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A Look from behind the Wall: West German Studies of the Political Preferences of East German Citizens

Introduction

“The GDR is not a foreign country for us”¹ is one of the statements that has been borne in the minds of many observers of the political life in Germany and around the world, as is the case of the claim that “recognising the other part of Germany as a foreign country or as a second sovereign state of the German nation is out of the question.”² Considering the constant presence in the public space of the idea of the unification of the German state, on the other hand, however, taking into account that only every third citizen of West Germany in the 1980s had personal contact with the citizens of the GDR³, it is necessary to reflect on what was known in the Federal Republic about the second German state. The issue of particular interest seems to be that of obtaining information relating to the views and moods, or political preferences of East German citizens, including their attitude to the idea of the German-German reunification, or their identification with the East German state. Taking into account the significant limitations in the access to information about the GDR

¹ „DDR ist für uns nicht Ausland“, Willy Brandt, Deutscher Bundestag, 229. Sitzung, Bonn, den 25. April 1969, p. 12653 D, <http://dipbt.bundestag.de/doc/btp/05/05229.pdf> [accessed: 20.07.2020].

² „Die Anerkennung des anderen Teils Deutschlands als Ausland oder als zweiter souveräner Staat deutscher Nation kommt nicht in Frage“, Olaf Baron von Wrangel, Deutscher Bundestag, 229. Sitzung, Bonn, den 25. April 1969, *ibid.*, p. 12647 C.

³ D.F. Sturm, ‘In der Realpolitik war die DDR Ausland’, *Die Welt*, 01.10.2005, <https://www.welt.de/print-welt/article168504/In-der-Realpolitik-war-die-DDR-Ausland.html> [accessed: 20.07.2020].

and its citizens,⁴ it seems reasonable to reflect deeper on the institutions that collected this type of information, as well as the methods of their work. Another important issue is to investigate what other areas of social life were of interest to the West.

In order to verify the working hypothesis that the German authorities had developed an effective method of examining political sentiments and had a broad understanding of the situation and moods of East German society, an institutional and legal analysis should be carried out, focusing on the institutions established to collect information from and about East German citizens. The source analysis as well as the case study method (BND survey going back to 1988) will allow to determine the working methods and the main topics of interest to these institutions. The retrospective method was used to present the genesis of research on the political preferences of the Germans. The subject of the research are documents produced and collected by the BND in 1986–1989, which, after declassification, were made available to scientists, as well as the results of research on the mood of the GDR society commissioned by federal institutions. The literature on the subject supplements the source documents.

Public opinion polls in the Federal Republic of Germany

In Germany, public opinion research in terms of political preferences has a tradition that dates back to 1945. In October of that year, an independent section of public opinion research (Opinion Survey Section) was created in the Information Control Division of the US military administration under the direction of Frederick W. Williams, based in Bad Homburg.⁵ In October and December 1945, the first public opinion polls were carried out in the American occupation zone, the so-called OM-GUS-Surveys by the Office of the Military as part of the Government of the United States. They concerned the attitudes of the Germans, including their attitude towards the occupation authorities, denazification and democratization, including re-education, as well as their assessment of National Socialism and anti-Semitism.⁶ The findings of the quantitative research were confidential and served not only the US military administration, but also the civil services at the highest level. From 1947, a new element appeared in the research by the name of anti-Communism, and from

⁴ Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Jan Korte, Dr. Gregor Gysi, Dr. Dietmar Bartsch, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE, Beobachtung von Funktionsträgern und sonstigen Bürgern der DDR durch westdeutsche Nachrichtendienste. Deutscher Bundestag, Drucksache 18/377318, 18. Wahlperiode, 19.01.2015, <https://kleineanfragen.de/bundestag/18/3773-beobachtung-von-funktionstraegern-und-sonstigen-buergernder-ddr-durch-westdeutsche-nachrichtendienste> [accessed: 22.07.2020].

⁵ A.J. Merritt, R.L. Merritt (eds.), *Public Opinion in Occupied Germany. The OMGUS Surveys, 1945–1949*, Urbana, Chicago, London 1970.

⁶ The results of the research were disturbing, considering that as late as 1948, over 55% of those surveyed in the US Zone of Occupation believed that National Socialism was a good idea, but poorly implemented, and that anti-Semitism was still present in the public mind. E. Latzin, *Lernen von Amerika? Das US-Kulturaustauschprogramm für Bayern und seine Absolventen*, Stuttgart 2005, p. 50 (Transatlantische Historische Studien, Band 23); see: U. Borsdorf, L. Niethammer (eds.), *Zwischen Befreiung und Besatzung. Analysen des US Geheimdienstes über Positionen und Strukturen deutscher Politik 1945*, 2nd edn., Weinheim 1995, p. 315.

