

## **Journalism Professors in the German Democratic Republic: A Collective Biography**

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Based on archive material and biographical interviews, this article reveals a dead end of the discipline's history. Examining all 25 full professors of journalism in the German Democratic Republic (GDR), the study shows that the politically motivated closure of the Leipzig department in 1990 buried a paradigm that had lost the connection to international discussions. Even if the invention of the East German alternative was clearly shaped by the communists' demand for journalists who would fit into the steered media, both the origins and requirements for the field's professors and their very first steps were quite similar to the rest of the world. However, when globalization and academization took off in full force, GDR professors became increasingly isolated from the field.

*Keywords: journalism education and research, history of the field, academic careers, Cold War*

Using the example of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and writing a collective biography of the country's journalism professors, this article explores a dead end of the discipline's history. Like in all Eastern European socialist countries before 1989, journalism education and training in the GDR was university based. Future journalists had to study at the Faculty of Journalism at the University of Leipzig over a period of four years. The faculty was founded in 1954 according to the Soviet model and renamed Journalism Section as part of the higher education reform in 1969. This faculty/section was the one and only academic journalism training facility in the GDR and, in terms of financial and human resources, was much bigger than comparable institutes in West Germany. In December 1990, when the Journalism Section was finally closed down by the Saxon government, the Leipzig unit had 10 full professors and altogether almost 100 academic staff members for supervising approximately 400 students. In Munich, to give just one comparative figure describing one of the field's leading West German institutes at the time, there were five full professors and fewer than 20 academic assistants for more than 2,000 students.

Along with the closure of the Journalism Section in Leipzig, all full professors employed there were forced to leave academia, although a new institute for communication and media studies was founded at the very same place in 1993. To put it differently, the reunified Germany did not place great emphasis on employing former GDR cadres in the academic discipline of communication since the Leipzig Journalism Section was tightly bound with the agitation and media-steering bureaucracy of the Communist

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Party. Just a few East German academic assistants survived the political changes after 1989 at universities. However, none of the theoretical ideas developed in Leipzig between the 1950s and 1989 were incorporated into communication and media research. This also applies in terms of practical journalism training methods. Even worse, all of these ideas are forgotten. Currently, there is no history of journalism education and research in the GDR. In addition to publications from the time of German division, only works on special aspects (such as international activities, the faculty's foundation in the 1950s or biographies of selected professors) are available (Meyen, 2014; Schemmert & Siemens, 2013; Siemens, 2013).

This article argues that this paradigm death was politically motivated. To put it differently, it is well known that the success of academic approaches depends not only on quality (explanatory force and so on) but maybe even more on institutionalization (cf. Kuhn, 1962). It takes paid positions at universities to get students, admirers, citations, and even histories. Leipzig's fall into complete oblivion consequently says nothing about the value of the academic work done there before the Berlin Wall came down. This becomes even more true if one considers that, beginning in the late 1960s, East and West German journalism researchers and teachers met on common ground at international conferences all over the world. Emil Dusiska (1914–2002), head of the Leipzig Journalism Section, was elected secretary-general of the International Association for Media and Communication Research (IAMCR) in Buenos Aires and did most of the association's paperwork from 1972 to 1978. Upon invitation from Dusiska, and mainly sponsored by the East German Communist Party, IAMCR had a conference in Leipzig in 1974 with a record participation of about 250 researchers (Meyen, 2014). At this conference, the Western world was represented by many highly ranked academics, including Herbert Schiller, George Gerbner, John Pollock, and Alex Edelstein from the United States and the Germans Gerhard Maletzke, Otto B. Roegele, and Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann.

Like their colleagues in West Germany, the Leipzig professors had to rebuild the discipline from scratch after World War II. *Zeitungswissenschaft*, the early German version of communication studies, had lost its reputation because of its attempts to join the rulers during the Nazi regime. As a consequence, alternative approaches left the country permanently aligned with their advocates after 1933 (cf. Averbek, 2001). By exploring the biographies of GDR journalism professors, this article comprehends the conditions and forms of journalism and communication research. Who became journalism professors behind the Iron Curtain, and how did these academics define their discipline? Where did those people come from, and how did they get into academia? From whom did they learn to do good science, and what were the principles and orientations that guided their work? What did they have in common with professors from the West, and what did the variations look like? What influence did the Communist Party and the affiliation with the Eastern Bloc have on how journalism professors worked in terms of both research and teaching? To get to the point: Is there anything that deserves to be cherished, acknowledged, and shared?

The way to the target is a collective biography of all 25 full journalism professors who worked at the University of Leipzig between the faculty's foundation in 1954 and its closure in 1990. That analytical tool is well known both in the field of history and in the social sciences (especially in sociology and in political science). Normally, collective biographies are based on large collections of data that are analyzed quantitatively and fitted into a kind of "norm" (Jones, 2001; Stone, 1971): How old was the "typical" GDR

journalism professor when he entered the field, which qualifications and family relationships did he have, and when was he promoted to full professor? What was the situation in 1960, 1975, and 1989? Averages such as these then help categorize and assess individuals' career paths. We deviate from this process here for two reasons. First, even with the complete sample of all 24 men and the one and only woman, there are certain limits for a quantification strategy and multiple regressions. Second, collective biographies are always concerned with exposing attitudes and behaviors (Jones, 2001)—beyond quantifiable data (Meyen, 2012). That is why five former professors were interviewed in 2015. At the time of data collection, the other 20 were either deceased (17) or seriously ill (3). The comparison object is the West German scientific community of communication studies, which shared the same academic tradition including Leipzig's Institut für Zeitungskunde, founded by Karl Bücher, in 1916, as point of reference. Furthermore, despite all the differences, especially in academic freedom and access to higher education, the two German university landscapes "were still more similar to each other than to any other European higher education system" (Hechler & Pasternack, 2014, p. 211).

