Chapter 14
Political Violence in the German Democratic Republic Between 1949 and 1989 and Its Consequences for Mental and Physical Health

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Introduction

A broad international audience first became acquainted with the topic of political violence in the German Democratic Republic (GDR) from the film *"The Lives of Others* (Henckel von Donnersmarck 2006, see also http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/The_Lives_of_Others). At the Oscars in 2007 the film received the award for the Best foreign language movie. The movie depicts the life of East-Berlin artists who were persecuted by the State Security police ("Stasi") for political reasons. The movie launched a controversial debate in Germany whether the story is historically appropriate (e.g. Simon 2007). The discussion focussess around the question: is it realistic to assume that the Stasi persecutors changed for the better? A final clarification of this issue must be discussed elsewhere. However, the movie directed international attention to the hitherto largely unknown issue of political persecution in the GDR.

Historical Background

Germany was in a political and administrative transition period between 1945 and 1949 after the end of World War II. After the Potsdam Conference in 1945, Germany was divided into 4 sectors. At the end of this phase, 2 German states were founded in 1949: the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG or West Germany, consisting of the American, British and French sectors) and the German Democratic Republic (GDR or East Germany, consisting of the Soviet sector).

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Political power in the GDR was in the hands of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (Fulbrook 1997), a party that was created in 1946 through the fusion of the Communist Party and the Social Democratic Party of Germany. Already at the beginning of the GDR, there were opposition efforts against this concentration of power in the Socialist Unity Party (SED). To prevent these oppositional tendencies, the SED continued to work closely with the State Security police ("Stasi"). In 1961, a wall between East and West Germany and between East and West Berlin was built. GDR citizens could no longer travel to West Germany and West Berlin.

Since the founding of the GDR and even more after the construction of the wall in 1961, the State Security police detained opposition activists and imprisoned them in special prisons (Bruce 2010; Gieseke 2011). There interrogations were carried out under the worst conditions (e.g. sleep deprivation, night interrogations). After pre-trial confinement and sentencing, the oppositionals were transferred into the "normal" prison regime, often in conjunction with criminals (murderers, etc.). But, there were also special prisons especially for political prisoners (e.g. Bautzen II, see Fricke and Klewin 2007).

The conditions of imprisonment can be described as follows: There were very harsh conditions with physical torture (e.g. beatings, special detention room, which could be filled with water; in German "Wasserkarzer") under the strong influence of Stalin's regime in the Soviet Union and its impact on the GDR until 1953 (Stalin's death). This physical torture declined in the course of time, but it remained part of the prison regime for political prisoners until the end of the GDR, while the psychological torture a higher priority. The State Security police had set up its own university especially for the "refinement" of psychological maltreatment. These methods of persecution can be subsumed under the dehumanizing term "Zersetzung" and were also used in the context of non-penal-detention (Klinitzke 2010).

As part of sentencing, several paragraphs of the Criminal Code of the GDR were used. These paragraphs criminalized oppositional efforts and were named as follows: "treasonous transmission of messages", "treasonous agitation", "public vilification" and (in most cases) "illegal border crossing", in reference to attempts to escape from East Germany (also including applying for departure).

It can be estimated that approximately 200,000 people were imprisoned for political reasons in the GDR (Schröder and Wilke 1998; Borbe 2010). The exact numbers vary between 180,000 and (with the involvement of political detainees from the time of the Soviet zone) 300,000. A small portion of these prisoners (about 34,000) were redeemed by the Federal Republic of Germany between 1963 and 1989 (Rehlinger 2011). In the 1980s, the political climate in Europe started to change (including the appearance of the trade union Solidarity in Poland, and the process of 'Perestroika' under Gorbachev in the Former Societ Union). Finally in 1989, the people demonstrated peacefully in Leipzig (Bartee 2000) and the entire GDR claiming for their freedom. This led to the fall of both the Berlin wall and the inner-German border and, finally, to the end of the GDR.