1949, the attitude of citizens to the Basic Law of Germany was examined.⁷ In total, by June 1962, more than 200 survey studies had been conducted in the Federal Republic, which formed the basis of more than 500 study reports.⁸ Relatively quickly, public opinion polls in West Germany became an integral part of research on democratic transformations, as well as on the legitimacy of political rule in Germany and the political preferences of its inhabitants.⁹ The most important institutes conducting this type of opinion and sentiment research were: Institut für Demoskopie (IfD), founded in 1947 in Allensbach by Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, which is still one of the most prestigious research centers in Germany,¹⁰ as well as Infratest based in Munich, Emnid based in Bielefeld, Infas based in Bonn-Bad Godesberg, Getas based in Bremen, Sinus based in Munich, and Forschungsgruppe Wahlen headquartered in Mannheim.¹¹

The area of interest of researchers from the Federal Republic of Germany also included the second German state and its society. The first sociological research of this type was carried out in West Germany in the early 1950s at the request of the Bundesministerium für gesamtdeutsche Fragen (Federal Ministry for All-German Issues; operating from 1968 under the name of Bundesministerium für innerdeutsche Beziehungen – Federal Ministry for Internal German Relations). They were carried out among workers who had escaped from the GDR. The research was to show their degree of communist indoctrination, as well as their attitude to private property. The results of the research among workers who, while fleeing the GDR, turned away from the communist system, but mostly accepted some measures taken by the SED, such as nationalization of industry, came as a surprise.¹² On the other hand, the findings of the polls showed unequivocally that Stalinism had failed to completely manipulate the workers, although most of them were sympathetic to Marxist ideology: 35% of them were wholly or largely influenced by it, 26% were partially pro-Marxist, and only 35% were untainted by it.¹³

⁷ D. Fuchs, *Die Unterstützung des politischen Systems der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, Wiesbaden 1989, p. 90.

⁸ Most of the OMGUS reports were published in the 1970s.

⁹ M. Kaase, 'Politische Meinungsforschung in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland', *Politische Vierteljahresschrift*, Vol. 18, No. 2/3, 1977: *Wahlsoziologie heute: Analysen aus Anlaß der Bundestagswahl 1976*, pp. 452–475.

¹⁰ 'Das Institut für Demoskopie Allensbach – Porträt', <https://www.ifd-allensbach.de/das-institut/portraet.html> [accessed: 16.07.2020]. The institute publishes comprehensive research results at irregular intervals in *Allensbacher Jahrbücher der Demoskopie* (so far 12 such editions have been published). The analyzes cover the entire spectrum of survey research, from market research and media analysis to social exploration and current political preferences. The Institute also prepares reports on the survey on legal practice.

¹¹ E. Wangen, *Polit-Marketing. Das Marketing-Management der politischen Parteien*, Opladen 1983, p. 89.

¹² A. Inkeles, R.A. Bauer, *The Soviet Citizen. Daily Life in a Totalitarian Society*, Harvard 1959. The most important Infratest publications in relation to refugees from the GDR include: Infratest, *Angestellte in der Sowjetzone Deutschlands. Verhaltensweisen und gesellschaftliche Einordnung der mitteldeutschen Angestellten*, München 1958, p. I; V. Graf Blücher, *Industriearbeiterschaft in der Sowjetzone. Eine Untersuchung der Arbeiterschaft in der volkseigenen Industrie der SBZ*, Stuttgart 1959, p. 14.

¹³ M. Kaase, *op. cit.*

West German sentiment surveys of East German citizens

West German institutions that conducted the polls somewhat behind the wall, which separated the two German states, were the Infratest – Markt- und Meinungsforschungsinstitut from Munich¹⁴, as well as one of the three intelligence institutions operating in Germany – the Federal Intelligence Service (Bundesnachrichtendienst, BND).¹⁵ The research was possible thanks to the development of a wide range of methods, techniques, and tools. The questionnaires that were administered contained a series of questions that allowed to look into the depths of the GDR society, to examine its views and political activity. Noteworthy is the non-standard research methodology used by West German centres that referred to previously conducted surveys of this type.

