

# Television and protest in East Germany's revolution, 1989-1990: A mixed-methods analysis

Marko Grdešić  
Department of Sociology  
University of Wisconsin Madison  
8128 William H. Sewell Social Sciences Building  
1180 Observatory Drive  
Madison, WI 53706  
Phone/Fax: 385 1 4574 087  
Email: grdesic@wisc.edu

## Abstract

This article uses a mixed-methods approach to analyze the relationship between television and protest during East Germany's revolution. The content of television newscasts, both West German and East German, is analyzed together with protest event data. There are two key findings. First, West German coverage of protests is associated with an increase in protest in the first phase of the revolution. This finding emerges from time series analysis. Second, West German and East German television coverage are in interaction, with the latter reacting to the former. This finding emerges from both quantitative and qualitative analysis.

**Keywords:** television; East Germany; 1989; revolutions; social movements; mixed-methods; time series

## 1. Introduction

This article investigates the relationship between television and protest during East Germany's revolution of 1989. This article asks two questions. First, did television in general, and West German television in particular, encourage and drive the protests? And second, what was the relationship between West German and East German television during the revolutionary fall and winter of 1989 and 1990? This analysis uses a mixed-methods approach: it combines a statistical analysis using time series methods with a qualitative analysis of television newscasts, both West

German and East German.

There are two main conclusions to the study. First, and in contrast to some previous work, this article shows that West German television coverage of protests drove protest levels in the first phase of the revolution, but not in the second phase, when state repression subsided and the conditions for organizing eased. This conclusion emerges from the use of time series methods such as Granger causality tests. Second, West German television and East German television form an interacting system. Within this system, East German television is the weaker side, the one that reacts to what is taking place in Western media. This conclusion emerges from an analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data.

East Germany's revolution is not relevant only to scholars interested in that particular country. The potential impact of West German television on protest activity in East Germany raises the more general question of the potentially destabilizing impact of foreign media on authoritarian regimes in general and communist regimes in particular. During the Cold War, the United States invested a lot of effort into reaching East European audiences with media such as Radio Free Europe and Voice of America. In the age of the internet, the impact of foreign media on authoritarian regimes continues to be a relevant question, including the world's remaining communist regimes such as China or Cuba (Taubman, 1998; Yang, 2003; Kalathil and Boas, 2003). The interaction between East German and West German television is one that can also be of interest to scholars of societies that have experienced similar territorial partitions, the most apparent example being Korea (Rhee 1993).

## **2. The role of television in East Germany's revolution**

The East German revolution is a key link in the interconnected revolutions of 1989. Subsequent revolutions in Czechoslovakia, Hungary, Bulgaria, Romania and the Soviet Union were

all inspired by the East German example. Since Germany was the crucial battleground of the Cold War, it was the fall of the Berlin Wall that became the symbolic watershed dividing the Cold War from the post-Cold War era. The historical significance of the East German case, the heightened symbolic importance of the Berlin Wall, and unmatched quality of data made the East German case a central one in the literature on the fall of communism (Opp, Voss and Gern, 1995; Maier, 1997; Dale, 2006; Pfaff, 2006). The re-unification of West and East Germany has led to an opening of East German archives, all in the spirit of Western-imposed “coming to terms with the past” (*Vergangenheitsbewältigung*) (Torpey, 1993; Silberman, 1993; Epstein, 2003). This Western liberal push to open up the archives of East Germany comes together with the impressive state of these archives, derived from typically German meticulousness as well as the paranoid data-gathering of East Germany's communist regime. This extends to protest catalogs and mass media materials, data which form the empirical basis of this article.

For a long time, the East German regime appeared to be among the more stable communist regimes in Eastern Europe (Kern, 2010, p. 3). Before the 1980s, East Germany was even considered to be one of East Europe's better performing economies (Kopstein, 1997). Yet, the revolution gathered momentum quickly and spread from the initial Monday demonstrations in Leipzig into a full-blown protest wave (Kuran, 1991; Lohmann, 1994). The harsh political climate made life difficult for dissidents and overt organizing was practically impossible, not least because of the oversight of the regime's secret police, the Stasi. Gorbachev's reforms were unpopular with East Germany's ruling class in general and Erich Honecker, general secretary of the SED (Socialist Unity Party's/Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands) in particular. The SED oligarchy was determined to remain true to communist orthodoxy, despite the popularity of Gorbachev amongst East German citizens (Philipsen, 1993, p. 50; Maier 1997, pp. 155-156). Honecker insisted that “there is no need for changes”, even as Gorbachev warned him that “dangers await those who do not react to life”

(Philipsen, 1993, p. 394). In such an austere political context, it is only natural to ask if West German television, which was widely available in East Germany, had something to do with the unexpected success of protests in East Germany.

Did television play a role in the East German revolution? Most researchers would agree that media exposure is important to the diffusion of protest (for example, Myers, 2000; Andrews and Biggs 2006). At the same time, much of the research has been on the printed press, with special focus on the potential biases of newspapers as a source of event data (Myers and Schaefer Caniglia, 2004; Earl, Martin, McCarthy, Soule, 2004; Davenport, 2010). There is much less research on television or radio (but see Straus, 2007; Yanagizawa, 2012). The case of East Germany has been the site of some of the most interesting research. Many authors claim that West German television was a significant factor in driving protests. This thesis exists in the German language literature in stronger (Hanke, 1990; Czaplicki, 2000), as well as in moderate forms (Hesse, 1990; Lindgens and Mahle, 1992; Holzweißig, 1996). There is also work in the English language which emphasizes the importance of West German television for the East German revolution (Kuran, 1991; Opp and Gern, 1993; Opp, Voss and Gern, 1995; Jarausch, 1994; Grix, 2000). In one formulation, the East German revolution is even referred to as “the first television revolution in the world” (Hanke, 1990, p. 319).

