

THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE AGRICULTURAL ADMINISTRATION AND ASSOCIATIONS IN EAST GERMANY BEFORE AND AFTER UNIFICATION: ARE THERE LESSONS FOR THE KOREAN PENINSULA?

AXEL WOLZ*

Keywords

transition, agricultural administration, farmers' union, unification, Germany

Abstract

With the collapse of the socialist regime in East Germany in late 1989 and the rising political call for unification in early 1990, a radical and abrupt change of the institutional structure became necessary. The (agricultural) administration had to be totally restructured. This included not only substance, functions and tasks which had to be adjusted, similar to all other transition economies, to the market-economic and pluralistic democratic system, but also the whole administrative set-up had to be re-established in line with the West German system (territorial re-organization). Hence, a new administrative system had to be built up from scratch, while simultaneously the socialist one had to be dismantled in a very short period. However, different to other transition economies, there had been strong support from the West in re-organizing the administrative set-up. Overall, this institutional change seems to have been accomplished successfully as billions of Deutsch Marks could be processed by the agricultural administration in 1990 in order to avoid an imminent collapse of the agricultural sector. In addition, the organizations representing the agricultural pop-

* Leibniz-Institute of Agricultural Development in Central and Eastern Europe (IAMO), Halle (Saale), Germany.

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ulation had to be re-organized. The re-organization of the German Farmers' Union is of special prominence as both German parts were representing completely different agricultural systems. This is the only important organization at national level where East Germans could stay in decision-making positions after unification which had severe repercussions when shaping transformation policies affecting the agricultural sector during the 1990s.

1. Introduction

More than 20 years have passed since West Germany ("Federal Republic of Germany", FRG) and East Germany ("German Democratic Republic", GDR) were united on 3 October 1990. In late 1989, the collapse of the socialist regime in East Germany happened almost overnight and nobody in the East and the West including politicians and administration had been prepared for the transformation process leading to unification at this time. This process required a radical change of the institutional structure, i.e. it quickly resulted in a complete administrative transfer of the West German system to the East (Lehmbruch 2000: 88). A new administrative system had to be established in the East, while the socialist one had to be dismantled at the same time. This institutional change also required new organizations representing the people in the political system (political parties) as well as with respect to their interests (lobbying). While the German experience seems to be exceptional when compared to the development in most other transition economies, it might provide some hints for a possible path on the Korean Peninsula.

In this contribution, the institutional change concerning the agricultural administration and major organizations representing agricultural producers in East Germany will be addressed. This change has to be analyzed in light of the introduction of the economic, monetary and social union between the two German states and the adoption of the Common Agricultural Policy (CAP) in the middle of 1990 leading to an almost immediate and complete bankruptcy of the agricultural sector. The whole agricultural and food sector had been in a very critical stage. Even before unification, the West German government provided emergency funds to rescue the agricultural sector in the East. These funds amounted to 4.9 bn DM in 1990 and 4.2 bn DM in 1991, respectively

(Warbeck 2001: 219). The smooth transfer of the financial support had to be handled by the administration which itself had to be re-organized. The legal basis was laid by the Agreement on the Economic, Monetary and Social Union (*Wirtschafts-, Währungs- und Sozialunion*), signed 18 May 1990; effective 1 July 1990) and the Unification Treaty (signed 31 August 1990; effective 3 October 1990).

When looking at the literature, it is surprising that not many analyses about the institutional transformation concerning the agricultural sector are available. In an analysis of the topics of articles of the major German weekly magazine dealing with the agricultural sector (“Agra-Europe”) during the first phase of transformation, i.e. 1990-1995, just three percent focused on agricultural administration and associations (Thiele 1998: 32). The major topics were the CAP, privatization and decollectivization. The management of public tasks seemed to have been handled smoothly. How this had been accomplished will be discussed in this contribution. Due to the lack of detailed analyses, the major sources will be personal reports of officials who actively participated in the transformation process themselves.

This paper is structured as follows. In the first part the transformation of the agricultural administration from the socialist system to the West German one will be discussed. This covers not only the transformation of the existing system in adopting new roles and functions, but also the establishment of new organizations in facilitating the transformation process, e.g. the set up of the Agency for Reprivatization which was placed in charge of all state owned assets including agricultural and forest lands. In the fourth section, a discussion will be focused on how organizations representing the agricultural producers in East Germany have adapted to unification. The final section concludes.

2. Transformation of public administration

In this chapter, the general administrative set-up in West Germany and East Germany before unification will be presented. This is followed by a brief overview of the agricultural administration in East Germany during the socialist period. The major part is dealing with the transformation of the agricultural administration, its new tasks and the major problems in establishing a new type of administration.

2.1. Administration in general

The administration in East Germany had been set up after World War II (i.e. 8 May 1945) under the Soviet occupation. Like in West Germany, i.e. in the American, British and French Occupational Zones, federal states were established which had - depending on the respective state - quite strong or relatively loose historical roots. Under the Soviet occupation five federal states were set up in 1945/46, i.e. Mecklenburg-Pomerania, Brandenburg, Saxony-Anhalt, Thuringia and Saxony. On 7 October 1949 the German Democratic Republic (GDR) became an independent state. In July 1952 the federal state system had been abolished and 14 regional districts (plus East Berlin as a special unit) became the highest administrative level under the national one. Below the regional districts came the districts (Table 1). Hence, there had been three levels of administrative decision-making, i.e. the national, regional district and district levels. However, as a highly centralized state the decision-making power of the last two levels was rather limited. Under the district level there had been the communes, but with respect to agricultural administration this level had been of minor relevance. Actually, since collectivization during the 1950s the communes and their mayors were no longer the highest decision-making unit in the rural areas. Their influence was replaced by chairmen of agricultural production cooperatives who represented the centers of power and authority at the local level. (Wilson and Wilson 2001: 235). They were the main employers in rural areas, the main source of investment, and the main provider of social and cultural services to the rural population. This administrative structure had been valid up to the eve of unification in 1990.