Infratest

An example of an institution that researched East German society can be the above-mentioned Infratest from Munich, which prepared Desk Research-type analyses (at that time the content of the GDR press was analysed) for the Federal Ministry for All-German Issues. At the end of 1968, cooperation with the Ministry was expanded, and public opinion polls in the GDR began.¹⁶ As it was not possible to conduct direct interviews with East German nationals, Infratest developed a surrogate research model combining participant observation with indirect intelligence.¹⁷ The target group were West German citizens who had spent at least three days in the GDR in the last two months. The interviews were conducted orally and consisted of two parts: in the first, the respondent provided information about his own observations during his visit to the GDR, and spoke about himself and his political preferences; the second related to the opinion or political preferences of person X (a GDR citizen) – the respondent provided information obtained during a longer conversation with person X, which meant that he was only an intermediary of opinion (indirect interview method).¹⁸

¹⁴ K. Bacherer, *Geschichte, Organisation und Funktion von Infratest*, München 1987, p. 247.

¹⁵ It should be remembered that in Germany three institutions have "intelligence" status, which differ fundamentally in the area of activity: Bundesnachrichtendienst – operates outside the country, Verfassungsschutz – observes and analyzes the behavior of individual actors within the country, Militärische Abschirmdienst, which operates within the Bundeswehr, since 2004 also as part of its tasks performed outside the country. A. Daun, 'Nachrichtendienste in der deutschen Außenpolitik', [in:] T. Jäger, A. Höse, K. Oppermann (eds.), *Deutsche Außenpolitik. Sicherheit, Wohlfahrt, Institutionen und Normen*, Wiesbaden 2007.

¹⁶ J. Hüttmann, *DDR-Geschichte und ihre Forscher: Akteure und Konjunkturen der bundesdeutschen DDR-Forschung*, Berlin 2008.

¹⁷ E. Holtmann, 'Volkes Stimme hinter der Mauer. Die westdeutschen „Stellvertreterumfragen“ zum politischen und gesellschaftlichen Bewusstsein der Bevölkerung in der DDR', 14.12.2017, <https://www.bpb.de/geschichte/zeitgeschichte/deutschlandarchiv/261037/die-westdeutschen-stellvertreterumfragen> [accessed: 18.07.2020].

¹⁸ *Ibid.*

The goal of the research was to find out about the political and social attitudes of the citizens of the GDR, to underpin the processes that were taking place there, and to identify the patterns of behaviour.¹⁹ The reaction of East German citizens to current events in German-German relations was also examined, e.g. top-level visits, visits by foreign politicians to the GDR, identification with the East German state, restrictions and facilitations in traveling to Germany, as well as the assessment of the economic situation of citizens and billions loans for East Berlin. Analysts were also interested in more general topics, such as: arming and the stationing of medium-range missiles in Germany, the activities of both governments (West Germany and East Germany) for world peace, and environmental protection. In 1989, one of the issues that was extremely topical and scrutinised in several respects were the escapes from the GDR.²⁰

Both the research topics and the content of the questionnaire were correlated with the needs of the relevant departments commissioning the ministries.²¹ Once the data had been obtained, the complicated process of their interpretation began, which in effect was supposed to define the general trends in East German society, and not to establish exact figures. First of all, the information allowed to capture the emerging political trends and to analyse them in a long-term perspective (Infratest research was conducted until 1989).²² Research reports were forwarded to the ministry ordering them, as well as to the Chancellery and the Senate of Berlin.²³ In 1989, the last research of this type was prepared, and another one, carried out in 1990, took place under different conditions and with the use of a slightly different methodology.²⁴ From that year, the results of the research were declassified and made available to researchers.²⁵

¹⁹ J. Gieseke, 'Auf der Suche nach der schweigenden Mehrheit Ost. Die geheimen Infratest-Stellvertreterbefragungen und die DDR-Gesellschaft 1968–1989', *Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History*, Online-Ausgabe, Vol. 12, No. 1, 2015, <https://zeithistorische-forschungen.de/1-2015/5182> [accessed: 14.01.2021].

²⁰ For more topics broken down by year, see: E. Holtmann, A. Köhler, *Wiedervereinigung vor dem Mauerfall. Einstellungen der Bevölkerung der DDR im Spiegel geheimer westlicher Meinungsumfragen*, Bonn 2016.

²¹ One of the people who collaborated with Infratest on behalf of the ministry was K.G., the director of the Political Department at that ministry, who – as it turned out later – was a Stasi collaborator. *Ibid.*, pp. 32–33.

²² *Ibid.*, pp. 27–29.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

²⁴ The summary results of the research from 1975–1989 are available on the Statista website: 'Umfrage zur Zufriedenheit der DDR-Bürger mit den politischen Verhältnissen 1975–89', <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/408905/umfrage/umfrage-zur-zufriedenheit-der-ddr-buerger-mit-den-politischen-verhaeltnissen/> [accessed: 14.01.2021].