However, this view has been challenged by two recent articles by Kern and Hainmueller which make use of the fact that most but not all of East Germany could receive West German television broadcasts (Kern and Hainmueller, 2009; Kern, 2010). The signal could not reach the so-called “valley of the clueless” (*Tal der Ahnungslosen*), i.e. the southeastern area around Dresden and the northeastern part of the country near Greifswald. Such a quasi-experimental setting makes it possible to compare counties that are as similar as possible but diverge on whether they had access to West German television. The interesting conclusion from these studies is that it does not appear to be the case that areas with access to West German television had a higher propensity to protest.

This new research gives us the most sophisticated analysis of the relationship between television and protest in East Germany published so far. However, it leaves two questions unanswered. First, it tells us nothing about the content of West German broadcasts. Content does not vary over space but over time. Did West German television talk about the protests and if so when? Is there a temporal pattern between their discussion of protests and the protests themselves? And second, Kern and Hainmueller ignore East German television. What was the relationship between West German and East German television? What was the relationship between East German television and the protests?

Kern and Hainmueller bring up the entertainment aspect of West German television as the potential “opium for the masses.” The notion that East Germans would turn to West German television primarily for entertainment is plausible but not without its problems. First, some of the most popular entertainment shows were actually aired on East German television. For example, “Polizeiruf 110” (Police call 110) and “Der Staatsanwalt hat das Wort” (The state attorney has the word) had the highest ratings of around 40 percent (Wolff, 2002, p. 285; Meyen, 2003, p. 117). And second, during times of revolutionary upheaval people tune in to watch the news and political shows much more than before. When asked what they want from television in 1987, 72 percent of East German viewers said they wanted entertainment and relaxation and 59 percent said they wanted information on important political events. In December of 1989, when revolutionary protests were in full swing, roughly the same percentage of people said they wanted entertainment but 77 percent of viewers said they wanted information on important political events (Meyen, 2003, p. 70). In short, people became more politicized during the revolutionary fall of 1989. Furthermore, the wish to be entertained may co-exist with a desire to be politically informed and involved, as it did in East Germany.

The second aspect which is not addressed in Kern's and Hainmueller's studies is the potential

impact of East German television. They abstract from this aspect since they wish to study only West German television. Yet, West German television was embedded in a larger media system with East German television. The two television networks were ideological rivals and were competing for the same (East German) viewers: how they relate to one another is also part of the larger picture. How did they talk about one another? How did their coverage of protests co-evolve?

The German language literature on East German television has recently come to a more nuanced understanding of the relationship between East and West television. Such an approach requires us to not merely celebrate West German television over its Eastern rival but to study the two in interaction (Dittmar, 2004, 2010; Lee, 2003). This view is part of the German language literature's recent shift away from the "collective emigration" perspective. Instead of an image which emphasized the virtual emigration of East German citizens to the West each night via West German television, most of the recent literature emphasizes the ways in which East German citizens used both East and West German television to construct for themselves an image of what reality is like in both Germanies (Hesse, 1998; Meyen, 2003). Therefore, it is preferable not to isolate West German television from the larger system to which it belongs.

### **3. Data and methods**

The data collection strategy for this article had two aspects: to collect data on protests and on television coverage. First, protest data comes from a published event catalog (Schwabe, 1999). It includes daily reports of local police forces to the East German Ministry of Interior, records of the Ministry of State Security (the Stasi), and numerous secondary sources such as newspapers and various publications. This is a remarkable source which is unrivaled in its depth and breadth. It was also used in the studies of Kern and Hainmueller. It includes more than three thousand protests for the six and a half month period of the revolution.

Second, daily television news broadcasts were viewed for the same period, i.e. 198 days from September 1st 1989 to March 18th 1990, the day of the first (and last) competitive elections for East Germany's parliament. The central evening newscasts of both West German and East German networks were chosen: "Aktuelle Kamera" in East Germany and "Tagesschau" in West Germany. Both aired each day, were roughly half an hour long and had prime time evening slots. "Tagesschau" was the central evening news show of ARD, West Germany's first public television channel and generally had higher ratings than "heute", the evening newscast of ZDF, West Germany's second public television channel. West German private channels were not accessible over the air in East Germany. ARD's "Tagesschau" is available on the internet (Die Tagesschau vor 20 Jahren, 2013), while "Aktuelle Kamera" is accessible at the Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv in Potsdam.

Throughout the 1980s, "Aktuelle Kamera" had relatively low ratings of around 10 percent (Meyen 2003, p. 117). However, viewers tended to tune in when there was a particularly important political event. For example, during the two-day visit of West Germany's chancellor Helmut Schmidt to East Germany in late 1981, "Aktuelle Kamera" had ratings of 36 and 50 percent (Dittmar, 2010, p. 370; Meyen, 2003, p. 127). After the resignation of Honecker and his replacement by Egon Krenz, "Aktuelle Kamera" quickly rose in the ratings. At the end of October "Aktuelle Kamera" had ratings of around 30 to 40 percent. By December it had ratings between 40 and 50 percent while "Tagesschau" was seen by approximately 37 percent and "heute" by another 25 percent of East German viewers (Hanke, 1990, p. 325; Hesse, 1998, p. 50).<sup>1</sup> In short, of the possible shows that could be selected, evening newscasts are key because of their prime time slots and high ratings. Of these, "Tagesschau" and "Aktuelle Kamera" are the most relevant.