Before presenting the collective biography of GDR journalism professors in the form of four theses, this article starts with a short introduction to the main sociology of science ideas leading to the category system that guided the analysis and a look at the situation of the field of communication at the time. Additionally, an overview of the sources on which the collective biography is based is presented. The key findings are, first, that the origin of and requirements for the field's professors were quite similar in East and West Germany at the time. Beginning in the late 1950s, in both countries, social climbers, guided by experienced and highly regarded journalists, had to find their very own way to the subject. Second, journalism studies as invented in Leipzig was clearly shaped by the Communist Party's demand for journalists who would fit into the steered and controlled media. Third, at least in the 1970s, the Leipzig professors, for good reasons, saw themselves as internationally competitive. Fourth, this changed by the end of the 1970s. While West German communication and journalism scholars started on their way to becoming a driver of international research, their GDR colleagues became increasingly isolated from the field. Therefore, the closure of 1990 buried a paradigm that had lost the connection to ongoing international discussions.

### **Background and Sources**

The collective biography of GDR journalism professors presented in this article is based on the implicitness in the sociology of science approach that an academic discipline is the product of cognitive and social parameters. Kuhn (1962) sees paradigms as "universally recognized scientific achievements that, for a time, provide model problems and solutions for a community of practitioners" (p. x). Paradigms include, for example, what is to be observed and scrutinized, the kinds of questions that are supposed to be asked, and how the results should be interpreted (Kuhn, 1962). At the same time, it is assumed that paradigms cannot be explained without having a closer look at the personal background of its most important figures as well as the structures they were confronted with (Löblich & Scheu, 2011). This basic idea is comprehensible when it comes to the academic discipline of communication studies, which, globally, was hardly developed for most of the 20th century (cf. Abbott, 2002; Simonson & Park, 2016; Vroons, 2005; Wahl-Jorgensen, 2004) and above all was a product of external influences (e.g., Delia, 1987; Glander, 2000; Pooley, 2008; Simpson, 1994). To stay in the German context after World War II,

the Federal Republic's *Publizistikwissenschaft* (the successor of National Socialist *Zeitungswissenschaft*) counted fewer than 10 one-professor departments until the 1970s. This did not change until the shift from a humanistic to an empirical social science, triggered by economic requirements (cf. Löblich, 2007).

On the other side of the Iron Curtain, the discipline was molded by political interests until the fall of the Berlin Wall, and with the Leipzig faculty/section being the country's only affiliation, it remained rather small (despite the impressive number of full professors and academic staff members in 1990). Obviously, professors must be considered the central agents of a scientific community, since they have permanent contracts, make organizational decisions (including hiring, tenure, and promotion classes), shape the profile of an academic enterprise, and provide the necessary guiding principles to ensure the discipline's right to exist. However, focusing on GDR journalism professors from 1954 to 1990 does not mean reactivating the often criticized "great man approach" (cf. Löblich & Scheu, 2011) but the pondering of their academic performance in light of the dialectical relationship between agency and structure, which is essential for any modern biographical approach (cf. Roberts, 2002).

Just like in West Germany, East German journalism studies needed a complete restart after the Third Reich, but it then became part of the Communist Party's media steering program and additionally found itself a competitor within the international scientific community (cf. Meyen, 2014). Therefore, our study had to take into account the influence of the political system on the conditions and forms of journalism and communication research in the GDR along with the impact of the international field of communication studies (in particular, of the West German discipline) and the internal competitive struggle for scientific authority that was in turn shaped by the humanities' rather low degree of autonomy in Eastern Europe (cf. Hechler & Pasternack, 2014). However, following Bourdieu (2004), our study assumes, first, that journalism studies even in the GDR was a social microcosm, with hierarchies and constraints, that was shaped by the currently gainful capital, and not only promoted a specific habitus but also reflected external effects from both the field of power at the top of the (national) social space and the (international) scientific community. Second, Bourdieu's (1975) notion of the academic field as the locus of a struggle "in which the specific issue at stake is the monopoly of scientific authority" (p. 19) should also apply to Leipzig's restart in unified Germany. This means that the exclusion of GDR professors from academia after 1990 and the related death of the Leipzig journalism studies paradigm could be explained by the "competition for the 'monopoly of the legitimate handling' of scientific goods" (Bourdieu, 2004, p. 45).

This has to be considered particularly true as the assessment of East German colleagues was led by West German communication and journalism scholars. In addition, after passing the evaluation of both political integrity and professional qualifications, successful candidates would probably have had to compete with West Germans and their "power-hungry and well-organized networks" (Berger, 2003, p. 64). To justify the devastation of GDR historiography, to give an obvious example of a neighboring academic field, its credentials "as a 'scientific' alternative to West German historiography needed to be destroyed" (Berger, 2003, p. 64). That is why, not just in the discipline of history, GDR academics were often dismissed as politically incriminated, whether because they worked with the Stasi or because, for example, they might have had a post as a party secretary. Many professors therefore avoided the process and left the university without evaluation (cf. Hechler & Pasternack, 2014, p. 210). Since the careers of

almost all East German academics were either terminated or redefined after 1990 (cf. Simon, 1998), the fate of the Journalism Section at the University of Leipzig is by no means unique.