²⁵ After the declassification of research papers and reports in 1990, Dr. Anne Köhler (Infratest) published for the first time in 1992 a short analysis based on her earlier data. See: A. Köhler, 'Marschierte der DDR-Bürger im Geiste mit? Systemidentifikation der DDR-Bevölkerung vor und nach der Wende', [in:] U. Gerhardt, E. Mochmann (eds.), *Gesellschaftlicher Umbruch 1945–1990. Re-Demokratisierung und Lebensverhältnisse*, München 1992, pp. 59–79.

Federal Intelligence Service

The second institution that carried out an extensive observation campaign for East German citizens was the Federal Intelligence Service, for which the GDR was the area of activity of the highest priority and interest with the maximum use of material resources and opportunities for action.²⁶ Until the end of the Cold War, tracking East German citizens was one of the BND's most serious tasks. The scale of infiltration was significant and amounted to approx. 71.5 thousand people, of which approx. 26 thousand were party and state officials (members of the parliament, ministries, SED structures), about 18.5 thousand were members of the National People's Army (NVA), and about 27,000 were employees of the MfS.²⁷

GDR refugees and displaced persons were also interviewed in transitional camps. This type of activity taken by the BND, however, cannot be regarded as a public opinion poll.²⁸ The situation changed in the mid-1980s, when it was noticed in the BND that the Soviet „hegemony concept in Eastern Europe [...] had failed,” and another idea was gaining momentum in Moscow based on the premise that the USSR security interests would be better protected by “East-West agreements and contracts rather than a forced maintenance of the political, military and ideological hegemony in Central and Eastern Europe.”²⁹ With this in mind, BND Chief Hans-Georg Wieck, former West German ambassador to Moscow and nominated President of the BND in 1985, admitted that the Federal Republic could be playing a major role in the new security concept of the USSR. This meant that Bonn was a more important partner for the USSR than East Berlin could ever be, and even that Moscow could sacrifice the GDR for its supreme objectives, i.e. its security.³⁰ This evolution of the BND's Soviet optics, noted by several analysts, was connected to Mikhail Gorbachev, and his idea of the common European home. In this case, for West Germany, one of the pivotal issues was to get ready for a possible change in the *status quo* of the two German states. Consequently, the BND prepared new studies and began an extended observation of the GDR, which bore the hallmarks of public opinion polls.³¹

At the beginning, the BND conducted interviews with the help of special forms in transit camps or in places where people who came to Germany, e.g. in urgent family matters or left the GDR permanently (legally and illegally). These methods referred

²⁶ E. Schmidt-Eenboom, *Schnüffler ohne Nase. Der BND – die unheimliche Macht im Staate*, Düsseldorf, Wien, New York, Moskau 1993, p. 55.

²⁷ G. Piper, *Abhörstaat Deutschland: Die SIGINT-Landschaft seit 1945 in Ost und West*, Hannover 2015.

²⁸ There have been relatively many publications on the history of the BND and its working methods recently, especially in the context of observing the GDR. This is related to the establishment in 2011 of an independent historians' commission to investigate the history of the BND from 1945 to 1968. See series publications *Veröffentlichungen der Unabhängigen Historikerkommission zur Erforschung der Geschichte des Bundesnachrichtendienstes 1945–1968*, e.g.: R. Heidenreich, *Die DDR-Spionage des BND: Von den Anfängen bis zum Mauerbau*, Berlin 2019; R. Heidenreich, D. Münkel, E. Stadelmann-Wenz, *Geheimdienstkrieg in Deutschland: die Konfrontation von DDR-Staatsicherheit und Organisation Gehlen 1953*, Berlin 2016.

²⁹ H.G. Wieck, *Markierungen und Reflexionen*, Vol. 1: *Die Deutsche Frage*, Berlin 2014, p. 125.

³⁰ *Ibid.*

³¹ For example: The Federal Archives (Bundesarchiv) in Koblenz (hereinafter: BAK), B 206/573, fol. 45–55, Psychopolitische Lage in der DDR (Stand: Januar 1986).