Case Vignettes

The study Health and social consequences of political imprisonment in the Soviet Zone/GDR was conducted between 2006 and 2008 (funded by "Stiftung Aufarbeitung", a German government funded organization for the investigation of the SED dictatorship). Biographical data were assessed by conducting 10 biographical interviews with former political prisoners. Two of these interviewed persons will be described in more detail. We selected these 2 cases as examples for the context of political violence in the GDR: (1) criminalisation because of vocal apposition to the system and (2) and in more detail) the failed attempt to escape from the GDR (Beer and Weißflog 2011).

Mr RB

Mr. RB was born in 1934. During his apprenticeship he received classes on political theory, where he took classes on texts from Lenin and Stalin. On January 12th, 1951, he expressed, together with other students, his disgust about this. The friends of RB slightly destroyed school furniture. RB painted a beard on the portrait of Lenin on the wall with a burnt wooden stick. In the following night, he was picked up at home by the police and was handed over to the custody of the Soviet authorities. In the prison cells the lights burned day and night. In the daytime one was only allowed to sit, but not to lie down. At 5 o'clock in the morning the prisoners were awakened and the interrogations were carried out until 1 o'clock at night. Mr. B was not beaten or physically tortured.

On March 6th, the 16 year old RB was convicted together with his classmates. Two of them were sentenced to 25 years, he and another boy to 10 years. RB was sent to the notorious prison "Yellow Misery" in Bautzen, and placed in the youth room. Two hundred to 300 young prisoners were herded into a room and slept on narrow bunks. All had been convicted of political offenses. The boys were constantly hungry. They had 350 g of bread, a quart of soup at noon, and sometimes margarine, jam or sugar. The poor feeding without vitamins worsened the rash on the whole body that RB had developed during the previous period of imprisonment.

A friend encouraged him to use the time in prison to learn something for the future. He even got up to 50 Russian daily vocabulary words. Until January 1952 he remained in Bautzen. Thereafter, RB, together with his friend, was transferred to another prison, the so-called "Red Ox" in Halle. In "Red Ox" there were not only political prisoners, but also criminals (from a bicycle thief to a murderer). This was a new experience for RB. In prison work he was responsible for preparing and distributing food. A successful amnesty appeal freed RB in January 1954.

After German reunification in 1990, RB told his imprisonment story to friends and work colleagues, and he had feelings of relief. Mr. B submitted a request for access to his records of the State Security (Stasi). Based on these documents he found that about eleven close persons from his surroundings had spied on him. He was sad that those persons who had written reports about him for the state security had not spoken honestly with him. RB was rehabilitated in 1997 (in 1998 by the Soviet authorities) and received detention compensation.

Today he still suffers from occasional nightmares and, due to malnutrition in the prison, has some dental problems. Contrary to his earlier decision not to deal with the circumstances of detention, Mr. B entered a reappraisal initiative after the political change in Germany. The members of this group supported the rehabilitation process of former political prisoners, held information sessions and were engaged in establishing the payment of an honorary pension for former political prisoners. After the corresponding bill had passed, his pension has been paid regularly since 2007.

Ms. RD

RD grew up with her parents and siblings in a little village. She gave birth to her first child when she was 15 years old. After giving birth, she lived with the parents of the father of her child. R. finished school and started an apprenticeship. At the age of 17 she met her true love. Her boyfriend was 1 year older. She was impressed by his knowledge of the world. She trusted him. Her boyfriend was conscripted into the army in 1970. He decided to withdraw and to escape with his girlfriend from the GDR. Their daughter was to remain with the grandmother. R. and her boyfriend wanted to get her later.

On August 25th in 1970, R., her boyfriend and 2 other friends took the train near the inner-German border. They were accompanied by a friend who lived in the border area and was familiar with the vicinity. His father was a major of the border troops in the area. R. and the others were hiding in the woods and wanted to cross the border to West Germany at dawn the next day. But there was no fog on that morning, so they decided to delay their border crossing until the next day. Their friend gave them something to eat and to drink. During the following night, this friend was arrested, and a bit later RD, her boyfriend and the 2 others were also arrested by border guards.