For each day, information was noted on whether the newscast reported on a protest. A simple

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<sup>1</sup> It should also be noted that more people watched West German television newscasts in East Germany than they did in West Germany (Hesse, 1998, pp. 52, 128).

binary variable was constructed which notes if a newscast reported on at least one protest. This makes statistical testing possible. For the qualitative analysis, notes were taken on the style of coverage, how West German and East German newscasts talked about protests and how each side talked about the other. Such discussion of what the other side was doing was frequent, especially before the fall of the Berlin Wall. This approach makes it possible to engage in a mixed-method analysis. More methodological information is presented in appendices A and B.

#### **4. Theory and hypotheses**

This article's main goal is to examine the relationship between television and protest during East Germany's revolution. The most intriguing work on the subject, two articles by Kern and Hainmueller, suggest that there is no positive effect of West German television on protest in East Germany. Furthermore, they do not investigate East German television and its relationship with protests, on the one hand, and West German television, on the other. They do not look at how the protests appeared on the air and how protest coverage changed over time, but conduct a comparison of East German counties that were exposed to West German television with those that were not. Since protest coverage is something that occurred on some days but did not occur on others, this article focuses on temporal patterns instead.

The first question to investigate is whether West German television protest coverage increased subsequent protest levels in East Germany. The mechanism has been described in the work of Susanne Lohmann (1994): viewers see protests taking place on the news and are encouraged to join themselves. Since both "Tagesschau" and "Aktuelle Kamera" reported on a very small percentage of total protests (3 percent for "Tagesschau" and 5 percent for "Aktuelle Kamera"), a simple binary variable is used which notes whether they reported on at least one protest that day. The logic of the test is to operationalize the day-to-day linkages between two time series in

what scholars call “constant causation” (Collier and Collier, 1991) or “tight coupling” (Perrow, 1984). In such a relationship, one kind of event is regularly and quickly followed by an event of another kind.

West German television may have served as a particularly important source of informal coordination in the first phase of the revolution, while state repression still hindered organizing. However, in the second phase of the revolution the political environment changed. Therefore, the revolution can be divided into various stages. A straight-forward way to break up the period is into two phases of equal length: The first would include September, October and November of 1989 and the second would include the period from December 1989 to the first free elections of March 18th 1990. This periodization was chosen because of very different levels of police repression. During the first phase there were 49 protests where police used force or arrested protesters and in the second there was one such protest. Therefore, conditions for movement organizing were much more favorable in the second period. The informal coordination that television provided to protesters may thus be more relevant in the first period than in the second. All results were double checked with slightly different periodizations.<sup>2</sup> Splitting the revolution into two phases makes it possible to test if West German coverage of protests lead to increased protest levels in the first phase of the revolution but not in the second.

The role of East German television may also be important. While East German television did not initiate the protests, it may have been important in the second phase of the revolution (Holzweißig, 1996; Lindgens and Mahle, 1992). Interestingly, some analysts actually make the opposite point: in the second phase of the revolution East German television actually gave less visibility to the protests because it was implicated in the consolidation of power by the (reformed)

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2 This includes a periodization that takes the day the Berlin Wall was opened (November 9th) as the cut-off point. For time series analysis to be viable, 50 to 60 data points are necessary. Therefore, were the middle of October (when Honecker resigned) chosen as a cut-off point, statistical analysis would not be meaningful. Yet, even here, most of the results were replicated.

Communists (Hesse, 1990, p. 339). These arguments can be tested empirically: did East German coverage of protests increase subsequent protest? Did it do so only in the second phase of the revolution, once the most extreme forms of censorship were removed? Or can the opposite be argued, i.e. that East German television was complicit with the ruling party and tried to sideline the protests in the second phase of the revolution?

Did West German and East German television form a joint media system? Who was reacting to whom? This will be analyzed in the qualitative section by examining the commentary of each side on the media practices of the other. In a statistical setting, their interplay can be operationalized by investigating if one newscast's coverage of protests is related to the other's. Therefore, we can ask if West German coverage of protests lead to East German coverage of protests only, or if the relationship works in both ways.

There are several alternative explanations that are sometimes brought up in the literature on the East German revolution. These are considered mostly as control variables, since they are not the main focus of the article. First, Mondays may have been important as “focal points” (Schelling, 1960), especially given the famous Monday demonstrations in Leipzig. Second, the role of emigration from East to West Germany may have mattered for protest, as “exit” intertwined with “voice” (Hirschman, 1993; Pfaff and Kim, 2003). This analysis uses a simple binary variable which notes if West German television reported on the emigration crisis. Third, particular types of protests may lead to increases in protest levels. The analysis focuses on very large protests, protests in Berlin and protests in Leipzig as protests that may have inspired additional protest activity. And fourth, it is also important not to overlook the role of organizational leadership. Therefore, this article investigates if protests organized by the main oppositional group “Neues Forum” (*New Forum*) lead to an increase in subsequent protest levels. The next section presents the findings of the statistical analysis.