TABLE 1. Administrative Structure, FRG and GDR, 1989

Administrative Level	Federal Republic of Germany	German Democratic Republic
National Government	1	1
Federal State Government	10 (+1, West Berlin)	-
Regional Districts	26*	14 (+1, East Berlin)
Districts	328**	227***
Communes	8,505	7,616

* None in the Federal States of Schleswig-Holstein, Saarland, Bremen, Hamburg and (West) Berlin; ** of which 237 rural districts and 91 urban districts; *** of which 189 rural and 38 urban districts

Source: Wilson and Wilson 2001: 235-236; Wehling 1994: 16

The administrative structure in West Germany looked a bit different (Table 1). There had been four layers of administration above the commune level, i.e. one more than in the East. In West Germany there had been 10 federal states plus West Berlin which had a special status. Like the national parliament the parliaments at federal state levels were elected by the respective population. Due to the federal system, the decision-making power by the federal states is quite high. Below the federal state level there were regional districts comprising a certain number of districts. Only the small federal states and the State of Schleswig-Holstein did not have this type of administrative level. The heads of the regional districts are appointed by the governments of the respective state. They are highly dependent on them as there are no elections at this level which might give them a separate power base by the people. At the district level people elect their deputies in the respective parliaments or councils which used to elect the respective district chief executives.

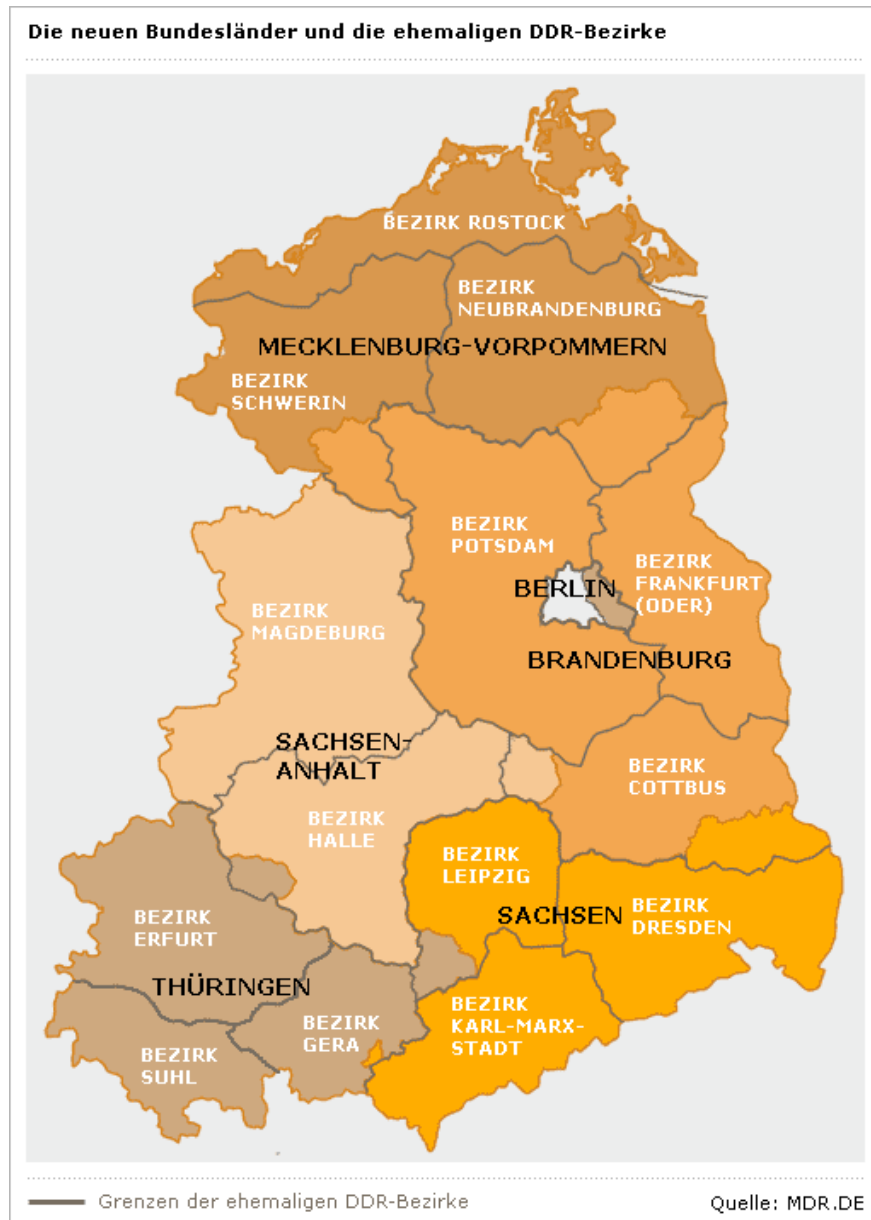
In East Germany people had the right to vote for the national, regional district and district parliaments. But under the GDR system, these were not free and equal with secret ballots. Voters had one option; that was, to endorse the general lists of the “National Front” approved by the dominant Socialist Unity Party (*Sozialistische Einheitspartei*, SED). In general, according to the official records, 99% of the eligible population voted and, again, 99% of the voters voted for the general list.

One interesting point to be mentioned is the fact that the GDR, although about half of the size of West Germany and about one fourth of the population, had a relatively large number of districts and communes. In West Germany there had been various administrative reforms during the 1960s and 1970s which rapidly reduced the number of districts and communes. In the GDR, there had been no such reforms and the number of districts increased during the 1950s. Hence, the number of communes had been relatively large, but about half of them had less than 500 inhabitants; consequently, on paper the GDR administration appeared to have been closer to the population than in the West.

