most important European ally. This campaign was readily apparent at the divisive NATO summit in Bonn, in May 1989, and contrasts with Thatcher's strained photo-sessions with the West German Chancellor, Helmut Kohl. Thatcher's relationship with Ronald Reagan personified the myth of the 'Special Relationship' between Britain and the US. It was not quite the same with George Bush.

Just nine days before the opening of the Berlin Wall, Conor Cruise O'Brien published an article in *The Times* with the rather alarming title: "Beware, The Reich Is Reviving".¹⁰ It began with reference to a speech by the US President George Bush in which he "affirmed" a new American relationship with the Federal Republic based on equality rather than dominance. This, thought O'Brien, was quite a significant foreign policy shift given the rapid changes taking place in Eastern Europe. It was only a matter of time before the Soviet empire disintegrated completely and the two Germanys reunified with full American endorsement. A new German Reich would establish economic hegemony "...extending from the Aran islands off the West coast of Ireland to Vladivostock". With great nationalist fervour, the united Germany would free itself of the superfluous economic and military alignments of the Cold War era and

recover the past glories of the Third Reich. A statue of Adolf Hitler would be erected in every town. Nazi ideas of racial purity would revive to regain respectability among and through the scientific community. German history and thus the people of the new empire would be purged of the burden of guilt over the Holocaust.

The benefit of hindsight allows us to see that some of O'Brien's vision seems to have come true. German reunification *has* taken place. The Soviet Union *has* collapsed. Neo-Nazi attacks on immigrants and ethnic minorities *are* on the increase all over Europe. Only time will tell about the rest. When he wrote his article, though, O'Brien gave voice to the hitherto unspeakable. His nightmare vision of a new, united Germany was by no means exceptional or eccentric. It fitted easily into a pre-existing propaganda framework about Germany and the Germans that had deep historical roots but which the West conveniently put to bed at the onset of the Cold War.

Indeed, since the Wall opened, talk about German reunification and what it might entail for Europe and the world over the next few decades was conducted in a verbal minefield. Public figures tread an indeterminate and hazardous line between what was thinkable in private and sayable in public. For example, Timothy Garton Ash called articles like O'Brien's "wild and offensive" and not at all conducive to constructive debate.¹¹ Yet, the editor of *New European*, John Coleman, referred to it in a letter to the *Times* to sound a warning against European federalism; the idea being that a united Germany would become an overwhelming economic and political force rather than an asset in a federal Europe.¹² Across the Atlantic, *New York Times* columnist, A.M. Rosenthal, called on the West to come to terms with the unpleasant realities of German history:

I search through the endless newspaper columns about the German wave rolling towards unification, but I cannot find any of the words I am looking for.

I cannot hear them in the drone of experts mustered up for TV nor in the Sunday talk shows about how unification is all just a matter of time, now very little time.

And when the leaders of so many nations issue their carefully crafted statements about how the will of the German people must be honoured (sic), the words are not there either.

These are some of the words: Jew, Auschwitz, Rotterdam, Polish *untermenschen*, Leningrad, slave labour (sic), crematorium, Holocaust, Nazi.

Strange how even speaking the words, which after all are at least as much a part of German history as of Jewish, Polish, Dutch, or Soviet, is already considered inappropriate, vulgar, emotional, not really fit for decent political discussion about Germany.¹³

In Britain, the domestic rows in July 1990 over the 'Chequers Memorandum' and the 'Ridley Affair' followed the same line of debate. However, Giuliano Ferrara suggests that ambiguities such as these may have had a negative impact on public understanding of the new, emerging Germany:

In Europe, there is a new party: the fear of Germany. Perhaps anti-German feelings...concerns (sic) primarily the chancelleries, the ruling classes, the intellectuals, the journalists, the historians, the churches and other mediators of the public conscience...(who) are competing to fan the flames of the mistrust, suspicion and questioning of German intentions.¹⁴

In the following sections, I will show how a certain negative vision of a new united Germany emerges from press coverage in Britain in the first days after the Wall opened. This contrasted with television news discourse which appeared to cohere around the centrist, pro-European federalist position in public debate.

The Press

As I have indicated in earlier chapters, the popular tabloids took a largely, upbeat and positive approach to what was happening in Berlin. For them, this was a very big human interest story and they did not devote much space to the long-term political or economic implications. Their attitude to the prospect of German unity was to accept its inevitability but in some cases with large doses of fear and loathing. The broadsheets were rather more circumspect in their views. Whether in leader comment or op-ed pieces, journalists took the cautious stance of the politicians and experts. Nonetheless, it is possible to glean fragments of doubt and anxiety from their writing.

Some writers argued that Cold War fears about the strategic implications of a united Germany were somewhat out of date. A loose confederation of German states rather than a united Germany would, said the *Scotsman*, "calm the fears of those worried by the possible re-emergence of a monolithic Germany dominating Europe".¹⁵ The real concern lay in the new Germany's ability to establish hegemony throughout Europe without military force. "What should worry the West", warned The *Daily Mail*, "is the possibility that this Greater Germany, possessing the most powerful economy in all Europe, will - prompted by ancestral voices - leave its Western moorings and turn its mighty energies and ambitions towards the Danube and beyond".¹⁶ The *Sunday Times* thought that the events in Berlin marked "the first step towards the creation of an 80m-strong Fourth German Reich". Like the *Daily Mail*, it envisaged this as an economic rather than military empire.¹⁷ Walter Ellis commented on the West German Foreign

Minister Genscher's thinking on "the benign nature of Germany's ambitions". According to Ellis, "Genscher is a long term advocate of the democratic efficacy of trade. He recognises that industrial imperialism is an honourable alternative to war".¹⁸

Indeed, had A.M. Rosenthal browsed through the British press, he would have found them full of the words that, in his view, western leaders found too "inappropriate, vulgar, emotional" for their "carefully crafted statements". The *Sun* 'spoke its mind' on the question of a united Germany and offered several reasons "Why It Won't Be All Reich On The Night" for the West. It noted the readiness of some in the West to welcome and even hasten the prospect of German reunification. Yet, it complained, "no one has really explained just why a greater Germany would be so desirable for Britain or the rest of the world". The past record wasn't encouraging: "Twice in this century, Germany dominated Europe. Twice she plunged the world into war...Twice German ambitions had to be frustrated at an enormous cost in misery and blood". Now that the prospect of one Germany was again in view, *The Sun* concluded that given the chance, the Germans might do it again: "Unshackled once more, the Germans might well decide to seek, in that time-worn phrase of their rulers for the past century, 'a place in the sun' ". The worst aspect would be the guessing. What would they look for next? "More captive markets? More living space?" The only certainty was that whatever the Germans do, "they will not set out to spread joy and benefit humanity".¹⁹

The *News of the World* thought it right that "wise statesmen" in the West should be alarmed at the "real prospect" of a united Germany. They had to get together quickly with leaders of the East to talk about security otherwise "today's joy could swiftly become tomorrow's terror".²⁰ Woodrow Wyatt, the "Voice of Reason", betrayed a palpable sense of confusion about whom to fear most, Russia or a new united Germany. For example, he recalled that Germany was divided after the war to give "protection to Russia against another Hitlerian type onslaught." When Russia became the new enemy, Stalin used East Germany as a "launching pad from which to threaten western Europe". However, it seemed from Wyatt's point of view that this was okay since "a divided Germany was a guarantee against a new German military menace". Now with the Wall down, the guarantee was gone. "We face a momentous fact. Germany is about to be reunited....Are you frightened? I am". What was there to be frightened of? Wyatt listed his reasons. A combined German economy would dominate Europe: the West German economy was already "turning destitute Poland into its economic vassal". A combined German army would threaten Europe. And, worse still, a united Germany "could be Russia's foremost friend".²¹

The *Daily Mirror* set out to answer some of the questions it claimed people were asking in the wake of the Berlin Wall's demise, one of which was "*Would a reunified Germany go to war again?*" The reply was in the British 'stiff-upper-lip' mould: "We can only hope they have learned their lesson after two world wars".²² In a similar vein, Martin Woollacott reflected on the essence of Britain's national consciousness in light of events in Berlin. "Britain", he said, "has spent the last 100 years fighting against the facts of German power: indeed our modern national identity has been forged in the fires of the great conflict with Germany while our sense of moral worth rests in part on our role in the defeat of Nazism."²³ And William Russell noted that "for many people in eastern Europe a divided Germany is seen as a guarantee that never again will Germany embark on the kind of predatory actions which caused the Second World War".²⁴

The *Sunday Express* leader, "Germany: the joy and the jeopardy" put the German Question in subtle context with Britain's objections to EC policy. It was a case of "Steady! Stop! Think!" on any number of "vexed questions" such as "Is this really the time for all of Europe to put its fortunes irrevocably into the hands of the Bundesbank?".²⁵ Norman Tebbit recalled that he forecasted German reunification a year earlier but was dismissed out of hand. He thought it would almost certainly damage NATO and wondered "if in 10 year's time all the optimism about the dawn of wonderful new times in Europe will have worn a little thin".²⁶ Alexander McLeod feared that a new German superpower would sooner or later assert its military independence and "face a standing temptation to...play off Western Europe with what remains of the Soviet empire. It would, in short, be a dynamo of instability at Europe's heart, much as it was until 1945...Suddenly, the spectre of a united fatherland is back on the agenda".²⁷ John Keegan argued that, "German reunification will bring disarmament to Europe - except in the one country which the victor nations of 1945 determined should not rise again as a great military power, Germany itself".²⁸

Television news

Television journalists did not air the more extreme scenarios of a united Germany that appeared in the press. But they did report the fact that for official and unofficial opinion in East and West, a united Germany did not seem such a good idea. At times, the language which reporters used belied their working assumptions, as when Michael Brunson, ITN's political correspondent, asked Mrs Thatcher, "Are there any *dangers* of the possible reunification of the Germans?" (my emphasis). Geoffrey Archer thought that the prospect of German unity produced "few fears of a resurgence

of militarism" among Western politicians but remarked that "some anxieties are bound to be expressed" by "old soldiers" in Remembrance ceremonies (ITN, 13.00, 10.11.89). A BBC journalist remarked that:

The talk of German unity may scare many people who remember that a united Germany started two world wars. But the Germans are now anxious to reassure the world. (BBC1, 18.00, 10.11.89)

There was also the reality that the two Germanys were divided by a host of barriers: economic, social, ideological and cultural. The news did not ignore this in spite of the 'good news' value of the story on a human-interest level.

In western popular culture Berlin was *the* Cold War city, full of spies from the CIA and the KGB, MI5 and the Stasi. It was the place where spies were exchanged and defectors defected. It was a potential flash-point where the forces of 'good' (the West) and 'evil' (the East) faced each other in perpetual stand-off. It was a secular 'city on the hill-top': a visible and perpetual reminder to the West why capitalism was 'better' than communism. West Berlin was "a beating capitalist heart in a Communist body" where the streets were alive and full of shops offering an abundance of goods and services. East Berlin was a drab and grey place and its shops offered much less in terms of consumer choice and quality.²⁹ In the West, they drove BMWs and Mercedes Benz; in the East, they chugged around in Trabants and Wartburgs. For some journalists, these differences remained despite the collapse of the Berlin Wall, and despite the allusions to unity:

I went across to the East...and the contrast is still striking: it's cold, it's dark, the lights are dim over there. It's a bright exciting place here in the West.

(ITN, 22.00, 13.11.89)

But for more revealing indicators of how television news saw opposition to short to medium term unification, we have to look at how they mediated public opinion. As shown in **Table 5.1**, the greatest single sources of opposition to unity are Eastern - the GDR (10 references) and the Soviet Union (12 references). However, it becomes apparent from **Table 5.3**, below, that there were as many negative references to unity from the West - from NATO countries. Taken as an East-West aggregate, this works out evenly at 22 references from each side. As with section one, on the issue of reform in the GDR, a look at the framework of meaning in these references occur reveals important qualitative differences in treatment.

Table 5.3: Visions of a new Germany
Short-medium term options for the two Germanys after fall of the Berlin Wall as debated on BBC News and ITN, 9 -13 November 1989 (References from reported statements, direct statements, and interview responses)

OPTION 2: Two Germanys should remain separate Governments

OPT	GDR	USSR	FRG	US	FRA	GB	TOT
2	7	10	-	2	1	6	26

The GDR Government

The government's opposition to any talk of German unity - short-term or long-term - was reported within the same prevailing negative framework used to report its reform proposals. Its resistance was seen as a reactionary attitude informed by its instinct for self-preservation at all costs. Thus when Helmut Kohl arranged a meeting to discuss the situation, on 11 November, "the embattled" Egon Krenz made his position clear. His statement was reported on all bulletins from early evening, 11 November and was headline news on the BBC's main bulletin:

Egon Krenz says he'll talk to Chancellor Kohl but reunification will not be on the agenda. (BBC1, 21.00, 11.11.89)

It was reported that "talks would be about improving relations between the two countries" (BBC1, 17.00) and that for Krenz, "the stability of Europe depends on East Germany surviving as a separate state" (BBC1, 21.00). Hans Modrow repeated this line on 13 November on his election as Prime Minister (BBC2, *Newsnight*, 13.11.89). John Simpson remarked that whatever about Krenz's opposition, reunification "may force its way on (to the agenda) like it or not" (BBC1, 17.00, 21.00, and BBC2, *Newsview*).

The GDR reform movement

The reform movement was also advocated separate Germanys but this was hardly considered throughout the coverage. The one instance in which it was given access to express its view ended in farce. One of *Neues Forum*'s co-founders, Professor Jens Reich, took part in a studio discussion on *Newsnight* (BBC2, 10.11.89). He told the newscaster, Peter Snow, that:

Reich: if it comes to serious choice, everybody will think twice before giving up what we have here from the socialist achievements. And I think not many will be ready to option for elbow society, for competitive society where life is hard. Well, it's more affluent but I think they will prefer to have some of the old social ideals. I'm simply convinced.

However, opposite Thomas Kielinger, a West German journalist, Professor Reich came across as shy and quite nervous on television. His English was not as fluent as that of Kielinger and he was unable to speak as concisely and forcefully. Whenever he tried to convey something of what his group stood for, and what they rejected, he sounded hesitant and uncertain. He was totally unprepared for the piece of television theatre that was to follow when, a short time later, the discussion was disrupted by an unexpected and dramatic entrance (see **Photo Sequence 5**, below):

Snow: Now look, we're joined by our reporter Olenka Frenkiel...who's walking into the studio with a large brick in her hand. Olenka, what have you here?

Frenkiel : Here is a brick from the Berlin Wall, symbol of your trip here (PLACES IT ON COFFEE TABLE, AND EXITS).

At this point, Kielinger presided priest-like over the brick and gave a long sermon to Reich on the glories of capitalism, dismissing his fears as unreasonable. His vision seemed to sum up what Reich and his colleagues feared most about the opening of the Berlin Wall and its long-term implications:

Kielinger: And once they start on that liberal, free-wheeling way of ours, Professor Reich, they will become a competitive society. Never mind about elbowing! We don't want to be brutal capitalists in the West but that's the way it goes! Once you let liberty fly easy and unfettered.....people will begin to develop their entrepreneurial skills and become competitive. And we don't like some of the ills of capitalism. We hate them! We hate each other's guts because we get on each other's nerves. We're impatient with one another. (SHRUGS) And yet that's the price you pay for freedom!

(BBC2 *Newsnight*, 10.11.89)

Photo Sequence 5 (*Newsnight*, BBC2, 10.11.89)



"We're joined by our reporter Olenka Frenkiel...who's walking into the studio with a large brick in her hand"



And we don't like some of the ills of capitalism. We hate them! We hate each other's guts because we get on each other's nerves. We're impatient with one another. And yet that's the price you pay for freedom!

A BBC news analysis programme seemed to share Kielinger's view that the East Germans would soon come round to the idea of unity:

East Germans remained reluctant to admit straight out they wanted reunification.

(BBC1, *On The Record*, 13.10, 12.11.89)

Yet the reform movement was speaking for a large majority of East Germans when it advocated an independent East Germany. The *News At Ten* reported that:

reunification may stay a dream for the West. Most East Germans don't want it.

(ITN, 22.00, 13.11.89)

However, this has to be considered along with very different results of opinion polls. BBC News reported one which claimed that 60% East Germans wanted unity (BBC1, 13.00, 13.11.89). A telephone survey of 1000 East Germans was conducted by MORI for the London Weekend Television programme, *Eyewitness*. It asked if they believed reunification was a good idea: 38% said it was, 48% said it was not, and 14% did not know.³⁰ *Channel Four News* reported a West German newspaper poll that suggested official German opinion was somewhat out of touch with the popular mood in the GDR. It claimed that 74% of East Germans (from a sample of 1000) were against unity:

The discovery that ordinary East Germans are rather less enthusiastic about it all is only dawning slowly here (in West Germany)....There's no doubt that the West German government sees the economy as the motor driving the two Germanys towards reunification. That's more than the East Germans had bargained for and that includes the opposition. They want economic aid but not to lose control over their own affairs....Much still divides the two Germanys and *it would be premature to see one German state emerging inevitably after the tearing down of the Berlin Wall* (13.11.89).

This fear in East Germany of being swallowed up by the bigger, fatter counterpart in the West was presented in very stark terms by a journalist on *Newsnight*. He remarked that:

it's the relative poverty of the East Germans which increases the possibility of West Germany patronising them and, in their eagerness to embrace them, ramming its own political and economic philosophy down their throats (13.11.89).

The Same But Different: The Soviet and British View

Section One showed how the news treated almost identical Soviet and British positions on reform within somewhat different frames. News reports took the same approach when reporting Soviet and British reservations about discussions of unification. The main Soviet spokesperson was Gennady Gerasimov, who maintained throughout that any discussion of the future for the two Germanys had to take place with a view to geo-political and strategic realities:

Gerasimov said it was unrealistic to talk of reunification between the two Germanys. He said Europe was divided as a result of war and the forming of NATO and the Warsaw Pact - it would be almost impossible to unite over such a great divide. (BBC1, 13.00, 10.11.89)

Gerasimov also backed Egon Krenz's view that the two countries had to remain separate for the sake of stability in Europe (ITN, 1740, 10.11.89).

The British government, like the Soviets, argued that public debate was "going much too fast" in talking about German unity (Margaret Thatcher, all ITN bulletins, 10.11.89), and that even its medium-term prospect would jeopardise current conventional disarmament talks in Vienna (CFE) and, ultimately, the stability of East-West relations (ITN, 20.45, BBC1 22.00, 12.11.89). The official Labour line hardly differed. ITN reminded the Shadow Foreign Minister, Gerald Kaufman, of his most recent pronouncement on the 'German Question':

Newscaster: Mr Kaufman, you said on a visit to Poland, last month (October 1989), "Any talk of German reunification is premature". Have last night's events changed your view?"

Kaufman: [...] One day, it may be that reunification of Germany can be right at the top of the agenda. But I think it ought to be the conclusion of the process rather than the start...because we've got to think carefully what a reunified Germany would mean for Europe, whether it would be a vacuum...a wild card. We've got to think what (it) would mean for the....negotiations on disarmament...

(ITN, 13.00, 10.11.89)

However, in spite of these similarities, there were suggestions in the press and television news of a hidden Soviet agenda. George Walden summed up the West's worst Cold War nightmare: that the Soviets would "[...] some day play the 'German card' - that is, propose the reunification of Germany on the basis of neutrality in the hope of weakening NATO, removing the Americans from Europe, eliminating the historic German threat and establishing their own permanent strategic ascendancy

in Europe".³¹ Dominic Lieven thought that rather than waste time running against the tide, Gorbachev might better "accept self-determination for the Germans, link reunification to the principle of no foreign armies on German soil, and seek thereby to take the moribund Warsaw Pact and NATO to the grave".³² Norman Stone quoted Lenin to highlight what he saw as the inherent dangers should the Soviets play this 'German Card': " 'We shall hang the capitalists with rope that they themselves will have sold us' ".³³ Within a few weeks of the Wall opening, Stone reckoned that the noose would begin to tighten as, "The West Germans will be fed up with East Germans working for lower wages and occupying scarce housing. The Poles and Hungarian may deafen us with recriminations about borders. The West Germans may make noises about leaving NATO, and the EEC may become intolerably strained because the British and the Americans pull away from the Germans".³⁴ In a special report on *Newsnight*, Jeremy Paxman suggested that,

there are others who think...Mr Gorbachev may have considered the implications of possible unity and not found them entirely distasteful.

These 'others' were represented by a BBC World Service journalist who told him that:

Tim Whewell: In the long run, [Gorbachev] must be thinking of a way of reducing American influence in Europe, even though he's got no card to play against that. He can't play the card of the Warsaw Pact if it's going to crumble by itself. And I think one possibility he must now be beginning to think about is of a reunified but neutral Germany. (22.30, 10.11.89)

FRG Government

Official West German opinion solidly adhered to the rhetoric of unity - crafting speeches and statements to the media around popular ideas and phrases such as "one people, one fatherland". John Simpson followed Chancellor Kohl on his state visit to Poland (which he had to interrupt to rush to Berlin). One feature of the visit which Simpson highlighted in a series of reports was the rapturous reception given to Kohl by ethnic Germans in Poland. The reporter contextualised their nationalistic slogans - "We are and remain German!", "Helmut, you are our Chancellor, too!" - with concurrent events in Berlin (BBC1. 22.00, 12.11.89), and he noted that,

the unlikely, cumbersome figure of Chancellor Kohl has emerged in his true importance as a representative of German power in middle Europe.

(BBC1, 18.00, 13.11.89)

However, Kohl received a different reception when he addressed a public rally with Willy Brandt and other leading politicians in West Berlin, on 10 November. When he mentioned German unity, the crowd began to hiss and jeer despite pleas from Brandt and others to hear him out. That was not so widely reported. Most news reports that evening referred to it briefly and in positive light. Some quoted the various references to unity (BBC2, *Newsnight*). Others focused on the historic resonance of the speech, its location at the Brandenburg Gate, with Kennedy's famous visit in 1962 (ITN, 17.40, 22.00). Only one made a light reference to the level of protest in the crowd:

A banner in the crowd said no to a united Germany.

(BBC1, 18.00 & 21.00, 10.11.89)

Among the press, most reports the next day were that Kohl addressed "thousands of cheering Berliners",³⁵ while *The Guardian* said only that the crowd "reserved their greatest enthusiasm" for Willy Brandt.³⁶ The *Daily Express* reported that Kohl "had to shout above the cheers as he spoke".³⁷ The truth finally emerged in a *Newsnight* report by Julian O'Halloran (13.11.89). He referred to the speech in context with the growing discontent about the East German 'refugee problem' and gave a much more accurate picture of what happened with the evidence on film:

(Pictures of Kohl struggling to speak) Indeed, so unpopular was Chancellor Kohl's message with sections of the crowd...that at times he was in danger of being drowned out altogether. Mr Kohl had been given a hard time by the crowd before he even uttered a word. It was an acutely embarrassing occasion for Herr Willy Brandt....and...Mayor...Walter Momper.

(BBC2, 13.11.89)

News reports also featured dissenting German opinion (4 references; see Fig.5.1 above). The main opposition party in the Federal Republic was the Social Democratic Party (SPD). However, under the country's federal system, it was the party of government in West Berlin. The Mayor was Walter Momper, the city's main spokesperson throughout the period. He was critical of Kohl's reunification rhetoric because it endangered the positive relationships between the two Germanys that had been nurtured by *Ostpolitik* and the Inter-German treaty 1972. His alternative to unity was to maintain the status quo as far as national boundaries were concerned but to establish Berlin as a free, or at least, open city. This would take full advantage of the new opportunities for more liberal trade and cultural links between the two halves without upsetting East- West aspirations or sensibilities (*Channel Four News*, 13.11.89). The former German Chancellor, Helmut Schmidt, thought German unity unlikely given the Soviet Union's strategic stake in the GDR (BBC1, 22.00, 12.11.89).