Now, her "journey" in the so-called "Grotewohl Express" began (cf. http://de.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grotewohl-Express). This special train for prisoners sometimes travelled for days through the GDR in order to bring prisoners from one prison to another. The prisoners were crammed into small compartments. Usually, the prisoners did not know where they were going. This was an additional way to confuse the political prisoners. R. was brought to a Stasi prison and interrogated throughout the night under floodlights. She was allowed to sleep for 2 h, and then the interrogation continued. She was very frightened, because all attendees

were armed. As the interrogation went on, she suffered a nervous breakdown. As a result, she was put in solitary confinement. R. cannot remember how often or for how long. There was no visible clock in prison. After the period of remand, R was initially in a juvenile detention center and, subsequently, she was sent to the women's prison Hoheneck. This prison was completely overcrowded. The estimated numbers are up to 1,600 inmates in a prison designed for just 200 prisoners. Up to 20 women were housed in a 24-square-meter cell with 2 toilets and 1 sink.

Immediately after her transfer to Hoheneck, R. was sent to a bullpen: no light, no toilet, only a bucket, and some bugs on the walls. She shouted, rattled the bars, hit her head until it bled and scraped her arms on the wall. Finally, she was brought to the central prison hospital in the GDR. There, she was sedated with drugs. After a while, she was brought back to Hoheneck in one of the totally overcrowded cells. In Hoheneck, most of the prisoners were incarcerated because of criminal offenses. There was between the prisoners, e.g. sexual abuse. R was very afraid. The political prisoners had a very bad reputation among the prisoners. They were not among the so-called "hard" who knew the "real life". Rather, the political ones were those who wanted to escape from their responsibility for society by escaping from the GDR. R tried to make herself as unnoticeable as possible. She lived in constant fear of death, suffered repeated nervous breakdowns, and had the feeling that she would not get through anything. She made futile attempts to open up the arteries with her long fingernails. Now she assumes that she had also been sedated with drugs in the prison Hoheneck. R received neither visits nor letters nor packages. She did not write, either. Her interrogators said that her friends and her family had turned away from her. R. believed that. Due to the interrogations she experienced in Hoheneck, she lost faith in herself and her self-esteem. She felt that she was not even worthy to grow her own child.

After the end of her imprisonment in 1971, R. returned to her parents. Her child had been at the parents of the child's father during their imprisonment. But after the discharge from prison, R. did not get in contact with her child because of her own feelings of worthlessness. She did not tell her parents or siblings about the prison term. She was embarrassed by the stigma of having been imprisoned. Everywhere in her environment she experienced exclusion and withdrew more and more. She had lost all confidence in herself and others.

After her boyfriend's discharge from prison, R. married him. They had 2 children. But R. began to suffer from depression and nightmares which she did not associate with her detention experience. She had been in psychiatric treatment since 1975 due to a number of psychosomatic symptoms (e.g. pain, weakness, stomach pain). Despite this treatment, her condition deteriorated. In 1979 her husband separated from her. She had not talked about her time in prison with him. The separation was an additional incision in her life. R. had thought that the shared experience of political imprisonment would provide a sufficient basis for living together. But it was not.

The increasing isolation and emotional instability exacerbated her mental state. R. made several suicide attempts due to her severe depression. At her job she tried

not to stand out as she did in prison. She did not participate in any events of her company outside the working hours. She assumed that ex-offenders like her have no right to do so. Work only served to feed herself and her children. This effort to not stand out had another reason: her children attended a regular school. In school, such a fate as hers was not an issue; officially there were no political prisoners in the GDR. There was no option to address this issue in the civic lessons, for example (in German the so-called "Staatsbürgerkundeunterricht"). Her sons would probably get in trouble if they had discussed the experiences of their mother. So, R. told her children to forget that she had been imprisoned. It was her way to protect them while she remained ashamed.

In 1989 the political situation changed in the GDR. Thousands of people left the country via the open border with Hungary and Austria. Others demonstrated for changes in society. That was the starting point for R to participate in social life again. The process of societal transformation led to a transformation in R, too. She went to Leipzig and participated in the Monday prayers and demonstrations. When she saw how many people were gathered there, she gradually lost her fear of attracting attention and being arrested again.