By this time, quite a number of federal states have abolished regional districts as administrative layers. In 2011 in East Germany, only the State of Saxony still keeps this administrative layer. In West Germany, too, more and more states have given them up. In addition, the number of districts declined rapidly in East Germany as it became evident that such a dense administrative

network with the respective staff - although already trimmed down during the early 1990s in comparison to GDR times - could not be financed anymore.

Map 1. Territorial Structure of the Federal States and the former Regional Districts in East Germany, 1990



Source: MDR 2011

Right after the fall of the Berlin Wall (i.e. 9 November 1989), there had been an extensive exchange of visits; at the beginning more from the East to the West, but starting from early 1990 also from the West to the East. Already in late 1989, first ideas of re-establishing the federal states came up. After the first free elections to the East German Parliament (i.e. 18 March 1990), a large majority of deputies was in favor of it. West German federal states volunteered to act as twinning partners (lead sponsorship) for the soon-to-be-set up East German states (Table 2). The legal basis for re-establishing the federal states was laid by the Re-establishment of Federal States Act (*Ländereinführungsgesetz*) adopted by the East German Parliament on 22 July 1990* (Gaude 1996: 70). In a nutshell, it laid the basis to (re-) create five federal states out of 14 regional districts. The Regional District of East Berlin was re-united with West Berlin as a separate federal state. In general, several regional districts were merged into one federal state. However, in some cases the merger was not one to one, but parts of the former regional districts were merged with neighboring federal states (Map 1).

The respective twinning partners gave their support in building up the new federal states in the form of training courses, practical training in West German administrations, secondment of staff to the East, etc. The major twinning partners are summarized in Table 2.

* The day for re-establishing the federal states in the East had been set on 14 October 1990 when the election for the respective federal parliaments was supposed to be held. At that time unification was foreseen to be accomplished by 2 December 1990 with the first free elections to the united national Parliament. However, due to the rapidly deteriorating economic situation, unification was set on 3 October by East German Parliament on 23 August 1990. 3 October 1990 became the starting day of the new federal states as East Germany, due to constitutional requirements, could not join the Federal Republic of Germany as the German Democratic Republic but in the form of the newly established federal states.

TABLE 2. Twinning Federal States from West Germany in Support of Setting up Administrative Structures in East Germany

East Germany	West Germany
Mecklenburg-Pomerania	Schleswig-Holstein
Brandenburg	North Rhine-Westphalia
Saxony-Anhalt	Lower Saxony
Thuringia	Hessen, Rhineland-Palatinate (Bavaria)
Saxony	Bavaria, Baden-Württemberg

Source: Aeikens: 12; Boehnke: 21; Brack: 23-24; Zillenbiller: 375

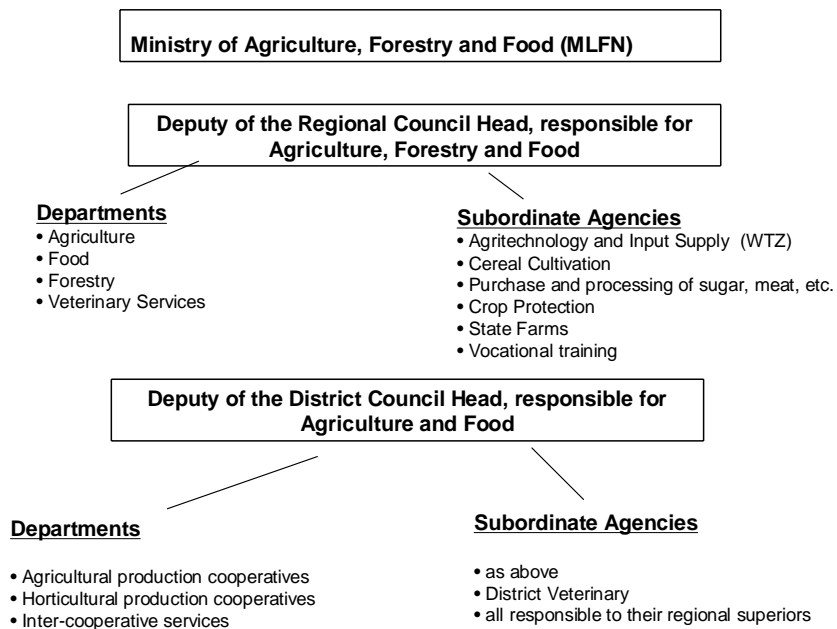
In general, it had to be seen that where possible neighboring states collaborated with each other. In general, there had been just one West German state responsible for the support in establishing an East German state. But with respect to the two southern East German states, i.e. Thuringia and Saxony, this approach was not feasible. These two states had two or more partner states from the West. But it had been agreed that not all West German states involved should collaborate (and compete) in the build up of the whole administration, but should concentrate on the establishment of specific ministries (division of tasks). For example, Rhineland-Palatinate held the lead management in building up the Ministry of Agriculture in Thuringia (Brack 1999: 30-31). The re-establishment of the federal state structure implied that the 15 regional districts had to be dismantled. At the district level, no large-scale adjustments were required.