French Government

The French government's attitude to unity was presented in the news as somewhat ambiguous. The *Telegraph* reported that, "Latent but deeply held fears of a powerful, reunified Germany surfaced in France yesterday as Paris officially welcomed the East German people's new freedom".³⁸ Patrick Marnham described a cartoon in the French newspaper, *Le Figaro*, which he thought "summed up the nation's subconscious fears". The cartoon was in three parts:

The first frame showed a pair of jackboots facing each other across a crack in the ground. The second showed the crack closing up with the boots now placed side by side. In the last frame, one of the boots was taking its first step. It was a goose step, and few French readers will have thought that the boots were marching east.³⁹

ITN presented it as a stark contrast of opposing political viewpoints:

In France, Prime Minister Rocard said unified Germany would help anchor a lasting peace in Europe, but ex-President Giscard d'Estaing said reunification would pose new problems. (ITN, 1740, 10.11.89)

The government claimed to support the idea of unity in principle but saw it as no reason to slow the pace of EC integration. The *Independent* argued that "Although one of Britain's interests has always been to prevent any one power from dominating the continent of Europe, the French government has been much quicker...to see the possibility of a Europe dominated by Germany, and to conclude that a Europe dominated by the EC would be preferable".⁴⁰ The *Nine O'Clock News* went to Paris to gauge French reaction to developments in Berlin. A report opened with shots showing preparations for Armistice Day, "a reminder of the history that brings caution to the French response". Furthermore:

A reunified Germany could endanger the main objective of post-war French foreign policy...a special relationship that would put France and West Germany at the heart of the new Europe...(and) tonight, some French politicians expressed concern about a headlong rush towards one Germany. (BBC1, 10.11.89)

President Mitterand wondered why disintegration of Eastern Europe should cause the dislocation of Western Europe - a remark that belied French fears about German dominance on matters economic and strategic. The *Times* reported that "the prospect of a reunited Germany throwing its even greater weight around Europe is unacceptable to Paris" and that "...the French keenly resent the way the European Monetary System has effectively enslaved France's economy to the stern disciplines of the

Bundesbank".⁴¹ Indeed, just before the Wall opened, Hella Pick reported that "France is considering a motion to invoke the quadripartite agreement on Berlin and calls for a meeting of the US, Britain, the Soviet union and France to ensure that the status of Berlin remains inviolable when the Berlin Wall, and all it symbolises, comes crashing down".⁴² BBC and ITN both reported on scheduled meetings of EC Finance and Foreign Ministers in Brussels, on 13 November, when these anxieties were very much in focus:

France's Foreign Minister, Roland Dumas, talked to his West German opposite number (Genscher) against a background of French fears about the prospect of German reunification. President Mitterand's call for an emergency summit reflects the French concern that a unified German state could dominate and distort the existing European structures. (BBC1, 21.00, 13.11.89)

On the military front, Woodrow Wyatt invoked the spirit of the *Grand Entente* between Britain and France in the face of a potential new enemy. In his view, "France has most to fear from the dramatic alterations to the map of Europe. Already too much under German sway, she will need the support of Britain in much stronger friendship than for decades. Two world wars have proved that militarily she depends on an alliance with us and America and the same applies to the new economic situation. We look forward to more agreeable noises from Paris, to which we should respond enthusiastically, for, *au fond*, we have always liked the French far more than the Germans. Both of us fear domination by Germany".⁴³ Philip Jackson recalled that for France, "The prospect of a Germany that may one day decide to slip anchor from within the Western defence alliance is a recurring nightmare. A glance at the military balance sheet suggests that East and West Germany combined could put into the field the largest army outside the USSR, and, as one French defence expert wondered aloud, who is to say that such a force would remain non- nuclear forever?".⁴⁴ But George Walden called this thinking "out of date". The threat was no longer military but economic and came not from the traditional "enemy", the Soviet Union, but from a friend, West Germany. "For the British", he concluded, "a massive training and educational effort would be a more intelligent response to the 'German threat' than new strategic arrangements with the French".⁴⁵

The US government

In Chapter Three, I showed how dominant Cold War narratives in the western media cast the US in the leading role in defending Europe against Communism. Yet as the Berlin Wall, a symbol of that war, collapsed, the official US response was muted and cautious. There were references to a "Superpower on the sidelines".⁴⁶ and reports that

"Mr Bush is cheering cautiously on the sidelines" (BBC1, 18.00, 10.11.89). There were other, more pointed observations. With the President of the US apparently at a loss for words, the leading US newscaster, Dan Rather, described him as "relaxed as a pound of liver" about events in Berlin.⁴⁷ And Patrick Brogan argued that "Bush suffers from a crisis of imagination" in formulating a coherent US foreign policy at a critical juncture in history.⁴⁸

However, the earliest official statement to be reported was by the Secretary of State, James Baker, who suggested that "it may be a little premature to take the jump from free travel in East Germany...to the subject of reunification. There are a lot of other steps in between" (BBC1, 18.00 10.11.89). Non-government commentators like Caspar Weinberger - former US Defence Secretary and Cold War 'hawk' - ruled out German unity because, he claimed, the Soviet Union would never allow it: the GDR was too vital to its strategic interests. In a classic Cold War framework, then, the Soviets are presented as impeding progress. Weinberger's view was reported three times during the sample period (BBC1, 13.00, ITN, 17.40 & 22.00). The view of another US source fitted the British mould. Ray Gartov, a former national security adviser to Reagan, told *Newsnight* that unity was not the priority. He thought it preferable to reassure, not alarm, the Soviet Union and thus guarantee stability and Western security in the process. (BBC2, 10.11.89).

Option Three: German unity within existing western economic and security structures

"The events broadcast live from Berlin", said the *Sunday Times*, "are the first step towards the creation of an 80m-strong Fourth German Reich. We do not know exactly how it will come about but, *de jure* or *de facto*, it will happen and sooner than most people think".⁴⁹

Newspaper articles and film reports from Berlin on events at street level were full of the imagery and symbolism of one people and one Germany.⁵⁰ The most prevalent images were of the people and the city of Berlin reunited. The press included headlines such as. "The end of the great divide" (*Daily Mirror*, 10.11.89), "Patriotism is evoked by vision of reunion" (*Telegraph*, 11.11.89), and, "United city revels in transport of delight" (*The Guardian*, 13.11.89).

Television news focused on the emotional impact of the event on the people, with scenes of families and friends being united after the long separation:

For almost 30 years, this Wall has symbolised the separation of East and West Germany but, as one man said to me tonight, "You can't build a wall around an entire country!"
(ITN, 22.00, 9.11.89)

Reporter 1: Two nations, one people, merged in joyful reunion

Reporter 2: In the euphoria in Berlin today, events may soon be beyond the control of the old Four Powers that have controlled the city for the past 44 years. Today, the Germans are taking over their own capital. (BBC1, 13.00, 10.11.89)

It's the city reunifying itself, at least in spirit.

(BBC2, *Newsnight*, 10.11.89)

Standing so close to this new breach in the Berlin Wall, and amid so much excitement, there's a real sense that the division of Germany is coming to an end, that the post war map of Europe is finally changing. (BBC1, 13.00, 11.11.89)

(The) centre of Berlin was reunited in a flood of people, memories and tears.

(BBC1, 13.00, 12.11.89)

The story of Berlin as the city reunited was common to all the news media. Journalists moved around Berlin as if through a museum, referring to key buildings for their historical significance in light of current developments in the two Germanys: the Brandenburg Gate, the Reichstag parliament building, and Potsdamer Platz. Each had its own story which was used to recall the days when Berlin was the imperial capital of a united and powerful Germany: "Berlin goes on a binge as it relives old splendours", "Berlin ist wieder Berlin! Berlin is again Berlin!" (*Observer*, 12.11.89).

News reporters recalled that:

Potsdamer Platz was once the busiest intersection in Europe, and Berliners were eager to see the heart of their city restored. (BBC1, 13.00, 12.11.89)

This was the biggest breach of the Berlin Wall, reuniting the city at a major junction, reviving memories of the old German capital, dormant for a generation.

(ITN, 20.45, 12.11.89)

The newscaster, Peter Snow, opened a live edition of *Newsnight* from a highly symbolic vantage point in the city:

We're standing here in West Berlin on the balcony of the old Reichstag building where the last parliament of a united Germany sat in the 1930s

(BBC2, 13.11.89)

On Sunday, 12 November, Berlin's the mayors of East and West Berlin met and shook hands at the Wall.⁵¹ The encounter was held in as another symbol of what the future might bring for the Germanys and made headline news

The Mayors of East and West Berlin have met at the Wall which divided their city.

(BBC1, 18.20, 12.11.89)

The mayors of East and West unite across the divide

(ITN, 20.45, 12.11.89)

Another powerful and prevalent story in this narrative was of communities, families, friends reunited. ITN and BBC both featured reports from towns on the inter-German border. They highlighted the impact events in Berlin had for these communities and what the future might mean. ITN went to Helmstedt and reported on, "A People Reunited":

The people...turned out in their hundreds to welcome the seemingly endless numbers of East Germans, taking advantage of their first opportunity to cross the border dividing the two Germanys. For some the emotion was too much, overcome by the warmth of the welcome from their fellow Germans....(Young man and woman hug) *One couple who were reunited after a long separation seemed in a moment to symbolise just what it means to be German on this day.*

(ITN, 22.00, 10.11.89)

BBC reported from Phillistahl, on the western side of the border:

Newscaster: The border has split the village but now it's effectively been reunited

Reporter: A little boy writes "Here was the border" (Over sign in German, "Here is the border"), and crowds gather. Up to now, this was a quiet country lane, a road to nowhere ending at the Wall which sliced through Germany.

The report then switches its focus from the general to the personal and joins a family reunion in the home of a local teacher:

(Family reunion) Peter Lehardt is a teacher in Phillistahl: his cousin Hubert is a teacher in a school only a mile away but, until now, on the other side of Germany. This is the first time the two families have been able to spend time together, looking over old photographs of their shared grandparents. (Peter and Hubert

discussing current events) Talking politics like this is a novel experience but, as they say good-bye, they know there will be other days like this.

(BBC1, 18.00, 13.11.89)

There were similar items in other news media. David Goodhart told the story of the Runge family through Mrs Gisela Runge.⁵² She recalled that she had been on holiday in Italy with her sister, Ingrid, when the Wall went up. They realised that when they returned home, they would be separated for a long time: Gisela lived in the western zone, Ingrid in the eastern zone. Now, after 28 years, the Wall was down and they were together again. ITN reported on a reunion in the home of the Grote family:

The Grote family was reunited today. Twelve of them came West for the first time - four generations together.

(ITN, 13.00, 12.11.89)

BBC *News Review* looked back on the scenes of Thursday night and focused on the image of two friends hugging and crying, with the simple caption:

Twenty-eight years of separation.

(BBC2, 11.11.89)

Compare it to a story in the *News Of The World* the next morning:

OLD PALS REUNITED IN RUSH TO WEST - Jubilant Germans Jurgen Zinke and Freidrich Ruck had a drink in their local yesterday - their first together in 28 YEARS .

(*News Of The World*, 12.11.89)

These narrative strands cohere under the theme of Germany and the future. The country is united symbolically and emotionally but what happens next? Is unity a realistic, foreseeable option? The BBC report from the border town of Phillistahl concludes:

Friends and families have been united across the Wall which divided the two Germanies, a movement of people with consequences that are hard to predict.

(BBC1, 18.00, 13.11.89)

German unity: the debate on television

Those politicians, experts and commentators who talked about reform in the GDR and those who warned against German unity, did so on the basis that the status quo in Europe should be preserved. But those who tried to talk in terms of unity did so in the face of uncertainty and doubt from all quarters because German unity would of itself mean change in the status quo: in the existing economic, political and security frameworks. How did television news approach this option as opposed to the others?

Table 5.4, below, shows how the extent to which the news reported European government sources on the option of German unity. It shows, hardly surprisingly, that the Bonn government was the greatest source of positive references (12). It also highlights the relative dearth of public statements on unity from other governments. But it does not reveal the nature of these references - were they rhetorical or *real politik*? - and how were they reported on the news and dealt with in discussions. The following sections set out the parameters of the debate

Table 5.4: Visions of a new Germany
Short-medium term options for the two Germanys after fall of the Berlin Wall as debated on BBC News and ITN, 9 - 13 November 1989 (References from reported statements, direct statements, and interview responses)

OPTION 3: German unity within existing western economic and security structures

Governments

OPT	GDR	FRG	US	USSR	FRA	GB	TOT
3	-	12	2	-	3	-	17

FRG Government

Chancellor Kohl's pronouncements on unity were widely reported and made the news headlines the day after the Wall came down:

West Germany's Chancellor Kohl says a united Germany is clearly in prospect.
(BBC1, 18.00, 10.11.89)

Helmut Kohl has gone to Berlin to tell the world "We are one nation!"
(BBC1, 21.00, 10.11.89)

The *News At Ten*, juxtaposed its headline quote with the image of a man and woman embracing after being separated by the Wall for years:

And the joy of seeing a loved one again. Chancellor Kohl says, "We belong together!"
(ITN, 10.11.89)

The press were a day behind with these quotes (11.11.89) but their headlines were all very similar:

Kohl says, "We belong together" (*The Times*, *The Financial Times*)

Kohl: "We are one nation" (*The Guardian*)

We belong together (*Daily Mail*)

Bulldozers move in to smash open gates as Kohl says, "Long live the Fatherland" (*Daily Express*).

However, there were some contextual differences. The Chancellor's initial references were pitched in the grand rhetoric of historic inevitability and destiny and were delivered in the mood of popular euphoria that followed the decision to open the Wall. Once the party mood subsided and the country began to contemplate the implications of what had happen, he was more careful to reassure Germany's neighbours that he was not talking about a new, unilateral Anschluss. BBC reported that:

Chancellor Kohl has been *trying to calm fears* that any future merging of the two Germanys could once again lead to German domination of Europe. During his visit to Poland, (he) said reunification was implausible without Europe's consent.

(BBC1, 21.00, 13.11.89)

ITN reported a similar reassurances from Kohl's Foreign Minister, Hans Dietrich Genscher, when he met with his European counterparts in Brussels on 13 November:

Genscher told (them) that the events of the past days *would not weaken West Germany's commitment to NATO* or the European Community. There's been much speculation about how the coming together of the two Germanys could alter the political and military balance in Europe.

(ITN, 22.00, 13.11.89)

What the Chancellor had in mind was to a gradual path to unity in full consultation with them. But, as I showed in the previous section, whatever he said about unity attracted criticism. The implication seemed to be that he should not have mentioned it at all. On the other hand, some commentators wondered what else he could have done in the circumstances. Edward Heath delivered this defence on *Newsnight*:

In all fairness to Kohl, I really don't think he had any alternative. Unification is now discussed everywhere and can he stand up and say, "I don't believe in unification"? Not for one moment. Every German Chancellor since Adenauer said, "Of course I believe in the reunification of Germany!" And when it's being discussed by the other countries - the Poles are terrified of (it) and other people in Europe are frightened of it as well... I think he's absolutely right to deal with it and what he has to do is find a way of removing the fears of other people (13.11.89).

Some non-government sources reinforced the theme of responsibility by reminding journalists of West Germany's democratic credentials. These would inform the creation of a new united Germany so neither East nor West had anything to fear. David Owen thought it was "strange how commentators representing the foreign policy establishment in the West cling to the division of Germany like a child to a safety blanket". It was important, he said, not to cast doubt on "the robustness of the post-war democracy in West Germany".⁵³ Edward Pearce argued that Britain could learn from just such a Germany rather than fret about it. "The truth is", he said, "West Germany - shrewdly lean, clean, efficient, scrupulously democratic, art and music-loving, generous, high conscienced, a little over-anxious, but through and through decent - values the things we British had easily and have grown complacent about. West Germany has worked at their civilisation...If unity with the East comes, West Germany, whatever the economic glitches, is equipped for it, not just financially but politically and, most of all, morally".⁵⁴

British non-government

There were no statements from British government sources positively affirming German unity, or at least conceding its inevitability. But, as **Table 5.5** shows, below, there was no shortage of discussion among non-government sources about these issues.

Table 5.5: non-government officials, political commentators, and others⁵⁵

OPT	GDR	NF	FRG	US	USSR	FRA	GB	NATO	EC	TOT
3	-	-	4	-	-	-	14	1	1	20

Of the 14 references to unity in this category, most came in the course of long, panel discussions on *Channel Four News* and *Newsnight*. The proponents were careful to qualify their support for or acceptance of unity with the condition that it take place within existing western economic and security structures. This prescription came in two forms. A simple version, proposed a united Germany safely 'anchored' to NATO and a federal European Community:

Edward Heath: For those worried about having a united Germany, I would just say one thing. The answer, if we get to that stage, is for Western Germany to be so tightly bound into the European Community that it would be impossible for her to pull out. Or, if Eastern Germany joined her, *it would be impossible for a united Germany to do damage to Europe.* (Channel Four News, 10.11.89)

Paddy Ashdown: The whole question of German unity can really only safely take place within (an) integrated , unified Europe. (ITN, 22.00, 10.11.89)

A more complex version outlined transitory measures that would accommodate a gradual withdrawal of Soviet armed forces from the former GDR. David Owen described his idea of gradual unity, with the eastern part of Germany signing up with the Western European Union Treaty (WEUT), a wholly European defence alliance separate from NATO. But this amounted to the same West-centred rhetoric of victory: German unity, yes, but on our terms only:

Owen: I don't think, of course, that East Germany, once a united country, will remain a member of the Warsaw Pact. I don't think it will even necessarily be a member of NATO. But I think it would be perfectly possible - and I think desirable - for it to be a signatory to the WEUT which all it does say that any signatory will come to the defence of other member states and that's nine countries, all of them in the European Community. *I do think, therefore, that East Germany will be drawn slowly away from both the Warsaw Pact, from communism, and from Soviet influence.* (Channel Four News, 9.11.89)

There was little or no recognition that it was somewhat anomalous to reunify Germany within the very security structures which the Four Powers had designed to perpetuate its division. Denis Healey was a lone voice in proposing new structures for the new European order that would surely follow the fall of the Wall. In the last of *Newsnight's* panel discussions (13.11.89), he was clear about who in the West was standing in the way of imagination in this regard:

Healey: So the most urgent thing is to try and create a new security structure by cooperation between the Warsaw Pact and NATO for very, very deep cuts in existing weapons and restructuring of forces so that they are incapable of aggressive action. The Americans and Russians have set themselves this objective: it worries me that our government does not seem to be supporting it, and nor do the French.

However, the newscaster, Peter Snow, was more concerned with how Kohl's unity rhetoric would affect the chances of new structures being adopted:

Snow: But what do you think....of the way Chancellor Kohl is talking in quite colourful language, "We are one country, we must be united!", that kind of talk? Do you think that is wise against the background of the managed change that you want to see?

Healey: Well, I think it's stupid demagoguery and...it will be counter-productive....German unification may come but it will be very difficult to achieve it unless we have a new security structure....

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have showed how the news reported public debate in the two Germanys, and the wider international scene, about what should happen in the next five to ten years after the Berlin Wall. I showed that an extensive body of official opinion - East and West - did not see unity as a realistic or desirable outcome on a shorter time-scale than that. Their reservations were based on historical fears of Germany and on the strategic *realpolitik* of Cold War thinking. There was also a strand of unofficial thinking that focused on the implications of events for the East German people, especially the dangers of being swallowed up in an Anschluss rather than move in a careful and considered process of gradual unity. Against these reservations, only West German sources openly advocated short term unity within existing western structures - NATO and the EC - with muted backing from the French and US governments. Some unofficial, pro-European federalist voices in Britain preferred this option, too. It was evident from my analysis that British television news reported German unity as an inevitability, whether East or West liked it or not. The fragments of negative opinion or images that emerged from the coverage in this period - and there were plenty - were reported within this interpretative framework. As I will show in Chapter Six, this would have implications for the way the news reported the high-speed rush to Germany unity in an uncertain post-Cold War order.

Notes

- ¹ Kennan, G. (1989)
- ² *The Telegraph*, 11 November 1989
- ³ *The Scotsman*, 9 November 1989
- ⁴ Simmons, M. (1989)
- ⁵ McElvoy, A. and Murray, I. (1989); this was in direct opposition to the media image of Krenz whose public affability belied his dark history as security minister.
- ⁶ Former Labour foreign minister, Denis Healey, *Newsnight*, 13 November 1989
- ⁷ Norton-Taylor, R. (1989)
- ⁸ Grice, A. and Smith, A. (1989)
- ⁹ Meyer, M. (1989)
- ¹⁰ O'Brien, C.C. (1989)
- ¹¹ Garton Ash, T. (1989)
- ¹² *The Times*, 9 November 1989
- ¹³ Rosentahl, A.M. (1992)
- ¹⁴ Ferrara, G.(1992); originally published as "*German e la storia ha fatto un salto*", *Corriera della sera*, 27 December 1989
- ¹⁵ Leader Comment, "Birth pangs of a new Europe", p.10, *The Scotsman*, 11 November 1989
- ¹⁶ Leader Comment, "Birth Pangs of a New Europe", p.6, *The Daily Mail*, 9 November 1989
- ¹⁷ Leader Comment, "The Fourth German Reich", p.2, Section B, *The Sunday Times*, 12 November 1989
- ¹⁸ Ellis, W. (1989)
- ¹⁹ "The Sun Speaks Its Mind": "Why It Won't Be All Reich On The Night", p.6, *The Sun*, 11 November 1989
- ²⁰ Leader Comment, "East-West, home's best", p.8, *The News of the World*, 12 November 1989
- ²¹ Wyatt, W. (1989a)
- ²² *The Daily Mirror*, p.7, 11 November 1989
- ²³ Woollacott, M. (1989)
- ²⁴ Russell, W. (1989)
- ²⁵ Leader Comment "Germany: the joy and the jeopardy", p.16, *Sunday Express*, 12 November 1989
- ²⁶ Tebbit, N., *Sunday Express*, 12 November 1989
- ²⁷ McLeod, A. (1989)
- ²⁸ Keegan, J. (1989)
- ²⁹ Moore, T. (1989)
- ³⁰ Murray, I. (1989)
- ³¹ Walden, G. (1989)
- ³² Lieven, D. (1989)

³³ Stone, N. (1989); Stone refers to Lenin's *The State and Revolution*

³⁴ *ibid.*

³⁵ *Financial Times, Scotsman, Daily Mail*, 11 November 1989

³⁶ *Guardian*, 11 November 1989

³⁷ *Daily Express*, 11 November 1989

³⁸ Witcher, T. (1989)

³⁹ Marnham, P. (1989)

⁴⁰ Leader Comment, "Two Cheers For Democracy", p.16, *Independent*, 11 November 1989

⁴¹ Jackson, P. (1989)

⁴² Pick, H. (1989)

⁴³ Wyatt, W. (1989b)

⁴⁴ Jackson, P. (1989)

⁴⁵ Walden, G. (1989)

⁴⁶ Walker, M. (1989)

⁴⁷ Brodie, I. (1989)

⁴⁸ Brogan, P. (1989)

⁴⁹ Leader Comment, "The Fourth German Reich", p.2, Section B, *The Sunday Times*, 12 November 1989

⁵⁰ Some, days later, *The New Statesman and Society* remarked that, "The fact is that a future united Germany...presents a far better model for Europe's future than the present United Kingdom". While a united Germany would continue in the federal mould, "Today, it is Britain that suffers from the type of regime that is the danger to the continent: centralised, jealous, impoverished, ever-ready to create and punish 'enemies within', and nostalgic for far-away wars. it is Britain which insists on retaining the armed strait-jacket of NATO when the whole logic of the breached Wall demonstrates its redundancy" (*Wir Sind Alles Berliners*, cf cartoon, 17 November 1989)

⁵¹ "City fathers shake hands across the fallen divide", *Telegraph*, 13 November 1989

⁵² Goodhart, D. (1989)

⁵³ Owen, D. (1989)

⁵⁴ Pearce, E. (1989)

⁵⁵ Template Description Missing. This should read as all other Tables in chapter 5, that is:

"Short to medium term options for two Germany after the fall of the Berlin Wall as debated on BBC News and ITN, 9-13 November 1989 (References from reported statements, direct statements, and interview responses)"

CHAPTER SIX

News on the fast track: reporting German unification

Within a year of the fall of the Berlin Wall, Germany was united. This was a time scale that exceeded even the most ambitious forecasts of the West German establishment. Since then, however, the optimistic picture of Germany united and prosperous has been confounded by a widening economic, social and political gulf between the east and west. This chapter, therefore, shows how television news journalists reported the political and economic realities of German reunification. I argue that throughout most of the period routine television news structured coverage around the optimistic predictions and subsequent revisions of the West German government. Thus they presented a picture of unification as a process that tried to solve the economic problems of the former GDR, not as one that caused as many problems as it took on. In comparison with the liberal press, and some current affairs, television news failed to note the serious contradictions between official rhetoric and reality. It was slow to acknowledge the existence and validity of a powerful, alternative view: that what was called 'the fast track' to unification was badly judged and ultimately disastrous, and that it was instigated by Chancellor Kohl for no other motive than political expediency.

The chapter is not based on the detailed, structured method used in Chapters 3-5. It is specifically designed to track dominant themes in routine reporting over a long period of time. Thus, it includes news coverage of only the most decisive moments on the way to unification: the East German elections, 18 March 1990; monetary union, 1 July 1990; and Unity Day, 3 October 1990. It then looks beyond unity over the following three years to see how the news marked the anniversaries of unity and the fall of the Berlin Wall. Such an approach provides a discreet impression of the picture that the news has constructed of Germany since unification.