## 5. Time series analysis

Time series methods give us tools that make it possible to zoom into a temporal relationship or a system of temporal relationships. Such detailed examination would not be possible with models which use locations such as counties as units. However, given the fact that not all counties in East Germany could receive West German television,<sup>3</sup> all results shown here were double-checked using only protests from those counties that could receive it.

Two time series techniques are used that are especially helpful when used in conjunction with one another: Granger causality tests estimated after vector auto-regression (VAR). More information on these techniques is presented in Appendix A. Table 1 presents the main findings. The dependent variable in all three models in table 1 is the number of protests. Model 1 uses only the first half of the series, model 2 only the second, and model 3 uses the entire series. As can be seen in model 1, the variable for “Tagesschau” protest coverage is statistically significant which means that it is related to increases in the number of protests on the following day. However, this relationship holds only for the first period. It does not hold for the second phase or for the revolution as a whole, as models 2 and 3 show. In other words, the protest coverage of “Tagesschau” spurred on protests on the next day, but only in the first phase of the revolution. The variable for “Aktuelle Kamera” is not statistically significant in any of the three models. Therefore, there is no effect of East German protest coverage on protest levels.

The dependent variables in table 2 are the coverage of protests by “Tagesschau” in models 1 and 2 and by “Aktuelle Kamera” in models 3 and 4. The key result is that the “Tagesschau” variable is statistically significant in model 3. Therefore, “Aktuelle Kamera's” protest coverage in the first phase of the revolution tended to follow on the previous protest coverage of “Tagesschau.” In that

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<sup>3</sup> 23 out of 217 counties could not receive West German television.

sense, it can be argued that “Aktuelle Kamera” was reacting to “Tagesschau.” However, the reverse relationship does not hold, and it does not hold for the second phase of the revolution. The coupling between “Tagesschau” and “Aktuelle Kamera” breaks down in the second phase of the revolution. This connection is also examined in the qualitative section.

The other variables serve more as control variables. In table 1, it can be seen that Mondays are clearly important. They are statistically significant in models 1, 2 and 3. Additional models were estimated in which Mondays were examined for their coordinating role (in other words, Sundays were used in order to investigate if there is a substantial increase in protest the following day). Results were essentially the same: Mondays functioned both as a means to facilitate protest and as a factor that increased later protests.

Regarding the role of emigration, there was no effect. The variable for “Tagesschau's” coverage of the exodus from East Germany is not statistically significant in model 1. As this issue disappeared from the agenda with the opening of the Berlin Wall, it was not included in model 2. Therefore, “exit” and “voice” do not seem to be related in the sense of “constant causation” or “tight coupling”, i.e. television reports of emigration one day did not lead to an increase in protests the next day. There also seems to be no effect of large protests on subsequent protest levels. Models shown in table 1 use 5,000 participants as a cut-off, but results were very similar when a cut-off of 10,000 participants was used.

When it comes to the importance of specific locations, it seems that Berlin was important in driving protest levels in the first phase of the revolution. Leipzig, on the other hand does not matter in the same way. This challenges the conventional interpretation a little, since it is usually Leipzig, not Berlin, which is seen as the center of the protest movement and the “city of heroes.”<sup>4</sup> Yet Berlin appears more important in driving subsequent protest levels in the first phase of the revolution. It

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<sup>4</sup> The name “city of heroes” refers to the leading role usually accorded to Leipzig, especially due to the Monday demonstrations which began there first, inspiring protest elsewhere in the country.

may well be that other (potential) protesters kept a closer eye on Berlin and saw protests there as more consequential given Berlin's status as capital city.

And finally, the variable for Neues Forum protests was significant in models 1 and 3, indicating a link between Neues Forum protests and the subsequent rise in protest levels. It seems that, in the first phase of the revolution at least, Neues Forum served as a source of inspiration and leadership for protesters. This finding is compatible with the scholarship on intellectuals and citizens' groups in East Germany (Torpey, 1995; Joppke, 1995). During the first phase of the revolution, calling for the legalization of Neues Forum was synonymous with a demand for greater political freedom. Yet, in later phases Neues Forum lost much of this support because of its unwillingness to endorse a general strike and its ever closer ties with the regime.

It should be mentioned that a relationship of reverse causation from protests to television coverage does not exist. As can be seen in Table 2, the variable for number of protests was not statistically significant in any of the models. All models used a basic approach of one lag, but were checked with two and three lags. The results were essentially unchanged, although increasing the lag length sometimes increased the number of statistically significant variables. In this sense, basic one lag models are the most rigorous test and are the closest approximation of a relationship of “constant causation” or “tight coupling.” All models were double-checked using only protests from those counties that could receive West German television and the results were essentially the same.

### **6.1. Qualitative analysis: Coverage styles**

Table 3 breaks down the protest and coverage data into two-week intervals: it shows the number of protests listed in the event catalog, number of protests reported by each newscast, and number of days in which each side commented on the other. This gives us a sense of how the coverage style of each newscast evolved over time. As can be seen in table 3, “Aktuelle Kamera” at

first completely avoided any reference to the protests. When they began to mention them, they referred to protesters in pejorative terms as “troublemakers” (*Randalierer*) and their demands were called “hostile to the state” (*republikfeindlichen Parolen*) (“Aktuelle Kamera”, October 8th).