Depending on political affiliations and the relationship to the subject matter, the explanations advanced for the demolition of GDR's academic traditions vary widely, ranging from anticommunist tendencies among West Germans to ideological enmity and suspicion during the years of division to the accusation of political colonization, including the generation block at Western universities that made many junior scholars available for appointments in the East, "even if some would be considered as second choices under normal circumstances" (Hechler & Pasternack, 2014, p. 219; cf. Berger, 2003; Simon, 1998). In any case, the somehow paradoxical political intervention in restoring university autonomy is well documented (Pasternack, 1999). This is also true for changes in the personal relations between academics from East and West that are peculiar to the field of journalism and communication studies. The apparent normality and cooperation on an equal footing before 1989 was replaced by the nonacceptance of scholarly work produced in the GDR (cf. Berger, 2003, p. 68).

Thus, a collective biography of Leipzig's journalism professors has to explore which habitus patterns and which capital mixtures were socially appropriate to "speak and act legitimately" (Bourdieu, 1975, p. 19) in journalism studies matters in the GDR. Moreover, the role perceptions of the professors and their academic self-conceptions were of particular interest. The sketched background helped identify and classify relevant source content. First, this study drew on extensive archive material dealing with the professional career of all 25 Leipzig full professors of journalism from 1954 to 1990 (especially their academic records retrieved from Berlin's Federal Archive and the Archive of Leipzig University as well as private documentations on behalf of former academic assistants at Leipzig's journalism faculty/section). Second, it examined their most significant academic publications (in particular, their doctoral and further qualification theses but also prominent articles in the journal *Theorie und Praxis des sozialistischen Journalismus*, the only academic publication platform on journalism matters in the GDR, edited by the Leipzig section itself). Third, the study referred to biographical interviews with five of the professors (Fritz Beckert, Werner Michaelis, Hans Poerschke, Klaus Preisigke, and Karl-Heinz Röhr), performed between March 4 and August 7, 2015.

Of course, this third source should be taken as what it is: a subjective memory that is shaped by personal interests and that cannot answer all research questions. Nevertheless, the eyewitnesses' statements were regarded as important, as they served to fill in remaining research gaps with own experiences and to balance information drawn from other sources (especially since 2015, which is 25 years after the closure of the Leipzig Journalism Section, might be a good time to get relatively unemotional self-reflections from the GDR journalism professors). Finally, the collective biography used literature on the history of the West German field of communication studies as well as on the discipline's situation at an international level in the second half of the 20th century. All of these sources were examined with the aid of a document analysis.

## Results

This section will show, with the support of a chain of arguments organized into four theses, who became journalism professor behind the Iron Curtain; how these academics defined their discipline; and on what individual, academic, and societal structures both could be explained. The word limit only allows for the inclusion of limited source evidence to support the successive stages of the argument.

### ***Thesis 1 (Origin, Habitus)***

GDR journalism professors were social climbers, most of them having originated from the working class. Their parents were turner, locksmith, carpenter, housewife, or simple laborer (see Table 1). They were the first members of their families to pursue a higher education. Part of their curriculum vitae (CV) is intensive contact with the Communist Party and its media early in life. Apart from one colleague, all professors were members of the ruling party and appeared as party officials. This explains why some of them temporarily worked in other political areas, such as the apparatus or editorial offices.

Even if the collective of this biography consists of only 24 men and one woman, one size does not fit all. To start with, the nominal non-Communist Arnd Römhild, who was born in 1914 and became a professor at the University of Leipzig at age 61, in 1975, was a member of one of the four smaller GDR parties that joined the Communists in the so-called antifascist democratic bloc (National Democratic Party of Germany). After military service and British captivity, Römhild became a leading editor of his party's newspapers in 1945 and, from 1953, served as editor in chief for more than 15 years. He earned his diploma (1962) and PhD (1969) in distance education. From his 11 years as lecturer (1969) and, finally, professor, no outstanding academic work was passed on. Römhild qualified for the position at the university with both his experiences in practical journalism and a dissertation on the daily *Abendpost* in the city of Weimar, for which he worked from 1945 to 1951.

There are exceptions to the rule of having a working-class background. Joachim Pötschke, born in 1924, was the son of a professional soldier who was promoted to the rank of colonel in 1942 and died two years later. Pötschke took the Abitur (high school graduation) in 1941, was subsequently mobilized for military service, and became an officer in 1944 (lieutenant of a tank regiment). After the war, he first studied German literature in Frankfurt in the U.S. zone. In 1948, he moved to Leipzig, worked as a freelancer for the local Communist daily, studied at the precursor to the later Faculty of Journalism and became, finally, part of that faculty's founding staff. It is no accident that Pötschke's career took place in the area of German stylistics. In subjects such as the history of journalism, the history of the Soviet Union, and journalistic methodology and practice, loyalty to the party and media experience were enough to qualify for a university position in the beginning; however, language teaching required an all-embracing humanistic education. Like Pötschke, the one-year-younger stylistics professor Werner Michaelis took his Abitur during the Nazi period. At this time, Michaelis's father worked as a left-wing teacher valuing books, Latin, and organ playing. In 1951, the older Michaelis became a lecturer of German language at the University of Leipzig and was joined by his son shortly afterward. Wieland Herzfelde (born in 1896), professor of literature and art criticism, and Wolfgang Rödel (born in 1924), professor of broadcasting and himself a well-known feature writer, share backgrounds similar to those of Pötschke and Michaelis.