A Happy New Year

Berliners celebrated New Years Eve 1989 with the opening up of the Brandenburg Gate, a monument to German imperialism. ITN reported the festivities with an upbeat item that began by reporting Chancellor Kohl's New Year message to the German people, East and West:

Headline: Berliners say good-bye to the year that saw the Wall come down

Newscaster: The West German Chancellor, Helmut Kohl, has called on his countrymen to strive for a united Germany and a united Europe. He said the 1990s could be the happiest decade of the century.

The report that followed described the party on the streets of Berlin around the Brandenburg Gate and the remains of the Wall. The scenes were reminiscent of the days after the Wall came down:

Tonight in Berlin, the boundary between the two Germanys is becoming even more blurred....We're standing here on what used to be the most closely patrolled and guarded areas of East Berlin. (CROWD ON WALL WITH BALLOONS AND PARTY STREAMERS) And just look at it now! The balloons are floating high, the bangs of fireworks and, below the magnificent monument (Brandenburg Gate), the biggest New Years Eve party in the world is underway.

The reporter closed the item with an endorsement of Kohl's optimistic message to the people:

As the fireworks burst high from West to East, they can look forward to a new decade full of uncertainties but rich in opportunities. (ITN, 21.05, 31.12.89)

This in effect signalled the dominant framework in news coverage of German unification throughout the following year to its formal ceremonies on 3 October 1990. It accepted that Chancellor Kohl's 'fast track to unity' was the natural, inevitable course to adopt, and that there could be no real alternatives. The East German people would suffer, and the West German people would resent the mounting costs, but in the long run it would be for the best. In the most extreme example of the approach, the economics editor of *Newsweek* saw it as the stuff of fairytales. His item from July 1990 is worth citing at length:

There's a fairy-tale quality to West Germany's economic take-over of East Germany. The fable goes something like this.

Once upon a time, a rich kingdom took over a poor one. The money in the 15 million bank accounts of the poor kingdom was no good, so - poof! - the rich kingdom exchanged it for the Deutsche mark, a currency better than gold. The air in the poor kingdom was so fouled that it stung the eyes. So - abracadabra! - the rich kingdom started a big clean up. The houses in the poor kingdom hadn't been fixed up since the government seized everything 40 years ago, so - shazzam! - the rich kingdom gave everybody back their property. The stores were only half filled with crummy products, so - presto! - companies from the rich kingdom restocked them with really good stuff. Only one problem remained. A lot of businesses in the poor country were likely to fail when forced to compete with firms in the rich country. So merry old king Kohl promised that all laid-off workers would be

supported and retained for new jobs: "Nobody will lose", Helmut Kohl promised the East Germans, "and most will win"

The journalist then insisted that this was not a fairytale. This was reality:

The crazy thing about this tale is that it is going to come true. There will be a couple of years of enormous turmoil - unemployment, bankruptcies, perhaps even political unrest. Many East Germans will still go west to find work and West Germans east to get rich. There will likely be a burst of inflation and higher taxes, too. Every fairytale has its villains. But after the rough transition, the 16.3 million who call the German Democratic Republic home are likely to live happily ever after.¹

The 'crazy thing' about this article was that it was not atypical of assumptions in western journalism about what a united Germany would turn out to be: a 'new economic super-power' and an 'economic colossus in the heart of Europe' were common labels. This framework accommodated other less positive narratives such as the bad news story about an unabashed Anschluss, or take over, by West Germany of the GDR and the consequences of this for the people. A good, first case study for this was news coverage of the East German elections, on 18 March 1990. The sample consists of all evening bulletins from 16-19 March and includes references to press coverage where they demonstrate the existence of alternative perspectives.

East Germany's free elections

Just as the election campaign was getting under way in the GDR, the people of Nicaragua were voting in a general election. The result was a disaster for the Sandinistas. After governing for eleven years in a state of military and economic siege, they lost to the high-powered, American-backed UNO coalition. Noam Chomsky presents a critique of US media coverage of this event. He writes that,

In the case of the...elections (in Nicaragua), the US interfered massively from the outset to gain victory for its candidates not only by the enormous financial aid that received some publicity, but - far more significant and considered quite uncontroversial - by White House announcements that only a victory by the US candidate would bring an end to the illegal US economic sanctions and restoration of aid. In brief, Nicaraguan voters were informed that they had a free choice: Vote for our candidate or watch your children starve (1992^a 141).

Chomsky identifies two dominant media perspectives on these contradictions. Conservative journalists did not mention them "and then hailed the stunning triumph of democracy". Liberal journalists did refer to them "and then hailed the stunning triumph of democracy" (1993:25). The same principle can be applied to media coverage of the East German elections. With few exceptions, television news coverage was preoccupied with the spectacle rather than the substance of the elections as 'democratic process'. It glossed over two disturbing aspects of the campaign. First, that the real candidates and the real winners were from another country, West Germany; and, second, that German unity was being brokered on strictly western terms.

The dominant theme of coverage was the celebration of the people's unique democratic choice: they had been starved of choice for the forty years their state had existed but now they suffered an embarrassment of riches. A leading SPD politician in Bonn was confident that the East German voters had made an informed choice: "You have to remember that East Germans have been looking at West German TV for 40 years. They know what awaits them and they want to live as we do in the Federal Republic".² *Channel Four News* reported that,

this is not East Germany's first election but choice is certainly a novelty. East Germans are no strangers to the trappings of democracy: not for nothing was this the German *Democratic* Republic (NEWSCASTER'S EMPHASIS). They voted with greater fervour than practically anywhere else in the Eastern bloc in a dozen votes since...1958, always producing 99-point-something-percent in a no-choice contest, the red banners of the communist party eternally the victors...Now, suddenly, they have a choice...But with a list of more than 24 parties to choose from, these erstwhile no-choice voters are left reeling. (19.00, 16.3.90)

What was the choice that so overwhelmed the East German voter? Looking back on the election later, Jonathan Steele thought it a tragedy that "even when the country had a chance to elect its first democratic parliament, it produced a weak and pathetic set of men and women".³ On the right, there was the East German Christian Democrat Union (CDU) who had been discredited after years of compromise with the East German regime. When it became apparent early in the campaign that they were doing rather badly in the opinion polls, Chancellor Kohl advised them to realign with a range of right-wing parties and pressure groups to form the Alliance for Germany. This included the German Social Union (DSU), a party of the far Right closely linked with the Bavarian Christian Social Union (CSU). The Alliance campaigned for speedy German unity and on a commitment to NATO and European integration. On the left, the East German Social Democrats (SPD), also under the tutelage of their western

superiors, wanted to slow down the pace of unity to three or four years. In the early stages of their campaign, they proposed the idea of a neutral Germany within a new, pan-European security framework. But when they lost ground in the opinion polls, they modified the position considerably by declaring a new commitment to NATO. The old communist party reformed itself and took the new title, the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS). They campaigned on issues of social welfare, employment, and other anxieties about the impact of unity on the lives of ordinary citizens. They favoured a neutral, united Germany and a pan-European security framework.

A party or alliance needed only a simple majority to form a government but required a two-thirds majority vote across all parties in the new parliament to bring about unity with the Federal Republic. Polls indicated that no one party was likely to secure such a majority so it looked as if some form of coalition between right and left was essential. This would prove problematic. Neither the centre-right alliance nor the social democrats were interested in a national coalition that included the reformed communists (PDS). The Social Democrats, on the other hand, refused to form a national coalition that included the DSU. But all this seemed academic when the *real* choice for East Germans was vote for Chancellor Kohl and get rich quick, or vote for the Social Democrats and get rich much later.

British television news saw it differently. When the result was declared, a BBC reporter thought that:

what really mattered today was not the result but rather the fact that for the first time in living memory, they (the people) had a real choice and that from now on those elected would have to be accountable to them.

(BBC2, *Newsnight: The Ballot in Berlin*, late evening 18.3.90)

This seems to imply that there is no correlation between the result of an election and its consequences for those who voted, and that the phenomenon of 'free elections' somehow guarantees a positive outcome. Some reporters mentioned the fact that it was nearly sixty years since East Germans were able to exercise their democratic right in an open election. This was the all-German general election in 1933. Adolf Hitler won it and became Chancellor. One can hardly imagine a journalist looking back and reflecting that 'what really mattered was not the result but that the people had a real choice'.

With headlines like, "Kohl's hard sell seduces the East"⁴, and "East Germans rally to Western clones"⁵, the liberal British press showed it was possible for journalists to take a more jaundiced view of the election as an exercise in democracy. For example, Michael Ignatieff argued in the *Observer* that, "In our impetuous and condescending haste to teach the Eastern Europeans lessons, we may forget that...democracy is more than a procedure for choosing one's rulers. It is an ethic, a way of life".⁶

Tony Snape underlined what he saw as the real West German agenda: "The big question, they are agreed, is what will be the likely structure of the new coalition government and *how easily will it toe the West German line*".⁷ It was vital that all parties in the new, democratically elected parliament should "toe the West German line", for the bigger, richer parties across the border had invested heavily in the process. Catherine Field reported that, "The copious amounts of money being poured into some campaigns by allied parties in West Germany does not affect the payment (of state election subsidy)" and that, "Parties do not have to declare the extent or source of any outside financing".⁸ It emerged, however, that the West German government financed Alliance for Germany to the tune of £2.8 million.⁹ The fate of the reform movement in all this summed up the consequences of western subversion for the independent reform parties who were feted as heroes back in November. As Neal Ascherson put it: "Revolutions are famous for devouring their children but this one has managed to eat its own parents before it is out of nappies".¹⁰ In November, the reformers "thought they had discovered a new sort of politics in which citizens would participate in the management of their own affairs". Now they were spectators in "an election campaign masterminded by the political professionals of West Germany".¹¹ Barbara Bohley, a co-founder of New Forum, felt bitter that the voter was "behaving like a sheep again, yet fondly imagining he is taking part in his first free elections".¹²

I found few examples in the sample of television news where the lack of real choice was spelled out very clearly. After the results of the election had been declared, New Forum's Jens Reich told *Channel Four News* that:

Reich: It's not our class to stand for parliament - that's more for the parties with the apparatus. So, we have been steam-rolled over, in particular by the West German parties with their apparatus, their logistics, their people, their politicians.

(19.00, 19.3.90)

The BBC correspondent Charles Wheeler was not particularly saddened by the demise of the GDR but when he reported on the election campaign, he noted the level of western intervention with irony and unease:

At the Halle headquarters of the Social democrats, the signs abound of a sponsored election in which the big West German parties...take over the campaign, showering the neophyte locals with gifts - fax machines, computers, stationery and carloads of shiny election souvenirs with which to dazzle the natives...

At this week's election rally, (the local chairman) attempted to talk to the crowd about the ways a new government might contribute to East Germany's salvation. He wasn't given a hearing. The toughs at the front shouted him down. It's the politicians from the West who are welcome at these rallies, the ones who make promises, the ones who hint that any day now, the East German workers will find West German marks...in their pockets. That is what this election is all about.

(BBC2, *Newsnight*, 15.2.90)

Two days before polling, the *News at Ten* contradicted the conventional wisdom that the election was about free choice:

Despite the 24 parties and hundreds of candidates, this is a one-issue election and it's *not an issue on which the 12 million East German voters will have much of a choice*. Because as soon as this election is over, and whatever the outcome, the new East German parliament will sit down immediately to discuss one thing - how long the process of unification should take. (ITN, 22.00, 16.3.90)

Given the lack of real choice and the scale of western interference, then, the assumption that the elections were free and pluralistic somewhat stretches credibility. Yet television news reported the two contradictory elements without any sense of irony. On one level, they reported that the elections were free and fair. Thus, on the eve of the vote:

The East German polling-stations will open in nine hours time for the first free and democratic elections in the country's history. (BBC1, 20.55, 17.3.89)

East Germans go to the polls in a few hours time for the first free elections in their country's history. (ITN, 22.10. 17.3.90)

But the main focus appeared to be the spectacle of the elections rather than their substance or consequences:

The early winner was the process itself, a uniformly high turnout with nine out of ten people voting. (BBC1, 21.55, 18.3.90)

For the first time in their lives they were voting in a free election with a choice of parties and a secret ballot, *an experience so unique* some didn't want to share it. (ITN, 21.45, 18.3.90)

This was a day for the nation to set the record straight, to prove themselves, after the wasted years, *capable of democracy*. (BBC2, *Newsnight: Ballot in Berlin*, early evening, 18.3.90)

On another level, reporters were very clear that Chancellor Kohl, not his counterpart in the East, Lothar de Maziere, was the real winner. But that did not seem to jar with their 'free election' theme:

The 48-year old Berlin lawyer (Lothar de Maziere) is East Germany's Prime Minister in waiting. But the real winner is Chancellor Helmut Kohl. (ITN, 21.45, 18.3.90)

Reporter: Above all, this was a triumph for the Christian Democrats of the West.

Newscaster: The results here in the East are a triumph for West Germany's Chancellor Helmut Kohl. (BBC1, 21.55, 18.3.90)

Headlines: After the revolution, the revolutionary election as the voters of East Germany give a landslide victory to the centre-right and a personal triumph to Chancellor Kohl of West Germany.

(BBC2, *Newsnight: Ballot in Berlin*, late evening, 18.3.90)

There's no doubt then that Chancellor Kohl has scored a major victory (BBC1, 13.00, 19.3.90)

The Constitutional route to unity

The subversion by West Germany's politicians of the East German elections was equalled only by their subsequent subversion of their own Basic Law, or provisional constitution. In short, there were two constitutional routes to unity. One would accelerate the process while the other would slow it down. The West German government sold the former option to the voters in both Germanys and, on the whole, British television news accepted the sales pitch at face value. But before looking at how they represented the issue, a summary of what was at stake may be helpful.

Throughout the election campaign, the CDU-Alliance told voters that Article 23 of the Basic Law allowed for a straightforward accession by the five East German Lander (states) to the Federal Republic after a two-thirds majority vote by parliament. For most of their campaign, the Social Democrats countered this option with reference to Article 146 of the Basic Law which allowed for referenda in the two Germanys to decide whether the people wanted unity and a completely new constitution. Such an option, in other words, did not assume that unity was 'inevitable', never mind that it would come about in one year or two. However, the party changed tack much later in the campaign when polls suggested that a once commanding lead of 65%-plus was fast slipping to the Alliance for Germany. Suddenly, they accepted unity as inevitable and focused solely on the timetable.

Leading German commentators and intellectuals on the left argued that the real complexities of the constitutional question had to be addressed in public debate.¹³ Writing in *Die Zeit* just after the election, Jurgen Habermas argued that the West German constitution demanded,

an agenda for reunification which gives priority to the freely exercised right of the citizens to determine their own future by direct vote, *within the framework of a non-occupied public sphere that has not already been willed away*. This means, concretely, that the will of the voting public is given precedence over an annexation cleverly initiated but...which dishonestly evades one of the essential conditions for the founding of any nation of state-citizens: the public act of a carefully considered democratic decision taken in both parts of Germany.¹⁴

But the point appeared to have got lost in the wider, more emotive issue of German nationalism and patriotism. Habermas, and other like-minded intellectuals and artists, like the writer Gunter Grass, provoked bitter criticism from the establishment for their critique of unification. Ulrich Greiner wrote that there was a "preliminary trial against these intellectuals because of insufficient love for the Fatherland,...apolitical day-dreaming, (and) wilful desertion from the troops".¹⁵ For example, historian and Hitler biographer, Jochen Thies, called them "the last burnt children of National Socialism".¹⁶ This counter-assault had the effect of burying important constitutional principles from public view. One was that the decision to unite was a matter for the citizens of both Germanys to decide in a referendum or even referenda. Another was that unity via Article 23 did not have the effect of determining German frontiers conclusively as would a new constitution via Article 146.¹⁷

Judging from accounts in the British media at this time, the constitutional question was not widely referred to and was seen to be a formality. The CDU-Alliance had only to forge a coalition with the SPD to obtain the two-thirds majority needed to vote the country out of existence. ITN reported that:

The historic win by the (CDU) and its alliance partners means that it is now when rather than whether the two Germanys will unite. (ITN, 13.00, 19.3.90)

BBC News made brief reference to the issue in all its main evening bulletins the day after the election:

The conservatives...want to use Article 23 of the constitution to extend it to East Germany. (BBC1, 21.00, 19.3.90)

The only inkling we might have had that there was an alternative route via Article 146 came in an interview response by a communist party (PDS) official:

(We) believe that the constitution of a united Germany should be negotiated. (BBC1, 21.00, 19.3.90)

I found only one news item in the sample - on *Channel Four News* - that got to the heart of the issue:

When Konrad Adenauer founded the state in the late '40s, he signed a constitution that left open the possibility of unification. *But there are now different interpretations of how that can happen.* The Constitution, called the Basic Law...contains an article, Number 23, which allows other German lands to join the Federal Republic. *But elsewhere, the document says that when a new Germany comes into being, it can start afresh with a new constitution.* The East Germans, now about to join the West, may demand that their social rights be protected, that the constitution should change to accommodate them. *It's an argument about the values of a future Germany.* (MY EMPHASIS) (19.00, 16.3.90)

News accounts showed considerable awareness that East Germany was already undergoing serious economic and social upheaval. However, they did not report this within a framework that suggested that an "argument about the values of a future Germany" even existed. They assumed that the problems were inherited from the communists - the legacy of centrally planned economic chaos - and presented West Germany's 'Anschluss' as a *panacea* for these problems rather than as a *contributory factor*.

Reporting economic unification

A feature report on *Newsnight* (BBC2) examined the prospects for East Germans after the election and their Western-inspired hope for an 'economic miracle'. The newscaster introduced the report using a metaphor of partnership to explain current expectations of unification. But he cast it in a somewhat one-sided mould:

The hope is that after the long, acrimonious separation, there can again be a marriage of two minds, with the commercial flair and dynamism of the West bringing new life to its partner's economy; and with the German industrial giants lending their weight to the work of reconstruction. Already, the Frankfurt-based Bundesbank, the guiding force behind the post-war economic miracle in the West, is poised to move to Berlin.

However the central question was not *if* the miracle would happen but *when*:

But can a new economic miracle transform the GDR at the pace its people are demanding?

The report that followed constructed an image of East Germany as a going concern, the biggest business opportunity of the decade with the economics minister cast as managing director:

Today, East German Enterprises Limited was born. At 8 am, its new finance director was on his way to Bonn, head office, the source of all his capital. Elmar Piero, a West German business man and former CDU minister in Berlin, is today East Germany's new economics minister. His task: change socialism into capitalism. Never has a businessman had such an opportunity.

The reporter did not ignore the problems that might hinder his mission but, before looking at them, she fixed them firmly within the framework of 'democracy'. Now that East Germany was a 'real' democracy, anything was possible:

Today, Berlin, a city of anachronism, came back to life - the east still occupied by Soviet troops but *now aglow with democratic grace*. They're going to need that grace and all their strength to cope with all the reconstruction now ahead. The country's infrastructure is threadbare, communications primitive. If they're to join their partners without sinking, the revolution ahead will have to reach into every recess of this country's being. (BBC2, *Newsnight*, 22.30, 19.3.90)

Again we can glean a different impression from the liberal press. John Eisenhower saw little or no evidence of a city "aglow with democratic grace", and predicted that the "fears, hopes and euphoria which the Bonn politicians did so much to whip up by

their unprecedentedly vicious and distressing election campaign in East Germany will now flow into German society as a whole".¹⁸ He based this prophetic statement on the political realities - the prevailing problems and divisions between East and West Germany - not on the declarations of Bonn politicians. For example, there was public disbelief among West Germans, and in the West in general, that Kohl could achieve unity without raising taxes and inflation. The *News at Ten* reported that:

The Chancellor...faces a formidable task. He promised the East Germans a social security system, pension rights, and unemployment benefits for those who'll lose their jobs when the economy feels the impact of the free market. Now he must deliver. No one has even dared calculate the total cost but West Germans fear they'll have to pay it. Opinion polls show 75% think taxes will rise despite the Chancellor's commitment to keep them down. And the value of their Deutsch Marks may be threatened, too. Monetary union is now expected at the end of June - it could bring inflation with it. (ITN, 22.00, 19.3.90)

Kohl canvassed in three very different constituencies: not only the two Germanys but the 'international community' as well. Robin Smyth reported how West Germans received "contradictory signals from Kohl" about the speed of unification. "First it was to be a long process; then it was going to happen as soon as possible because of the danger of economic collapse in the East; now the orders are again for a slow advance." He told how Kohl took part in a TV talk show from Leipzig which showed film of the extent of economic problems which the West proposed to take on: "(Kohl) rather surprisingly complained that (it)...had painted too black a picture...He wanted to give his new supporters in the East and viewers at home a more upbeat impression of the burden they were going to shoulder".¹⁹ David Gow reported that East Germany's new finance minister, Elmar Pieroth, promised monetary union by 1 July only to be contradicted by officials in Bonn who said that was an impossible timetable.²⁰ Television news failed to point out this contradiction even though it was very evident from coverage overall. For example, one of ITN's first reports on the election result led with the headline:

Kohl's triumph means unification of Germany may be only months ahead.

(13.00, 19.3.90)

And the *News at Ten* reported that:

The winners of yesterday's election, the Christian Democrats and their allies, said they'll step up the pace of unification. (19.3.90)

But the story was rather different on *Channel Four News* when they spoke to the General Secretary of the ruling West German Christian Democrats:

Reporter: Volke Ruhe showed the party's growing realism when I asked him when he expected German reunification?

Ruhe: Within the next two or three years, the reunification of the states. And still after that, you will need plenty time for adjustment of laws, etcetera, etcetera.

(19.3.90)

A report on *Channel Four News* just after the election belied the contradiction between vague "et cetera, et cetera" of politically interested sources - government officials and western 'analysts' - and the evidence the reporter sees for himself:

Support for rapid reunification had been *resounding*. Chancellor *Kohl* had *correctly read the mood* here but *East Germans remain apprehensive* about the cost to them of the high-speed, high-risk strategy...

In West Germany, *the stockmarket rocketed*. Share prices rose highest in the companies who are fast investing in East Germany. *But on the streets of East Berlin, the daily struggle continues*. 360,000 East Germans have left since last summer but almost 16 million remain to *confront the reality of unification* - massive price increases instead of low subsidised prices, unemployment, uncertainty about the future of pensions and the social welfare system.

Economists believe that one day there will be an economic miracle in eastern Germany but the transition is expected to be painful. Productivity here is 40% that of West Germany. *Some analysts predict* that up to 1.4 m workers will lose their jobs, *but in recent weeks analysts say* the slide into an economic abyss has been halted. (MY EMPHASES)

The reporter then informed us that the flow of East German labour out of the country to West Germany was continuing. In spite of the Wall coming down, the promises of monetary parity, and the holding of elections, thousands of people were still not convinced that things would get better:

(The) likely future East German economics minister...painted *an optimistic forecast* for the East...*But when East Germans look around at the legacy left by the communists*, they face now a test of extreme patience. (MY EMPHASIS)

(19.00, 19.3.90)

Predictions that German monetary union was only months away were vindicated on 1 July 1990, when the value of East German currency and wages was fixed on a par with the West German mark. This was what Kohl had promised East Germans in

return for their vote in their first 'free elections'. In vital economic terms, they had become citizen-consumers of Fukuyama's post-communist "universal homogenous state". Whereas Marxist-Leninism declared that Communism was the soviet government plus the electrification of the whole country, Fukuyama declared the universal homogenous state to be "liberal democracy in the political sphere combined with easy access to VCRs and stereos in the economic".²¹ When the day came for East Germany, there were plenty of VCRs and stereos but, like the staples of bread and vegetables, they were beyond their price-range. With echoes of their coverage when the Berlin Wall came down, ITN and BBC News still seemed fascinated with East Germans turned western consumers. In this BBC item, the journalist seems blissfully ignorant of a glaring inconsistency in his reporting:

The goods were of *a price and a quality not previously seen here* and the crowds were as if for *a Christmas shopping spree*. Where last week, the goods they could get here were only 10% Western, now it was 80%, a bewildering variety for some. And an especially high demand for radios, televisions and video-cassettes, all to be paid for in *crisp new bank notes*.

But the reviews are more mixed in the supermarket where subsidies are off. *The price of some staples has doubled and more than doubled*. But fruits are available which were not on the shelves before. *Shoppers are cautious....*

They were also beating a path to the doors of travel agents for *package holidays to be paid in Deutsch Marks* to places previously beyond the reach of East Germans. (MY EMPHASES) (BBC1, 21.00, 2.7.90)

The people were 'cautious' about buying staple food yet they were buying western electrical goods with 'crisp new bank notes' and snapping up holidays in the sun with Deutsch Marks. It is difficult to reconcile these two images.