On the other hand, “Tagesschau” regularly reported on the location of a protest, number of protesters and key demands. For example, in early September they reported on a protest in Leipzig and listed the protesters' demands: freedom and human rights, dissolution of the Stasi and removal of the Berlin Wall (“Tagesschau”, September 4th). They also showed footage of police violence. Given that access was difficult for West German television crews, such video footage was rare in September or October, but “Tagesschau” tried to at least have a picture of the protest in the background. They also gave exposure to opposition groups such as Neues Forum, favoring statements from the painter and activist Bärbel Bohley in particular (she appears in “Tagesschau” on September 22nd, 24th, October 14th, 17th, 18th, February 7th). Throughout the revolution, “Tagesschau's” style of reporting changed little.

During its initial disparaging coverage of the protests, “Aktuelle Kamera” would choose “respectable” citizens, with education and social status, to comment on the protests. The interviewees would call the protests “appalling” (*erschreckend*) and talk about how the protesters provoked the police so that West German television could film police brutality (“Aktuelle Kamera”, October 9th). A few days after Honecker's resignation the Politburo announced that wide-ranging reforms would begin. “Aktuelle Kamera” began a phase of experimentation. Politicians went to factories to engage workers in “discussion.” Although these conversations were staged, they nevertheless exposed politicians to people's opinions more directly. In one such “discussion” a worker asked for changes in East Germany's mass media, naming “Aktuelle Kamera” in particular (“Aktuelle Kamera”, October 14th).

On October 16th, “Aktuelle Kamera” aired its first conventional report on a street protest, a

demonstration in Leipzig, with no pejorative or editorializing commentary. The report was only 17 seconds long, but was the first neutral feature on the protests (“Aktuelle Kamera”, October 16th). Throughout the next month or so, “Aktuelle Kamera” would oscillate from attempts to control the protests to merely reporting the facts. In particular, protests were often seen as unruly, the opposite of “constructive” dialog.

“Aktuelle Kamera's” soul searching continued with changes in format. A shorter central news section was introduced followed by two longer reports on topics of particular interest (“AK Report”, November 23rd). Among these reports was a story on Wandlitz, a suburb of Berlin where high ranking politicians lived, previously off-limits because of the communist elite's secret privileges, most interestingly a supermarket with goods not available in regular East German stores (“Aktuelle Kamera”, November 23rd). A changed approach was announced by the new editors who said they wanted “to be able to look their viewers in the eye” (“Aktuelle Kamera”, October 29th). A formal apology followed soon (“Aktuelle Kamera”, November 4th). The apology was offered as atonement for the way “Aktuelle Kamera” was edited during the entire post-war period.

After the opening of the Berlin Wall, the new style of reporting became more and more consolidated. The day after the Berlin Wall was breached, “Aktuelle Kamera” featured live footage from the Brandenburg gate where crowds were climbing the wall and chiseling parts of it away (“Aktuelle Kamera”, November 10th). In the next few days, “Aktuelle Kamera” followed the visits of East Berliners to West Berlin in detail.

By the end of November, “Aktuelle Kamera” had adopted much of the style of “Tagesschau.” Objective facts such as location, time and estimated number of participants were combined, when possible, with a reporter on the spot and perhaps with a statement or two from the protesters. Furthermore, as can be seen from Table 3, “Aktuelle Kamera” can be favorably compared to “Tagesschau” in the quantity of protests reported. During the first half of the

revolution, i.e. until the beginning of December, “Aktuelle Kamera” reported on roughly the same number of protests as “Tagesschau”: 49 in “Tagesschau” and 56 in “Aktuelle Kamera.” In the second phase of the revolution, “Aktuelle Kamera” actually reported on more: 94 to “Tagesschau's” 56. Therefore, it cannot be said that “Aktuelle Kamera” was complicit with the East German government and that it tried to sideline protests in the second half of the revolution.

Furthermore, “Aktuelle Kamera” reported neutrally on several controversial topics, never favoring the official government standpoint and always trying to offer a balanced perspective. The first such phenomenon are occupations of Stasi buildings, which many feared signaled an escalation of violence on the part of protesters. If the Stasi could be reformed and protected, as was the original moderate solution of the government, than it would indeed be warranted to speak of a conservative backlash of (supposedly reformed) communists who were hoping to keep the regime's darker aspects out of the limelight. When protesters broke into Stasi buildings to secure secret police documents which were being shredded on a massive scale, many commentators asked for restraint. Yet, without the occupations, it is highly likely that many more documents would be permanently lost.

“Aktuelle Kamera” reported on the “chaos” the first day, including pictures of broken windows and documents scattered everywhere. However, on the next day they featured a conversation in which protesters rather calmly explained why they did what they did. A variety of opinions were heard and a multi-faceted perspective was given (“Aktuelle Kamera”, January 15th, 16th, 19th). “Tagesschau” chose the same approach, giving the demonstrators an opportunity to explain the positive aspects of the occupations (“Tagesschau”, January 16th). Neither newscast can be faulted much in their coverage of this touchy topic.