**Table 1. GDR Journalism Professors.**

	Birth	Father	Journalism degree	PhD	Habilitation	Professor
<b>Founders</b>						
Hermann Budzislawski	1901	Butcher	...	1923	...	1948–1967
Heinrich Bruhn	1913	Carpenter	...	...	...	1951–1978
Wilhelm Eildermann	1897	Worker	...	...	...	1952–1957
Emil Dusiska	1914	Locksmith	...	1965	...	1965–1978
Wieland Herzfelde	1896	Writer	...	...	...	1949–1958
Arnd Römhild	1914	Employee	...	1969	...	1975–1980
Basil Spiru	1898	Doctor	...	1956	...	1955–1964
Hans Teubner	1902	Sculptor	...	1972	...	1957–1959
Hedwig Voegt	1903	Plumber	...	1952	...	1953–1963
<b>Side Entrants</b>						
Fritz Beckert	1925	Turner	...	1958	1962	1975–1990
Gerhard Fuchs	1929	Unskilled	1975	1977	...	1974–1990
Werner Michaelis	1925	Teacher	...	1964	...	1972–1986
Wolfgang Rödel	1924	Teacher	...	1955	...	1962–1987
Rolf Schulze	1926	Carpenter	...	1964	1979	1981–1990
Wolfgang Wittenbecher	1926	Teacher	...	1966	...	1969–1990
<b>Homegrown</b>						
Uwe Boldt	1928	Employee	1954	1963	...	1969–1990
Jürgen Grubitzsch	1937	Accountant	1962	1971	...	1988–1990
Heinz Halbach	1930	Engineer	1954	1965	1977	1977–1990
Arnold Hoffmann	1927	Employee	1959	1963	...	1972–1987
Franz Knipping	1931	Locksmith	1954	1961	1969	1965–1968
Hans Poerschke	1937	Servant	1959	1969	1982	1983–1990
Joachim Pötschke	1924	Officer	1951	1962	1977	1977–1989
Klaus Preisigke	1939	Retailer	1965	1972	1980	1988–1991
Günter Raue	1938	Driver	1961	1965	1983	1986–1990
Karl-Heinz Röhr	1935	Locksmith	1960	1966	1979	1986–1990

However, the humble beginnings of communication and journalism professors are not specific to the GDR. In West Germany, only four of the field's 21 full professors who were born between 1930 and 1940 came from a home with academics. Like their colleagues in the East, none of them started out with the idea of joining the university as a life task. Quite the contrary—on both sides of the Iron Curtain, the future professors initially wanted to become journalists or teachers. In the GDR, two of them even worked

as school principals for a few years at an early age (Werner Michaelis and Fritz Beckert). Similar beginnings for male professors can be observed in the United States (Meyen, 2012).

One difference between careers within the field in East and West is their dependence on political influences. That does not mean party membership only. Even in West Germany, it was quite common that communication and journalism professors could be identified politically (either Christian Democrats or Social Democrats), and they got their positions precisely for that reason. In the GDR, however, the academic field was even less autonomous. The Communist Party decided where university graduates and, later in life, marked members such as research assistants, professors, and editors in chief, would benefit it the most. Hans Poerschke (born in 1937), for example, who would become the GDR's leading journalism and public sphere theoretician in the 1980s, learned on the final day of his studies that he could stay at the faculty as a PhD student. The alternative was to be editor of an army newspaper. Poerschke completed his dissertation as late as 10 years after his diploma, since he had to serve as an official of the East German youth association for three years along the way. Günter Raue (born in 1938), to give another example, was sent to the party's mouthpiece newspaper *Neues Deutschland* after finishing his PhD. Before coming back to Leipzig as a lecturer, Raue functioned as foreign correspondent (in Moscow) and science editor for 12 years. Quite similar, Jürgen Grubitzsch (born in 1937) worked as leading editor for 26 years before he became a professor of journalistic methodology in 1988. Franz Knipping (born in 1931) was a full professor at the Faculty of Journalism and briefly even its dean (1965–67) when the party delegated him to *Neues Deutschland* in 1968, where he stayed until his retirement. Therefore, even after the decision in favor of academia was made, in the GDR, strategic career planning was less of an option than it was in West Germany or in the United States.

### ***Thesis 2 (Generations)***

With a view to both academic socialization and experiences in life and in the journalistic profession, three generations of GDR journalism professors can be distinguished (see Table 1). The *founders* were born at the turn of the century, grew up with the Communist media of the Weimar Republic, and, therefore, were not really qualified for academic work. In a similar way, this applies for the second, smaller group of *side entrants*, born around 1925, who joined the Faculty of Journalism either for leadership functions (Rödel, Fuchs, Wittenbecher) or because of their expertise in non-media-related subjects such as psychology, stylistics, or literature and arts (Beckert, Michaelis, Schulze). Most interesting are the *homegrown*. Trained by the faculty's founders and soon dedicated to an academic career, this generation was the one to invent journalism studies made in GDR.

Again, the parallels to the West are obvious. In the United States, before the "Chi-Squares" took over from the 1960s on because their scholarly approach fit with the norms of North American research universities (Meyen, 2012), university-based journalism schools were headed by well-established journalists such as Carl Ackerman (Columbia University), Walter Williams (University of Missouri), or Raymond B. Nixon (University of Minnesota), whose mission was to educate journalists rather than earning scientific capital or academic merits (Rogers, 1994).