ITN adopted a similar line. This report sounded like advertising copy for the Berlin chamber of commerce:

East Germans got their new money at the weekend. Today, they poured into the shops to spend it, and *they found shops once drab and bare had been transformed into sparkling palaces full of the best Western products*. People needed time just to look. After years of poor quality and no variety, even the packaging was a novelty (FILM, TWO MEN SCRUTINISE A MILK CARTON), and so was the food. Others complained about the higher prices...Staff learn to use price-sticker guns and identify the new notes and coins. (MY EMPHASES) (ITN, 22.00, 2.7.90)

On another level, these BBC and ITN items differed when they went on to report the wider and deeper implications of monetary union for east and west. BBC News saw it more as an economic rite of passage for East Germans: they were now part of the western, consumer society and were empowered by the mighty Deutsch Mark.²² ITN, on the other hand, implied that the magic moment did nothing to close the gulf of social and economic difference that persisted between East and West Germans. Thus the headline:

In East Germany, western goods fill the shops but thousands of jobs go.

(ITN, 22.00, 2.7.90)

BBC structured its item around the optimistic views of government officials, the stock market, and expert opinion to come up with what the money markets would call a 'buoyant' forecast:

All this will take some time to work through the economy and there are fears it will fuel high inflation. The *government says 'not so'...*It was *a confidence reflected in share prices* in Frankfurt stock exchange where *conditions were described as 'friendly'*. *The expert opinion?* There could be problems ahead in the event of large scale plant-closure *but the wider Deutsch Mark is off to a good start.* (MY EMPHASES)

(BBC1, 21.00, 2.7.90)

As an economic outlook, this had two major blindspots. First, where the West German government was making confident predictions, it was also sending out warning signals. For example, the *Guardian* reported one such transmission with the headline: "East Germany faces mass unemployment, says Bonn".²³ The day after monetary union, the West German Economics Minister, Helmut Hausmann, stated that it was "essential for investment that over the next three to five years low wages and longer working hours prevail in East Germany".²⁴ Second, a focus solely on the stock market did not tell the whole story about market responses to monetary union. As Milner pointed out in the *Guardian*, the stock markets were buoyant because they were speculating on *potential profits* to made from wholesale investment in the East by big West German companies. A look at the bond market revealed a different picture. It was counting the costs. It would have to pay the bills and underwrite public spending on bringing the East German infrastructure up to West German standards.²⁵ Hutton estimated an expenditure of £45 billion on transport, £10 billion on new power stations, not to mention investment on health, education and housing: "Small wonder the German bond market...is a trifle shaky".²⁶

In contrast with the BBC, ITN eschewed stock market speculation altogether:

West German ministers who devised and forced through monetary union are confident about its impact....However, as the last visible barriers were removed today (FILM, CHECKPOINT POSTS TAKEN AWAY), *there are doubts about how quickly that dynamism can revive the East.* (MY EMPHASIS)

They also reported doubts over the West German government's optimistic predictions:

But there are *clear uncertainties* about this overnight transformation of a state-run economy to the free-market...This factory...like almost every other, was producing too much - even before monetary union. Now it may be forced to close. Today, 4,000 metal workers staged a lightning strike because of fears of unemployment - *action that might become common-place* throughout East German industry. (MY EMPHASES) (ITN, 22.00, 2.7.90)

In spite of all these doubts, the timetable for full political unity continued to confound all expectations. There were still many complicated problems to address, not least on the international level, and it was thought that these would be resolved in time for a special sitting of the CSCE in November.²⁷ Yet, the Four-Plus-Two Talks had finalised a treaty by September, allowing full unification on 3 October. Alex Brummer described the whole process as "the big Bang theory carried to the ultimate":

The speed at which events have moved, *stampeded* by Helmut Kohl, is simply astonishing. It is like watching (the soccer player) Lothar Matthaeus *storming* towards the goal in (World Cup 1990). They have been *unstoppable as a Panzer division*. No amount of diplomatic disguise, in the shape of the two plus four formula, the European Community, NATO *or even Mrs Thatcher* has been able to withstand the pressure. We have all been *bowled over by Dr Kohl*, the only European statesman who knew firmly where he was going. His *steam roller* has balked at nothing....(His) willingness...to gamble all for a place in the *pantheon of German leadership*, in the name of *Das Volk*, has inspired imitation in finance, industry and commerce.²⁸ (MY EMPHASES)

The *Independent* advertised its coverage of Unity Day with this box notice:

It is the cabaret act of the season in Bonn: the German jaw jutting, shouts, 'Come on, of course we can pay, we're Germans! What, the Americans want a few billion for the Gulf, no problem. Ah, the Russians, too, only 20 billion, petty cash. Poles, Israelis? hand me that cheque book. This is Germany, we can afford anything!' German unification this week in the *Independent*.²⁹

The jibes at the pace and manner of unification appeared to vindicate Habermas when he argued that the opportunity for a new and permanent German constitution was being missed by the short-sightedness of what he called "Deutschmark Nationalism".³⁰ The writer Gunter Grass saw the German mark as "a substitute for thought, an all-purpose adhesive".³¹ Tony Barber reported that economic chaos and widespread fear and anxiety still reigned in the east, while those in the West harboured growing resentment that they would ultimately pay the price of unity. This was hardly surprising "when one considers that the cost...will run into hundreds of billions of marks over the next decade: far more than originally predicted, and likely to mean higher taxes".³² The *Guardian* warned that the "internal strains of reunification are already evident as stress marks on the surface of official joy". It noted Kohl's unrestrained optimism and underlined how relative this could prove to be:

The structural changes now underway backed by new technology and a strong Deutschmark, are supposed to create a new German lift-off with jobs across all his new land. But it will require a combination of faith and sheer German determination to see this through. First, the dislocation of the East's economy, its loss of social benefits a grim counterpoint to the loss of jobs, has to be weathered. The most optimistic forecast is that it will get worse before it starts to get better in the mid-1990s. If there is a world recession, can even the strongest currency in Europe bear the load?³³

Brasier reported that criticisms about the huge costs was by now taboo in German public debate. Chancellor Kohl's political opponents were finding it difficult to use it against him - an ideal situation given the extent to which Germany was sinking into debt. Figures for the real costs varied greatly between media accounts depending on their source and what they included in their calculations. Brasier quoted the German Ministry of Finance which had just revised the budget for the third time and revealed that the country would go into the red to the tune of DM100 million (£34 million), increasing by another DM50 million the following year. This compared with a DM 5 million surplus in 1989. These figures did not include a range of costs in the private and public sectors which neither government nor banks had begun to consider.³⁴ Munchau cited more far-ranging estimate from the *Deutsches Institut für Wirtschaftsforschung* which forecast that the budget deficit would quadruple in 1991 from DM30 billion in 1989.³⁵

But there were other, more optimistic soothsayers who continued to argue that the pain was worth it and that a new, better Germany would emerge as the leading power in the European community. The *European* thought Kohl deserved "praise for forcing

through reunification when many...saw only the dangers and the price, not the advantages...Unification was a German choice and the country should accept the financial burden as it will expect to reap the benefit".³⁶ Frankland concluded that the freedom that the east German people had won was worth bearing in mind when talking about the costs of unification.³⁷ Neal Ascherson argued that "the omens were good" for the new Germany in that it was not being founded as "the fulfilment of an ideal". Whereas Bismarck, Hitler and Honecker led their German polities to disaster, the Weimar and Federal republics were "delivered down the chimney" to become the only two decent German states in recent history.³⁸ This does not seem to be a judicious use of history given that the Weimar Republic's 'decency' did not save it from economic chaos and political extremism.

As with the press, television news continued to accommodate both optimistic and pessimistic views of unity, but in the final analysis their framework continued to give unification the benefit of the doubt. Both ITN and BBC News reported that huge economic difficulties persisted in spite of Helmut Kohl's promises to the East and West Germans alike that the upturn was just around the corner:

Here, outside the Reichstag, Berlin's former parliament, there will be an enormous party. But the jollity will hide the subdued reality of hardship and uncertainty, of the price Germany must pay, both in unemployment and hard cash, a price which the leader of the opposition Social Democrats told me continues to be underestimated.

(*Channel Four News*, 2.10.90)

The problems of unity are enormous. West Germans must find the money to rebuild the East. It'll cost hundreds of billions of pounds and take well into the next century. Meantime, the east must cope with the consequences of dropping a state-run economy into a free market. Two-thirds of their industrial companies are predicted to close, and half their work-force lose their jobs within a year.

(BBC1, 21.00, 2.10.90)

The big nightmare in East Germany is unemployment. Short-time working hides the true extent of it, now about 2 and a half million, a third of the working population.

(BBC2, *Newsnight*, 22.30, 2.10.90)

A week before the East German election in 1990, BBC *Panorama* considered the likely result and, while arguing that unity was almost inevitable, raised the spectre of it going terribly wrong:

Although many people initially rejoiced with the Germans, it hasn't taken long for the euphoria to fade, in Germany *and* abroad...Mating a Communist with a market economy poses a challenge for Germany. It could become an economic superpower but *such is the run-down state of East Germany that it could prove more burden than opportunity*.³⁹ (BBC1, 12.3.90)

In BBC's *Notes in the Margin* series, Will Hutton looked at the economic options open to East Germany in context with events throughout Eastern Europe. He analysed the search in east Germany, and by extension Eastern Europe as a whole, for a way forward in the wake of the so-called 'revolution'. Hutton first considered the brand of economics that had prevailed in Britain and the US throughout the eighties and which now claimed to have triumphed over communism. 'Thatcherism' and 'Reaganomics', however, were part of a 'spiv culture', the wholesale speculation of the state's economic resources in the financial markets:

Easy money has created in Britain and the USA alike not so much an enterprise but a spiv culture. To make money you've got to guess the events of the next five minutes, not the five years that real economic life requires.⁴⁰

The disastrous effects of this for these economies were only just becoming apparent. They were sliding into deepening recession without a sound manufacturing base: this they had already destroyed themselves. Hutton then argued that gradual adoption of the social-market system of West Germany was in fact the ideal for the East Germans. It was a system that evolved out of a consensus between capital and labour, and an abiding commitment to investment in manufacturing and technology, and to research and development. In turn, the running of the economy was controlled by a system of public accountability not by a regime of financial deregulation. "And", as Hutton so succinctly put it, "it works!". But Kohl abandoned whatever chances there were to manage unification in this way in favour of the 'fast track' and the 'fast buck'. The rush to unity was a gamble that not only pushed East Germany into chaos but also damaged West Germany's economy.

Reporting social and political unification

News reports also highlighted the serious social divisions between East and West that threatened real unity between the people. Throughout the process of unification there was a persistent and profound disdain among West Germans for East Germans. Sometimes it bordered on racism. There was little sympathy for their grievances about unemployment and their fears for a western 'take-over'. West Germans only anticipated the rising cost of unification and its impact on *their* standard of living. According to

Tony Barber, the West German media produced an image of East Germans as a people incapable of making informed decisions, and thus unready to meet the demands of sophisticated life in the West. They would need the guidance of Big Brother for some time to come: "Articles in...magazines describe the lifestyles of East Germans as if they were talking not about brothers and sisters but about freaks from another continent".⁴¹ A *Channel Four News* reporter remarked that:

Unification is meant to unite the people of Germany but one negative side of the process has been the animosity between some westerners and some easterners, almost racist with unpleasant undertones. (3.10.90)

Michael Farr wrote that, "When the unity party is over and world attention is turned away, the new Germany's...people will have to set about achieving 'inner reunification'".⁴² The *Guardian* argued that the unity celebrations did not "mask the strongly subterranean dislike felt by many West Germans for their comrades in the East".⁴³ Barber pointed out that West Germans took some years after the second world war to recover their dignity and sense of pride. East Germans would experience the same time lag in terms of their standard of living but, more critically, "the East German sense of humiliation is also caused by a feeling that West Germans have geared themselves up, in a slightly self-righteous way to be tutors in democracy to a misled people".⁴⁴ This was not an unreasonable feeling. The West German journalist, Thomas Kielinger, captured the sea-change in opinion. When the Wall came down in November, he ridiculed the East German reformer Jens Reich on *Newsnight* for being fearful of what the event might mean for his people. There was much to celebrate, not least the entrepreneurial spirit of the East German people and the prospects of German unity (see Chapter Five). Six months later, his tune had changed:

West Germans will not simply roll over and pay any prices for a privilege they, put coldly, can well do without. For example, should the new leaders in East Germany choose to request rewriting of the West German constitution as part of their coming under one German roof, one can safely predict that this request will be courteously but firmly rejected by *a no-nonsense population in the West*. They have learned too well to enjoy the renaissance of democracy in their country to be inclined to tamper with its foundations.⁴⁵

On the eve of German unity, *Newsnight's* Charles Wheeler reported on how the wider political and administrative structures in East Germany were undergoing a process similar to that of de-nazification in West Germany after world war two:

Like Germany in 1945, this is a state and a system in abject defeat, waiting to be told how to reform and how to rebuild. Once again, *the power structure needs to*

be purged, what we used to call de-Nazification, with public servants being *taught* that their primary concern is no longer the extension of the power of the party and the state. For weeks now, West German officials have been helping to set up regional government here, closely modelled on the West German Lander.⁴⁶ (MY EMPHASIS)
(BBC2, *Newsnight*, 22.30, 2.10.90)

Jonathan Steele wrote of a counterrevolution in the east that swept away even the most enlightened policies on education, welfare, women's rights, and culture.⁴⁷ A more sinister aspect of this counter-revolution was the witch-hunt for state security (Stasi) agents. Various estimates put the number of east Germans who worked or even merely had contact with the Stasi at between half a million to six million.⁴⁸ For a great majority, the association was formal and routine because of their membership of the communist party. The witch-hunt - real or imagined - was instilling fear, suspicion, paranoia and guilt in the minds of millions of East Germans.

It was ultimately a question of winners and losers, of leading and following. The *News at Ten* led with a story that seemed to sum up their perception of the order of things, unification notwithstanding. The bulletin opened with the image of a brand new West German car full of happy passengers followed by a rickety old Trabant, the symbol of all East Germany stood for in Western eyes: broken down and going nowhere. The headline was:

Germans - all united now - learn who leads (Family in Volkswagen saloon), and who follows (Family in Trabant).

The family in the Volkswagen were identified as former 'refugees' who had come to West Germany on the first 'wave' in the summer of 1989. ITN retell their story - how they got to West Germany and how they found jobs and prosperity. Now it was their turn to welcome their friends from the east and show them the ways of life in the West:

Then, (they) took their friends to see the sights, their shiny new car an inspiration to the newcomers following in their old East model, as obsolete now as the country that made it.
(ITN, 22.00, 3.10.90)

In the final analysis, the news maintained their overall framework, that is that unity would ultimately absorb and surmount all difficulties:

The merger of two disparate economic systems will be costly and painful, *but these are Germans and they'll make it work*. (MY EMPHASIS)

(BBC2, *Newsnight*, 22.30, 2.10.90)

Despite these celebrations, there are also fears for the future. In the east, where the economy is collapsing and unemployment is rising, and in the West where they're having to pay an enormous price for unification. *But all that is for tomorrow.* Tonight, the revellers can only give thanks that their two nations are finally becoming one and that they are here for the moment of history they've waited so long to see...In fact, an opinion poll of Germans East and West shows 88% of them are behind reunification. Though some think it's being badly rushed, *there's little they can do about that now* except to make the new nation work...The unification party here has perhaps been a little smaller than expected but that's because Germans were anxious all along not to make this look like a display of nationalism, just a display of joy. (BBC1, 21.00, 3.10.90)

Just in case the party does get out of hand, 3,000 riot police are waiting in the side streets but so far the atmosphere remains festive. The party's warming up just two hours now to unity. *Time to enjoy the unexpected, plenty of weeks afterwards to count the cost and adjust to the new ways.* (ITN, 22.00, 2.10.90)

The police referred to in the last quote were in fact deployed in Berlin hours later to break up an anarchist demonstration against unification. As might be expected, the news reported this as an aberration, an illegitimate act of protest, and a damper on the party. But this protest was part of the wider backlash of political radicalism in Germany, especially from the Far Right, that was only becoming apparent in this period and that is still haunting the German establishment years after unity. With its uncomfortable resonance with Nazism in the Weimar Republic, it became a major and persistent news story in the media which reported it within a changing framework for understanding the new united Germany. A cursory glance at coverage of key moments in the years since unity illustrates this point quite succinctly. I looked at prime-time news reporting of anniversaries of unity and the fall of the Berlin Wall, and also their coverage of major demonstrations and racist violence by German neo-Nazis.

Reporting the aftermath

One year after the East German election, Barbara Beck reported that, "The East German economic miracle, once pencilled in to start late in 1991, will be indefinitely delayed". This, she said, was on no lesser authority than the President of the Bundesbank, Karl Otto Pohl. He referred to monetary union as a "disaster" and thought that eastern Germany was "completely uncompetitive". Beck went on:

Disaster is the right word. The economy of the "new Lander", as they are known, is in free fall and the parachute of investment, from West Germany and abroad, is refusing to open. Of a workforce of under 9 million, 3 million will soon be jobless, and the crowds that once lionised Helmut Kohl...are back on the streets in a mood of fury and despair.⁴⁹

Huge differentials in rates of pay, employment, and production were opening up between east and west. Germany was united but economists continued to make separate estimates and forecasts for the western half and the eastern half.⁵⁰

David Gow has reported on Germany's progress since unification. In 1991, two years after the Wall, he looked at the range of predictions for the future, from doomsday prophecies to the wild optimism of planners and politicians. He concluded that "Germany, as yet, appears unable to develop a vision of its own future in a Europe torn between west and east and subjected to new and old hopes and suspicions from all sides".⁵¹ In an article from 1992, headed "In The Kohl Light Of Morning", he wrote that "Germany has been living in a dream world since the euphoric days of the fall of the Wall and of unification but, even so, the scales of illusion about its new tasks are taking an inordinately long time to drop from the eyes of its 80 million citizens". And, he added: "Unification has simply hastened a profound challenge to the assumptions and behaviour that have lain behind West Germany's post-war economic miracle".⁵² In January 1993, he asked "Who's still afraid of Germany?" Not many, it seemed, for "The big bad wolf of popular imagery, towering over Europe economically and straining at the leash to impose its political will over both the western and eastern parts of the continent, is turning out to be a sheep".⁵³ Gow's line of vision, then, was entirely consistent throughout the three or four years since the heady days of November 1989. He showed it was possible to see, even at an early stage and without much extraordinary effort, that the official German drive for high-speed unity, and its supportive rhetoric, was fundamentally flawed.

The *Financial Times Survey* of Germany, 25 October 1993 ran to twelve pages of special feature items on the on-going public debate about Germany's ability to compete internationally and how that touched on the country's socio-economic fabric. Popularly referred to as *Standort Deutschland*, the debate had been bubbling under for ten or more years but had been brought to the surface by a number of factors: the impact of unification and European integration, the collapse of east European markets, in which Germany had invested heavily over the years, and increased competition from the Far East.⁵⁴ On the economic front, then, articles examined the breakdown of West

Germany's much vaunted consensus between capital and labour.⁵⁵ Economists came under fire for their inaccurate predictions.⁵⁶ In an interview with Christopher Parkes, the chairman of the much-troubled car firm, Volkswagen, argued that only 20% of German industry's problems stemmed from labour - the blame for the other 80% lay with management.⁵⁷

On the socio-political front, the unemployment rate in eastern Germany was outstripping that of the west and was provoking a review of the state benefit system.⁵⁸ This was just one of many rethinks in social policy since unification and it was provoking a widespread backlash against the established political parties. In the run up to 1994, a super-election year, this could lead to unsatisfactory coalitions between bitter opponents at a time when decisive leadership was urgently required.⁵⁹ The problem was exacerbated in the East, where the witch hunt for Stasi agents among public officials inhibited talented people from putting themselves forward for election. "Paradoxically", noted Judy Dempsey, "the newly found freedom has had the bizarre and disturbing effect of silencing them". The result? The same weak politicians that were elected on western coat-tails in March 1990 would remain in office. Dempsey concluded:

The disappointment is caused not just by high unemployment, or failed expectations raised by...Kohl when he said in 1990 that eastern Germany would be a "blossoming landscape in a few years", and that "no one would be worse off after unification". It is a sense of powerlessness fuelled by the feeling of imposed shame; the loss of the Voice because its words are not believed; the loss of the spontaneity and civic courage which helped to break down the Berlin Wall. If Standort Deutschland is to have political meaning, it must help break the silence in the east.⁶⁰

The Treuhand, the special agency set up in 1989 to manage the privatisation of east German industries, was fast earning the distinction of being even less popular than the Honecker regime. It was commissioned to close inefficient and uncompetitive factories down and put the most promising up for sale. Its most immediate and most visible impact on the economy was to push unemployment up even higher. And, in the long-term, it tried to save factories that had lost their original markets in eastern Europe, which collapsed, and which would or could never compete with their carbon copies in the West. The only serious buyers appeared to be either big western firms which closed them down to snuff out the competition, or western real estate speculators hungry for a fast profit on the land.⁶¹ In 1991, the BBC2 series, *Forty Minutes*, featured a documentary on one such company, the East Berlin light company

Varna. The film showed the effects of privatisation on working people who had been guaranteed job security for all or most of their lives. Now their company was up for sale and they faced almost certain unemployment. The future seemed to offer only different versions of the same fate. Would a western competitor buy them out and close them down? Or would a real estate firm buy them out and close them down? The film looks at the situation from a variety of perspectives: the manager from West Germany whose job it is to rationalise the operation for privatisation, the workers' representative whose job was to chair a committee to decide which workers should be made redundant and then inform them by letter, and a worker who was single with three children to look after. By intercutting from one to the other, the film conveyed the real nature of the process, that ultimately the fate of these people was being controlled by forces in the west totally alien to them. The worker, Rosie, sees little hope of getting another job given her personal situation. Even the wages she earned at Varna remained low while her rent had increased from 147 marks in November 1989 to 572 marks two years later. She said that when the wall came down:

It was wonderful and we thought we'll create a different GDR. No one would have said then that things would turn out the way they did with unification. And if unification had to come, we wanted West Germany and the GDR to grow together. But at the moment, it seems that everything from the GDR is being wound up and that we're blindly adopting everything from the West, whether it's good or bad.

The film ends with the news that the speculators had struck a deal only to pull out at the eleventh hour with an announcement that they were unwilling to inherit Varna's debts. The company is put back on the market and the process has to start all over again.⁶²

On the first anniversary of the fall of the Wall, the main theme in news accounts appeared to be the 'hang-over after the party', the sense of disillusionment that quickly took over from the euphoria of November 1989. The Western promises had not been fulfilled:

(CAPTION, "A BITTER BERLIN AFTERMATH") And a special report one year after the breaching of the Berlin Wall: bank robbery, corruption and disillusionment in the East. (*Channel Four News*, 19.00, 8.11.90)

It was on November 9 1989 that the East German authorities lifted the travel restrictions that had kept their people hemmed in. And the people responded in an explosion of energy which swept away the East German state. In elections this March, East Germans voted for unification with their neighbours whose lifestyle they had coveted for so long. The Wall in pieces had become a collector's item. A year on it's still being dismantled but the crowds have gone and the glamour has faded. Freedom spelt the end of many problems but the beginning of many others. After the initial rush of elation, life has settled back to become, once again, a hard slog for East Germans.

(BBC1, 21.00, 9.11.90)

In the second and third year after the Wall, the economic chaos in the East persisted but it was the violent backlash it gave rise to that captured the headlines. They frame the problem as humanitarian rather than economic:

In Berlin, more than 30,000 people turned out to show their solidarity with the asylum-seekers who've been attacked and fire-bombed by neo-Nazis. *Just two years after the Wall came down, Germany is once again becoming a polarised country. The divisions now are not between east and west but between tolerance and intolerance.*

(ITN, 20.45, 9.11.91)

Headline: A Berlin rally by 350,000 Germans protesting against growing racism has been disrupted by violence. Riot police moved in as eggs and paint bombs were thrown at Germany's President

Reporter: It was planned as a great demonstration on a national scale - the German people showing their rejection of racism and the hatred of foreigners. It was timed on the eve of the double anniversary of Hitler's pogrom against the Jews and the coming down of the Wall three years ago. (BBC1, 21.00, 8.11.92)

Three weeks after these demonstrations, neo-Nazis killed three Turkish people in a fire-bomb attack on their apartment house. The ITN reporter referred back to the New Year's Eve Party at the Brandenburg Gate in 1989:

When they opened the Brandenburg Gate, no one believed Germany was reopening the floodgates to her Nazi past but, three years after the collapse of the Berlin Wall, the spread of right-wing extremism has already dented her reputation abroad and, if it's not stemmed, could endanger the stability of the country itself.