2.2. Agricultural administration during the socialist period

The agricultural administration was based on three levels (see Figure 1). At the national level there had been the Ministry of Agriculture, Forestry and Food (*Ministerium für Land- Forst- und Nahrungsgüterwirtschaft*, MLFN). The main tasks had been to ensure a high output of agricultural products in line with the central planning system. At the regional district level there had been the Office of Agriculture, Food and Forestry led by the deputy head of the respective regional council. This office comprised the departments of agriculture, food, forestry and veterinary services. It was closely linked to the subordinate offices responsible for agritechnology and input supply, including extension (*Wissenschaftlich-Technische Zentren*, WTZ), cereal cultivation (i.e. cereal purchase) as well as the purchase and processing of other food products, crop pro-

tection and state farms. In addition, this office had been responsible for basic and advanced vocational training. At the district level, there had been an Office of Agriculture and Food which was mainly responsible for the agricultural and horticultural production cooperatives. It had close links to the district veterinary and the district offices of the respective regional subordinate agencies. During the socialist period there had been about 230 district offices. They reported through the respective regional district offices to the national ministry about the state of the agricultural production every week (Wegge 1999: 358).

FIGURE 1. Administration of the Agricultural Sector, GDR, 1989



Source: Roeloffs 1999: 286; Brockhaus 1974: 1044

Besides this administrative structure of the state, there had been - like in all socialist countries following the Soviet model - a parallel structure of the Socialist Unity Party (SED). Within the politburo of the SED one member (“secretary”) was responsible for food and agriculture. In addition, there was a department of food and agriculture under the Central Committee. Both the secretary and the head of the department had more political power than the minister himself. At the regional district and district levels the same power structure applied. The Party personnel used to focus on more strategic issues. In general,

party and government officials worked hand in hand, but in case of disagreement it was the Party which had the upper hand.

Already by late 1989 and early 1990, this parallel structure became obsolete. In late 1989 following the Polish experience from early 1989, "Round Tables" were formed at the national, regional district and district levels in order to discuss ideas about re-organizing the political system in the GDR. At these "Round Tables" both representatives of the socialist regime and newly formed opposition groups representing people pushing for a regime change were present (Breitschuh et al. 2005: 70). The major function of "Round Tables" had been to guide the transition process until the parliaments at various administrative levels had been elected in a democratic manner. The members of the regional district and district committees who represented the socialist regime retired in late 1989. Already in December 1989 many "Round Tables" elected provisional members of the district and regional district councils (Hoffmann 1999: 126).

2.3. Newly established agricultural administration with unification

Early 1990 it became evident that the administration had to be reorganized not only with respect to the new administrative set-up due to the re-establishment of the federal states, but more importantly due to the new tasks the administration had to fulfill in order to support agricultural producers in managing their farms effectively in a market economy and in line with the CAP. In Germany, agricultural administration comes under the responsibility of the individual federal states (Großkopf 2000: 172), and these too had to be established themselves as well. After the first free election to the East German Parliament (i.e. 18 March 1990) an overwhelming majority of MPs were in favor of the new arrangements. This meant that the GDR structure focusing on regional districts had to be dismantled while at the same time the new structure had to be built up.

The local and district elections on 6 May 1990 ensured a democratically legitimized political structure at local levels. In the following weeks working groups for drafting the role and functions of the new federal administration in all five (to be established) federal states had been convened. All those parties could send representatives who had been legitimated by winning state and/or district elections. One sub-group dealt with 'food, agriculture and forestry' which later became the nucleus of the ministry (Ernst 1999: 65). By the end

of September 1990 these working groups finalized their work (Breitschuh et al. 2005: 70). From the West German side, in general, one or two civil servants had been seconded in order to support these working groups.

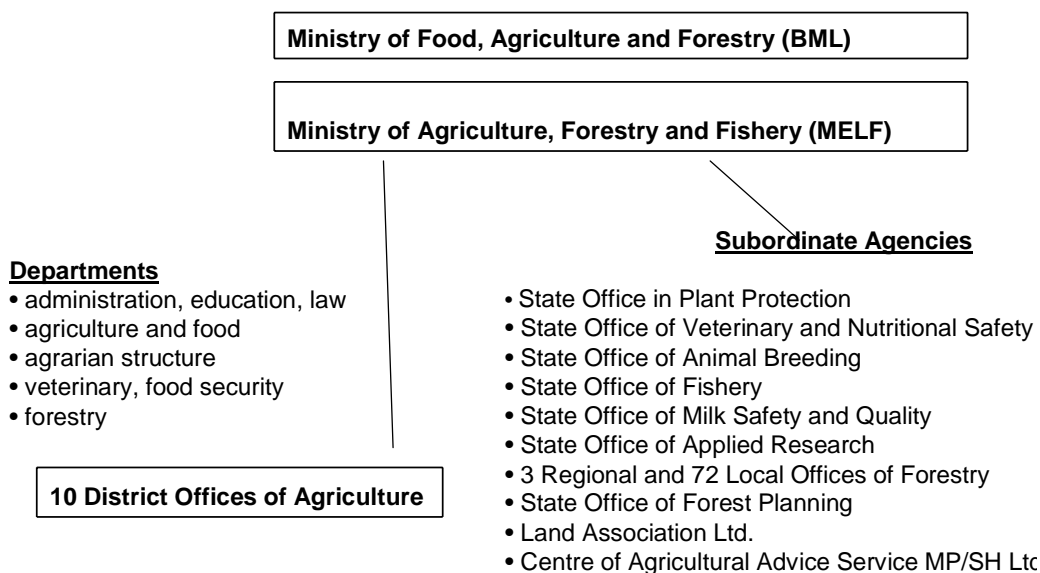
In general, these groups made proposals about the major tasks and functions of the new ministries, although that might have been revised once the ministries became operational. One main decision referred to the question whether the federal agricultural administration should be based on two levels, i.e. federal state and district or on three levels, i.e. federal state - intermediary level - district level. Since Germany is a federal republic, all federal states were free to choose their model according to their own wishes. A certain influence by the respective twinning partner could be observed. Hence, the agricultural administration in the various federal states is not uniform; for example, Mecklenburg-Pomerania adopted a two-level system (Muus: 226), Thuringia a three-level system with an agricultural branch within the Federal Administration Office (*Landesverwaltungsamt*) as the intermediary level (Breitschuh et al. 2005: 75) and Saxony-Anhalt a three-level system with three regional district offices (Aeikens 1999: 10). Figure 2 reflects the situation with respect to Mecklenburg-Pomerania in 1991.