to earlier activities used by this intelligence service and were in fact the only activities carried out inside the country (the BND as an intelligence service conducted primarily activities outside the country). In mid-1986, files were created for people who could legally come to Germany. Soon after, special questionnaires (600) were prepared, which were analysed, and then a report was prepared every six months. Wieck, who was appointed president of the BND in 1985 (he held office until 1990), wanted to check whether and to what extent the citizens of the GDR identified themselves with their country. The results were extremely interesting: between 72% and 78% of all respondents wanted a reunification of Germany. Most of the respondents were ready to reject the SED regime, although they did not show any particular enthusiasm for the democratic order. An important issue was to maintain the general German awareness, which was undoubtedly supported by the desire to achieve the standard of living of the Germans from the West.³² The second important point of the analysis was the economic situation of the GDR and the standard of living of its citizens. The questionnaires prepared by Wieck's team also asked about the possibility of traveling and the intention to move to Germany, as well as the scope of reception of West German media – newspapers, radio and television.³³ The new formulars were innovative, because they rejected the previous assessments of the GDR, based on the growing statehood of East Germany, and the belief that they would continue to exist as a separate state for a long time to come. Moreover, they were to show not only the scale of support, but also the awareness of citizens and their views on the durability of the GDR's existence.³⁴ The results of systematic interviews were presented as "Reports on the psycho-political situation". Reports prepared by the BND served both domestic recipients and used during cyclical consultations among NATO countries, the purpose of which was to agree on the position of the Pact.³⁵ During the consultations, information on the military assessment of the situation in the Soviet Union and satellite states was exchanged, as well as topics

³² *Ibid.*

³³ H.G. Wieck, *DDR aus der Sicht der BND 1985–1990*, [in:] H. Timmermann (ed.), *Die DDR in Europa: zwischen Isolation und Öffnung*, Münster 2005, pp. 191–207.

³⁴ H. Wentker, 'Die DDR in den Augen des BND (1985–1990). Ein Interview mit Dr. Hans-Georg Wieck', *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, Vol. 56, No. 2, 2008, pp. 323–358.

³⁵ Since the early 1950s, there has been an exchange of information between the various intelligence services, including the Gahlen Organization, later the BND, and the CIA, French and English intelligence services. In fact, from 1950 it was clear that Western intelligence could not exist side by side without consulting each other. Only their cooperation with the CIA gave a chance of success in observing the GDR and the USSR. At this point, it should be mentioned that the CIA had reservations about passing information under NATO consultations to French intelligence due to the participation of the French Communist Party in the French government. Cooperation with the BND developed well, especially in the observation of the GDR. In turn, the BND cooperated very well and closely with the French intelligence services. See: A. Wagner, M. Uhl, *BND contra Sowjetarmee: westdeutsche Militärspionage in der DDR*, Berlin 2008. More about the cooperation between the intelligence services can be found in: V. Diersch, 'Culture, Cooperation, Capabilities'. *Internationale Geheimdienstkooperation und europäische Polizeikooperation im Spannungsfeld von Legitimität und Effektivität*, doctoral thesis, University of Cologne, 2019, <https://d-nb.info/1191895769/34> [accessed: 1.06.2020].

related to the social and economic situation in the Eastern Bloc.³⁶ This was important in determining the existing armament level of the Warsaw Pact, as well as the possibility of increasing its military potential or conducting development research in this direction. In this context, it is necessary to recall Gorbachev's meeting with representatives of communist parties from the Eastern Bloc, which took place in Moscow in November 1986.³⁷

Undoubtedly, the reports were used primarily in Germany, as they were sent to the relevant federal ministries. In addition, Wieck managed to present the results of the analyses to the most important politicians in the country: Chancellor Helmut Kohl, and the Minister of Foreign Affairs, Hans-Dietrich Genscher, as well as members of the Bundestag's Committee on Intra-German Relations (*Ausschuss für innerdeutsche Beziehungen*). It is noteworthy that Detlef Kühn, president of the All German Institute (*Gesamtdeutsche Institut – Bundesanstalt für gesamtdeutsche Aufgaben*), which was subordinate to the Federal Ministry of Intra-German Relations, was also informed about the results of the BND research.³⁸ It was to this ministry that the analyses prepared by Infratest, as mentioned earlier, were sent. This means that since the mid-1980s, this ministry has produced two independent results of research on social sentiment in East Germany and the attitude of citizens to the idea of unification.

As the results of the research were of interest to several BND departments, the content of the questionnaire was often supplemented and changed in order to adjust it to the needs of various recipients. Interesting changes, or rather an extension of the survey, were made in 1988, that is, after two years of observing moods in the GDR. At that time, not only was the collection of this type of information confirmed to be successful, but it was also decided to continue it.³⁹ At the same time, the existing long-term catalogue of questions for researching moods, their fluctuations and transformations in the GDR society was modified and supplemented. The changes to the questionnaires consisted in extending the information base, and in particular in taking greater account of the information background and the social environment of the persons providing information. An important element of the analysis was the study of the mood and opinions of the GDR society on current political events. These analyses covered both past and future events. The Reagan-Gorbachev meeting and the possible visit of Chancellor Kohl to the GDR were

³⁶ H. Wentker, *op. cit.* More about the GDR economy from the BND perspective: J.-H. Hartwig, *Die Erkenntnisse des Bundesnachrichtendienstes über die Wirtschaft der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik*, München 2016.