West Germany is better suited to this comparison. Journalism and communication institutes in the postwar German states shared not only culture, language, customs, and traditions but also the history of an academic discipline that had lost its reputation by both cooperating with the Nazi regime and chasing alternative approaches out of the country (Averbeck, 2001). After 1945, in West Germany only three university institutes for *Zeitungswissenschaft* or *Publizistikwissenschaft* could continue to work (Berlin, Munster, and Munich). In this situation, outstanding journalists were appointed as professors to restore a reputation in academia as well as in society and thus to save the field (i.e., Walter Hagemann, Munster; Hanns Braun and Otto B. Roegele, Munich; Fritz Eberhard and Harry Pross, Berlin).

These West German new starters are comparable with the founders of Leipzig's Faculty of Journalism. Neither in the East nor the West were scholars trained in the field available. As a substitute for the lack of academic qualifications, skills and a reputation in journalism as well as any other doctorate were brought into service. West German Otto B. Roegele, for example, earned two PhDs in philosophy and medicine in April 1945 and was editor in chief of the leading Catholic weekly *Rheinischer Merkur* when he was appointed professor of *Zeitungswissenschaft* at Munich. From the nine Leipzig founders, six honed their journalistic skills in the Communist press in the Weimar Republic or abroad. Four of these party functionaries did not hold a PhD (Bruhn, Eildermann, Herzfelde, and Teubner, who got his honorary doctorate in 1972, long after leaving the faculty). Voegt and Dusiska were promoted to PhD rather late in life and shortly before they joined the faculty as full professors. Looking at Basil Spuru's CV yields a very similar picture, but his case is different. Born as a country doctor's son and involved in the communist movement at an early age, Spuru was evicted from his home country, Austria, in 1926 and therefore could not defend his already submitted dissertation in political science.

This portrait of Leipzig's founding generation reveals why Hermann Budzislawski was not just the faculty's first dean (1954–62), but the key point of reference for both academic staff and students. Budzislawski was the one and only GDR journalism professor who got both his doctorate in the Weimar Republic (at Tübingen, in economy) and his professional fame in the bourgeois press. Before 1933, he wrote, for example, book reviews for the daily *Berliner Tageblatt* and was also active for the left-intellectual magazine *Weltbühne*, run by the later Peace Nobel Prize winner Carl von Ossietzky. Budzislawski went to Zurich and Prague, where he was in charge of the anti-Nazi magazine *Die neue Weltbühne* from 1934 to 1938. Finally, he fled to the United States and became, among other things, a ghostwriter for Dorothy Thompson.

It is well documented that the ruling East German Communists were suspicious of remigrants who survived in the West. Hermann Budzislawski, too, had to face false accusations and professional obstructions in the early GDR (Schemmert & Siemens, 2013). Additionally, and maybe related to these problems, he lacked academic ambition. "Budzislawski was a newspaper man rather than a theoretician," said Karl-Heinz Röhr who served as his personal assistant. According to Röhr, the dean would have preferred reading Western newspapers such as *The New York Times* and *Le Monde* to books from the library. This sets Budzislawski apart from, for example, the West German Walter Hagemann, of the same age, who developed an original theoretical and empirical approach at the University of Munster at the same time (Wiedemann, 2016). However, all five interviewed eyewitnesses who belong to the homegrown generation still talked about Budzislawski: "Well-read, analytical, creative, stimulating, and multilingual," said Röhr about

Budzislawski, "I adored him" (personal communication, March 4, 2015). And the book on socialist journalism studies (Budzislawski, 1966)? "He didn't think that up himself. We had to prepare everything, and he ate us alive. In the end, there was a Budzislawski. He was reputed to write so well, beyond party jargon."

Despite his unique personality, as an academic leading figure for the homegrown future professors, even Hermann Budzislawski was out of the question. "I did it my way," said Röhr (1968) when asked about his dissertation on the press in the television age. "Who should teach us? We had neither research plans nor projects back then. I just thought that socialist journalists would be interested." The case of Werner Michaelis is quite similar. Although Budzislawski was his supervisor officially, Michaelis would not call him his academic teacher today: "He wasn't busy with me. Sometimes I got literature tips. That was it" (personal communication, August 7, 2015). Klaus Preisigke who returned to the faculty after three years of TV practice submitted a textbook chapter on TV genres as his dissertation: "It had to be reprinted a number of times and was translated in Prague and Sofia. What I was originally working on, wouldn't have been completed on time" (personal communication, April 2, 2015). Hans Poerschke, too, could not name any academic teachers: "We had to take on responsibility quickly" (personal communication, March 5, 2015). Regarding his dissertation, Poerschke described himself as searching and finishing something nobody was really aware of.

In a way, Table 1 makes those differences between the three generations of GDR journalism professors clear at a glance. These differences not only relate to the year of birth and the associated social position in a post-Nazi country run by Communists, the founders were also involved in both the proletarian movement in the Weimar Republic and the antifascist resistance. Therefore, the students did not respect them as academics, but as personalities and for their lifetime achievements. None of the founders hold a diploma in journalism or communication studies, and none of them had completed a habilitation thesis.