In general, the federal ministries of agriculture were planned to be made up by 4-5 departments and about 20 divisions. Each federal state was free to put the focus on specific issues; for example, in Figure 2, rural development is not specifically emphasized while in Thuringia there had been a separate department of rural development which comprised, amongst others, village renewal, land consolidation and environmental issues (Breitschuh et al. 2005: 72). The intermediary offices (if any) and the district offices were directly under the supervision of the respective federal ministry. Similarly, the ministries had supervisory functions over the subordinate offices. Concerning the focus of the various departments, it has to be emphasized that this shifted over time and many departments were renamed and divisions restructured since 1990.

In parallel, the former regional district offices were gradually downgraded. Starting in June 1990 their (provisionally appointed) heads had been replaced - again on a provisional basis - by people representing those parties which had been elected in the free elections. Some of their staff had been recruited as the secretariat of the working groups 'food, agriculture and forestry'. But, in general, most of them could only apply for a new job once the new ministries became operational at the federal level. The regional district of-

ices of the GDR were finally closed by the end of 1990 (Breitschuh et al. 2005: 71). Similarly, the head of the agricultural offices at the district level had been appointed (in some cases re-appointed) by the newly elected district chiefs (Breitschuh et al. 2005: 69).

FIGURE 2. Administration of the Agricultural Sector in Mecklenburg-Pomerania (East Germany), 1991



Source: Roeloffs 1999: 285; Gaude 1996: 70

While the district offices were kept as the lowest administrative level in all new federal states, their number was significantly downsized during the following years; for example, in Mecklenburg-Pomerania from 34 to 10 (Muus 1999: 226), in Saxony-Anhalt from 40 to 8 (Aeikens 1999: 10) and in Thuringia from 36 to 12 (Breitschuh et al. 2005: 83). In general, the staff from the district offices was re-recruited for those offices that were transformed; nevertheless, many became unemployed. Those district offices no longer needed were closed during 1991. Nevertheless, in 1990, these offices had an important task in processing and distributing the national emergency funds in support of agricultural producers (Sönnichsen 1999: 325).

The unification could be handled relatively easily at the national level. All ministries of the GDR government, including the Ministry of Agriculture, were closed. In general, some staff was taken over by the national ministries.

The former GDR ministry became the liaison office of the respective ministry located in Bonn. In June 1991, the National Parliament decided to shift the capital of Germany from Bonn back to Berlin. In the summer of 1999 Parliament and the government moved to Berlin. However, some ministries, like the Ministry of Agriculture, kept their main offices in Bonn (based on the Bonn-Berlin Act, 1994), with a second office in Berlin.

2.4. New tasks of the agricultural administration

With the establishment of the new agricultural administration its role, tasks and function had to change. During the socialist period, the administration had an important task in making sure that agricultural and food production was in line with the central plans. It could directly influence the production plans of the agricultural production cooperatives and state farms. Since 1990 agricultural producers were totally free in their decision-making while the administration had the role to give them the best support possible.

Right after unification (i.e. 3 October 1990), the most immediate tasks referred to the need for drafting a budget for 1991 and the organizational charts of the new ministries as well as of the transformed district offices reflecting their new roles and duties. However, everything had to be done on a provisional basis since the final decision rested with the newly elected federal state parliaments which were elected on 14 October 1990. In general, the seconded staff from West Germany relied on the organizational setup of their respective home ministries (Brandt 1999: 36). In addition, the daily tasks of the offices had to be fulfilled (as listed below). Since there was not that much staff available and there was still no hierarchical order, everybody had to do everything; mostly just on short notice (Ernst 1999: 66; Roeloffs 1999: 276). All this work had to be done under heavy time pressure. It short, the task had been to set up an efficient agricultural administration as soon as possible. The new administrations were now fully accepted partners by the national ministry and the West German state ministries. This meant that starting from 3 October 1990 the still preliminary offices were “flooded” with all types of information about any new changes concerning the national and EU policies (Brandt 1999: 38). Similarly, the new federal states had to bring in their own priorities when it came to setting priorities of national agricultural policy, e.g. the negotiations about the future focus of the Common Task for Improving Agricultural

Structures and Coastal Protection (*Gemeinschaftsaufgabe zur Verbesserung der Agrarstruktur und des Küstenschutzes*, GAK), one of the basic documents of national agricultural support policy, by 22 October 1990 (Kolt 1999: 180-182).

Once the federal ministries had been officially approved by the parliaments of the respective federal states, the major tasks can be summarized as follows (Breitschuh et al. 2005: 72-73):

- recruitment of staff at the various administrative levels in order to fulfill the necessary tasks;
- review of all subordinate agencies and, if necessary, dismantle them;
- restructuring of the subordinate agencies in line with the constitutional administrative structures;
- implementation of the Agricultural Adjustment Act adopted on 29 June 1990 by East German Parliament with all the problems concerning the restructuring of the agricultural production cooperatives, conflict settlements with respect to privatization of farm assets and the consolidation of separate ownership titles of land and buildings on it;
- implementation of the national agricultural policy as well as CAP (even if there were short or no transition periods); and
- drafting laws concerning the agricultural and food sector for federal state parliaments as well as preparing recommendations for the state ministers in influencing national agricultural policy.