³⁷ Gorbachev said during a meeting with representatives of communist parties from the Eastern bloc in November 1986 in Moscow that the bloc states have two possible paths of development: either socialism will rapidly accelerate, it will attain the highest positions in science, technology and lifestyle, and then its position in the world will strengthen, or it will get stuck in difficulties and problems, will lose momentum, and then it will be rejected by society with all its consequences. W. Süß, 'Von der Ohnmacht des Volkes zur Resignation der Mächtigen. Ein Vergleich des Aufstandes in der DDR 1953 mit der Revolution von 1989', *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, Vol. 52, No. 3, 2004, pp. 441–477.

³⁸ Established in 1969, the institute was to support the All-German idea and to educate politically.

³⁹ *Innenpolitische Situation in der DDR: Psychopolitische Lage in der DDR, 005/86 (Meinungsforschung)*, BAK, B 206/570, fol. 107–117.

mentioned as examples of significant events. There was also an interest in the perception of Gorbachev in the GDR.⁴⁰ All in all, the new catalogue of questions was formulated in a very detailed way, which was to help and provide contracting organizational units with individual adaptation of questions and answers to their needs.

The 1988 BND document contained information on the need to obtain the results of polls conducted by East German institutions and covering a significant part of the social areas of the state. This type of research concerned current events and was undoubtedly representative in nature, and thus could have a significant impact on the stability of the picture of the situation in terms of moods in the GDR and the resulting social reactions. In this context, one of the main tasks of BND interviewers was to draw attention to people who might have had data from this type of research. Soon, both the opinion research institutes in the GDR and the results of their research became the subject of interest of the German intelligence service. The effects of infiltration became apparent in the 1988 BND analyzes, when it was revealed that the source of the analysed data was an East German institution.⁴¹ It should be noted that at the end of the 1980s, in principle, only one institute conducted extensive survey research in the GDR, it was the Zentralinstitut für Jugendforschung (Central Institute for Youth Research) based in Leipzig, established in 1966, whose main task was to conduct research among the younger generation.⁴² To a limited extent, public opinion polls were also conducted by other institutions: ministries, large workplaces, or SED (the Stasi was also involved in collecting information), but it is difficult to talk about classic public opinion polls here.⁴³ The results of the research conducted by the Central Institute of Youth Research were published after German-German reunification and are freely available.

⁴⁰ The BND knew about the tensions on the Gorbaczow-Honecker line. Among other things, it was rumored that Gorbachev called on Honecker to resign and also refused any support for the SED. Innenpolitische Situation in der DDR, Sprechzettel für PKK-Sitzung, 3. November 1989, BAK, B 206/587, fol. 53–58.

⁴¹ DDR-Innenpolitik, Studie zur Haltung der DDR-Bevölkerung zur Wiedervereinigung, 16. September 1988, BAK, B 206/573, fol. 20–23.

⁴² The main tasks of this East German institute were: to grasp the basic tendencies, problems and processes of development and socialist education of the young generation; designing and developing major methods of youth research; promoting and conducting research on youth in the GDR in terms of content and methods. The first empirical study was organized in November 1966 at the central "Tomorrow's Masters Fair" in Leipzig. In the years 1966–1990, the institute conducted around 400 empirical studies. The main areas of research were: youth and work, teenagers' leisure time habits, roles of women and genders, partners and sexual behavior, families and young marriages, intelligence and creativity, talent and giftedness, and twinning studies. The institute was dissolved on 31 December 1990. W. Friedrich, P. Förster, K. Starke (eds.), *Das Zentralinstitut für Jugendforschung Leipzig 1966–1990. Geschichte, Methoden, Erkenntnisse*, Berlin 1999, p. 20; W. Friedrich, *Gründung und Entwicklung des Zentralinstituts für Jugendforschung in den sechziger Jahren*, Berlin 2002.

⁴³ Ch. Reinecke, 'Fragen an die sozialistische Lebensweise. Empirische Sozialforschung und soziales Wissen in der SED-Fürsorgediktatur', *Archiv für Sozialgeschichte*, Vol. 50, 2010, pp. 311–334; J. Gieseke, 'Bevölkerungsstimmungen in der geschlossenen Gesellschaft. MfS-Berichte an die DDR-Führung in den 1960er- und 1970er-Jahren', *Zeithistorische Forschungen/Studies in Contemporary History*, Vol. 5, 2008, pp. 236–257.

The BND survey, which was revised in 1988, was very detailed, therefore it was not expected that respondents would have to answer all the questions. It was also realized that in some areas informants only had single pieces of information, with the authors of the survey assuming that individual opinions on specific topics should generally be the exception and a broader information base should always be sought. In this specific context, it was indicated that information relating to one work or private environment in the GDR should be enriched as far as possible with information and the possibilities of age, social and regional classification. Such enriched information became the basis for the preparation of reports on the social and political situation in the GDR.