(ITN, 22.00, 23.11.92)

The first anniversary of Unity Day, 3 October 1991, was also marked by violence:

Celebrations to mark the first anniversary of the unification of Germany have been marred by clashes involving neo-Nazi groups and anarchists.

(*Channel Four News*, 3.10.91)

Newscaster: The German Chancellor, Helmut Kohl, has been jostled by demonstrators during the second Anniversary of German reunification. Later, he condemned attacks against foreigners and acknowledged that economic recovery in eastern Germany will take longer than he has first thought.

Reporter: But this was also a national holiday. Many people enjoyed it, especially in the east where they really do prefer the new Germany to the old one.

(BBC1, 21.50, 3.10.92)

ITN's report on the incident reached a different conclusion:

But the euphoria of two years ago has gone. As Chancellor Kohl discovered, unification alone is not enough. He must now deliver a better future.

(ITN, 23.00, 3.10.92)

The third anniversary of German unity, on 3 October 1993, was not reported or marked in the main peak-time news bulletins but BBC *Breakfast News* featured a special report from Berlin by Brian Hanrahan. He introduced his film report with the remark that:

I haven't been to Berlin since the country was unified and what's surprising is how little has really changed. *Even without the Wall, Berlin is still a frontline between East and West.* Unemployment in the East is officially double Western levels and some even say it's much higher. *It's differences like that that keep the two sides of the city separated, with each turning in on itself.* (BBC, 07.45, 3.10.93)

Two common themes, then, emerge from coverage over this long period of time: the persistence of economic stagnation and hardship, especially in the former East Germany, and the rise of political alienation and violence. But television news seemed to take longer than the press to move away from the notion that the fall of the wall and German unity was good news for the East German people: that in socio-economic and psychological terms, the Berlin Wall never came down. Channel Four News picked up on this at an early stage, on the first anniversary of the Fall:

The new citizens of a united Germany face a very different future from that envisaged a year ago. Few guessed how fast the East German state would disintegrate. (JUXTAPOSITION OF IMAGES: EUPHORIA AT THE WALL, 1989 - URBAN

POVERTY, EAST BERLIN 1990) But it's clear that one year after the euphoria of last November, the removal of the concrete Wall that divided East from West has revealed different barriers which can't be so easily demolished. Here, *it's being called the Wall in the mind, a vast difference in thinking and attitude.*

(Channel Four News, 19.00, 8.11.90)

Three years later, Brian Hanrahan concluded:

The Wall has gone...(but) not every one likes the insecurity about jobs and homes that came with freedom. *The Wall's been replaced by a void of understanding that matches the physical gash which still cuts across the city.* (IMAGES FROM NOVEMBER 1989) It was here in the Potsdamer Platz that Berliners symbolically celebrated their unification. I remember the police from east and west linking arms between a crossing point through the barbed wire and the watch-towers. *But the two halves of the city soon pulled back to separate lives...* The two Germanys had 40 years to grow apart. *They won't grow together again just three or four. It will take a new generation to do it.*

(BBC1, Breakfast News, 4.10.93)

Conclusion

The examples offered above suggest that for the most part, television news only ever offered superficial view of Germany after unification. But was there a concurrent and readily accessible alternative perspective? Examples from concurrent press coverage show that it did not require inordinate amounts of time and space to present a fuller and more detailed picture, and a more critical stance.

When the Berlin Wall came down, journalists readily acknowledged that it spelled the end of the Cold War as understood by East and West. They accepted that the old political and economic certainties were no longer valid making the future much more difficult to predict. The problem was most immediate in the two Germanies where people east and west expected to make important decisions about the future. Yet, as shown in Chapter 5, the German government quickly took advantage of the prevailing euphoria to set out on an supposedly 'inevitable', 'fast-track' to German unity. In absence of certainty, television news seemed to settle for that option and followed it through to eventual unity on 3 October and far beyond. They did not see that the 'fast-track' option was ill-judged and hastily conducted. They acknowledged the persistence of serious economic problems in the former East Germany but explained all these as legacies of communism rather than the result of derailment. They proclaimed the advent of democracy in East Germany but saw no contradiction between this and the

extent of western interference and management in the 1990 election, and the expedient interpretation of the Basic Law to hasten unity before the West German elections in December 1990. It does not require hindsight to reach this judgement. The evidence and the critique were available in concurrent coverage by the liberal press.

Notes

- ¹ Thomas, R. (1990)
- ² Smyth, R. (1990)
- ³ Steele, J. (1990a)
- ⁴ Frankland, M. (1990a)
- ⁵ Towers, R. (1990)
- ⁶ Ignatieff, M. (1990)
- ⁷ Snape, T. (1990)
- ⁸ Field, C. (1990)
- ⁹ Barber, T. (1990)
- ¹⁰ Ascherson, N., (1990)
- ¹¹ Frankland, M. (1990b)
- ¹² Pond, E. (1993: 200)
- ¹³ Delius, F.C. (1992; originally published in *Die Zeit*, 2 February 1990); Greiner, U. (1992); Habermas, J. (1992)
- ¹⁴ Habermas, J. (1992:96)
- ¹⁵ Greiner, U. (1992:78)
- ¹⁶ Zitelmann, R. (1992:106-107)
- ¹⁷ Habermas, J. (1992:96)
- ¹⁸ Eisenhamer, J. (1990)
- ¹⁹ Smyth, R. (1990)
- ²⁰ Gow, D. (1990a)
- ²¹ Fukuyama, F. (1989:8)
- ²² The *Guardian* predicted positive knock-on effects for the economy on the grounds that "monetary union will generate synergetic benefits with only slight worries about resurgent inflation"; Comment, "A union made on earth", p.22, *Guardian*, 2 July 1990
- ²³ Gow, D. (1990b)
- ²⁴ Tomforde, A. (1990b)
- ²⁵ Milner, M. (1990)
- ²⁶ Hutton, W. (1990)
- ²⁷ Tomforde, A. (1990a)
- ²⁸ Brummer, A. (1990); see also cartoons, Appendix ?.
- ²⁹ *Independent on Sunday*, 30 September 1990

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- ³⁰ Habermas (1992)
- ³¹ Frankland, M. (1990c)
- ³² Barber, T. (1990b)
- ³³ Comment, "Together in the great unknown", p.18, *Guardian*, 3 October 1990
- ³⁴ Brasier, M. (1990)
- ³⁵ Munchau, W. (1990)
- ³⁶ Comment, "The obligations of the new Germany", p.8, *European*, 5-7 October 1990
- ³⁷ Frankland, M. (1990c)
- ³⁸ Ascherson, N. (1990b)
- ³⁹ *Panorama*: "Who's afraid of Germany?", BBC1, 21.30, 12 March 1990
- ⁴⁰ Hutton, W. (1990a); see also Marquand, D. (1990)
- ⁴¹ Barber, T. (1990); see also Rinke, A. (1994)
- ⁴² Farr, M. (1990)
- ⁴³ Comment, "Together in the great unknown", p.18, *Guardian*, 3 October 1990
- ⁴⁴ Barber, T. (1990b)
- ⁴⁵ Kielinger, T. (1990)
- ⁴⁶ see also Farr, M. (1990)
- ⁴⁷ Steele, J. (1990b)
- ⁴⁸ Engel, M. (1990)
- ⁴⁹ Beck, B. (1991)
- ⁵⁰ Beck, B. (1991)
- ⁵¹ Gow, D. (1991)
- ⁵² Gow, D. (1992)
- ⁵³ Gow, D. (1993)
- ⁵⁴ Peel, Q. (1993a)
- ⁵⁵ Peel, Q. (1993c); Gowers, A. (1993); Mayer, T. (1993)
- ⁵⁶ Parkes, C. (1993a)
- ⁵⁷ Parkes, C. (1993b; Interview with Volkswagen Director, Ferdinand Peich)
- ⁵⁸ Peel, Q. (1993d)
- ⁵⁹ Peel, Q. (1993b)
- ⁶⁰ Dempsey, J. (1993a)
- ⁶¹ Dempsey, J. (1993b)
- ⁶² *Forty Minutes*: "Berlin Lights", BBC2, 13 November 1991

CHAPTER SEVEN:

Visions of a new world order in the news: a paradigm found?

1. Introduction

German reunification took place in a post-Cold war world robbed of certainties. The news media readily acknowledged that was so and it is their attempt to make sense of world-wide events in that context that forms the basis of this last chapter.

The term 'New World Order' has been used to signify a conceptual world view that replaces the Cold War paradigm in the post-Cold war era. Yet the term is highly problematic. In a period when war and conflict appear to break out on a daily basis somewhere, it seems right to question it, to pose it as a problem of definition much as that explored in Chapter Three in respect to the East German 'refugees'. The problem is that as a category it does not accommodate the empirical realities of what is actually going on in the world. Thus journalists might adopt it as an interpretative framework for reporting the post-Cold War world only to find that it fails to explain the very global crises and conflicts that have taken place in the period. Only a few years after the Wall, some news media were already thinking in terms of a 'New World Disorder' that, as Hugo Young wrote, "touches its presumptive masters as well as its undoubted victims".¹ In a special feature for the *Independent on Sunday*, Cal McCrystal argued that, "Despite the end of the Cold War and promises of a 'New World Order', we are continually reminded that war remains a bad habit". He estimated that there were around 30 'substantial' conflicts around the globe.² The *Observer* commented on "A world crying out for order", arguing that, " 'The New World Order' was not just over optimistic: it was stupidly misleading. Order was always the last thing that was going to be achieved".³ Certainly, from the perspective of the so-called 'Third World', the post-Cold War era already stands as a disastrous time. Panama, Iraq, Somalia, and Haiti are just some examples of what Western peace-keeping and peace-enforcement can do for the powerless in the name of the New World Order. For them, little or nothing has changed.⁴

The notion of a 'New World Disorder' has also been cited as reason for the big powers to exercise their military muscle and boost the defence budget. This was the most dominant of the two broad world views to emerge from media debate about the post-Cold War order. It emphasised the need for the West to keep its existing security structures in tact, to keep its guard up. In an uncertain world, instability was the new enemy and it came in a variety of forms. For example, Mark Urban pointed out the dangers of nuclear weapons falling into the hands of a 'Middle Eastern despot' or a

'deranged Soviet colonel' (*Newsnight*, 8.11.91). There was also the 'war on drugs; and the threat of Islamic fundamentalism, and nationalism.

The alternative view was of a transformed security, economic and political order in the world, based on the Helsinki process and tied in with the United Nations. The existing military alliances would atrophy and no one power would assume the task of global policing. This view was pushed by the Soviets in the run up to German unification but it was never taken seriously by western governments for whom the preservation of the status quo - a US-led Atlantic Alliance - was paramount. And it was never taken very seriously by television news media who continued to approach security issues from the dominant perspective.

With these definitional problems in mind how can we approach an analysis of media coverage? In Chapter Two, I referred to Chomsky's argument that essentially there are two broad paradigms for understanding the Cold War - as ideological construct, or as historical process.⁵

The view of the Cold War as an ideological construct was the dominant paradigm in western discourse throughout the period. It is this, I would argue, that explains the difficulty in making sense of the 'post Cold War' world. As shown in Chapter Three, journalists presented the definitive history of the Cold War as being the continuation of the second world war, a conflict between two superpowers that represented and brought into confrontation a whole range of economic, political and ideological oppositions. From its construction in 1961, the Berlin Wall was seen as a visible sign of East-West divisions, just as its demise in 1989 was taken as marking their symbolic end. But at that same moment of defining the past journalists were immediately left to confront uncertainty in the present and future. This apparent end to the Cold War left the West without an enemy as a focus of ideological consensus and coherence. If there was any triumphalism after the Berlin Wall it soon evaporated.

In the first few months after the Berlin Wall, the rhetoric of various international summits on security and economics (e.g. the 1989 superpower summit in Malta; the 1990 NATO Summit in London; the 1990 G7 summit in Houston) seemed to confirm for journalists the persistence of uncertainty in western thinking. But then came the Gulf crisis, a crucial watershed that marked the transformation of western rhetoric back to certainty and which seemed on the surface to replace the Cold War as a referential framework for interpreting world events. The apparent ease with which the west transcended uncertainty and division to go to war against Iraq, the much vaunted

technological superiority of western military forces, and the sudden rehabilitation of the United Nations, seemed to signal the advent of the 'New World Order'. Shortly after the war, the Group of Seven of the world's 'richest' economies, gathered in London for a triumphant summit. BBC News reported that:

The leaders this morning published far-reaching political declarations. They amount to the first tentative steps in building the long-awaited New World Order. They're shedding their inhibitions about states concerning themselves in the internal affairs of others. (BBC1, 21.00, 16.7.91)

It seems somewhat ahistorical to talk in terms of Western powers "shedding their inhibitions" about managing world affairs. It takes no account of the past and makes presumptions about the future. Thus, the Gulf War marks Year Zero, ignoring centuries of imperialist conquest and domination, while the 'New World Order' is taken not as a highly particularised and provisional form of public expression but as an entirely new system of international relations. Since the Gulf War, the concept of a 'New World Order' has hardly survived the US-UN debacles in Cambodia and in Somalia, the civil war in Bosnia, or the massacre of hundreds of thousands of people in Rwanda. These instances have exposed inaction and division in the west's response to crisis and they mark a return to 'uncertainty' as a central theme in western discourse.

This, however, is not to argue that there is no order in the world. To adopt a historical paradigm is to work within a framework that accommodates certain continuities such as the struggles between capital and labour, imperialism and nationalism, North and South that have characterised the western concept of 'a world order'.⁶ Analysing events in the post-Cold War era within this framework would certainly make more sense because order would be understood as an empirical category, as that which is constructed and imposed by the dominant world powers, not by an idealistic collective of nations. To think of the 'New World Order' through the historical paradigm is to think of the *realpolitik* of dominant powers, what they are actually about beneath the rhetoric and the propaganda. The historical paradigm would also view the Cold War as a specific and provisional phase in a much deeper, much more structured system of relations between capital and labour. Its continuity transcends restrictive 'Cold War' - 'end of Cold War' frameworks and serves as a more efficient, less problematic explanatory framework for understanding international relations.

It is my purpose in this chapter to use these analytical paradigms to differentiate between the rhetoric of 'New World Order' (ideological construct) and the rhetoric of *realpolitik* (historical process), and show how they are mediated through British television news and current affairs. I focused on coverage of two types of events from the period late 1989 to early 1994: those which yielded official 'New World Order' rhetoric (e.g. international security and economic summits, UN peacekeeping operations in Bosnia and Somalia); and those which yielded official '*realpolitik*' rhetoric (US military interventions in Panama, the Gulf, Somalia, and the West's contribution to the collapse of the Soviet Union).⁷ I will look at ways in which the news internalised the rhetoric of 'new World Order' (Section 2) and *realpolitik* (Section 3). I will then argue that with less ideological control over western discourse in the post-Cold War period, news journalism can present more critical accounts of order and security issues, and of western interventions in the 'developing world' (Section 4).

2. The ideological paradigm: reporting the rhetoric of 'New World Order'

When the Berlin Wall came down, many in the West noted the timeliness of a superpower summit agreed only weeks earlier and scheduled for Malta on 2-3 December 1989. The Soviet Union and the US insisted that it was a 'getting-to-know-you' meeting and would have no fixed agenda for discussion on substantive East-West issues like arms control. But such was the pace of events in Eastern Europe that few believed this would remain the case on the day. The changes seemed too momentous for the superpowers to brush over in casual chat. The British Foreign Secretary, Douglas Hurd, thought that if the summit had not been scheduled one would have to be arranged. "In other words", reported ITN, "Western leaders wanted reassurance as well as good news from the East" (22.00, 10.11.89).

The basic theme of the Malta Summit was two superpowers trying to come to terms with rapid change in the world. It was to be set on warships off the coast of Malta, a symbolic evocation of post-war settlement inspired by the Soviet slogan, "From Yalta to Malta".⁸ However, a heavy storm disrupted the occasion and provided journalists with "the lasting image of George Bush's foray into superpower negotiations" (ITN, 22.00, 2.12.89). Another reporter remarked that "with Mr Gorbachev's reforms and the turbulent events in Eastern Europe high on the agenda here, both leaders are hoping their talks will set the ground rules for a political climate of rather more tranquillity" (BBC1, 21.50, 2.12.89).

A former US arms control negotiator told *Channel Four News* that in such a turbulent environment both superpowers had "an interest in keeping things evolutionary and making sure they do not go revolutionary" (19.00, 1.12.89).⁹ But news coverage as a whole presented a different picture: one of two superpowers with ideas of their own about how the world should be ordered after the Cold War. The US favoured the status quo and so used the summit as launching pad from which to reassert its leadership role in the West and maintain the Cold War military-security framework. The Soviet Union was depicted as rather insecure, hoping to recover its waning power and influence by manipulating the west towards a radical transformation of the security framework. This entailed moving away from the system of East-West blocs and spheres of influence towards a global blend of the conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) and the United Nations. Here is how two BBC journalists saw it:

Newscaster: Why is the Soviet side so intent on building up expectations, talking about water-sheds and mile-stones, even a summit to mark the end of the Cold War?

Reporter: I think really what's happened is that Mr Gorbachev seeing his whole side, as it were, in the Cold War collapsing around him and he's got to do something about it. He can't simply live with a West which is built up still, still coherent and still all on the same side, when he can't...entirely trust any single one of his...allies (because) they're not going to be able to form a coherent military pact. He's *got* to find some alternative...He's going to be persuading President Bush to move towards some new kind of system in Europe which will protect his interests as well as the West's.

Newscaster: What is that going to mean in practice? Will he be pushing for an end to the NATO and the Warsaw Pact and its replacement by an entirely new European security system?

Reporter: Yes, I think he is going to be edging towards this new kind of updated Helsinki Agreement whereby you have 35 European countries working out their own destinies. The Americans won't like that very much, of course, because they don't want to see themselves written out of the script in this at all. It's going to be quite a difficult and nerve-wracking time ahead, I think. I don't think it's all going to be sweetness and light.

(BBC1, 21.00, 1.12.89)

Little sense there, then, that journalists were taken by the notion of a 'convergence' of superpower interests. Cold War antagonism, confrontation, and mistrust still informed the framework of interpretation but we were also able to see uncertainty and antagonism within the Western alliance. This had always been a feature of their

relationship - historical fault-lines that Cold War ideology held together but never quite cemented. After all, NATO was an alliance of traditional enemies - Britain and France, Britain and Germany, France and Germany, and the most volcanic of all, Greece and Turkey. The US was always been able to bring its 'leadership role' into play whenever diplomatic animosity turned to hostility, such as that which emerges from time to time in relations between Britain and Germany (e.g., the Nato Summit, May 1989). But the US has also been viewed with suspicion and mistrust by its allies in Europe. The direct and sometimes exclusive bargaining between the US and the USSR during the INF talks process in the 1980s even threatened Mrs Thatcher's legendary 'special relationship' with Ronald Reagan. This was especially acute in the aftermath of the Reykjavik summit. But if the Soviet threat transcended these historic, economic and nationalistic rivalries in the West during the Cold War, what would happen if the threat disappeared, and with it the system of relations within which confrontation and competition were managed? How would the alliance rationalise its existence?

The NATO summit of 1990 was held in Britain and produced the so-called 'London Declaration' in which the alliance formally declared the end of the Cold War. But it was more than just a set-piece meeting. It was arranged to announce a radical rethink in the alliance's nuclear defence posture but ended up stirring up some serious internal divisions. Britain objected strongly to the US idea of nuclear weapons as weapons of last resort, arguing that it defeated the whole purpose of the nuclear deterrent. Mrs Thatcher insisted that, regardless of the international situation, the "fundamental NATO strategy of reliance on nuclear weapons and the possibility always of using them hasn't changed" (BBC1, 21.00, 6.7.90). The *Independent* front page captured the mood and the rhetoric of the occasion: "NATO declares peace on the Warsaw Pact". But inside, the euphoria was qualified with doubts about NATO unity: "Peace has been declared at NATO's summit in London but the new European order is not without its stresses" (7.7.90).

The difference between ITN and BBC coverage on 6 July was in their treatment of the summit rhetoric and the emphasis they placed on the divisions. ITN quoted liberally from a summit declaration "brimming with historic talk of peace" (*Channel Four News*), describing it as "the most fundamental shift in alliance thinking in its 40-year history" (*News at Ten*). This seemed to be based on the observation that having "cut through the remaining cobwebs of NATO thinking", President Bush was now setting his sights on "clearing the cobwebs and misconceptions in Soviet thinking" (*Channel Four News*). In his summit speech, Bush addressed the Soviet Union directly, urging Gorbachev to view NATO as "defensive and not threatening" and to "convince your

military...of this fact". The problem with the Soviets, he claimed, was that "they have viewed NATO as much more threatening to them than the way (he has) looked at NATO". Hopefully, he said, the summit would change all that and that "it should be clear to the Soviet military, to Mr Gorbachev, to his adversaries and his friends inside the Soviet Union, that NATO is changing". BBC News took a much more cautious view of this sort of rhetoric, describing the declaration as "more a *promise* to change than an announcement of change itself". Charles Wheeler pointed out that, "NATO will change but it will go on being a formidable military machine armed with vast amounts of the most lethal weapons men have been able to devise" (*Newsnight*). The BBC also emphasised the divisions between individual members of the alliance over the concept of "last resort".

The difference of emphasis between the two news channels determined their overall interpretations of the event. The BBC reported official claims "that the internal battle lines are already drawn" in NATO between the "cautious" (Britain and France) and the "pace-setters" (the US and Germany). The alliance leaders had,

left unsettled the most fundamental question: NATO's future in an undivided Europe - whether it should remain a cornerstone for the West's defence or become a building block in an alliance for all Europe? (21.00).

ITN explained the differences as routine, certainly nothing to undermine the significance of the occasion. The reporter remarked on,

the upbeat atmosphere and the unity - even a touch of exuberance - that cumbersome NATO has managed to turn itself on its head faster than the sceptics thought possible" (22.00).

To get a measure of the immediate impact of the Gulf War on the West's view of itself through the news media, it is useful to compare coverage of the major western security and economic summits pre- and post- Gulf War.

Gulf Crisis - from uncertainty to certainty

The Two Plus Four Summit in Moscow on 12 September 1990 set the seal on German unification and came as the world faced into crisis in the Gulf. It was, then, an occasion of conflicting rhetoric of war and peace. On one level, the meeting provided an ideal platform for the four victorious powers in the second world war to finally settle the post-war division of Europe and declare the second world war and the Cold War formally over. The news headlines declared:

The two Germanys and the four wartime allies are at one over a united Germany.
This morning's treaty celebrations mark the symbolic end of the second world war.

(BBC1, 13.00, 12.9.90)

The Four Powers unite to toast the formal end of the second world war

(*Channel Four News*, 12.9.90)

On another level, it was presented as an opportunity for them to take a united stand against a new, common enemy: Iraq. No sooner had the West rid itself of one 'Evil Empire' than another appeared to defy the 'international community'. As the powers remembered their victory over Hitler, a 'new Hitler' appeared to haunt their visions of world peace. In this example from ITN, the themes are synthesised into a drama of past powers (Germany and the Soviet Union) and present powers (The US, Britain and France), and of passive observers (the Soviet Union, and "the world at large") and actors (present powers). This was taken as proof positive of a 'new world order in the making':

Sometimes symbolism has great substance. So it was as today's ceremony in Moscow acquired *a powerful meaning all of its own*....In the minds of everyone here this was the end of world war two, the days when the scores of history were finally settled. But *with President Gorbachev looking on* they were also sending a clear message to the world at large and Iraq in particular, the message that *the great powers of past and present* will now work together and that *a new world order is in the making*.

(*Channel Four News*, 12.9.90)

The counterpoint between the rhetoric of war and peace was also a dominant feature in coverage of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (CSCE) weeks later in Paris 19 November. ITN noted that the conference "was meant to forge a new framework for cooperation among former enemies but (was) haunted by the reality of a new enemy in the Middle East and by the threat of war in the Persian Gulf" (ITN, 22.00, 19.11.90). The US was preparing to double its forces in the Gulf and was softening public opinion towards an acceptance that war was inevitable. The BBC reported that President Bush was "trying to drum up support for his Gulf policy" and, "As *befits hopes for a new world order*, Mikhail Gorbachev could prove the most important partner" (BBC1, 21.00, 19.11.90).