Protests for and against re-unification with West Germany are the second controversial issue. The turn towards reunification was a disappointment for many activists who initiated the early

protests. This is especially the case for intellectuals who had hoped for a “third way” or a “socialism with a human face” (Joppke 1995, Torpey 1995). Given its prominence, “Aktuelle Kamera” could have insisted on a position of separate statehood for East Germany and thus supported the regime. However, most of its reporting on the reunification issue attempted to show both sides of the argument. For example, in their coverage of an early December protest in Leipzig they gave exposure both to those that were for reunification and those that were against it (“Aktuelle Kamera”, December 4th. Their coverage is similar on January 28th). In their report on this protest “Tagesschau” was actually less balanced as they only reported on the pro-unification groups and their slogan “Germany united fatherland” (*Deutschland einig Vaterland*) (“Tagesschau”, December 4th).

But overall, it would be incorrect to say that “Tagesschau” purposefully pushed the reunification agenda. The failure of the “third way” cannot be blamed on the media, either Eastern or Western, but on the inability of the East German intellectuals to forge a platform that could rival the simple resonance of the reunification idea. One reporter from a Leipzig protest commented that the crowd seemed “feed up with the long speeches of the various opposition groups” (“Tagesschau”, January 22nd). In less than a month another report from Leipzig noted that the speeches had become more “fatherlandly” (*vaterlandish*) (“Tagesschau”, February 12th). Reunification had prevailed over the “third way”, especially after the elections of March 18th in which Helmut Kohl and his pro-unification coalition won around 41 percent of votes. However, the media played a neutral role in this process.

## **6.2. Qualitative analysis: Interaction and political control**

Were the two television stations in a relationship of mutual interaction? How did the two newscasts talk about each other? Table 3 shows that the two newscasts talked about each other

rather frequently in the first weeks of the revolution. After November, this practice had completely ceased. Early on, “Aktuelle Kamera” would adopt a very aggressive tone when referring to West German media in general and West German television in particular. This was especially the case in the first month and a half of the revolution. For example, the emigration crisis was described as a “smear campaign” (*Hetzkampagne*). They even accused West German television of organizing the exodus (“Aktuelle Kamera”, September 4th and 6th). Commentators spoke of “battalions of Western reporters and cameramen” (*Bataillone westlicher Reporter und Kameraleute*) and asked what will come after the media loses interest in the fugitives and they become unemployed or homeless (“Aktuelle Kamera”, September 11th and 12th).

In its early coverage of the protests, “Aktuelle Kamera” regularly referenced West German television and its supposed “teamwork” (*Zusammenspiel*) with protesters (“Aktuelle Kamera”, October 8th). They concluded that it cannot be a coincidence that West German television crews appear whenever there is a protest (“Aktuelle Kamera”, October 10th). On the other hand, “Tagesschau” commented on the behavior of “Aktuelle Kamera” about as often but in less hostile language. During the emigration crisis “Tagesschau” commented on the alleged “smear campaign” against East Germany (“Tagesschau”, September 5th). However, “Tagesschau” was also willing to admit that the tone in the East German media was changing (“Tagesschau”, October 11th.) “Tagesschau” also noticed that protesters were, after mid-October, no longer referred to as “hooligans” (*Rowdys*) (“Tagesschau”, October 17th). When discussing “Aktuelle Kamera's” staged discussions of politicians with workers, “Tagesschau” welcomed the development and said such a thing would be “unthinkable just a few weeks ago” (“Tagesschau”, October 19th).

After the opening of the Wall, the relationship between the two televisions changes markedly. At the end of November, “Aktuelle Kamera's” staff visited “Tagesschau's” network ARD, at the invitation of the editors of “Tagesschau” (“Tagesschau”, November 11th). The two television

teams discussed new opportunities for cooperation. Among the visitors were some reporters who had previously read rather angry anti-Western statements on the air, and who now had to adjust to the new context. With this meeting, the two stations had ended their period of intense conflict. On the air discussion of what the other side was doing practically ceased.

East German television's defensive posture derived in large part from its ideological obsession with its West German nemesis and the insecurities of a regime abandoned by its long time protector, the Soviet Union. East German television may have also exaggerated how much attention West German television paid to them (Dittmar, 2010, pp. 429-430, 432). A case in point was the show "Der schwarze Kanal" which consisted of ideological commentary of West German television material. The show had very low ratings, even lower than "Aktuelle Kamera" (Meyen, 2003, p. 117). East German television even went so far as to employ the Stasi to investigate the future plans of West German broadcasters (Dittmar, 2010, p. 372). Once cooperation began between East German and West German television stations, it was on the terms set by the West Germans (Lee, 2003, pp. 358-359). In short, East German television was the weaker side in this relationship, the one that reacted to what the other was doing. In the end, the entire East German television system was swallowed by West Germany, a process largely completed by December of 1990.

This aggressive ideological posturing of East German television was due to Politburo's desire for political control of key television shows. That "Aktuelle Kamera" was tightly censored was no secret (Dittmar, 2010, p. 408). Even Honecker was personally involved, shortly until "Aktuelle Kamera" aired, or even as it aired (Holzweißig, 1996, p. 51). Long time news announcer Angelika Unterlauf later commented that politicians would even call their studio "cockpit" and give instructions over the telephone (Holzweißig, 1996, p. 71). Journalists from the press as well as from "Aktuelle Kamera" were expected to attend meetings each Thursday in order to receive instructions on what passed as politically acceptable journalism (Holzweißig, 1996, p. 54). Correspondents of

the West German station ARD later commented how sensitive East German politicians were to the ways they were portrayed by West German television: even showing Honecker next to a crying baby was taboo (Hesse, 1998, p. 26.) All this goes to show how far the East German regime tried to go in order to maintain control.