In 1990 she felt strong enough to start looking for her daughter, with whom she had had no contact all the years since her arrest. But 5 years passed until there was a first encounter with the daughter. It was followed by other meetings, but a "real" daughter-mother relationship could not be established.

In the mid-1990s, a large proportion of the workforce, especially those workers with disabilities, was to be dismissed or moved to other workplaces, and R. tried to support these colleagues. She sensed that as a new grave injustice. She was very upset in realizing that many of the former SED officials received good posts and pensions, or even appeared on television. It was also a great problem for her recognize that the prison guards who had tortured her still worked in Hoheneck and that the "old" teachers still teach the children. Because of her deep hurts, she would have preferred a radical dealing with the perpetrators and their supporters.

Until 1995, she had energy to fight for her belief in justice. But her hopes vanished. R. took more and more psychiatric drugs. Finally, she became addicted. In 2000 she was admitted to a psychiatric ward again. At first she had a drug withdrawal reaction. This was followed by inpatient psychotherapy. But there was no permanent stabilization of her emotional state. It was only possible to get away from it all when she was on holiday with her new partner far away from Germany, e.g. in the USA.

In 2003, she bought a weekend home near their former home village. She soon regretted this decision. Everything in the village was connected with disturbing memories from the period after discharge from the prison, such as how she hid behind trees in order not to be pursued by the villagers' eyes or to be insulted or ridiculed. This she describes as a re-traumatisation. She reacted with insomnia and depression. A psychiatrist prescribed her antidepressants. After a period of complete lethargy with feelings of futility, she tried to face her fears, she visited the women's prison in Hoheneck on "Open Day" in 2004. Her psychiatrist offered to accompany her, but R. refused. As she walked through the prison, memories came.

Everything was present. This was the world that she knew. In the world outside, she felt she was a stranger. R. realized that she had not coped with the experiences of her past.

In May 2005 her health deteriorated again. She was admitted to an inpatient psychiatric treatment. The psychiatrist became her most important attachment figure. R. felt protected and understood. But she developed a dependency in this relationship. It was very difficult to break it. Her hope for relief by (re-) processing the experiences in her youth was not realized; she felt rather overwhelmed and alone after 26 weeks of psychotherapy. After this, she spoke for the first time with her sons and her current partner about her prison time – even if she could only tell fragments.

In 2006 she first talked about her prison experiences with her former partner (the one with whom she tried to escape). Up to this time he did not know how much she had suffered from the prison experiences. Their daughter now also knew their history, but only fragments. That is because no questions were asked within the family. Rather, the brother-in-law of R. claimed that if they had behaved properly, they would not have been sent to prison. Now R believes that many people think that way. She only tells her story to people when she knows that they consider the GDR to be a dictatorship. Otherwise she would have to explain too much – an effort she cannot afford.

R. is rehabilitated and receives an honorary pension for former political prisoners. But she does not get along without a regular daily routine. Any changes throw her off course. She suffers from nightmares and stomach ulcer. She has to rely on pills, and her quality of life is greatly reduced. Once a week she goes for psychotherapeutic treatment.

Overview on Mental and Somatic Health Sequelae

In the 1990s, the first research projects dealt with the psychological effects of political imprisonment in the GDR. Foremost to mention is the work of the study group of Stefan Priebe and Denis and Doris, and the group of Andreas Maercker and Matthias Schützwohl (cited below). Their studies provide the first results on traumatic disorders after political imprisonment in the GDR.

Their findings suggets a characteristic syndrome involving symptoms of depression and anxiety with vegetative complaints and increased arousal. This symptom cluster persists without improvement over a long period in more than the half of the former political prisoners. Approximately 30.0 % had a current Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), 60.0 % a lifetime PTSD. The level of dissociation was elevated in the former prisoner group. Intrusive recollections and hyperarousal were more common than avoidance/numbing symptoms. Regarding coping styles, there were initial indications of 2 separate coping groups: one group experienced social relationships as helpful and a second group who felt not supported by anyone. But there were also tentative signs that the experience of the political imprisonment

was reinterpreted by some individuals into a "helpful" experience for their later life (Bauer et al. 1993; Priebe et al. 1993; Denis et al. 1997; Maercker and Schützwohl 1997).