Immediately following the 1990 NATO summit in London the Group of 7 "of the world's richest nations" met in Houston where, reported ITN, "President Bush...set in context the challenge they faced in dealing with the new world economic order" (22.00, 9.7.90). BBC news reports presented the meeting as being one of uncertainty

and division, with "each...nation apparently determined to go its own way on the crunch issue of aid to the Soviet Union". And while US military leadership of the West was beyond doubt, "US political leadership is much more open to question"(BBC1, 21.00, 9.7.90). *Newsnight* went further to suggest that the seemingly mundane proceedings at Houston should perhaps give cause for concern:

It may be that the row between the (US) and Europe over trade should be causing us nightmares. The fears of a future transatlantic Cold War over trade are based on the determination of the Bush Administration to force the (EC) into drastic cuts in financial support for farmers. (9.7.90)

When the Group of Seven met a year later, in London (16 July 1991) they were still on military high after the Gulf War. The tone of the summit was triumphalist and belied in starker terms than ever before what they really meant when they spoke of a New World Order. Although it was billed as an economic summit to discuss their own economic relations it was used as a platform for dictating the terms of economic surrender to the Soviet Union, and the terms of radical arms control to lesser powers in the world. Charles Wheeler reported for *Newsnight* on:

The London *Economic* Summit - that's what it's called but times have changed. The seven...went heavily political today, launching what looks like a bid to manage the foreign affairs of the world...

The original goal of steering the world's economies has always been something of a pipe-dream - it still is. At this, their 17th such gathering, (they) have switched to an objective more suited to their talents: shaping the post-Cold War world....

What's important here is the way this highly exclusive group of western leaders, three of whom have permanent seats on the (UN) Security Council, are giving a lead to the (UN), managing it as they did in the Gulf War. (*Newsnight*, 16.7.91)

Back to uncertainty: whatever happened to the New World Order?

After the Gulf War the West heralded the real dawn of a 'New World Order'. But, like Post-Cold War euphoria, this sense of certainty soon faltered. The Western powers started to go their own ways again. The agencies through which they aimed to police a New World Order - the UN and NATO - were being locked into unaccustomed roles. The conflict in Bosnia raised questions about NATO's role and identity. Was it a military alliance for mutual defence or an out of area trouble-shooter? Should it widen its membership to include former Warsaw Pact countries? The UN's peace-keeping activities seem more like peace-enforcement as witnessed in Bosnia and Somalia. The agendas of national foreign policies and international agencies were in constant conflict over the question of how to cope and deal with global crises. The US was still at trade

loggerheads with Japan.¹⁰ And contrary to the original cooperative vision of the EC, that organisation now appears to be entangled in conflict between the need of some states to assert national sovereignty or, more significantly, 'regionality', and the readiness of others to accept centralised decision-making from Brussels.¹¹ The theme of uncertainty was central to coverage of the NATO summit in Rome on 7-8 November 1991. The civil war in Bosnia was beginning to assume complexities that would confound all western attempts to bring about a permanent ceasefire. Against this background, the summit focused on redefining NATO's role to cope with "a more complex security environment characterised by uncertainty, instability, and unpredictable risks".¹² We can best appreciate the extent of this transformation if we compare how news reporters summed up the meeting with their assessment a year earlier of the triumphant CSCE conference.

As the CSCE 1990 conference closed on 19 November, *Channel Four News* (ITN) and the *Nine O'Clock News* (BBC) endorsed the hyperbole and the grand rhetoric of the occasion in items that were practically identical in content and structure. Both saw it as a successful blue-print for the New World Order. With a grand historical flourish, they accepted that the conference marked the greatest "display of unity" (ITN) and the "most comprehensive European peace settlement in 175 years" (BBC) - that is, since the Congress of Vienna in 1815. Although 35 countries committed their signatures to the final declaration, it was seen primarily as a "celebration of achievement" by the three western victors of world war two to mark the end of the Cold War, "basking in the pride and success of their 45-years of anti-communist deterrence based on military power" (ITN) and their "firmness in the face of the Soviet threat" (BBC). The accounts differed on why the 'Soviet threat' had disappeared so quickly. The BBC put it down simply to "the bold decision of Mikhail Gorbachev to withdraw from confrontation and the division of the continent", while ITN saw it as a more fundamental, "*de facto* admission that Moscow's military (was) crumbling, that Stalinist hegemony in Eastern Europe was a catastrophe, and that the East-West race for military supremacy was futile and an absurd waste of resources". But that was the past. The 'international community' could now look to the future with an "historic declaration of friendship pledging that East-West relations will never more be based on the threat of aggression" (BBC), and with "the old enemy, the Soviet Union, now a partner in building peace from the Atlantic to the Urals" (ITN). Already, this "unprecedented international consensus" was facing up to "the threat to this newly-won freedom and stability from Saddam Hussein in the Gulf" (ITN), and was "proving its value in...the sort of regional conflict that five years ago would have pitted East against West but which is now fostering cooperation and solidarity" (BBC).

At the NATO summit one year later, the macho rhetoric of the Gulf War was almost forgotten and the news reported on an alliance that was once again uncertain as to its future role. No sooner had one threat been vanquished, the west was facing a new one: the Soviet Union. The *Nine O'Clock News* reported that this time the threat lay not so much in its military power as in "the consequences of its disintegration" (BBC1). *Channel Four News* referred to "a deepening concern, even *a hint of panic*" within the alliance "that events...are now moving so fast, *so unpredictably*, and in such *a potentially anarchic direction*" that it may have "little practical ability to preserve stability and peace...in the Soviet Union (7.11.91). Yet the West's negative approach to encouraging economic development and restructuring in the Soviet Union since the end of the Cold War appeared to contradict the professed wish to "preserve stability and peace" there. This was very apparent in their gatherings during the period 1990-1991.

Privatising Lenin

If anything seemed certain in the post-Cold War world it was the decline of the Soviet Union as a superpower and its disintegration as a national entity. To western capitalism this was the ultimate vindication of market economics and liberal democracy. While Western powers issued endless and 'final' declarations of the end of the Cold War and of peace with the Soviet Union, their economic agenda was characterised by a very different tone. The West delivered an ultimatum: in essence, no economic aid without economic surrender. The sight of Mikhail Gorbachev turning up on the doorsteps of the world's principal economic powers, cap in hand for massive financial aid, was a far cry from the heyday of 'Gorbymania'.¹³ Whatever promises or commitments were made to him in private, the public rhetoric on these occasions was informed by hard *realpolitik* not 'New World Order' idealism. The western news media were primary agencies in getting that rhetoric across. The theme was well established in the western summits leading up to the Gulf War and seemed to sit quite comfortably with western powers whose own economic houses were less than well managed, the US and Britain in particular. In the 'New World Order', the watchwords for nations of the 'developing world' are not only "what we say goes" but also "do what we say not what we do".

The treaty on the unification of Germany in 1990 should have been an occasion for the Four Powers to formally end the second world war but the news set it within the end-of-the-Cold-War framework thus setting the West apart from the Soviet Union at the signing ceremony:

It's been another day for President George *and his western allies* to savour the New World Order that's emerged from a year of revolutionary change...*For the West*, there can be no more striking testimony to their victory in the Cold War than today's treaty....*Watching them* (Gorbachev) the man who had made it all possible by abandoning his country's military grip on Eastern Europe but had also suffered *a severe diplomatic defeat*: he had failed to keep the new Germany out of NATO. But *the champagne drowned all talk of winners and losers*.

(*Newsnight*, 12.9.90)

Two months later, Gorbachev went to the CSCE summit in Paris to sign a charter on a building a new security and human rights order in Europe post-Cold War. The ITN could hardly resist drawing conclusions as the Soviet leader committed his signature to the document:

No one...has been so undiplomatic as to talk of winners and losers here but the Paris Charter...*formally enshrines the triumph of democratic values over East European communism*. The Soviet leader has pledged himself to respect not just human rights and the rule of law but the principles of the free market, too.

(13.00, 21.11.90)

Wherever Gorbachev met western leaders, the news 'set the agenda' for discussion. As he arrived in London in July 1991, reporters predicted that the G7 leaders would ask him "Why spend billions on armaments when your industries should be producing consumer goods?" (ITN, 22.00, 15.7.91) The BBC reported that Gorbachev had come to "negotiate terms for converting the Soviet economy" to capitalism, thus ending "a seven-decade experiment in central planning" (21.00, 16.7.91). *Newsnight* appeared to adopt a more critical line when it wondered if "the G7 leaders more concerned to be global power-brokers than the Soviet Union's bankers?" (16.7.91).

In the event, the Soviet leader got little more than promises of aid and a trouble-shooting visit from the then British Chancellor of Exchequer, Norman Lamont. He was also feted and applauded at end-of-summit social events, awkward moments which ITN and BBC seemed to satirise in their reports. *Channel Four News* reported that at a dinner with the G7 leaders at Downing St, "the Soviet leader had joined what by all accounts was a rousing post-dinner singing by the G7 leaders of popular songs,

including 'If I were a rich man'"(18.7.91). And the BBC described his 'prophetic' final engagement at "the opera Cinderella, the story of a poor relation who's finally allowed to attend the rich man's ball"(BBC1, 21.00, 18.7.91).

Gorbachev's first summit meeting with George Bush after Malta was in Moscow, 31 July 1991, to sign the START treaty to cut long range strategic nuclear missiles. However Bush came with a blunt ultimatum that the Soviet Union should make drastic cuts in its military budget or else forfeit the promises of financial and technical aid made at the G7 summit. He assured them he appreciated "the difficulties of military reform (and) the competing demands of people displaced when a Cold War makes way for a New World Order". It appeared to be an attempt to totally neutralise the Soviet Union as a superpower and thus consolidate the US's perceived buoyancy in the world, post Gulf War. The headlines endorsed Bush's undiplomatic, macho-posture:

Mr Bush spells it out for Mr Gorbachev: the price for American support
(*Channel Four News*, 30.7.91)

The superpower summit opens and President Bush puts a price on American support for the Soviet Union. He says they are no longer adversaries. Now Moscow must dismantle its military machine. (BBC1, 21.00, 30.7.91)

The 'prize' for Soviet compliance was Most Favoured Nation trading status with the US but, as Michael Buerk noted, this was "nothing special" since "almost every country on earth has it" (BBC1, 21.00, 30.7.91). Bush claimed that the US was setting an example to the Soviet Union by cutting its own military spending but, as some reporters pointed out, that was deceptive. The *Nine O'Clock News* reported that the START treaty was about cutting numbers of already out-dated nuclear weapons. An arms control analyst argued that: "The nuclear arms race hasn't stopped at all. We are still under this treaty able to design and develop new nuclear warheads, new nuclear missiles" (30.7.91).¹⁴ As always in superpower number crunching, the real issue was not the quantitative but rather the qualitative nature of the arms race. Nik Gowing concluded on *Channel Four News* that:

Any euphoria at today's (treaty) should therefore not mask the future reality - the numbers of missiles and warheads like on America's MX Peacekeeper have been reduced, the ageing junk of both superpower arsenals...will be phased out, *but development and modernisation will continue.* (31.7.91)

Tough rhetoric and hard bargains from the West, then, yet there was a significant gap between rhetoric and *realpolitik* in their approach to helping Gorbachev through turbulent times. A measure of doublethink informed official explanations why massive aid should be withheld. The argument was that the Soviet economy would remain in a state of chaos until such time as it converted fully to the stability of a free market system. In the meantime, the policy of committing hard cash was tantamount to 'pouring good money after bad', as Charles Wheeler put it when he interviewed Mrs Thatcher on this and other matters at the NATO summit 1990:

Wheeler: Aid to Gorbachev...We're told that you're a bit unhappy about this - you want to see reforms in place before you pour good money after bad. Is that true?

Thatcher : There's no point in just giving large amounts of loans for the purchase of consumer goods...(When) we gave aid to Poland and to Hungary we insisted as a condition that they change the way their economies are run. We should do the same with the Soviet Union. They want to change but they don't know *how* to change.
(*Newsnight*, 6.7.90)

As long as they withheld aid from the Soviet Union, the Soviet economy would remain unstable and in crisis. This was presented as one good reason for the West to refuse aid and resist all calls for cashing in the 'peace dividend'. Here is an assessment from a journalist on Gorbachev's *private* discussion with the Cabinet during the summit:

What emerged from the Cabinet room...was the impression of what one source called a leopard who has begun to change his spots but a leopard who, as he tries to persuade the likes of Mr Major, is also balancing on a high-wire of complex political forces...which could unbalance him at any moment.

(*Channel Four News*, 18.7.91)

As the Moscow summit to sign the START treaty ended with a joint-peace initiative for the Middle East, six Lithuanian border guards were shot dead by unknown assailants. The incident was presented in the news within this same framework: Gorbachev's insecure position at home justifies Western caution. ITN observed that the attack was "a sharp reminder that there are still forces at large here determined to undermine Gorbachev and his newly improved relationship with the West (22.00, 31.7.91). An element of doublethink comes in when the G7, and journalists themselves, alert us to Gorbachev's intention to use "the old veiled threat of possible political instability" as bargaining leverage in negotiations with the West (BBC1, 21.00, 17.7.91). Journalists discussed this at the G7 summit - a month before the August Coup:

Newscaster: How great is the threat to Gorbachev of a social uprising in the Soviet Union if he goes home relatively empty handed?

Reporter: I don't think it's going to spark a conservative coup, because the Soviet public regard this as something of an irrelevance in their daily lives. But it clearly is a weapon, the threat of unrest is a weapon that the Soviets are willing to use to the full and I think it's little more than a bargaining position.

(BBC1, 21.00, 15.7.91)

3. The historical paradigm: reporting the New World Order as *realpolitik*

The historical paradigm presents the post-cold war era in terms of its historical continuity with the emergence of capitalism and imperialism. It eschews more restrictive categories of Cold War or post-Cold order and rests instead on a North-South rather than East-West axis. Dominant among the western powers is the US which maintains its leadership role primarily with military power, the doctrine of 'Invincible Force'.¹⁵ This was used to flout international law by invading Panama regardless of almost unanimous condemnation from the UN General Assembly and the Security Council. It was also used to bully and blackmail small countries into supporting the Gulf War resolutions, and to intimidate North Korea and Iraq into complying with western arms control and nuclear proliferation restrictions. Within the historical paradigm it would appear that when George Bush told the developing world "What we say goes!", and when Bill Clinton warned "Don't tread on us!", they were underscoring the rhetoric of the European-US imperial project over centuries rather than decades previously. This section examines the extent to which media accounts internalise the legitimating rhetoric of 'Great Power' *realpolitik*.

On the eve of the Malta Summit, Gorbachev and Bush made their way to Malta with contrasting opening gambits that provided the news media with the desired imagery. Gorbachev stopped off for an almost messianic state visit to Italy where he was pictured swamped by huge crowds of adoring fans in Rome and Milan, and stepping onto the hallowed anti-Communist ground of the Vatican for an 'historic' reconciliation with the Pope. George Bush sent out a different message. As he landed on the US aircraft carrier, Forrester, in the Mediterranean, fighter planes were taking off from a base in the Pacific to help quash another attempted insurrection in the Philippines. The point was not lost on the British news:

(PLANES TAKING OFF FROM AND LANDING ON THE FORRESTER)

On the eve of the Malta Summit, *a display of American military might*. Just hours after ordering his pilots to support government troops in the Philippines, George

Bush reviewed US air-power in the Mediterranean...America's action in the Philippines was the first major military intervention ordered by President Bush and has bolstered his reputation as a decision-maker. It follows criticism that he failed to help the recent coup attempt against Panama's General Noriega and that he's responded weakly to upheavals in Eastern Europe. Now, just before his meeting with Mr Gorbachev, *Mr Bush has a new, bolder image*. (ITN, 22.00, 1.12.89)

This has the ring of a washing-powder advertisement. Bush is presented as the 'greenhorn' President still overwhelmed by his new responsibility as US leader and in need of a new image as a bold, hands-on decision maker. Yet Noam Chomsky chronicles Bush's past record as a national security apparatchik in successive administrations since the 1970s, culminating in his post as director of the CIA, and shows that he had little to learn about projecting US power around the world.¹⁶ Far from needing "a new, bolder image", then, Bush was very much an 'old brand' US President. Still, it is a useful public relations strategy, and a persistent one as media coverage of recent US interventions show. Two weeks after the Malta Summit, Bush was trying out his new, bolder image again, this time to invade Panama, capture its leader, General Manuel Noriega, and install their own replacement by a quick oath of allegiance. As Noam Chomsky has demonstrated, the US media response to the operation was favourable with the military imagery going down a treat (1992). But although the British media were generally more critical they did not completely withhold their traditional support for US right and might. An ITN headline declared, "American troops fly in and topple the Panama regime" (22.00, 20.12.89) and a *Newsnight* report on the operation began, "So the George Bush 'wimp factor' disappeared with one big bang in Panama" (*Newsnight*, 20.12.89).

Whereas the US felt obliged to manufacture some sort of international 'consensus' for war in the Gulf, it invaded Panama regardless of world-wide condemnation. It simply did not matter who objected. Unlike in the Gulf area, where the US went about undermining and neutralising pan-Arab solidarity by intimidation, bribery and blackmail, there was no danger of anyone in Central or South America coming to the military aid of Panama. This after all was the US's 'backyard'. Noam Chomsky shows how the US media pulled out all the stops to: manufacture the crisis (Noriega defies international law! American lives in danger!); caricature and demonise General Noriega; minimise civilian casualties; and distract public attention away from the real geo-political objectives of the operation.¹⁷

Forty- five years of Cold War propaganda and ideology was not simply put back in the box by the Soviet Sinatra Doctrine. When it came to reporting the Soviet Union's response to the invasion some familiar propaganda reflexes helped absorb the impact of international condemnation. For example, a BBC item recalled Gorbachev's state visit to Cuba earlier that year. While the reporter highlighted the contrast between Castro and Gorbachev as one of reaction versus reform, of confrontation versus *rapprochement*, he suggested that a crisis like Panama could bridge the gap in an instant:

Despite the smiles in Havana...the reformist Gorbachev and old-style Communist Fidel Castro have little in common these days. At least they didn't until the US invasion of Panama. The reaction by both has been a leap back to Cold War rhetoric

The problem with this is that the Soviet Union and Cuba were not alone in their condemnation but just two voices among a United Nations majority. Had they made that much clear they would have found it much more difficult to explain why the whole world except the US and Britain had taken a sudden "leap back to Cold War rhetoric". The reporter resolved the problem by framing it a "South American" crisis. He reported that the public consensus among Central and south American countries belied private divisions of opinion and that the US was simply doing what they had long failed to do:

Many South American leaders know that the invasion is, at least in part, a result of their failure to find a diplomatic solution...When Latin American meet...this week the public talk will be about the dangers of America being a regional bully-boy. In private, they know that President Bush has let them off the hook.

(BBC1 21.00, 20.12.89)

Like his successor, President Bill Clinton also suffered a credibility gap when he eased his into office in 1993. The campaign smears concerning his draft-dodging, cannabis-puffing (but not inhaling) days at Oxford could not be allowed to linger in the public mind. As he prepared to take office from Bush, the crisis in Somalia provided his first major test of leadership. Throughout 1992, television images from Somalia of thousands of starving people in the midst of savage civil war had brought home to the West the legacy of Cold War, superpower rivalry in the so-called 'Third World'. The superpowers had gone but much of their fire power remained in the hands of rival factions who fought to fill the power vacuum. The images also served as a uncomfortable reminder that, as in Bosnia, the concept of a New World Order was meaningless when the west stood by and did nothing. The out-going President Bush

and President-elect, Clinton, announced their intention to send in the troops to help the aid agencies distribute food around the country without hindrance or intimidation from the various armed factions. Thus Operation Restore Hope was presented as a mission of mercy rather than an old-fashioned, geo-political, Cold War style invasion. And it would do the image of either President no harm at all.

Yet, according to a *Los Angeles Times* report, there was another aspect to the story that the media in the US, and it seems in Britain, did not include in their coverage: oil. It was oil which motivated the US to launch such a large-scale military operation at a time when it shied away from comparable commitments to crises in Bosnia and Rwanda. In what might have been better named Operation Restore Oil, The *LA Times* obtained documents that revealed that "nearly two-thirds of Somalia was allocated to the American oil giants Conoco, Amoco, Chevron and Phillips in the final years before Somalia's pro-US President Siad Barre was overthrown...in January 1991". This land had the potential to "yield significant amounts of oil and natural gas if the US-led military mission can restore peace to (Somalia)".¹⁸ There is also evidence that the oil company Conoco closely cooperated with the US forces in their 'humanitarian effort' and even leased one of its properties in Mogadishu to serve as a temporary US embassy. The *LA Times* report revealed that the close ties between the US military and the oil companies "has left many Somalis and foreign development experts deeply troubled...leading many to liken the...operation to a miniature version of Operation Desert Storm".¹⁹ I looked at several samples of British television news coverage of the story but found no references to links with oil or any other major western interests. However, coverage certainly bore similarities with that of Panama and the Gulf War.

The major US media were alerted unofficially and in advance to the exact place on a beach near Mogadishu where the huge military landing would take place on 9 December, 1992. The day before, the BBC reported that it would be "an invasion by arrangement, not a dawn raid" and called it "a humanitarian mission but with muscle" (21.00, 8.12.92). And the *News At Ten* predicted that "the gun-men will find out what they're really up against, with the eyes of the world watching"(ITN, 8.12.92). As in coverage of the Panama and the Gulf War, the show of military might and technology seemed to freeze the critical impulses of the news media in Britain as they launched into gung-ho rhetoric with the headlines like "Hundreds of American marines storm Mogadishu"(BBC1, 13.00, 9.12.92).

This ITN report captures perfectly the tone and mood of coverage in the first critical hours of the operation:

(FILM, US LANDING)

D-Day in Somalia. Outlined against the moon-lit Indian Ocean, the spearhead force hit the beaches. Giant hovercraft disgorged the American marines of Team Tiger...Out at sea, the warships...Overhead, wave upon wave of helicopters thundered in carrying yet more troops to secure the airport and the docks. The UN peacekeepers who've been holding the fort here just looked on as this huge operation unfolded around them. (12.30, 9.12.92)

A marines' commander told reporters that, "Our objective here is to come in and display maximum force, to let everyone know that we mean business". How the warring parties in Somalia received this is unknown but the commander certainly impressed ITN who reported that "The Somalis have been left in no doubt that these US marines mean business"(ITN, 12.30, 9.12.92), and on how "The Americans show who's in charge in Somalia" (ITN, 22.00, 9.12.92).

Bill Clinton also chose to bomb Iraq twice and threaten North Korea over their alleged nuclear weapons programmes and their apparent reluctance to allow inspection by the International Atomic Energy Agency. These foreign policy options were also designed to help to project his image as a "new, bolder" US president and again the news media were ready to oblige. For example, when the US carried out its first bombing raids on Iraq in January 1993²⁰, a BBC reporter noted that:

passing the torch from Bush to Clinton is a time when both men want to show they are not going to be pushed about, so there's a certain amount of domestic and world public relations involved in all this.²¹ (BBC1, 21.00, 13.1.93)

Clinton's second strike against Iraq came in June 1993, this time on the grounds that Iraq had plotted to assassinate ex-President George Bush. Suspects had been arrested and their trial was still in progress in Kuwait when the US decided its own investigation was proof enough to justify another Cruise missile bombardment on the capital. The US President told the world that, "From the first days of our revolution, America's security has depended on the clarity of this message: don't tread on us!" While he justified the bombing as self-defence under the terms of Article 51 of the UN Charter, he warned Iraq not to do likewise. And he emphatically denied that the bombing had anything to do with image. ITN's newscaster took this up with his correspondent in Washington:

Newscaster: Any suggestion that he might have done it to sharpen up his image?

Reporter: Well, he was asked that question today and as you might expect specifically denied it. But officials are not denying that it does give him a boost in those areas where he's seen to be weakest. He's not seen as being a decisive leader or as being a strong military commander. But there was no dithering, no public agonising about this and his statement, "Don't tread on us", was seen as a very strong, almost Reaganesque warning. (ITN, 22.00, 28.6.93)

The BBC reported on Clinton's visit two weeks later to South Korea or, to be more precise, his day "in and around the demilitarised zone" dressed in military fatigues and threatening North Korea with "annihilation". The contradiction of military posturing in a demilitarised zone was apparently lost on the reporter but he was quick to see it was "clearly designed to sharpen (Clinton's) military image" (BBC1, 22.05, 11.7.93).

