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## Interview: Karl-Heinz Rudolf

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# A critical view of the reunification of Germany

*Karl-Heinz Rudolf, an industrial management expert from Leipzig who twice spent some years in prison for political reasons under the Socialist Unity Party regime, reviews the East German revolution between the time of the large demonstrations in October 1989 and the unification treaty in October 1990. His judgment may strike many western readers as unjust. And yet, we westerners should ask ourselves: What has caused so many easterners to curse, not the unification of Germany, but rather the circumstances that accompanied it? This is the second part in a series on developments in eastern Germany. Part one appeared in EIR on Oct. 25.*

Beginning with the election fraud at the beginning of 1989 at the latest, the patience of the people of East Germany was at an end. But the fear that what had happened on June 17, 1953, when Russian tanks crushed the people's uprising that was labeled as a "counterrevolution," was still present.

What did these people want? They wanted a free press. They wanted to freely express their opinion. They wanted to be able to freely choose their jobs and where they lived, and even to be able to move freely over national borders. They wanted their certificates of discharge from slavery to an ever-present party. They wanted to work in order to better shape their own lives and not for the glory of an ideology.

The governmental power attempted to stifle every impulse toward reform from below and label it as counterrevolutionary and as guided by the West.

### Revolutionary upsurge begins

With the end of the Leipzig autumn fair, a wave of outrage began that grew unstopably after the degrading spectacle of the 40th anniversary and the brutality exercised against peaceful demonstrators. And then came Oct. 9. That day caused great fear, since no help was to be expected from the West. Would the occupying power again dare to smother the demands of the people? How the East German Army would respond to that was unclear, but people thought the security troops, including the combat troops of the Socialist Unity Party (SED), would be easily capable of violence.

In fact, early on Oct. 9, the order was given that members

of the combat troops should receive weapons in order to, if necessary, restore law and order together with the Army that evening. And yet, the party experienced its first fiasco in those early morning hours: Some 95% of the "warriors of the party" refused to obey this order. Also, the Army leadership was not in agreement on what they should do if soldiers fired, not at demonstrators, but at others in uniform. Additionally, all the major allies of the regime refused to give any active help.

Thus the peaceful revolution could run its course, but not without fear that shots would still be fired, which could have had devastating consequences. That didn't happen, and so the danger of a violent escalation was warded off.

The state's forces of law and order were deprived of their power, and ruled only as shadowy figures. Erich Honecker left, [Egon] Krenz left. Hans Modrow's multi-party transitional government was also not able to win back the trust of the people. The government declared the elections invalid and promised free elections in 1990. Their promises were not believed—people had been swindled too often and for too long.

### Realistic people squeezed out

Most Germans were astonished by these events. Overnight, East Germans had become fearless heroes. The western parties at first remained aloof, they absolutely did not know what to make of this totally abnormal development. They kept their distance from their namesakes in the East, the coalitions. It was said they didn't want to interfere in this development, and there was talk of a four- to six-year period of transition until reunification was possible.

Then, however, other interests, primarily economic, came into play. For one thing, there was the danger that the peaceful revolution might spread to the western part of Germany if the demonstrations should go on forever. Another thing was that the western economy could not make good use of such a period of transition. The market in the East was still not under control and, in the course of such a transitional phase, a new form of economy could come into existence in the former Comecon area that would also work as a market

economy, but differently from that in the West. Therefore, the policy had to be turned as quickly as possible in a different direction.

Twenty-four carat economic leaders visited the eastern section, and sounded out the situation with egotistical SED functionaries, who swung unreservedly in the western leaders' direction. Now, the contacts to sister parties in the East were also reinforced. Politicians fetched ambitious sympathizers from the eastern Christian Democratic Union (CDU), the liberal Agricultural Production Societies (LPDP), the farmers party (DBD), and the National Democratic Party of Germany. People who were thinking in realistic terms were forced to the fringe, whereas hardly a hair was touched on the heads of those who enriched themselves at the expense of the people.

### **Elections and currency union**

Shortly before the first election in the East, the political change of course was announced: an exchange of money favorable to the East, on July 1, 1990, and the beginning of discussions after the election in order to effect German unity as quickly and smoothly as possible.

The old parties got new chairmen, but little support from the west. New parties and groupings came into existence in various places, and now had to seek to acquire status with the population within two and one-half months. Thus, it happened that the election campaign was taken care of in an unparalleled way by western leaders. There were generally no substantive issues discussed. Only those who had played a decisive role in the successful political overthrow were calm.

The election produced the desired result. It set the direction for the fastest possible unification according to the western model, and determined a composition of a negotiating commission acceptable to Bonn.

From then on, there was less and less talk of unification on an equal basis; more and more the idea won out that the quickest possible entry was the only real way to German unity. For western politicians, it was now a matter of exploiting the moment politically. And the western economy hoped for a considerable upswing from unity, which necessarily would be at the expense of the East.

With punctuality, after the small vote in the East, the exchange law was announced. The population in the East was happy; those in the West, pacified that they would not be burdened by it. The western economy prepared for action since it was known that the economy in the East would not be at all able to bear this great explosion. Citizens did not think of the consequences but rather only of money, and believed that the Bonn government, which had up to that point kept its electoral promises, would continue to do so.

In the East German companies, plans for restructuring were now worked out that were oriented to their own productivity with an admixture of western products. In the eyes of western

politicians and the western economy, these plans were rubbish. Of course, the economy of East Germany was sick, in part very sick, but it would have been curable if that committee of professors and bank managers from the West had not given it a death blow with the currency union of July 1, 1990.

On July 1, 1990, approximately 100 billion deutsche-marks flowed toward East Germany, of which approximately DM 50 billion was immediately available. People were gripped by a binge of consumption, and ignored the consequences. The western economy knew that, and flooded the market with products at prices that were inflated by 10-15%. Ninety-five percent of the money that had flowed to the East on July 1 was, by the middle of July, back in the cash registers of western businesses, and, of that, at least DM 14 billion [\$8.2 billion] as the result of inflated prices. There was nothing left for the companies of the East. That was and is the free market.

### **The unification treaty**

Nothing more was to be heard of a unification of the two Germanys on equal terms after the March 18, 1990 elections; everything was moving in the direction of the entry of East Germany into West Germany. This entry, however, could not be completed with a mere stroke of the pen. Even if, during the 40 years of separation, their language had remained the same, the two parts of Germany had developed very differently. Therefore, there had to be negotiations on important points.

The elected representatives of the people in the East and the new government could not accomplish the necessary work; they were guided by remote control from Bonn, past the interests of the people. In Bonn, the ideas were formed, and Berlin said "yes" and "amen" since there was no time for discussion. In Berlin, they conjured out of the hat an all-around man who could do anything, knew everything, even how things would go in the future, and sat in Berlin facing a staff of experts, negotiating the unification treaty.

In the East German parliament, the 1,200-page treaty was handled with intergalactic velocity, and approved, of course, by a binding majority. The people were not asked.

Thanks to this treaty, 16 million people were degraded into second-class citizens, and yet, until the declaration of entry, they were left in the dark about that. They were allowed and encouraged to busy themselves with uninteresting, incidental matters, which were consciously made into matters to consume their time and energy.

And even that was not enough. In the East, a new category of human being was created that was supposedly useful for nothing: everyone over 50 years of age. They were no longer suitable for work, and had no more prospects in a unified Germany; they were written off. Witchhunts and character assassination bloomed again. The knowledge and experience of these people was no longer consulted. As remnants of the past, they were, at best, granted charity.