The result of the research conducted in this way was reports which, apart from the analysis of the attitude of East German citizens to the most important political events (current and past), also contained information about the general mood prevailing in this society. One of the elements taken into account in the research on public sentiment were jokes that BND collected and processed thematically, according to the following categories: political, economic, and even attesting to the attitude of citizens to their neighbours, including Poland, Poles or John Paul II (this is also in the context of the economic crisis in the People's Republic of Poland).⁴⁴

Conclusions

Gathering information about the GDR was associated with a serious threat, as evidenced by the sentences issued for espionage for the Federal Republic. According to several studies prepared by the Stasi, as many as 1,382 real or alleged Western spies were convicted between October 1955 and October 1989. On the other hand, according to the findings of German historians Armin Wagner and Matthias Uhl based on data collected by the BND, about 10,000 people in the GDR were sentenced only for espionage against the National People's Army (NVA).⁴⁵ Nevertheless, in Germany, it was possible to develop effective methods that allowed for the penetration of East German society and the preparation of analyses of the political mood of citizens. Institutions entrusted with collecting this type of information were the Infratest – Markt- und Meinungsforschungsinstitut from Munich, which has been conducting research since the 1960s, and the Bundesnachrichtendienst. The intelligence activities aimed at determining the mood in the GDR began in the second half of the 1980s and were directly related to the seizure of power in Moscow by Mikhail Gorbachev and the change in the current policy of the Soviet Union expected in Bonn, in line with his declaration on the common European home.

In Bonn, people were interested in virtually all areas of social and political life in the GDR. The citizens' reaction to the events in the German-German relations,

⁴⁴ H.-H. Hertle, H.-W. Saure (eds.), *Ausgelacht. DDR-Witze aus den Geheimakten des BND*, Berlin 2016; B. Müller, *Lachen gegen die Ohnmacht. DDR-Witze im Visier der Stasi*, Berlin 2016.

⁴⁵ Antwort der Bundesregierung auf die Kleine Anfrage der Abgeordneten Jan Korte, Dr. Gregor Gysi, Dr. Dietmar Bartsch, weiterer Abgeordneter und der Fraktion DIE LINKE, Beobachtung von Funktionsträgern und sonstigen Bürgern der DDR durch westdeutsche Nachrichtendienste. Deutscher Bundestag, Drucksache 18/377318, 18. Wahlperiode, 19.01.2015.

restrictions and facilitations in travel to Germany, as well as to the billions in loans granted to the Honecker government was examined. Flagship projects in East Germany, such as actions for world peace and disarmament, also remained in the sphere of interest. Thanks to the discontinuation of the indirect research method and the preparation of special question sheets enabling the expansion of GDR observations so that they could bear the features of public opinion polls, it was possible to collect information that proved the considerable reserve with which the GDR society approached its state and its policy identified with the state, most were not only ready to reject the SED regime, but above all were positive about the idea of German-German reunification. The escapes to the West were not condemned, which was undoubtedly due to the weak economic condition of the GDR. The desire to achieve the standard of living of West Germans served to maintain the general German awareness, fueled by the media coverage from West Berlin, which, according to reports, was widely watched.

The Infratest and BND research provided not only facts indicating sympathy for West Germany, but also made it possible to learn about the expectations of citizens from various social and professional groups from East German regions towards Federal Republic. By the end of the 1980s, Bonn must have been aware of the impermanence of the GDR and of the moods that might have contributed to its collapse. Such sentiments were clearly mentioned in reports sent to both the Chancellery and several federal institutions. In fact, in 1989 there was a turning point, which led to increased numbers of escapes to the West, as well as several other situations that ultimately led to German-German reunification in 1990. The perception of the data collected by Infratest and BND and their translation into specific decisions and political actions taken in the Federal Republic still remain an open question.⁴⁶

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⁴⁶ In this case, it is especially about the attitude of East German citizens towards German-German reunification: DDR-Innenpolitik, Studie zur Haltung der DDR-Bevölkerung zur Wiedervereinigung, 16. September 1988, BAK, B 206/573, fol. 20–23.