In this respect, the tasks can be divided into short-term ones related to the (re-)organization of the agricultural administration and its subordinate agencies, short to medium ones related to decollectivization and restructuring and long-term (i.e. permanently ongoing) ones related to the implementation and supervision of national and EU agricultural policies and to the participation in the national political process.

2.5. Major problems in establishing the new agricultural administration

Although - as stated in the introduction - the transition of the agricultural administration has not been widely discussed, it had been a tremendous task. At that time nobody had any experience in such an undertaking. Once it became evident that the GDR will open up to the market economic system and become a pluralistic democracy, it was understood that this could not be achieved with

its existing (agricultural) administration. Different to most other transition economies, East Germany could rely on the strong support by the West German governments at national and federal state levels in accomplishing this transformation process. In the following, we will focus on two major problems with respect to establishing the five federal ministries of agriculture, viz. (1) logistical problems and (2) problems in recruiting appropriate staff.

Logistical problems

The new ministries had to start from scratch. On a provisional basis they took up their work in August/ September 1990 but they all had to be officially legitimized by their respective federal state parliaments whose elections took place on 14 October 1990. Hence, the preliminary staff had to look for, at least, provisional offices. When the West German advisors (experienced civil servants) who had all the advantages of having worked in a smoothly running administration took up their (temporary) assignments in the East, they had to meet a number of logistical problems first. In summary, these were the most important of these challenges (Brandt 1999: 37-38; Boehnke 1999: 20; Muus 1999: 227; Roeloffs 1999: 274).

- *Poor Working Conditions:* Some offices were still used by other organizations and the facilities were outdated.
- *Lack of Technical Equipment:* At the beginning, offices were without the most basic equipment (e.g. telephones, copy or fax machines, etc.) As one seconded staff person recalled “We had to walk when we wanted to communicate” (Brandt 1999: 38),
- *Lack of Service Infrastructure:* Writing pools, janitors, or messengers did not exist.
- *Lack of a Proper Financial Transfer System:* Consistent practices for transferring high volumes of funds to agricultural producers and accountability did not exist.
- *Lack of Proper Job Descriptions and Salary Scales:* The legal basis for drawing up employment contracts for thousands of staff at federal state and district levels had to be laid by the still-to-be-elected federal parliaments. This had a direct influence on the tasks and duties as well as the level of salaries of the staff. This prevented the immediate use of the federal pay scale for public employees as well as the civil servant

payment schemes.

- *Lack of a Legal Foundation for Rights and Obligation:* At the federal state levels neither an understanding nor a policy of administrative and financial rights and obligations existed.

In this respect, the staff had quite a lot of liberty in executing its activities which was particularly appreciated by the seconded staff. Since housing conditions had been basic for the seconded staff, only those with a strong dedication volunteered to “go East”. Admittedly, they received an addition to their salaries, but they were required to work long hours, generally 12-14 hours per day.

Staffing

As shown above, all federal ministries, as well as offices at lower levels had to recruit their staff from scratch. In principle, anyone with the necessary background could apply for these jobs; this included, people who worked in the predecessor offices during the socialist period, and others from the upstream and downstream sectors, including West Germans (Boehnke 1999: 17). In reality, most of the new staff had been recruited from the predecessor offices. This outcome created two major problems: (1) validity of a person’s professional background, and (2) a person’s personal record during the socialist period.

The new administrative structure required qualified personnel who were familiar with the German agricultural policy programs and the CAP and East Germans were unfamiliar with West German agricultural policies. The ideas of e.g. “principle of subsidiarity”, “support threshold” or “promotion of individual farming” were totally unknown to East Germans (Kolt 1999: 180). Therefore, many training programs - either on-the-job in the new offices or in practical training in the twinning ministries in West Germany - were undertaken. Through these training programs the new staff was taught the focus and implementation of the national West German agricultural policy and CAP as well as standard administrative practices and economic principles (Boehnke 1999: 21).

Special East German history created other staffing problems. The revolution in the GDR was pushed by anti-socialist groups who did not want to see the well-recognized supporters of the socialist system in positions of power after the regime change. The outcome was to disqualify anyone from a government job who represented two particular groups; they are (1) former high level

cadres of the Socialist Unity Party and (2) former staff including informal collaborators of the dissolved secret service (*Staatssicherheitsdienst*, Stasi). The first group was relatively easy to identify. With respect to the second group it was not that easy. During the GDR-times the secret service had established a dense network of informal collaborators who were responsible for knowing all and everything about the people around them and reporting their findings to the secret service. Although the secret service had been abolished with the change of the political regime, the public remained fearful of them. Consequently, anyone who applied for a job with the government had to be checked by the Federal Commission for Registration of the Files of the Former East German Secret Service (*Der Bundesbeauftragte für die Unterlagen des Staatssicherheitsdienstes der ehemaligen Deutschen Demokratischen Republik, Gauck-Behörde*) and had to receive a clearance for not having been an informal agent. This became a severe problem when setting up agricultural administrations when it was discovered that those who had been hired and trained had not given a full disclosure of their past. Newly recruited and trained staff had to be dismissed overnight due to the reports from that commission (Boehnke 1999: 18-19; Brandt 1999: 40; Ernst 1999: 68).

Despite these challenges of determining who was truly qualified for particular jobs, who had a respectable work record, who did not have a troubled past, by late 1990 and early 1991 staff was hired and the administrative structure was taking shape (Muus 1999: 227). The agricultural administrations expanded in size. Take for example, the Ministry of Agriculture in the Federal State of Thuringia in Table 3.