Since 2000, further studies were conducted suggestingmixed results (Ehlers et al. 2000; Schützwohl and Maercker 2000; Maercker and Müller 2004). In contrast to participants without PTSD, those with chronic or remitted PTSD were more likely to perceive mental defeat and an overall feeling of alienation from other people. Chronic PTSD was also related to perceived negative and permanent change in their personalities or life aspirations. The groups did not differ in their attempts to gain control during imprisonment. Using structural equation modelling, trait-anger was shown to be directly activated by the experience of chronic posttraumatic intrusions. Social support appeared to lessen the level of anger. Principal components analysis yielded 3 factors: recognition as victim, general disapproval, and family disapproval.

Further, the role of initial reactions on the development of PTSD or related disorders was analyzed. The results can be summarized as follows: (1) Lifetime PTSD symptoms were predominantly predicted by initial reactions to trauma, and (2) chronic dissociation was predominantly predicted by trauma severity (Maercker et al. 2000). In the same way, communication behaviour after political imprisonment was investigated (Müller et al. 2000). For the detection of specific communication behaviours after imprisonment, a scale was developed. This scale yielded 3 dimensions: "conditions of silence", "conditions of talking" (not polarized in opposite directions, but independently of each other) and, as a third factor, "emotional reactions".

An expert opinion from 2003 can be characterized as a milestone in the research engagement with the issue of traumatic disorders following political imprisonment in GDR (Freyberger et al. 2003). It was authorized by the State Commissioner for the Records of the State Security Service of the GDR. It stated as follows:

(1) *The empirical research in the previous decade has shown that political repression can lead to severe physical and mental disorders.*
(2) *At least 100,000 persons have a mental disorder like a PTSD or other trauma-related mental disorders. . .and at least 50,000 persons have a chronification of this disorder.*
(3) *The reintegration of the traumatized people can be contributed by an open social atmosphere. This atmosphere can be enhanced by competent experts [in the context of acceptance of physical and/or mental subsequent damage following political repression] and the overcoming of shortcomings of existing laws.*

From a sociological perspective, it was stated that people from the GDR experienced 2 dictatorships: the Nazi dictatorship from 1933 to 1945 and the communist dictatorship in the GDR, both generated the development of post-traumatic disorders following political repression (Seidler and Froese 2006).

In the late 2000s, attention on the long term physical and mental sequelae of imprisoned persons was increasing again. The main research question was: *Are the sequelae still observable?* (Plogstedt 2010). Additionally, there are follow-up-surveys of studies first conducted in 1990s ("Dresden-Study"). The initial results of the last mentioned study are now available (Gäbler et al. 2009; Gäbler and Maercker 2011).

There are also long-term sequelae for non-imprisoned but detained persons. They were exposed to a variety of reprisals such as observation, different forms of social marginalization and arranged professional failure and others. At least 1 mental disorder was found in 60.0 % of the participants, affective disorders in 38.0 % (lifetime prevalence), followed by somatoform disorders with 28.0 % and anxiety with 23.0 % (Spitzer et al. 2007).

Finally, a some studies should be mentioned which analyzed the persisting long-term sequelae. The study results can be summarized as follows:

PTSD (Weißflog et al. 2011)

Based on questionnaire data, it can be estimated that 50.0 % of the people in sample of $N = 157$ former political prisoners suffer from a PTSD. Further, in this study, there was no consistent impact of imprisonment-related variables (e. g. duration of imprisonment) on health-related quality of life.

Anxiety and depression (Weißflog et al. 2010)

Anxiety of the former political detainees was significantly increased in comparison to an age- and gender matched subsample of the German general population (10 vs. 4.8; $p < 0.001$, effect size $d = 1.33$). The same applies to depression (9.7 vs. 5.6; $p < 0.001$; effect size $d = 0.92$).