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Spojrzenie zza muru. Zachodnioniemieckie badania preferencji politycznych obywateli NRD

Streszczenie

Po powstaniu NRD zachodnioniemieccy badacze rozpoczęli szereg badań preferencji społecznych obywateli Niemiec Wschodnich, a także procesów, które tam zachodziły. W wyniku zmian, które miały miejsce w NRD, i trudności w przeprowadzaniu obserwacji bezpośrednich zdecydowano się podjąć działania o charakterze niestandardowym. Rozwinięto szereg procedur szczególnych, łączących badania ankietowe bezpośrednie i pośrednie. Na czoło badań wysunęły się dwie wiodące instytucje: Infratest – Markt- und Meinungsforschungsinstitut z Monachium oraz Bundesnachrichtendienst (Federalna Służba Wywiadowcza). Wśród licznych obszarów badawczych szczególne miejsce zajmowała analiza bieżących wydarzeń: wizyt na najwyższym szczeblu, kontaktów pomiędzy oboma państwami niemieckimi, skali utożsamiania się obywateli NRD z ich państwem, skali ograniczeń i ułatwień z podróżowaniem do RFN, jak również ocena sytuacji ekonomicznej obywateli Niemiec Wschodnich.

Słowa kluczowe: Republika Federalna Niemiec (RFN), Niemiecka Republika Demokratyczna (NRD), badanie opinii publicznej, Federalna Służba Wywiadowcza (BND)

A Look from behind the Wall: West German Studies of the Political Preferences of East German Citizens

Abstract

After the establishment of the GDR, West German researchers began to study the political and social attitude of GDR citizens, and the processes that were taking place there. Due to the changes taking place in the GDR and the difficulties in conducting direct observations, it was decided to take non-standard actions, and to develop special procedures that combined direct survey research with indirect research. At the lead of this the research efforts were two institutions: Infratest – Markt- und Meinungsforschungsinstitut from Monachium and Bundesnachrichtendienst (Federal Intelligence Service). Among other things, they studied the reactions to current events: for example, for top-level visits, and in particular FRG–DGR contacts, citizens' identification with the East German state, restrictions and facilities in traveling to FRG, as well as the assessment of the economic situation of GDR citizens.

Key words: Federal Republic of Germany (FRG), German Democratic Republic (GDR), opinion polls, Federal Intelligence Service (BND)

Ein Blick von jenseits der Mauer. Westdeutsche Untersuchungen der politischen Präferenzen von DDR-Bürgern *Zusammenfassung*

Nach der Entstehung der DDR begannen westdeutsche Wissenschaftler eine Reihe von Untersuchungen zu gesellschaftlichen Präferenzen der Bürger Ostdeutschlands, aber auch zu den Prozessen, die dort eintraten. Infolge der Veränderungen, die in der DDR stattfanden, und der Schwierigkeiten bei der Durchführung von direkten Beobachtungen entschied man sich, ungewöhnliche Maßnahmen zu ergreifen. Es wurde eine Reihe von besonderen Prozeduren entwickelt, die direkte und indirekte Befragungen miteinander verbanden. An der Spitze der Untersuchungen standen zwei führende Institutionen: Infratest – Markt- und Meinungsforschungsinstitut aus München sowie der Bundesnachrichtendienst. Unter den zahlreichen Forschungsgebieten nahm die Analyse der laufenden Ereignisse eine besondere Stellung ein: Besuche auf höchster Ebene, Kontakte zwischen beiden deutschen Staaten, Skala der Identifikation der DDR-Bürger mit ihrem Staat, Skala der Einschränkungen und Erleichterungen bei Reisen in die Bundesrepublik, sowie Einschätzung der wirtschaftlichen Lage der ostdeutschen Bürger.

Schlüsselwörter: Bundesrepublik Deutschland (BRD), Deutsche Demokratische Republik (DDR), Meinungsforschung, Bundesnachrichtendienst (BND)

Взгляд из-за стены. Западногерманские исследования политических предпочтений граждан ГДР *Резюме*

После образования ГДР западногерманские исследователи начали изучать политические и социальные предпочтения граждан ГДР, а также процессы, которые там происходили. В связи с произошедшими в ГДР переменами и трудностями в проведении прямых наблюдений, было принято решение использовать нестандартный подход и разработать ряд процедур, сочетающих прямые и косвенные исследования. Главную роль в исследованиях сыграли два ведущих учреждения: Infratest – Markt- und Meinungsforschungsinstitut из Мюнхена и Bundesnachrichtendienst (Федеральная разведывательная служба). Среди многочисленных направлений исследований, особое внимание было уделено вопросам: встреч на высшем уровне, контактов между двумя немецкими государствами, масштабов отождествления граждан ГДР с их государством, ограничений и возможностей поездок в ФРГ, оценки экономического положения граждан ГДР.

Ключевые слова: Федеральная Республика Германия (ФРГ), Германская Демократическая Республика (ГДР), опрос общественного мнения, Федеральная разведывательная служба (БНД)