TABLE 3. Staff Development in the Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Forestry, Thuringia

Date	Number of Persons
Sept./ Oct. 1990	about 30 (taken over from the regional district offices)
late 1990/ early 1991	about 30 + about 40 persons seconded from West Germany (mainly from Rhineland-Palatinate and Hessen)
1991	90-100
1992	178
1993	183

Source: Breitschuh et al. 2005: 72

Similarly, staffing at the Ministry of Agriculture in Mecklenburg-Pomerania expanded on a step-by-step basis. While in early November 1990 the whole staff comprised 20 persons next to the Minister, it had been joined by 13 seconded staff from Schleswig-Holstein. Already by the end of 1990, the staff comprised 60 persons (including the seconded staff) and by the end of March 1991 142 persons (Boehnke 1999: 18). In general, more officials had been seconded to the newly established ministries of agriculture after unification when the formal approval by the respective state parliaments could be foreseen. While 13 persons were seconded from Schleswig-Holstein to Mecklenburg-Pomerania, the number from Rhineland-Palatinate and Hessen to Thuringia initially stood at 12, but rapidly increased to 40 by the end of the year (Brack 1999: 31). During 1991 all ministries started to run smoothly and gradually the seconded staff returned to their home ministries. Interestingly, some seconded staff preferred to continue their work with the new ministry and asked for a transfer. In other words, they became civil servants of the newly established ministries. By about 1992 all ministries of agriculture were fully staffed and only retired staff was replaced.

2.6. Concluding Remarks

By 1991 the agricultural administration in the new federal states had been established and was up and running. When looking at reasons why this administrative transition had been effectively handled, most participating staff mentioned the high degree of support by the West German twinning ministries. Without it, it would have been almost impossible. This support included the secondment of staff, the delivery of technical equipment and material, the organization of training courses; and not to be forgotten, the remaining staff who took over responsibilities of their absent colleagues at the respective home ministries (Boehnke 1999: 20-21; Brandt 1999: 45). This support was given at all administrative levels (Aeikens 1999: 14).

Additionally, highly motivated people, both the newly recruited East German staff as well as the seconded staff from West Germany realized that this had been a historic opportunity. There had been a “euphoric mode” (Roeloffs 1999: 278). They did not complain about working long hours. Particularly among the seconded staff from West Germany, they had a feeling of “pioneer work”. They were used to working in a hierarchical administrative

system where every step had a legal justification. Suddenly, they were faced with no such rules in the East, as these administrative rules had to be incrementally implemented after unification. Hence, the motto “pragmatism and improvisation” was the guiding principle (Kolt 1999: 178). In principle, the administration was working in a still not yet legislated area and the staff wanted to accomplish a good job. The West German “model of public administration with its perfectionist and complicated mechanism will overrun us early enough” (Brandt 1999: 45). There was a necessity for quick action which left no time for critical assessments, a practice familiar in West German administration (Gaude 1996: 76). In this respect, the seconded staff in particular enjoyed their high degree of liberty in decision-making which they did not experience in their home administrations.

This high degree of pragmatism seems to explain why there had been no strong complains by the agricultural producers when applying for financial support. The economic situation of agricultural producers deteriorated day by day and emergency support funds, with billions of DMs to distribute, still had to be established. At one and only stage (15 August 1990), a mass rally was held by about 250,000 East German farmers in East Berlin protesting against the imminent collapse of farm production as the effects of the economic, monetary and social union became evident (Stuhler 2010: 155-159). The politicians drew conclusions that the support funds had to be distributed to the producers as quickly as possible and that any policy affecting the agricultural sector has to ensure “social peace” in the rural areas, as will be discussed below. The success of the agricultural administration can be judged by the expression of only one public protest.

3. Establishment of a new specialized administration focusing agricultural issues

The transformation of the agricultural administration involved both the transition of the former administration, in order to support the agricultural and food sectors, and the establishment of new specialized organizations, in order to provide a smooth transition. With respect to the agricultural sector, the most important new public administration was the Agency for Reprivatization of

Industry in the GDR (*Treuhandanstalt*, THA). It took over all state-owned property, i.e. industry, as well as agricultural and forest lands. From the beginning, this agency was established to be transitional. It was expected to be phased out after a few years once all former GDR assets were privatized.

The THA was set up on 1 March 1990, even before the first free elections in East Germany. The objective at that time was to restructure state-owned enterprises. After the election on 18 March 1990 the focus shifted to privatization. Parliament passed the Privatization and Reorganization of State-Owned Assets Act (*Gesetz zur Privatisierung und Reorganization des volkseigenen Vermögens; Treuhandgesetz*) on 17 June 1990, which provided the legal basis for this work. Politicians who supported the Privatization and Reorganization of State-Owned Assets Act (*Gesetz zur Privatisierung und Reorganization des volkseigenen Vermögens; Treuhandgesetz*) had high expectations about the resale value of the state-owned enterprises. They expected the value of these assets minus administration costs and taxes to generate billions of DM to the national budget. It was the agricultural and food sector which was seen as the “basket” since these enterprises needed quick government emergency support in order to stay afloat. But already by mid-1990 it was realized that the state had to provide high financial incentives (or subsidies) in order to sell these enterprises (Görtemaker 1996: 49; Wegge 1999: 364).

From the beginning, the THA was responsible for privatizing state-owned agricultural and forest lands. The major source of state-owned agricultural and forests lands was from land expropriated between 8 May 1945 and 7 October 1949, when East Germany was under Soviet administration. Most of this expropriated land had been turned over to resettled refugees and small-scale farmers at that time (‘land reform’ during the late 1940s), but a certain share was kept to establish, amongst others, state-owned farms. In addition, land expropriated after 7 October 1949 were from farmers who fled to the west to escape the demands of collectivization. In 1990 the state-owned agricultural area amounted to about 1.5 million ha, or about one-fourth of the total utilized agricultural area (UAA) of East Germany and about one million ha of forest land. With respect to the agricultural area that was expropriated after 7 October 1949, about 0.5 million ha were restituted to original owners or their heirs. The remaining one million hectares were supposed to be privatized as soon as possible (Hagedorn et al. 1997: 441). Interestingly, the German government did not give any land to farmers whose land was expropriated between 1945 and 1949.