Somatic complaints (Weißflog et al. 2012)

In addition to psychopathology, somatic complaints of former politically imprisoned persons were investigated. The main results were: somatic complaints in the assessed dimensions of "exhaustion", "gastrointestinal complaints", "musculoskeletal complaints", and "cardiovascular complaints" significantly increased in comparison to an age- and gender matched sample from the German general population (including high effect sizes).

After this brief presentation of some study results concerning psychopathological consequences after political persecution in the GDR, we consider that these results have to be contextualized in current social or socio-economic contexts of Germany. The consideration of the painful experiences of politically persecuted people solely through the "diagnostic lens" of psychiatric classification systems has strong limitations (e.g. not considering a social responsibility for individual disorders; see Stanciu and Rogers 2011).

Counselling and Psychotherapy

Psychodynamic Characteristics

The common characteristic of people who suffered from political imprisonment is that they come to counselling or therapy with a *suffering package charged by society and tied by the individual* (Drees 1996). The feelings that are related to the detention are usually isolated in sealed memory boxes. Affected persons have shown normal functioning in their everyday roles by dissociating the painful memories. However, most of the detained persons reach a point in their life when this regulation does not work anymore (often associated with external stimuli, e.g. a movie about the topic or a newspaper report). As a result, it may come to a crisis that affects their mental and physical health and their social relations. It is possible that affected persons react with social withdrawal and isolation. Trobisch-Lütge calls this "poisoned relations" (Trobisch-Lütge 2004). Hölter describes it as follows: *Because of the fear that everything good is destroyed again, affected persons distrust themselves and their environment* (Hölter 2003, 2005). The second case in this chapter names the first step in coping with the crisis. R. sought professional help. However, several offers did not help her*: It is all troubled, and nothing more*. Psychological treatments were terminated by her repeatedly. R. suggests that it is important that psychological professionals are familiar with the topic of mental disorders following political imprisonment. This would be one of the most important preconditions for helpful treatment. This leads up to the very special role of affects of shame on those affected. The experienced depersonalization in prison leads to intense feelings of shame (Hilgers 2006; Wurmser 2007). In the therapeutic setting, affected persons often recall (flashbacks) detailed external events such as arrest, the detention situation, establishment of the cell in the prison, and similar details. But deep hidden feelings of shame and guilt cannot be verbalized. If psychotherapists address this issue, the therapeutic relationship can be radically disturbed or the patient could terminate the therapy (Trobisch-Lütge 2004).

In the recent literature, the concept of "omnipresence" is discussed as a form of an unconscious psychic defence mechanism that is specific for people who were exposed to political persecution. As a result of political repression, the "you" in other persons is lost. According to the author, this loss is defended by an excessive and cross-border impulse for expansion. It is strongly connected with the media-moderated expansion of individual development and acceleration (Frommer 2011).

Therapist and Therapeutic Situation

On the part of therapists, there is the danger that an excessive demand is recognized when the patient reports horrible experiences of political imprisonment. The therapeutic work may be hampered by the task to cure psychological impairments that

are neglected by society. It is possible that the therapist perceives his or her professional work as tampering with the situation of the formerly imprisoned persons. It could culminate in the question: Do I actually have the appropriate resources for helping in this case?

Therefore, counselling and psychotherapeutic treatment of people who were politically imprisoned have to include the historical and the current social context. The formerly imprisoned persons themselves address these issues very often in the treatment.

The Societal Context

There are some societal conditions after political imprisonment which can hinder coping with the traumatic experience. These conditions go from a lack of understanding up to allegations from the immediate social environment toward the formerly imprisoned persons (Horvay 2011). In the context of the rehabilitation process of imprisonment-related health disabilities, incomprehensible demands placed on the responsible authorities also belong to these conditions (see Denis et al. 2000). This is connected with the perception of the former detainees that their personal injury is not recognized and they are ignorant concerning mental and physical trauma within the society. Furthermore, there is a possibility to meet the former perpetrators again. This could be an additional risk factor that hinders post-traumatic coping. Feelings of revenge can also play a role in this context, as Gäbler et al. demonstrate in their study (Gäbler and Maercker 2011).