The Gulf War

Far from criticising the US leadership role in marshalling the Gulf War effort at the expense of the UN, the British media largely endorsed it as proof positive that the US was in an ideal position to direct the New World Order. As US warships headed for the Gulf not to 'free Kuwait' but to 'defend Saudi Arabia', ITN noted that "America is once again adopting the role of policeman of the world" (ITN, 22.00, 8.8.90). But in the first stages of the crisis, it was reported that the option of "Taking on a war-machine as enormous as Iraq has already, in effect, been ruled out by the defence ministries of the western world", and that "Foreign Office sources indicate that any military action is now out of the question" (BBC1, 21.00, 2.8.90). A report on *Channel Four News* concluded that despite western involvement in the Iran-Iraq war, "Any new conflict would be unwinnable" (2.8.90).

Nonetheless, news items were very clear that a solution could only come from the West led by the US. In two items for the BBC John Simpson saw the Arab world as divided and powerless:

(It's) impossible to think that there could be an Arab solution. There's simply not the power to settle the affair...No one likes it but if there's to be a solution rather than a compromise it'll come mostly from the West. (BBC1, 21.00, 8.8.90)

For 30 years the Arab world has tried to establish its independence from the outside control. Now the West is coming in to sort out what is essentially an Arab problem. It's little short of a humiliation. (BBC1, 21.00, 9.8.90)

By the end of November, the US was talking of 'freeing Kuwait' even if that meant all out war. To this end it launched a propaganda campaign to forge a military alliance of western and Arab powers, and overcome divisions in western public opinion over doubling its forces in the Gulf. There was much criticism of the way the US hijacked the UN to forge his Western-Arab coalition against Saddam Hussein in the early stages of the crisis but history shows such criticism to be misplaced. Bush simply revived the original and principle purpose of the United Nations: as an agency of enforcement with a hierarchy of leadership and very clear parameters of conduct in the global arena. President Franklin D. Roosevelt set out the blue-print in 1943 when he determined that:

there should be four policemen in the world - the US, Great Britain, Russia, and China...The rest of the world would disarm...As soon as any of the other nations was caught arming they would be threatened first with quarantine and if quarantine did not work they would be bombed.²²

This was a model of a 'New World Order' that did not translate very well into the grand, idealistic rhetoric of the UN Charter but it was clearly invoked through George Bush's ideas in a speech on the Gulf crisis. He promised that by the time the US dealt with Saddam Hussein they:

will have taught a dangerous dictator and *any* tyrant tempted to follow in his footsteps that the US has a new credibility, and that what we say goes, and that there is no place for lawless aggression in the Persian Gulf and in this New World Order that we seek to create. And we mean it! And (Saddam Hussein) will understand that when the day is done!²³

When Bush announced the beginning of war, he invoked the New World Order again, this time with the racist undertones that informed much of his bellicose rhetoric against Saddam Hussein. "We have before us", he said, "the opportunity to forge for ourselves and for future generations a New World Order, a world where the rule of law, *not the law of the jungle*, governs the conduct of nations".²⁴ Some weeks later, the British Foreign Secretary, Douglas Hurd, endorsed the rhetoric when told an audience that, "In the late 20th century nations must be able to conduct affairs by a code more worthy of rational human beings than the law of the jungle".²⁵

On US media coverage of the Gulf crisis, Edward Said remarks that "the central media failing (was) an unquestioning acceptance of American power", and he argues that "public rhetoric...(was) simply undeterred, uncomplicated by any considerations of detail, realism, or cause and effect" of the crisis at hand.²⁶ The news media simply

fulfilled their designated role as they had done so well in their coverage of Vietnam, Grenada and Panama.²⁷ When the crisis in the Gulf finally gave way to war, Said was just finishing his new work, *Culture and Imperialism*, and he tells of how he looked again at what he had written:

Here was a new chapter of the imperial story, with the (US) now at the centre of the world stage instead of France and Britain. And as culture in the form of various narratives of western ascendancy had shaped the 19th century imperial dynamic, so it was the media that now played the same role.²⁸

Eqbal Ahmad reflected on how the 20th Century had been "most remarkable for its simultaneous capacity to promise hope and deliver disappointments", and seems to be ending as it began with "renewed hopes of a just and peaceable world order...being overwhelmed by politicians and warriors whose political minds remain rooted in the past".²⁹ He warned that, "We are being lied to; and we must not be deceived. What we are actually witnessing is a display of imperialism relieved of the limits imposed by superpower rivalry and nuclear deterrence".³⁰ Indeed, when Iraq invaded Kuwait and precipitated a major post-Cold War crisis, the BBC looked on the bright side:

There's only one good thing about the situation...It's become plain that an incident that might have brought the world to the edge of nuclear war won't now do anything of the sort. (BBC1, 21.00, 2.8.90)

The UN sanctions that were effective in November were no longer effective in January. Diplomacy and negotiations via the UN had become 'unhelpful'. By contrast, Bush's military build up in the Gulf was read as 'going the extra mile for peace', and his bellicose rhetoric as extraordinary diplomacy. A world-wide coalition stood behind the world's only superpower against a pariah state whose leader could not see reason. War had become 'inevitable'.³¹ When the war finally began, the fascination with the hi-tech weaponry and Top Gun imagery served up by the Pentagon in daily news conferences seemed to lull journalists into a ready acceptance that this really was the first ever clean, casualty-free war.³² Some journalists appreciated the wider geopolitical implications of this for US military power in the world. David Dimbleby remarked to the US Ambassador to Britain that the bombing,

suggests that America's ability to react militarily has really become quite extraordinary, despite all the critics beforehand who said it will never work out like that. You are now able to claim that you can act precisely and, therefore - to use that hideous word about warfare - 'surgically'.³³ (BBC1, 10.00, 18.1.91)

There was nothing in this of the 'US decline' that academics like Kennedy argued had resulted from 'imperial overstretch' (Kennedy, 1989). After the war, Bush declared to the nation: "It's a proud day for America and, by God!, we've kicked Vietnam syndrome once and for all!".³⁴ In other words, he served notice that no Third World country should dare stand up to the US again and have the temerity to defeat it in a war. At a US army victory cabaret, a senior officer told the troops that the Iraqis "never had a chance". Their whole problem, he thought, was their complete ignorance of US military power, "the lethality, the speed and the vigour of execution that resided in our equipment and in our leadership". There was only one snag for the US: "We knew we were good - we didn't know *how* good".³⁵

Arms control

Top of the agenda at the 1991 G7 summit in London was the issue of arms control, specifically the assumption that the western powers should play a direct, controlling role monitoring and limiting arms sales and arms proliferation around the world. The 'big idea' of a western-oriented, US-led new world order post-Gulf - encapsulated in Bush's assertion, "What we say goes!" - seemed unassailable. Charles Wheeler pointed out that:

It's the Seven, and not the UN, that have conceived of the idea of controlling the transfer of conventional weapons, though they may have to go to the UN to endorse sanctions against transgressors. (*Newsnight*, 16.7.91)

The official rhetoric belied a profound level of arrogance and hypocrisy since those same powers were the world's principal arms dealers and made immense profits by fostering markets in so-called 'sensitive areas' like the Middle East and Central and South America. Yet Mark Urban opened his report on the summit with the observation that, "Cynics might note that the nations represented here supply 80% of the world's weapons" (*Newsnight*, 16.7.91)

By this criterion, other reporters like Ian Williams were being merely 'cynical' when they underlined some of the most glaring contradictions in western arms control policy. Williams recalled the arms bonanza at the Paris Air Show just weeks before the G7 summit:

The way western arms companies supplied Saddam has clearly alarmed G7 leaders but last month at the Paris Air Show, arms salesmen were aggressively marketing their battle-proven weapons, trumpeting their success against Iraq.

He also revealed that the US government was the biggest arms dealer of them all:

US officials, led by Defense Secretary Dick Cheney, have chalked up \$18 billion of sales to the Middle East alone since the end of the Gulf War.

(*Channel Four News*, 16.7.91)

There were also some 'cynical' current affairs programmes on the subject. Margaret Gilmore reported on "how the apparent success of hi-tech fire-power in the Gulf has triggered a new demand for weapons" (*This Week*, 9.5.91).³⁶ *Dispatches* detailed western arms supplies to Bahrain, the United Arab Emirates, Oman, Egypt, and especially Saudi Arabia, in the immediate aftermath of the Gulf War. Paul Rogers told the programme Saudi Arabia went on an "all-time buying spree for new strike aircraft, cluster bombs, multiple rocket launchers - all the really devastating weapons that were used in the Gulf".³⁷ Jane Corbin revealed that the huge profits from the arms trade came not just from sales but from the transfer of technology, a customer service that allowed countries like Chile, Indonesia, and Egypt to develop self-sufficient weapons industries and then sell it on to other countries, some of these blacklisted by their western enemies - North Korea and Iraq were just two examples (*Panorama*, 24.6.91).³⁸ *Dispatches* revealed still another dimension to this - that the US idea of arms-control was to carve out a monopoly. Admiral Gene LaRocque underlined his country's hypocrisy:

We say we're interested in curtailing the sale of arms. What we really have in mind there is curtailing the British, the French, and the other countries from selling arms while we go ahead and sell ours! ³⁹

Nonetheless Urban suggested that the G7 summit deliberations on arms control represented:

a small but important step towards curbing the international arms trade free-for-all, particularly in the Middle East. It's been brought about by the realisation that if the more uncertain world requires greater use of gun-boat diplomacy by the developed countries, it's not a good idea to sell Saddam Hussein and his like the means of sinking your gunboats.

(*Newsnight*, 16.7.91)

But as the Gulf War showed, this is not necessarily the case. Western arms sales to Iraq before the Gulf crisis have caused uproar and controversial public enquiries but they boosted flagging western economies. And when friendship turned to war, Iraq's western weaponry proved no trouble to the West's more powerful and advanced military technology.

In the post-Gulf war era, arms-control became a useful excuse for the US to remind 'renegade' nations that "what we say goes" and to send out a clear warning: "Don't tread on us". The US carried out three bombing raids on Iraq in January 1993, one of which was aimed at what they claimed was a nuclear missile plant maintained in defiance of UN resolutions and the UN inspection team. The Iraqis insisted that it was no longer a nuclear plant but a machine tools factory. The inspectors revealed that they were still in the process of inspecting the plant but had already sealed those parts given over to nuclear weapons production and testing. British television news reported claim and counter-claim but, largely, accepted the US justification for the attack and the evidence on which it was based.⁴⁰

Trying to control North Korea's nuclear activities was a much more difficult task for the G7 "world managers". Firstly, North Korea was a closed society that regarded the west as hostile and threatening. Secondly, it had not been bombed and humiliated in a recent war and was not obliged by extraordinary UN resolutions to open up to western inspection teams on threat of being bombed. The crisis continued throughout 1993 and into 1994 and was marked by a sudden media interest in North Korea. It was portrayed as an isolated and dangerous 'renegade' state which, like Iraq during the Gulf crisis, was 'only months away' from developing nuclear missiles. A report for ITN showed familiar images of goose-stepping military parades and wondered if the "Stalinist regime... might just be crazy enough to go to war rather than give in, crazy enough even to use the crude atomic bomb that intelligence reports suggest has already been built". The report also reminded us that "The last time North Korea attacked, back in 1950, the Americans were caught unprepared and almost driven off the peninsula. They won't make that mistake again". Noteworthy here is that North Korea's resistance to external interference - "Don't tread on us" - is labelled "crazy", while the US's right to be present on 'the peninsula' in the first place goes without question. Thus, "The US says an attack on the South is an attack on America. North Korea could not have been warned more clearly but it may not be in the mood to listen" (22.00, 21.3.94).

In March 1994, President Clinton decided to dispatch Patriot missiles in defence, he said, of "our national interests and the interests of the people of South Korea". He also announced plans to resume joint military exercises with South Korean forces which had been suspended in 1993 as part of negotiations with the North over access to its nuclear facilities. The Chairman of the House of Representatives Foreign Affairs Committee, Lee Hamilton told journalists that "The pattern here has been that North Korea does eventually cede if enough pressure is put on them. All we can do is ratchet

that pressure up".⁴¹ Television news in Britain did not quote or reference Hamilton's statement but reported that "President Clinton has decided enough is enough" and was "ratcheting up the pressure"(21.00, 21.3.94). It was pure US propaganda designed to intimidate rather than take actual military action. The US Defence Secretary, William Perry, "hinted at using American warships....to increase the psychological pressure on Pyongyang".⁴²

While the media thought US rhetoric about annihilating North Korea and their constant military posturing was nothing out of the ordinary, they were quick to pick up on North Korean rhetoric against South Korea as outright provocation. The *Independent on Sunday*, for example, reported that while "North Korea is threatening to blast Seoul into a 'sea of fire'...Washington is resisting calls for a tougher response". The item featured a photograph of a South Korean military parade with the caption: "Marching as to war? South Korean troops are on red alert, while the North moves further towards the brink. Washington calls it rhetoric - others fear devastation".⁴³

Television news reports appeared to accept official claims that North Korea had suddenly become a dangerous nuclear threat. In April, an official North Korean statement announced the resumption of "peaceful nuclear activities"⁴⁴ but, as with the confrontation with Iraq, western evidence of the nature and extent of those activities was by no means conclusive. If the west, led by the US, is to embark on future confrontations with 'renegade' countries in the 'developing world' it will no doubt present 'compelling' evidence to justify intimidation or outright attack. As shown by precedent, officials need have few worries that western journalists will ask questions and take a closer look at the evidence.

4. The limits of rhetoric: journalists ask the questions that beg

It is important to emphasise that the official rhetorics of *realpolitik* and 'New World Order' are not unassailable to challenge or critique. For example, when the US invaded Panama in 1989, or when it bombed Iraq in 1993, it failed to marshal unanimous support for these actions among its western allies. Similarly, the rhetoric of a New World Order seems to have lost credibility while the west disputes policies on peacekeeping and humanitarian aid in crisis situations such as those in Bosnia, Somalia, or Rwanda. The collapse of consensus and the prevalence of uncertainty in the west, then, appear to have created more space for the news media to ask questions about 'order' and 'power', and to underline contradictions and hypocrisy in western policy, in a way that would have been unthinkable during the Cold War or the Gulf War.

Noam Chomsky presents a detailed account of how the US media endorsed and legitimised the US invasion of Panama (1992), but television news in Britain operated within a more critical culture in Britain, and in Europe as a whole. The tight ideological control culture of the Cold War had slackened somewhat to allow a more dialectical perspective on the US invasion. News bulletins pointed out the glaring contradiction between the foreign policies of the US and the Soviet Union at a time when Eastern Europe celebrated freedom and democracy. The Berlin Wall had come down, and the superpowers had just met in Malta to wax lyrical about a new era of hope for world peace. Some accounts contrasted the Soviet Union's 'Sinatra Doctrine' of non-intervention in, and peaceful disengagement from, the internal affairs of its allies and client states, with the US's continued policy of aggressive intervention in its own backyard.

It is in the superpower game that America stands to lose most points. As Moscow pursues its new doctrine of non-interference, permitting joy on the Berlin Wall and beyond, America commits itself to a shooting war to pursue its interests on its backyard.

(ITN, 22.00, 20.12.89)

The BBC reported Mrs Thatcher's unqualified public support for the invasion but noted that "a few Conservative MPs are worried tonight at what they see as a growing American tendency to play the role of international policeman" (18.00, 20.12.89). In reply to these misgivings in parliament, the Foreign Secretary, Douglas Hurd, recorded his exasperation that "it should be thought undemocratic to restore a democracy". But Hurd was closely questioned on both BBC News and ITN. Peter Sissons put the invasion in the context of a world "widely perceived to be a safer place" and wondered if "it (was) not a set back for that when one superpower puts itself about in this way?" He then went further to establish with Hurd whether Britain had "made it plain to the (US) that there are some limits to support for armed action of this kind?" (BBC, 18.00, 20.12.89). On *Channel Four News*, Jon Snow asked the Foreign Secretary "whether Britain hadn't been too hasty in supporting the American action" and, when Hurd replied no, put it to him that "the message of the last few months here in Europe (has) been that whatever the temptation force is not going to be the answer" to crisis resolution? Hurd replied that like the people of Eastern Europe, the people of Panama cried out for freedom and democracy. The US was merely facilitating that wish by giving the reluctant regime the shove (19.00, 20.12.89).

Explicit 'New World Order' rhetoric also appeared to flounder as the West professed a new sense of uncertainty just months after the Gulf War. Recrimination and controversy among traditional allies about policy in Bosnia or Somalia - to keep the peace or enforce it - have created a situation in which the bounds of legitimate controversy in news reporting are much looser and less well policed than was the case during the Gulf War. Journalists like Martin Bell (BBC), Ed Vulliamy and Maggie O'Kane (*Guardian*) have been criticised for their advocacy of military intervention, with the Foreign Secretary labelling them "The Something Must Be Done Brigade" of western journalists. Whether or not such criticism is valid or deserved is not the issue here. The crucial point is the readiness of western journalists to stand back and point out the doublethink and contradiction that riddles western New World Order rhetoric. In this regard, their approach is a departure from their willingness to swallow and regurgitate the propaganda line as so many did in their coverage of the Gulf War.

A brief look at coverage of NATO's 'Partnership For Peace' (PFP) summit (10 January 1994) highlights the extent to which the civil war in Bosnia has transformed media perceptions of Western military and security structures and their rhetoric. The tendency to internalise the rhetoric has markedly decreased and the news seems to provide a focus of popular contempt for inaction and division between NATO and the UN, and between the US and the EC. On *Channel Four News*, Nik Gowing remarked that, "Four years into this post-Cold War period, NATO continues to be proof of the gulf between public commitments and reality when it comes to crisis management" (10.1.94). And on *Newsnight*, Gordon Brewer said that Bosnia served as "a reminder that relying on the West is not necessarily a cure-all" for Eastern Europe where they wondered if 'Partnership For Peace' was a viable framework of security or "another recipe for (Western) indecision". Brewer went further and asked if PFP was "a bold initiative by a rejuvenated NATO...or an exercise in doublethink?" The problem, he said, was that they claimed to achieve two goals that were contradictory. On one hand they aimed "to reassure the East Europeans the West will protect them against the Russians" and, on the other, "to reassure the Russians NATO is not a hostile force". But, he went on, "the doublethink doesn't stop there" because PFP did not offer East European participants "the crucial protection of Article 5 of the NATO Charter which says an attack on one NATO member will be resisted by all of them". Partnership For Peace, Brewer concluded, was "as much about what it *doesn't* say as what it does" (10.1.94). Four months later, a BBC correspondent in Bosnia reminded us that "NATO's success during the Cold War was in threatening effective retaliation in the event of attack", yet four years after the Cold War it was "trying to resurrect similar, credible deterrence from the ashes of western policy in Bosnia (BBC1, 13.00, 20.4.94).

In section three, I argued that the US intervention in Somalia was reported solely as a humanitarian mission, not as part of a geo-political strategy to make the country safe for western oil exploration. Nevertheless, instances of media criticism within the humanitarian framework are still noteworthy.

While the publicly stated aim of 'Operation Restore Hope' was to restore order to Somalia and facilitate the distribution of food, the US forces also became involved in a highly personal mission to capture General Aideed, the so-called 'warlord' who dared resist their attempts at forcible disarmament and stand up to the aggressive, gung-ho tactics of soldiers trained for total warfare, not diplomacy. To complicate matters further, the UN peacekeeping force drawn mainly from Pakistan also got sucked into direct conflict with Aideed, thus departing from their original brief: 'to keep the peace'. This had disastrous consequences for them but especially for the Somalis.

After a year of quite bloody confrontation, the US prepared the ground for withdrawal. In November 1993, the UN Security Council ordered an inquiry into what went wrong and in March 1994 the last US troops pulled out of Somalia. By that time, the UN inquiry had yielded a highly critical 200-page report "(alleging) that the UN and the United States followed a misguided policy and shared the blame for subsequent bloodshed with...(General) Aideed" (*Guardian*, 1.4.94).⁴⁵ The report was deemed so critical by UN officials that they suppressed it from publication in the news media. However, this was rather futile and belated censorship because media coverage in Britain offered space for a sustained critique of the US and UN military operation from mid-1993, when it descended into chaos. The close policing of the media that was so evident in Grenada, Panama and the Gulf appeared to be missing in Somalia in spite of the heavy PR campaign that heralded the arrival of US troops.

The crucial point of departure came in June when 23 Pakistani soldiers were killed in a gun-battle with General Aideed's forces. The UN responded with an assault on Aideed's headquarters on 12 June. At first news reports endorsed US reasons for the attack. The BBC led with these headlines:

United Nations forces attack the Somali capital in retaliation for the killing of 23 Pakistani peacekeepers. Four arms dumps are destroyed, 200 prisoners taken in an attempt to disarm criminal elements.

With no sense of irony the reporter summed it up as "all part of the UN's latest efforts to bring peace to Somalia". He described it as "a military success, albeit against a much weaker enemy" and concluded that "the real test for the UN now is to win the hearts and minds of the Somali people while keeping up this hardline approach" (21.50, 12.6.93).

The next day, the tone of news reporting changed when Pakistani troops shot dead 20 unarmed Somali protesters. BBC News reported that "Anger among Somalis over the actions of the (UN) is rapidly turning to fury (and)...is losing the UN the sympathy it cannot do without" (BBC1, 18.20, 13.6.93). ITN showed pictures of wounded civilians being treated in a makeshift operating theatre and reported how "Somali people are finding it harder and harder to understand the purpose of a humanitarian mission which has turned into a military offensive....Peace-keeping in Somalia has taken on a new and deadly meaning"(ITN, 23.15. 13.6.93). Another BBC item showed US helicopter guns-ships targeting missiles at mortar batteries in Mogadishu. The reporter said it was part of "the UN policy of destroying weapons here" but reported that "they're doing it during the day and over busy streets filled with innocent civilians". He remarked that "For many Somalis, hatred for the UN now overwhelms any animosity against General Aideed". The item refers to Aideed's comparison of the UN's deeds with those of a dictator and concludes that "The sight of French soldiers...planting explosives to destroy a radio station that broadcasts against the (UN) does lend force to the comparison" (21.00, 14.6.93).

As the last US troops withdrew from Somalia on 25 March 1994, ITN reported that they were getting out "before good intentions paved the road to hell" yet its own assessment of the operation would suggest that was too late. The report recalled that "When US troops came, there was no government - there is no government now", and that "what began with a near farcical night-landing under TV lights soon degenerated into an undeclared war". The US commander told the news media how he prayed that "the Somali people would raise themselves out of this turmoil and anarchy and to build some kind of society based on love instead of...the gun". ITN's reporter countered his piety with the reality that "the US has just given weapons worth £20 million to the Somali police to subdue the clans that America could not subdue" (22.00).

Conclusion

It is clear then that no persistent, ideological framework of interpretation has replaced the Cold War paradigm for reporting world events. The 'New World Order' paradigm has certainly not prevailed since the Gulf War. The very idea seems to have lost currency among journalists as they attempt to make sense of the various 'post-Cold War' crises in Bosnia, Somalia, North Korea and Rwanda, and the failure of western policy makers to reach consensus, make decisions, or find solutions. The *Daily Telegraph* glanced back at four years since the East European revolutions and remarked that "the economic consequences of Western victory in the Cold War have brought chaos, not a new order, to Eastern Europe" with the imposition of market reforms that western European countries have long since mitigated with welfare provisions. "There is more to capitalism than simple deregulation and privatisation", it said without even a nod to its Thatcherite heritage. "Without the established institutions and conventions of civil society, markets tend to be craved up by gangsters, as has happened throughout the former Soviet Union".⁴⁶ One of the most telling and ironic headlines since the East European revolutions appeared in the *Guardian* just as Poland and Hungary voted for some form of socialism in general elections:

RED TIDE SWEEPS EASTERN EUROPE (21.9.93)⁴⁷

Time will tell if uncertainty, conflict and chaos emerge as dominant themes in news coverage of world-wide affairs. To view world events as part of historical process would surmount some of the confusion about what has replaced the Cold War order. The end of the Cold War has freed journalism from the restrictive East-West, post World War Two framework of the Cold War. Thus the 'historical process' paradigm presents a model of domination of the 'developing' South by the 'developed' North which bears continuity with western imperial history. Rather than making sense of 'western policy' as being indicative, or not, of some vague idea of a 'New World Order', the historical paradigm offers the possibility to analyse global politics and crises through the prism of the *realpolitik* of individual western powers.

This in turn offers a more coherent framework for analysing media coverage. If we accept that each crisis involves disagreement and competition between various agencies, rather than ideological conformity or consensus, then we can move away from instrumentalist propaganda models to an analysis of how these agencies develop and effect strategies for shaping coverage in their favour or to their advantage.