Yet, it is remarkable how quickly “Aktuelle Kamera” changed: it became a highly professional newscast about a month from its first steps in mid-October. The change began after the Politburo's announcement that reforms would begin. The resignation of Honecker was followed by the resignation of the secretary for agitation and propaganda Joachim Hermann (Lee, 2003, p. 358). On December 1st, a new general manager (*Intendant*) for television was named (Dittmar, 2010, p. 414). After Krenz replaced Honecker, changes were put into effect in “Aktuelle Kamera” within 48 hours (Wolff, 2002, p. 275). When on November 4th a protest took place on Berlin's Alexanderplatz, attended by as many as half a million, East German television interrupted its program and switched to live coverage, seen by 44 percent of the people (Dittmar, 2010, p. 414; Wolff, 2002, p. 279). On the day the Berlin Wall was opened, the regular program was once again interrupted (Steinmetz, 2004, p. 471).

“Aktuelle Kamera's” coverage of protests from abroad, for example in South Africa or even in the Soviet Union, showed that they were certainly capable of neutral and objective reporting. The resignation of Honecker signaled the end of censorship. Honecker's successor, Egon Krenz asked editors, including editors of “Aktuelle Kamera”, to provide frank coverage of political events (Wolff, 2002, p. 277). Into this new sphere of freedom journalists could step in with already developed concepts. For example, East German television developed “Elf 99”, a popular youth show that combined reports, music, discussion and films (Wolff, 2002, pp. 275-279). This fast pace of change would not have been possible had East German television not had West German television as an ever present reminder of what television journalism could look like. The only thing

that did not change quickly was the fashion: male speakers continued to wear oversized glasses, while female speakers continued to wear even larger shoulder pads. This however, was also true of the West.

## **7. Conclusions**

This article has analyzed the relationship between television and protest in the East German revolution of 1989-1990 using a mixed-method approach that combined time series techniques with qualitative analysis of newscasts. There are two main conclusions. The first conclusion emerges from statistical testing: West German coverage of protest lead to increased protest levels in the first phase of the revolution. Once repression eased and the tacit coordination that West German television provided was no longer necessary, the link between West German television and protests was broken.

The second conclusion emerges from both the quantitative and qualitative segments of the analysis: West and East German television form two parts of an interactive system. East German television is the weaker partner in this asymmetric relationship. It is the one that reacts to Western television, both in its coverage of protest as well as its more general commentary on the behavior of the other side. However, just as with the first finding, this linkage holds only for the first phase of the revolution when the two sides were still in a relationship of intense political competition.

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## Appendix A

This appendix discusses the econometric underpinnings of time series techniques used in the analysis: Granger causality tests and vector auto-regression (VAR). Granger causality tests (Granger, 1969) use lagged values of one variable to forecast the value of another. It is said that series A “Granger causes” series B if the expectation of B, given the history of A, is sufficiently different from the expectation of B, unconditional on A. Specifications given in equation (1) and equation (2) are compared, at  $k$  appropriate lag lengths:

$$\Delta Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Y_{t-1} + \beta_2 Y_{t-2} + \dots + \beta_k Y_{t-k} + \varepsilon_t \quad \text{Equation (1)}$$

$$\Delta Y = \beta_0 + \beta_1 Y_{t-1} + \beta_2 Y_{t-2} + \dots + \beta_k Y_{t-k} + \gamma_1 X_{t-1} + \gamma_2 X_{t-2} + \dots + \gamma_k X_{t-k} + \varepsilon_t \quad \text{Equation (2)}$$

If the  $\gamma$  parameters are jointly significant, Granger causality has been established. However, there is no reason to restrict the use of Granger causality tests to systems with only two variables. One may want to predict relationships so that all series in a system are simultaneously estimated. VAR takes the bi-variate case and extends it to a system of variables (Sims, 1980). We can therefore estimate the effect of one series on another, controlling for the effects of all other series on each other. VAR models assume everything to be jointly endogenous:

$$Y_t = \alpha_0 + \Sigma B_s Y_{t-k} + \varepsilon_t \quad \text{Equation (3)}$$

where  $B$  stands for a matrix of regression coefficients, allowing for as many regression equations as there are variables in the system. If there are “ $s$ ” number of variables, then  $B$  is a  $s \times s$  matrix. The estimated variable  $Y_t$  is assumed to be a vector, hence the name vector auto-regression, with  $s$

number of elements, while  $k$  allows us to determine the lag length.

VAR allows us to conduct a rather stringent test of any assumed relationship because it estimates every variable with the help of every other variable, while controlling for the effect of all variables on each other. Given the large number of estimated equations, VAR is inefficient and coefficients cannot be interpreted in substantive terms. Instead, the analysis should be restricted to statistical significance. For an introduction to time series methods see Enders (2009).

## **Appendix B**

This appendix discusses coding procedures and variable construction. A research assistant helped with the viewing of newscasts. The author viewed all of “Tagesschau's” newscasts and roughly half of “Aktuelle Kamera's” newscasts. All daily newscasts from September 1st 1989 to March 18th 1990 were viewed (dates covered in Schwabe, 1999). Although convenience dictated this choice, it should be noted that protests did not take off until mid to late September and so there is not much reason to think that August witnessed many protests. Leipzig's famous Monday demonstrations were “officially” on vacation during August. The end point was chosen since on March 18th 1990 East Germans voted in their first competitive multi-party elections. In total, the time series includes 198 days.