Counselling and Psychotherapeutic Service Provision

Finally, we review psychosocial service provision for trauma victims after political imprisonment. At the Federal State Commissioner for the Records of the State Security Service of the former GDR, there are counselling services, but their focus is mainly on providing advice on administrative issues (including support in the process of penal rehabilitation, assistance in the application). There are only 2 specific institutions for psychosocial counselling and psychotherapeutic treatment for people who suffer from the long term consequences of political repression. First, the Treatment Centre for Torture Victims in Berlin (www.bzfo.de), in which the victims of human rights violations throughout the world have been treated since 1998. Second, the counselling unit "Gegenwind" in Berlin (which means "Headwind"), a contact point for victims of the GDR dictatorship (www.beratungsstelle-gegenwind.de). Work scopes of this counselling unit are:

(1) Support in handling with (legal) matters of compensation,
(2) Counselling and psychotherapeutic treatment (alone or in group),

(3) Initiation and guidance of self-help groups to process traumatic experiences,
(4) Supervision and education and/or training for institutions that advise politically traumatized persons of the GDR dictatorship.

Due to the high demand for counselling and psychotherapy and only few employees in specific treatment units, there are long waiting times for treatment. Therefore, the formerly mentioned points (3) and (4) are also specially emphasized, namely the distribution of tasks across several shoulders. On the one hand, this serves to strengthen the self-help potential. On the other hand, an adequate counselling and treatment of politically traumatized people in non-specific institutions (e.g. psychotherapists in private practice) has to be ensured.

Beside structural factors, personal characteristics can hinder the use of psychosocial services (Schreiber et al. 2009). Therefore, internet-based psychosocial service provision is an alternative way to offer an appropriate treatment (Böttche et al. 2012). It also includes the possibility to avoid an under-supply of this high-risk group for chronic post-traumatic impairment.

Conclusion

More than two decades after the end of the GDR, people who were imprisoned for political reasons in the GDR are still strongly affected with mental and physical long-term consequences that are related to their experience of political repression. There is only little specific psychosocial service provision (counselling and psychotherapy) for this group. Therefore, it is necessary to integrate relevant trauma-therapeutic expertise into existing medical services through continuing education. Here it is very important to consider specific characteristics of counselling and psychotherapy of former politically imprisoned persons. On a social level, political education has to be strengthened, especially for young people in schools. Finally, the transgenerational effects (for children, grandchildren) of political imprisonment should be more examined in research (Weingarten 2004; Wohlrab 2006; Glaesmer et al. 2011; Klinitzke et al. 2012).

On the one hand, Germans are "world champions" in the reappraisal of their recent history after WW II (53,000 publications on GDR-related issues, including nearly 10,000 books). Moreover, in the early 1990s special laws as the basis for the penal and administrative rehabilitation were passed. On the other hand, the reappraisal of the GDR dictatorship is heterogeneous. For example, there were bfew judicial consequences for the perpetrators and their supporters. Only few responsible persons were convicted with small sentences.

Reappraisal in the media has won increasing importance in the last decade. The above mentioned movie *The Lives of Others* has contributed to this. On November 9th in 2011 (anniversary of the fall of the Berlin Wall), there was another movie on German television showing the story of a woman who lived in the Western part of Germany 20 years after the end of the GDR. By chance, she meets a doctor there

whom she recognizes as a doctor who had treated her in the women's prison Hoheneck. She confronts him with the accusation of having "sedated" her with psychotropic drugs in prison. He denies this. He pathologizes the woman (because of her impaired mental state). The movie bears the significant title *It's not over* (Meletzky 2011). It had 5.85 million viewers in prime time (audience rate nearly 20.0 %) and reached a large public audience. Beside scientific research on psychological and physical consequences after political repression, this film is a brick in the wall in the process of reappraising the younger German history, which has not yet been completed.

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