Notes

- ¹ Young, H. "A year of no world order", p?, *Guardian*, 31.12.92
- ² McCrystal, C. "The world at war", pp.39-41, *Independent on Sunday Review*, 14.3.91
- ³ Comment: "A new world crying out for order", p.18, *Observer*, 26.12.93
- ⁴ see Mowlana et al (eds.) (1992); Peters, C. (ed.)(1992) (Chomsky, 1993b)
- ⁵ Chomsky, N. (1992a: 9-33)
- ⁶ Chomsky, N. (1992a, 1992b, 1993a, 1993b)
- ⁷ Each sample of news included the main evening BBC and ITN bulletins, and the off-peak news programmes, *Channel Four News* (19.00) and *Newsnight* (BBC2, 22.30). Lunchtime or early evening bulletins were referred to where they reported a breaking story. The sample periods were as follows:
 - 1-3 December 1989 (Malta Summit)
 - 20-21 December 1989 (US invasion of Panama)
 - 6 July 1990 (NATO Summit, London)
 - 3 August 1990 (Iraqi invasion of Kuwait)
 - 9 July 1990 (G7 Summit, Houston)
 - 12 September 1990 (Two-Plus-Four Treaty on unification of Germany, Moscow)
 - 19-21 November 1990 (CSCE conference, Paris)
 - 15-18 July 1991 (G7 Summit, London)
 - 30 July 1991 (START treaty ceremony, Moscow)
 - 7-8 November 1991 (NATO Summit, Rome)
 - 8-9 December 1992 (US troops land in Somalia)
 - 13-14 & 17-18 January 1993 (US bombing raids on Baghdad).
 - 21 March 1993 (US dispatches Patriot missile system to South Korea and promises to resume joint military exercises with Seoul after pressure fails to make North Korea back down on inspection of its nuclear facilities)
 - 12-14 June 1993 (US-led UN forces kill at least 20 unarmed Somali civilians)
 - 27-28 June 1993 (US bomb Baghdad in revenge for alleged assassination plot against George Bush in Kuwait, April 1993).
 - 11 July 1993 (President Clinton visits DMZ on N.Korean-S.Korean border)
 - 12 July 1993 (US-led UN forces open fire on Somali civilians; western journalist killed in revenge)
 - 4 October 1993 (Over 100 US troops killed in more confrontations with General Aideed's forces).
 - 10 January 1994 (NATO Partnership For Peace conference, Brussels)
- ⁸ Another PR coup by Gennady Gerasimov, who it was coined the phrase "The Sinatra Doctrine" to sum up the Soviet attitude to reform in Eastern Europe ("Let them do it their way").

⁹ Kenneth Adelman, ex-Director US Arms Control and Disarmament Agency

¹⁰ Johnson, R.W. "War between blocs comes in from the cold", p.16, *Independent on Sunday*, 1.7.90; Becker, J. "Why the West will lose", p.23, *Guardian Europe*, 8.2.91

¹¹ see Ascherson, N. (1990a, 1991a, 1991b, 1992)

¹² Manfred Woerner Secretary General NATO, Summit address, 7.11.91.

¹³ It was also ironic that with Gorby mugs, caps, badges and tee-shirts - essential fashion accessories for the naff - many Western companies made a neat profit on merchandising Mikhail.

¹⁴ Dr Patricia Lewis

¹⁵ A phrase coined by the Chairman of the US Joint Chiefs of Staff, Colin Powell, Bush Administration 1989-1993.

¹⁶ Chomsky, N. (1992b)

¹⁷ Chomsky, N. (1992a: 144-172)

¹⁸ Fineman, M. "The oil factor in Somalia", *Los Angeles Times*, 18.1.93; pp.234-238 in Jensen, C. (1994).

¹⁹ Fineman, M. in Jensen, C. (1994)

²⁰ For a more detailed view of media coverage of the bombing raids, see Philo and McLaughlin (1993b)

²¹ When it came to assessing the impact of the bombing on Arab opinion, journalists readily endorsed the official line - there was nothing to worry about:

Despite the protests in some quarters, *British officials are relaxed* about the reactions to last night's strike. They point out that it's caused no difficulty with the *three Arab governments that really matter*. The Saudis allowed (their) air-bases...to be used and while the Syrians and the Egyptians expressed regret that force was necessary, they've refrained from any criticism. (ITN, 22.00, 14.1.93)

Whenever I ask about (Arab reaction) *I'm always told by officials* that it's not the problem that we all think it is. I suppose that's the answer you'd expect *but we have not heard huge cries of protest from the Arab world*. (ITN, 23.00, 17.1.93)

This was hardly surprising given that it is unusual for the western news media to routinely report any sort of opinion from the Arab world - especially when the West goes to war in the area.

²² *Critical Eye*: "Proud Arabs and Texas Oilmen", Prod. Peter Day, Platform Films, for Channel Four, 7.10.93

²³ speech, 8.8.90, cited in *Dispatches*: "The Audit of War", Prod., Barraclough, J.; Barraclough-Carey, for Channel Four, 8.1.92

²⁴ TV Address, 17.1.91

²⁵ Speech at Blaby, 2.2.91; op cit. Gittings, J. in Gittings, J. (ed.) (1991:2); for a detailed discussion of race and gender in Gulf War rhetoric and imagery, see Enloe, C. (1992) and Farmanfarmaian.

A. (1992) in Peters, C. (ed.)

²⁶ Said, E.W. (1992)

²⁷ Voices like Chomsky and Pilger provide the only redemptive antidote to the effects of this long-term project. The issue of whether the media lost the Vietnam War for the US has distracted from the fundamental fact that they have played and still play a crucial role in the revisionist project that has followed the war: the writing out of contemporary US history the massacre of millions of Vietnamese, Cambodians and Laotians, whether at the hands of US forces or as a direct result of US intervention in the region.

²⁸ *Arena*: "Culture and Imperialism", Edward. W. Said, BBC2, 12.2.93

²⁹ *ibid.*

³⁰ Ahmad, E. (1992)

³¹ The *Guardian* alone among the British press argued against using force and quoted a CIA report that sanctions had stopped 97% of Iraqi exports (Comment, 15.1.91). And a BBC News item referred to the success of sanctions in wrecking not just Iraq's economy but those of its neighbours, especially Jordan. An American economist told the reporter that sanctions were having: "More than ten times the impact (than on) economies in past episodes, where sanctions have *succeeded* in achieving their goal" (BBC1, 21.00, 14.1.91)

But the overwhelming flow of coverage suggested that war was inevitable if 'negotiations' failed. The *Sun* front page exclaimed "IT LOOKS LIKE WAR - Battle stations as Gulf talks collapse War in the Gulf looked inevitable last night after last ditch peace talks failed" (10.1.91). Hours before US bombers attacked Baghdad, television news reported on the collapse of President Mitterand's last minute attempts at negotiation: "All efforts to find a peaceful solution to the Gulf crisis seemed to have ended in failure tonight" (BBC1, 21.00, 15.1.91). ITN's prognosis was just as final and blamed it all on Iraqi belligerence: "War in the Gulf looks unavoidable. Iraq said tonight that it was ready for it. It rejected any final peace initiatives" (ITN, 22.00, 15.1.91); see Philo and McLaughlin (1993).

³² Philo and McLaughlin (1993a)

³³ Philo and McLaughlin (1993a)

³⁴ *Assignment*: "Uncle Sam's Last Stand", Reporter, J.Pettifer; Prod., BBC2, 12.3.91

³⁵ *Dispatches*: "The Audit of War"

³⁶ The then US Deputy Defense Secretary, Donald Atwood, told her that the imperative for the US post-Gulf War was to: "Absolutely push for the next generation (of weapons) and the generation after that! If history tells us anything it's that it's a fast-moving, technological world. We're looking ahead now and we need to...What will the threat be? What will the potential enemies have in the year 2000, 2010, 2020? And to prepare for those technological improvements with our own weapons, with our own defence mechanisms"; ("Hits or Myths? Hi-tech and the arms race", Reporter, M.Gilmore; Prod. Bill Lyons; Thames TV)

³⁷ *Dispatches*: "The Audit of War"

³⁸ Panorama, "Making a Killing?", Reporter, J. Corbin; Prod., ; BBC1 24.6.91

³⁹ Dispatches, "The Audit of War", 8 December 1991; Reporter: G. Carey; Prod. J. Barraclough; Barraclough-Carey for Channel Four

⁴⁰ Philo, G. and McLaughlin, G. (1993b)

⁴¹ Cornwell, T (1994)

⁴² Cornwell, T (1994)

⁴³ Usborne, D. (1994)

⁴⁴ Rafferty, K. (1994)

⁴⁵ Reuter (1994)

⁴⁶ Comment: "No peace by appeasement", p.31, *The Sunday Telegraph*, 19.12.93

⁴⁷ Pick, H. (1993) "Red Tide Sweeps Eastern Europe", 21 September

CHAPTER EIGHT:

Conclusion

My thesis has examined the impact of the East European revolutions on the Cold War news paradigm at one of the earliest moments of crisis: the fall of the Berlin Wall. It has argued that the East European revolutions of 1989 and the end of the Cold War have resulted in a paradigm crisis in news frameworks. The fall of the Berlin Wall marked a critical moment when television news could have revised the orthodox history of the events leading to its construction. Instead, they largely reaffirmed the orthodox account, reinforcing rather than questioning the old assumptions and certainties of the Cold War.

As shown in Chapter Four the paradigm shift also resulted in some serious inconsistencies and confusion in news accounts. If the East German 'refugee' story had been reported as one of economic migration from the beginning, there might have been little problem. But it was not. News accounts followed the dominant rhetoric about the East German exodus from the very beginning and accepted its turnabout without serious inquiry. In doing so, they inadvertently gave lie to their original premise: that this was a "refugee" story and, as such, that the "refugees" were "fleeing" a country without hope for reform.

In Chapter Five, I showed how the news reported public debate in the two Germanys, and on the wider international scene, about what should happen in the next five to ten years after the Berlin Wall. I showed that British television news appeared to endorse the view that German unity was an inevitability, whether East or West liked it or not. The fragments of negative opinion or images that emerged from the coverage in this period - and there were plenty - were reported within this interpretative framework. I showed in Chapter Six that this would have implications for the way the news reported the high-speed rush to German unity in an uncertain post-Cold War order. In absence of certainty, television news seemed to settle for the 'fast track' option and followed it through to eventual unity on 3 October and far beyond. They acknowledged the persistence of serious economic problems in the former East Germany but explained all these as legacies of communism rather than the result of derailment. They proclaimed the advent of democracy in East Germany but saw no contradiction between this and the extent of western interference and management in the 1990 election, and the expedient interpretation of the Basic Law to hasten unity before the West German elections in December 1990.

Finally I argued that it seems clear then that no persistent, ideological framework of interpretation has replaced the Cold War paradigm for reporting world events. The 'New World Order' paradigm has certainly not prevailed since the Gulf War. The very idea seems to have lost currency among journalists as they attempt to make sense of the various 'post-Cold War' crises in Bosnia, Somalia, North Korea and Rwanda, and the failure of western policy makers to reach consensus, make decisions, or find solutions.

Time will tell if uncertainty, conflict and chaos emerge as dominant themes in news coverage of world-wide affairs. Eberwine *et al* argue that,

Developing an appropriate framework, lexicon, and - finally - paradigm in the aftermath of the Cold War is a daunting challenge for journalism. It requires the kind of self-scrutiny that many journalists expect the profession, with its cultivated scepticism (*sic*) to resist.¹

They asked thirteen US journalists, all of them employed on major US dailies and TV networks, 1) what they thought the Cold War meant and 2) if they thought the end of the Cold war demanded a change in how the news media reported international affairs.²

What was the Cold War all about?

Valentin Zorin believes that "journalism will be the last fortification of the Cold War"³, and among some of these journalists it seems he may have a point. In reply to the first question, they displayed both lack of objective criticism of the US in perpetuating the Cold War. They seemed to be steeped in Cold War ideology and while they declared the conflict over they did so with a certain self-righteous triumphalism that saw it only in terms of right (the US) and wrong (the Soviet Union), of winners (the US, capitalism, liberal democracy) and losers (the Soviet Union, the planned economy, and socialism). Their grasp of the failures and ultimate collapse of the Soviet Union is matched only by their blind assertion of US right and might. According to Monroe^{*},

The Soviets held at gunpoint since World War II a few small, sullen satellites. The West, on the other hand, by the uses of freedom, has converted the two military juggernauts responsible for World War II, into great, stable, productive nations allied with the West. And the fuel of capitalist incentives has lit up other conspicuous gems of prosperity: Korea, Singapore, Taiwan, Hong Kong.⁴

(* Bill Monroe, *Washington Journalism Review*)

What is particularly remarkable is the unspoken assumption that the Cold War was started, maintained and sometimes exacerbated by the Soviet Union. None of the journalists raised fundamental questions about the US role in the conflict. "Revisionist quibbles aside," says Hertzberg, "the basic cause of the Cold War was totalitarian".⁵ Peter Braestrup, who worked on the *Washington Post* and the *New York Times*, thought that

the earlier journalistic preoccupation with events growing out of the East-West contest was not irrational, while it lasted. The Soviets and their allies were directly involved in threatening activities in Europe, Asia and elsewhere - and the West was responding. The "Red Menace", although imperfectly perceived and often exaggerated for domestic political purposes, was not simply a right-wing fantasy. The...Berlin Blockade, the Berlin Wall, the Cuban missile crisis, Soviet support for Egypt and North Vietnam, the invasion of Afghanistan, the Korean War - these did occur. Stalin, Mao, Pol Pot, Ho Chi Minh, Castro, and Brezhnev were no Boy Scouts. Containment of communist expansionism was a story - an increasingly complicated story, but not an unnatural focus for American journalism.⁶

Over the last few years, critics such as Noam Chomsky and Edward Herman have provided plenty of examples of what an "unnatural" focus might be for US journalists like Baestrup: US support for some of the most murderous right wing regimes in the world, its bombing of civilians in wars against Vietnam, Cambodia, Panama, Haiti, and Somalia, and its readiness to overlook human rights abuses wherever US interests are stake.⁷

Does the end of the Cold War demand a change in reporting international affairs?

The response to the second question was divided between those who thought their coverage was already adequate and up to the challenges of the post-cold War world, and those who thought that journalism needed to review its whole interpretative framework.⁸

Peter Gumbel, for the *Wall Street Journal*, wondered if the Cold War was really over. He complained bitterly about reporting restrictions in the Soviet Union and concluded that "the Cold War will only be over for journalists when we can work in the Soviet Union as freely as in any other foreign posting".⁹ Along with cynicism and bitterness, there was also some complacency. Bill Monroe, of the *Washington Journalism Review*, prescribed this course of treatment for journalists wondering how to deal with the rapid changes in the world since 1989:

They should do what comes naturally: Report them in all their breadth and depth and in all the fine, telling detail now so richly available. And in particular, they should give us chapter and verse on how those gloriously ancient, wonderfully new ideas of 1776 America are taking hold in the Soviet Union with a potential for subverting authoritarianism that no American defence budget could ever match. These passionate, explosive notions - not miraculous weaponry - hold the real promise of peace for our grandchildren.¹⁰

Other journalists conceded that new frameworks and themes were inevitable. Hendrik Hertzberg, editor of the *New Republic*, predicted a shift from reporting the US-Soviet nuclear stand-off to focus on the destruction of the environment.¹¹ Hodding Carter III, press secretary to the Carter Administration, came nearest to conceding difficulties in reporting when he pointed out the pitfalls of a paradigm-shift, particularly the danger that "the disintegration of one set of outworn slogans could simply lead to the substitution of new equally mindless ones - and of the kind of reporting that slogans, rather than careful scrutiny, produce".¹²

Journalists in Britain are also aware of the difficulties faced in reporting crisis, change and uncertainty. In 1992, the BBC newscaster, Martyn Lewis, published an article criticising prevailing news values and agendas. He questioned the proportion of air-time given in bulletins to 'bad news' as opposed to good news stories, with undue focus on wars, famines, and crime. The reaction from some of his journalist colleagues was speedy and sharp. They attacked the notion that news should be assessed for some sort of feel good factor. John Simpson argued that BBC News is in not in the business of "engineering news". In a familiar defence from news professionals, he maintained that journalists were simply 'reflecting reality':

Nineteen eighty nine, like 1956 and 1968, was a year when the entire world changed direction and we're still living through the consequences of that: wars, upheavals, the collapse of old systems and old certainties. And until new certainties replace them, the real world will be a place of violence and conflict and our television screens will have to reflect that.¹³

But there is an expectation that the media do more than simply 'reflect' an uncertain and unstable post Cold War world. The *Channel Four News* journalist, Nik Gowing, challenges the assumption that,

real time coverage of the horrors of Bosnia or Somalia or Rwanda not only creates a demand that 'Something Must Be Done', but also drives the making of foreign policy...Televised horror in Bosnia: instant policy response in Whitehall or Washington.¹⁴

Government ministers such as Douglas Hurd may express horror at the pictures from Rwanda but such reporting does nothing to force a policy-shift that might stop the conflict:

The challenge for TV crews is cover a crisis as...comprehensively and as rapidly as possible. The challenge for governments is to appear to react, while quietly adhering to the continuum of a 'cold and rational' policy line.¹⁵

This is an intriguing clash of agendas and assumptions in media and government circles and it presents some opportunities for a systematic, multi-method approach to the role of the media in reporting crisis and conflict.

Research agenda

Detailed quantitative-qualitative analysis could reveal dominant patterns of media representation of the many crises the west has faced in the post Cold War era (e.g., Somalia, Bosnia, Rwanda, North Korea, Iraq). It might support or challenge the instrumentalist argument that there is a neo-imperialist narrative in news reporting of a) the nature of the selected crises and conflicts, and b) of actual western interventions or hotly debated proposals for intervention. The sample might range across media formats - TV, radio, and the press - and perhaps current affairs and documentary, and periodicals.

A production study would gain some insights into how the news media report these crises without the certainties of the Cold War. Such a study would aim to investigate how the conflicting policy agendas of government and non-government agencies influence coverage of conflicts and crises. It involve interviews with a large sample of journalists - correspondents, photographers, producers and editors. It would also require interviews with representatives from governmental and non-governmental agencies such as 1) Foreign Office, MoD, NATO, UN; 2) aid agencies, e.g., Oxfam, GOAL; and, 3) human rights organisations and pressure groups, e.g. Amnesty International, Africa Watch.

Using research method developed at the Glasgow University Media Group, an audience reception study would use compare public beliefs about the facts and nature of two conflicts such as Bosnia and Rwanda.

Notes

¹ Eberwine *et al* (1991: 131)

² Eberwine *et al.*(1991:126-150); this is an abridged version of an interview survey for *Deadline* (Summer, 1989), the periodical of the New York based Centre for War, Peace and the News Media.

³ Zassoursky, Y. (1991: 168)

⁴ Eberwine *et al* (1991: 144)

⁵ Eberwine *et al* (1991: 138)

⁶ Eberwine *et al* (1991: 133)

⁷ Chomsky and Herman (1979, 1988); Chomsky (1989, 1992a, 1993)

⁸ Eberwine *et al* (1991: 129)

⁹ Eberwine *et al* (1991: 137)

¹⁰ Eberwine *et al* (1991: 145)

¹¹ Eberwine *et al* (1991: 138)

¹² Eberwine *et al* (1991: 134)

¹³ Simpson, J. (1993) "Making News", *Huw Wheldon Lecture 1993*, BBC1, 2 September

¹⁴ Gowing., N. (1994:2)

¹⁵ Gowing , N. (1994:7)

APPENDIX 1

Perceptions of the East German migrants (1-2) :

1. THE NEED FOR EAST GERMANS TO RETURN TO/STAY AT HOME IN THE GDR FOR THE GOOD OF EAST AND WEST GERMANY (Source: Usually by state leaders and other politicians from both East and West Germany, US, Britain, Soviet Union)
2. REFUGEES WILL BE/SHOULD BE WELCOMED TO THE WEST WITHOUT RESERVATION, e.g., FRG coped with much larger numbers of refugees in post war period (Source : Usually FRG politicians at Federal level)

Effects of their movement on the country they were leaving, East Germany, and on the host country, West Germany (3-6) :

3. NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF THE "REFUGEE EXODUS" FOR THE GDR, e.g., a "brain drain" of young skilled workers, debilitation of the country's public services (Source: Usually by media)
4. POSITIVE ASPECTS OF THE EXODUS FOR THE GDR, e.g., ridding the country of dissidents, malcontents and "nasties", as one E. German official put it in The Scotsman, 9 November. (Source: Usually by East German officials)
5. NEGATIVE ASPECTS OF THE EXODUS FOR WEST GERMANY (FRG), e.g., strain on economic resources and social fabric, politically divisive issue, potential to provoke backlash from extreme right (Source : Usually by media, or FRG politicians at state, *Länder*, level, and ranging across ideological divisions)
6. POSITIVE ASPECTS OF THE EXODUS FOR FRG, stimulate the economy by sudden upsurge in consumer demand with potential boom in construction and retail sectors. East Germans source of cheap, skilled and reliable labour. German speaking, they are easier to assimilate than workers from Turkey, etc. (Source: Usually media, FRG economists)

APPENDIX 2

NEWS CONSTRUCTION OF THE EAST GERMAN REFUGEE EXODUS STORY

Abstract of public debate on the exodus AFTER the Berlin Wall opened

The Centre

From the Federal Government, a warm welcome to the East German people. As they come over in their millions for a weekend in West Berlin, to join the massive street party and experience the delights of the city's shop-fronts, each person is entitled to 100 DM "welcome money". But while they might enjoy all this, they know it is not for them. They must return to East Germany, to their homes and to their jobs. They must also build democracy in East Germany by working for free, multi-party elections.

The Periphery

From the periphery, a note of warning. State and local governments are experiencing serious economic and social problems without having to cope with more refugees from East Germany. Social tensions arising from high unemployment and acute shortage of housing stock are being exacerbated by a continuing influx of "refugees" from East Germany and "immigrants" from Poland or Turkey. Such tensions are being used for political advantage by the Far Right.

(Details and sources of statements quantified in Chapter Four, pp. 83-84, Tables 4.4 and 4.5)

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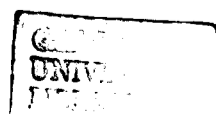
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Supplementary Appendix

Detailed Description of Samples of Media Content used in Chapters Three and Four

Chapter Three referred to the period immediately following the collapse of the Berlin Wall, 9-14 November. It analysed television news accounts of the history of the Berlin Wall and thus focused only on news items that featured such narratives on the evening of 9 November 1989. There were three in all, one each on BBC *Nine O'Clock News*, ITN *News At Ten*, and BBC2 *Newsnight* at 22.30. There was no comparable item on *Channel Four News* at 19.00hrs that evening, when the news of the opening of the Wall was only just breaking.

The chapter also makes reference to the press. It drew from a sample of 13 British daily newspapers on 10, 11, 13 & 14 November 1989, and to 8 British Sunday newspapers on 12 November 1989. The newspapers were as follows:

Daily - *Telegraph*, *Times*, *Financial Times*, *Independent*, *Guardian*, *Mail*, *Express*, *Glasgow Herald*, *Scotsman*, *Sun*, *Mirror*, *Daily Record* (Glasgow), *The Evening Times* (Glasgow)

Sunday - *Telegraph*, *Times*, *Independent on Sunday*, *Observer*, *Scotland on Sunday*, *Sunday Express*, *Mail on Sunday*, *News of the World*

Chapter Four analysed how television news reported the movement of East German citizens to West Germany from September until November 1989 when the Wall opened. It thus referred to sample periods before and after the opening of the Berlin Wall. These were as follows:

Sample Period 1: 10-12 September 1989
 Sample Period 2: 5-8 October 1989
 Sample Period 3: 2-4 November 1989
 Sample Period 4: 9-13 November 1989

These comprised of the main daily bulletins on BBC1 (13.00, 18.00, and 21.00) and ITN (13.00, 17.40, 22.00); and also included *Newsnight* (BBC2, 22.30) and *Channel Four News* (Channel Four, 19.00).

The chapter also compared television news coverage of the East German "refugee" story with their treatment of the Vietnam "boat-people" story in Hong Kong. These secondary samples (Sample Periods 5 and 6) are detailed in Footnote 1 of the chapter (p.113).

References to the press were drawn mainly from the press sample used in Chapter Three.

Finally, an important note on current affairs. The thesis did not include a systematic analysis of a sample of current affairs programmes. Although this may now seem an important omission, the logic at the time of research was that the critical focus of attention was with news frameworks at moments of crisis. It was felt that since current affairs and documentary output is generated over a longer, more considered time-frame, it can and in many cases does enjoy the benefit of hindsight in a way crisis news does not. There is no doubt, however, that this presents an opportunity for further research.