As the newscasts were viewed, certain coding routines were followed by both the author and the research assistant. Each time a protest was mentioned, information was noted on the hard data as well as the style of reporting. Notes were taken on the tone of commentary, how the speakers talked about the protests and whether any editorializing commentary was included as part of the report. The main independent variables were constructed as simple dummy variables, i.e. 1 if the newscast reported on protests that day, 0 if they did not. In order to qualify for a 1 on any given day, it was sufficient if the newscast reported on at least one protest. The justification for such a choice is that

television could not, due to time constraints, talk about all the protests in the country. If they talked about one, this protest *de facto* symbolized all other protests that were taking place. Implicitly, the journalists also accepted this approach as they often mentioned protests in several locations but then had a longer report on only one.

Coding routines for the qualitative analysis were also outlined in advance, although they were updated as the work progressed. The main coding rule was to watch for changes in emphasis, either in format or content, which signal a politically important phenomenon. For example, a frequent characteristic of the early “Aktuelle Kamera” newscasts were long statements that were read by the speaker with no picture in the background (sometimes with no title either). When the Politburo announced a reform course, “Aktuelle Kamera” read the statement on the air in this format. Although often very long, quite boring and difficult to follow due to their ideologically convoluted language, these statements were clearly important. Similar attention was paid each time the newscast would turn to the media situation in the other Germany.

**Table 1 – VAR Granger causality tests for number of protests**

	First period: September 1st to November 30th	Second period: December 1st to March 18th	Both periods: September 1st to March 18th
	(1) Number of protests	(2) Number of protests	(3) Number of protests
Tagesschau reported on protest	10.620** (0.005)	0.421 (0.810)	2.867 (0.238)
Aktuelle Kamera reported on protest	2.455 (0.293)	0.814 (0.665)	1.320 (0.517)
Monday	6.539* (0.038)	9.602** (0.008)	19.113*** (0.000)
Tagesschau reported on emigration	4.725 (0.094)		2.700 (0.259)
Large protest took place (5,000 participants)	2.746 (0.253)	0.524 (0.769)	1.271 (0.530)
Protest took place in Berlin	10.892** (0.004)	2.117 (0.347)	0.261 (0.877)
Protest took place in Leipzig	0.126 (0.939)	3.742 (0.154)	4.005 (0.135)
New Forum protest took place	17.836*** (0.000)	3.824 (0.148)	10.989** (0.004)

Tables composed by author.

Chi-squared test statistics and  $p$ -values in parentheses.

\*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ .

**Table 2 – VAR Granger causality tests for television coverage**

	First period: September 1st to November 30th	Second period: December 1st to March 18th	First period: September 1st to November 30th	Second period: December 1st to March 18th
	(1) “Tagesschau” reported on protest	(2) “Tagesschau” reported on protest	(3) “Aktuelle Kamera” reported on protest	(4) “Aktuelle Kamera” reported on protest
“Tagesschau” reported on protest			7.414* (0.025)	3.509 (0.173)
“Aktuelle Kamera” reported on protest	0.164 (0.921)	1.943 (0.378)		
Monday	6.336* (0.042)	2.555 (0.279)	4.511 (0.105)	3.907 (0.142)
“Tagesschau” reported on emigration	2.281 (0.320)		5.762 (0.056)	
Large protest took place (5,000 participants)	3.272 (0.195)	1.074 (0.584)	0.932 (0.627)	0.377 (0.828)
Protest took place in Berlin	6.611* (0.037)	0.739 (0.691)	11.128** (0.004)	2.046 (0.359)
Protest took place in Leipzig	2.796 (0.247)	0.688 (0.709)	0.755 (0.685)	6.271* (0.043)
New Forum protest took place	0.905 (0.636)	2.757 (0.252)	2.810 (0.245)	0.990 (0.610)
Number of protests	1.985 (0.370)	0.949 (0.622)	1.942 (0.379)	0.932 (0.627)

Tables composed by author.

Chi-squared test statistics and  $p$ -values in parentheses.

\*\*\*  $p < 0.001$ , \*\*  $p < 0.01$ , \*  $p < 0.05$ .

**Table 3 – Protest and coverage over time**

	Number of protest events	Number of protests reported by “Aktuelle Kamera”	Number of protests reported by “Tagesschau”	Number of days in which “Aktuelle Kamera” comments on “Tagesschau”	Number of days in which “Tagesschau” comments on “Aktuelle Kamera”
1989					
September 1 – September 15	9	0	2	6	2
September 16 – September 30	4	0	4	1	3
October 1 – October 15	74	4	10	4	3
October 16 – October 31	276	20	22	1	2
November 1 – November 15	547	18	8	0	0
November 16 – November 30	377	14	3	0	0
December 1 – December 15	394	20	23	0	0
December 16 – December 31	128	5	4	0	0
1990					
January 1 – January 15	303	14	13	0	0
January 16 – January 31	392	28	7	0	0
February 1 – February 14	285	10	3	0	0
February 15 – February 28	142	4	4	0	0
March 1 – March 18	152	12	4	0	0

Sources: Schwabe, 1999; Die Tagesschau vor 20 Jahren, 2013; Deutsches Rundfunkarchiv.