This missing academic background is something the founders have in common with most of the side entrants. When Gerhard Fuchs (born in 1929) finally passed his diploma exam in 1975, he was already teaching as a full professor for more than one year. Before Fuchs came to the University of Leipzig, he was editor in chief of a regional Communist daily. In 1978, he became successor of Emil Dusiska as director of the Journalism Section. Wolfgang Wittenbecher (born in 1926), a second academic latecomer, was vice editor in chief of the youth mouthpiece *Junge Welt* before the party delegated him to Leipzig. Their interviewed former colleagues described Fuchs and Wittenbecher as apparatchiks without any theoretical and methodological abilities. In contrast, Wolfgang Rödel (born in 1924), who also came down to Leipzig from a top media position, was a German studies graduate. Therefore, even the upcoming professors younger than the homegrown respected him as a specialist in radio journalism. This is also true for the three professors belonging to the second type of side entrants (Werner Michaelis and Rolf Schulze, also coming from German studies, and the psychologist Fritz Beckert).

One can easily imagine why homegrown professors such as Karl-Heinz Röhr, Hans Poerschke, and Klaus Preisigke had to pave the way for GDR journalism studies by themselves and without the help of experienced supervisors. As a rule, these men were born after 1930. Therefore, and in contrast to five of six side entrants who had to serve in the Nazi army, the homegrown belonging to the GDR's *Aufbau* generation,

which carried the country until the Berlin Wall came down, had the opportunity for a fresh start after 1945. *Aufbau*, meaning construction, building up, is the term used to refer to the period that followed the founding of the GDR in 1949. To understand why young people returning from war, or who had at least been in the Hitler Youth, also needed to be recruited for journalism training at the university level, it is enough to take a look at the Communists' workforce. The party had many posts to fill, and additionally had lost many of its best strengths in the fascist era. This explains the rapid careers of the Aufbau generation—people with modest backgrounds, mainly born in the late 1920s and early 1930s, who wanted a new start after the war and who originally started in antifascist groups or in the Communist youth organization, who soon joined the party and were given opportunities in the East, which they had not previously dreamed about. As the West German historian Lutz Niethammer (1994) put it, they qualified for the empty leadership levels in a "collective *Bildungsroman*." This experience could not be repeated by later generations because the new elites lay over society like a "lead plate" (Niethammer, 1994).

The eyewitness interviews mirror the experiences of literature. Werner Michaelis and Fritz Beckert became school principals, experimenting with new forms of teaching and looking for qualified teachers in their very early 20s, and the not yet 18-year-old Karl-Heinz Röhr was on night duty in the foreign affairs department of the party's mouthpiece *Neues Deutschland* when the politburo member Fred Oelßner appeared in the editorial office after the events of June 17, 1953. It is obvious that the requirement of a "pure" background (child of workers and no family in West Germany) restricted the potential for academic top performance just as much as the necessity to occupy many positions in a short period of time. Ambitious young people, instructed by comrades who had proved themselves in party work, in agitation, and in the fight against fascism, but who were hardly prepared for a university position—in the given situation, all of the above led to both dissatisfaction of the students and ongoing disputes about teaching concepts. "The quality of instruction was very poor back then," said the youngster Klaus Preisigke (born in 1939), who became a freshman in 1961. "The curriculum was overloaded with history, and in journalistic methodology, we didn't get so much." It would take 15 years, the maturation of Preisigke, Röhr, Poerschke, and others from their generation and the strong input of the new director, Emil Dusiska, before the journalistic training system, which lasted up to the section's end, was established in 1969.

It was not without consequences for the self-image of the homegrown professors that political commitment came first and the university post was a (fairly random) result of talent and need for staff. The average dissertation and habilitation age appeared to be rather high—early 30s and mid-40s. However, the homegrown were the first GDR journalism professors that were formally qualified for the job. Exceptions are Jürgen Grubitzsch, who was a leading journalist for more than two and a half decades before joining the section, and Arnold Hoffmann (born in 1927) and Uwe Boldt (1928), who were a bit older than the others and therefore got promoted early. With role models dedicated to teaching future journalists who would be able to create a new (Communist) society, research was of rather secondary importance in the role perceptions of the homegrown. "I was pleased to be an educator," said Röhr, "I loved teaching. Asking questions, moderating, explaining all the things" (personal communication, March 4, 2015). Preisigke, too, focused on education and training: "All my publications were about sharing best practice and helping journalists out there" (personal communication, April 2, 2015). To this very day, Preisigke is proud of the textbook on journalistic methodology that he was in charge of (Autorenkollektiv, 1985): "Of course, the amount of ideological ballast is not acceptable any more. Beyond that, it's on West

German level" (personal communication, April 2, 2015). The exception is the theoretician Hans Poerschke: "Journalism theory was hardly the students' favorite subject. I've always considered myself an academic working conceptually" (personal communication, March 5, 2015).

### ***Thesis 3 (Lead Positions)***

While the recruitment of personnel at professorship level became increasingly academic over time, directorship remained a political function. For this post, no outstanding researchers or university teachers were nominated, but rather loyal party functionaries who had proved themselves in media practice.

Altogether—and leaving aside the good year after the fall of the Berlin Wall in November 1989, when two bosses were elected, one after the other, by the staff itself (Raue and Poerschke)—the Faculty of Journalism and the Journalism Section had five deans or directors: Hermann Budzislawski (1954–62), Wolfgang Rödel (1962–65), Franz Knipping (1965–67), Emil Dusiska (1967–78), and Gerhard Fuchs (1978–89). Only the short-term dean Knipping had a distinguished university career. Right after passing his journalism exams in December 1954, he became a research assistant at the faculty, submitted a dissertation there (1961), was named a lecturer in 1962, and became a full professor in 1965. Even as a dean, Knipping pushed ahead his habilitation, which he finished in 1969. At that time, the party already had sent him to its mouthpiece *Neues Deutschland*, where he became department head and, from 1978 to 1981, London correspondent.

The other three of Budzislawski's successors went in the reverse direction. Rödel had a leading post at the state broadcaster in Berlin from 1956 to 1962. Dusiska was, first, part of the *Neues Deutschland* leadership from 1950 to 1955 and then a distinguished member of the central committee's agitation commission (1955–63). Without any higher education background, he got 14 months of training at one of the party's think tanks and was immediately appointed full professor at the University of Leipzig in 1965. The fast sequence of deans in the 1960s was a consequence of Budzislawski's refusal to stay in office until retirement. His assistant, Karl-Heinz Röhr, pointed to both political pressure ("By heart, he was a Social Democrat. He couldn't handle the dogmatists any longer") and the field's developments driven by the homegrown: "He hadn't come across cybernetics and the philosophical notion of information. So, he was not able to present modern subject matters anymore" (personal communication, March 4, 2015). Again and again, beginning in the late 1950s, Budzislawski pleaded for his release from the dean's office. Only in 1962 was he replaced by Rödel and remained an ordinary professor until 1967.

Neither Emil Dusiska nor his successor Gerhard Fuchs, who were both in charge for more than a decade, worked as academics. Still worse, Dusiska did not respect researchers. According to the eyewitnesses, this attitude was grounded in his rapid success at the university. Even without any academic background, Dusiska became the focal point for the journalism trainers in Leipzig. "He was worldly wise and eloquent," said Werner Michaelis, "a hardliner without any sledgehammer" (personal communication, August 7, 2015). As a skilled functionary, Dusiska was able to release a whole department for a year to set up the new journalistic training system. Additionally, without a certain proficiency in English, he excelled internationally. His correspondence as IAMCR's secretary-general

(1972–78), for example, had to be translated by assistants. In contrast to the “dictator” Dusiska (Röhr, personal communication, March 4, 2015), Gerhard Fuchs stood out nowhere. “He was unable to cope with the situation,” said Michaelis (personal communication, August 7, 2015). And Karl-Heinz Röhr observed, “Fuchs was a coward. He was just afraid that the section would fall in disgrace in Berlin” (personal communication, March 4, 2015). After all, Fuchs was praised as a manager. “He could have led even a large factory,” said Klaus Preisigke (personal communication, April 2, 2015). From the perspective of the ruling party, in filling top positions of the journalism program at the University of Leipzig, political reliability was far more important than academic innovation. This is also illustrated by the role Wolfgang Wittenbecher could play. Without major publications, the former vice editor in chief became a kind of gray eminence with strong ties to the central committee’s agitation section that was in charge of staff planning, research and teaching plans, and graduate employment.

#### ***Thesis 4 (Autonomy)***

The primacy of politics is not the one and only reason why Leipzig’s journalism professors became increasingly isolated and unable to keep pace with developments within the field in the 1980s. In the GDR, there was neither competition nor any incentive to improve one’s position through internationally visible publications. Additionally, apart from IAMCR’s 1974 conference and some follow-ups, there was very little personal contact with colleagues from the West. The party’s disinterest in realistic data on media content and media usage, too, worked against the trend toward sophisticated empirical research. Therefore, focusing on journalism training almost exclusively, the GDR professors developed their own ideas on journalistic methodology, stylistics, and the work process. The missing link to the Western literature made it easy to ban these ideas after 1990.

The interviewed eyewitnesses perceived the Leipzig conference in 1974 as “opening” (Röhr, personal communication, March 4, 2015). Röhr met Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann from the airport and also took care of Yassen Zassursky, dean at Moscow State University and one of IAMCR’s vice presidents. “With Emil Dusiska, the section opened up to the world,” said Werner Michaelis, “At least, we got contacts” (personal communication, August 7, 2015). Michaelis had a talk at the IAMCR conference in Warsaw in 1978 and also went to Belgrade and Ljubljana. After Dusiska’s dismissal in 1978, the travel era ended abruptly. GDR’s foreign policy no longer had need for the stage of IAMCR, and foreign currency was always short (Meyen, 2014). Even with Dusiska, visiting conferences abroad was a privilege. Karl-Heinz Röhr, for example, who was not in line with the director, went neither to Leicester in 1976 nor to Warsaw in 1978. However, the Leipzig delegates considered themselves to be ambassadors of socialist approaches. This role perception, which was strengthened by tactics before conference meetings, also inhibited the exchange of ideas.

Furthermore, the literature that was taken note of in Leipzig was limited. “We had only limited access to research from the West, even from a linguistic point of view,” said Karl-Heinz Röhr (personal communication, March 4, 2015). “Nearly nobody from us was fluent in English or French.” Werner Michaelis became a GDR speaker at IAMCR’s Warsaw conference also because he was an educated Anglicist. Literature from the Eastern Bloc could not be a substitute for the missing input from the West. Röhr noted, “Of course, we had translations from the Soviet Union, but we were far ahead. In Poland and

Czechoslovakia, there was even less.” While the West German community first started to receive the international state of the art from the 1960s on and then became an influential part of it, the GDR journalism professors stayed on the island. In their own country, there was no second, similar institution. Most of the academic work was self-published and dedicated to training purposes. The Journalism Section was paid to get journalists who would fit into the media steered and controlled by party and state (Fiedler, 2014). The respective university courses took up a lot of manpower, were very practical, and were not intended to facilitate outstanding research internationally.

However, there was journalism research at the University of Leipzig before 1990. Most famous is an extensive content analysis of the party’s regional press, which was combined with personal interviews of leading editors in the early 1980s. The study showed, not very surprisingly even at the time, that GDR media did not reflect reality but party policy (cf. Fiedler & Meyen, 2015). Instead of reacting to it, as the researchers were hoping for, the central committee’s agitation section branded and threatened the four authors as well as the Journalism Section and locked the material away. Apart from the fear of conflicts with the rulers and the close link to ideology, academic productivity was reduced by other factors, such as a staff policy favoring loyalty and, as a consequence, self-sufficiency.

While empirical social scientific research was limited in a way, journalistic genres, role models such as Egon Erwin Kisch or the young Karl Marx who was editor in chief in the 1840s, stylistics, and the editorial work process became significant elements of the Leipzig journalism studies paradigm. To put it differently, academic thinking and subsequent publications were focused on the needs of future journalists. The students got material that helped them first to learn the necessary skills as a trade and then facilitated their access to the job. In turn, this material was based on both exams, ranging from diploma theses to dissertations, and research projects. This paradigm explains why most Leipzig graduates, despite their instrumentalization for political purposes in the GDR, pretty well fit the profession’s requirements after 1990. At least, they knew how to finish a piece of journalism.

However, a look into the publications from Leipzig shows that ideas concerning the content were borrowed from the debates of GDR elites. As sources of inspiration in the late 1960s, Karl-Heinz Röhr mentioned cybernetics, sociology, and Marxism–Leninism:

We’ve tried to implement all these suggestions including the so-called science of management. We did call it the doctrine of the journalistic creative process. This doctrine was about everything from the idea and research to production to reception. That time was delightful. (Röhr, 2015, para. 50)

Hans Poerschke, too, got his ideas from outside the Journalism Section in the 1980s: “I was part of an interdisciplinary working group, with philosophers and so on. Our project was modern socialism and the public sphere” (personal communication, March 5, 2015).

Neglecting the political background of the demolition of GDR’s academic traditions outlined above and possible triumphant emotions after the West’s perceived victory in the Cold War, it is quite obvious why it was easy to justify, even in the light of academic criteria, that all GDR journalism professors had to

leave university after 1990. The evaluation process was led by their colleagues in West Germany who worked in a completely different paradigm. Ever since Thomas Kuhn (1962), it is known that competing paradigms are, in principle, incompatible with each other. In other words, the West German scientific community, which was already an empirical social science specialized in media effects at the time, had no use for the ideas made in GDR. Many of the Leipzig professors and lecturers did not even try to pass the evaluation barrier. Karl-Heinz Röhr served as the section's party secretary for quite a long time ("This was a stigma. I wouldn't have had a chance"; personal communication, March 4, 2015). "I knew that the new conservative minister wouldn't accept me," said Klaus Preisigke (personal communication, April 2, 2015). "In addition, I didn't feel competent any more. I didn't know anything about commercial TV. How should I teach the students?" Hans Poerschke who was elected director of the transformation study program in 1991, got a partly positive decision and a year's postponement: "I couldn't write anything in this time. I just lacked serenity. So, I didn't apply for anything" (personal communication, March 5, 2015).

### Conclusion

The previous section leaves no need for an extensive summary. The argument of the present article is threefold. First, in some respects, the GDR field of journalism studies followed a trend similar to the one in the West. This is especially so for the Federal Republic of Germany, where the same problems had to be solved against the same cultural background—the disavowing of the discipline during the Nazi regime and the need for university-educated journalists. After the war, both in the East and the West, leading editors with a high reputation in media as well as in society were appointed as journalism professors. Lacking academic knowledge and training, these discipline founders had to look for successors dedicated to a university career and, therefore, were able to do the necessary theoretical and methodological work.

While those homegrown in the West increasingly were involved in the U.S.-dominated scientific community, their East German colleagues remained largely isolated. This did not change even when, for a short period of time, IAMCR became an important stage for the GDR's foreign policy (Meyen, 2014). In the end, there were only a few contacts, with a lot of hesitation on both sides. Political, personal and even language barriers limited the transfer of ideas in both directions.

That is why there was little understanding for GDR journalism professors after 1990. However, this does not necessarily mean that there is nothing that deserves to be shared and remembered. Research and teaching at the Faculty of Journalism and the Journalism Section at the University of Leipzig were clearly for a purpose other than to convince colleagues in the West. Since academic judgment is always directed by paradigms and interests, it is possible that journalism and communication study will come back to the Leipzig approaches one day. This could, in particular, be the case for the works on journalistic genres, stylistics, and the editorial work process.

In respect to research aimed at academic development in general and, in particular, the history of communication, the GDR case is interesting for two reasons. On the one hand, Leipzig is an example of an academic culture that was isolated from the international scientific community. Especially in countries with low economic standards and, therefore, lacking travel money and literature budgets, the situation

could be quite similar today. On the other hand, not a few national scientific communities are closely linked to ruling powers. To view their output this way could help reach a more balanced assessment of those publications and, by this means, bring these colleagues into closer contact with international associations such as ICA or IAMCR.

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