In the Unification Treaty between East and West Germany (signed 31 August 1990) and the Treaty of the Final Settlement with Respect to Germany (*Vertrag über die abschließende Regelung in bezug auf Deutschland*, “Two plus Four Agreement”) between the two German states and the four Allies (signed 12 September 1990), it was agreed that land expropriated during Soviet occupation would not be restituted to the original owners or their heirs.

Soon it became evident that the “normal” privatization process of THA would threaten the agricultural sector. The main objective of the THA was to exist for a limited period in order to privatize state property as quickly as possible and at the highest prices possible*. However, a fear arose that quick sales of one million ha would have led to a complete collapse of land prices in East Germany resulting in marginal income effects. Out of necessity, already in 1990, a special branch of THA was created to administer all agricultural and forest land. This special branch was headed by a special chief representative who directly reported to the management board of THA in order to assure that financial, as well as agricultural, policy and regional aspects could be observed (Wegge 1999: 364). On 1 July 1992, all responsibility for state-owned land was passed to a newly formed public agency, i.e. the Land Settlement and Administration Company (*Bodenverwertungs- und Verwaltungsgesellschaft*, BVVG). Since the sale of state-owned land was a highly politicized topic at that time**, almost all land was rented out to interested agricultural entrepreneurs (Wilson and Wilson 2001: 131).

During the early 1990s the conditions for privatization were intensively negotiated by all political parties in a time-consuming process in order to determine whether the former owners (expropriated without restitution rights) or the present cultivators will become the main beneficiaries of the privatization process. At that time the land was leased on a short-term basis only, i.e. for one year. Gradually, more and more land was leased on a medium and long-term basis, i.e. several up to nine years. The cornerstones of the privatization were fixed in a special land acquisition program according to the

* The THA was liquidated on 31 December 1994. However, some smaller successor companies took over the unfinished tasks.

** The former owners expropriated in 1945-49 went to court to claim their rights, but were finally turned down by the Federal Constitutional Court in 1991 and again in 1996 and 2000, respectively.

Indemnification and Compensation Act of September 1994 (*Entschädigungs- und Ausgleichsleistungsgesetz*, EALG) (Forstner and Isermeyer 2000: 70):

- (former) owners of expropriated land were now eligible to obtain either a small compensation or to lease or purchase for a subsidized price a small amount of their original land,
- all farmers with a lease-contract for state-owned land were eligible to buy such land, and
- the prices of this land were about half of the common market prices in East Germany.

The privatization of farm land started in 1994. Nevertheless, this is a time-consuming process. By mid-2011, about 390,000 ha, or about 40 percent of the total agricultural land under its disposal, had been sold to former owners of expropriated land and lease holders at preferential prices. In addition, about 292,000 ha have been sold at market prices, particularly during the last few years. But still about 335,000 ha are rented out, predominantly under long-term lease contracts up to nine years, and will have to be privatized over the next few years (BVVG 2011: 2-3). During the last few years a steady increase in land prices in East Germany could be observed. On the one hand, this development supports those who had argued for a gradual privatization process. On the other hand, the administrative system established to transfer former GDR government property has taken much more time than anticipated. The BVVG expects to remain in business for a long time.

4. Transformation of agricultural associations

The entire agricultural administration had to be transformed and newly organized. This chapter will address how the agricultural population and their organizations in the GDR had adjusted to unification and its repercussions. Roughly, there had been two types of organizations representing the agricultural population; they are, those that were obviously political and those that were more for lobbying. In reality, in a socialist system this is a more formal distinction. Moreover, all parties and specialized organizations came under the umbrella of the National Front which was closely scrutinized by the Socialist Unity Party (SED). In this chapter, the political parties and trade unions in

charge of the agricultural sector will be discussed. The major focus will be on farmers' organizations and their transformation. They were the only association on the East German side which had, at least, some voice in the unification process. In general, associations from West Germany held the upper hand and they tried to influence the process to their advantage, e.g. in the transformation of the public health system (Lehmbruch 2000: 96-98).

4.1. Political parties and trade unions

The GDR did not consider itself a one-party state. Several parties were allowed to exist side by side, with the purpose of providing gateways into the political system for those who did not have an affiliation with the SED. Needless to say, these parties were just partly independent and were fully in line with the socialist ideology under the leadership of the SED. The party that focused on the farming population was the German Democratic Farmers' Party (*Demokratische Bauernpartei Deutschlands*, DBD)* which was established in April 1948. Its objective had been to win over the farming population for building up a socialist society.

Before 1989 the DBD had a quota in the National Parliament of about 10% or 52 deputies. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, the DBD tried to transform itself into a member-oriented party and participated in the first free elections of the East German Parliament on 18 March 1990. It received about 2.9 percent of the votes which entitled it to nine deputies. In June 1990, however, the party members decided to dissolve the party and to join the dominant Christian Democratic Party (CDU). Since then the agricultural population, while their number rapidly declined, seemed to have supported the same major parties as the rest of the population.

* Besides the SED and DBD there had been three other officially recognised parties in the GDR, i.e. the Christian Democratic Party (*Christlich-Demokratische Union Deutschlands*, CDU), the Liberal Party (*Liberal-Demokratische Partei Deutschlands*, LDPD) and the National Party (*National-Demokratische Partei Deutschlands*, NDPD).

Trade union

During the GDR, all people working on state farms were regarded as agricultural workers and were required to join the Union of Agricultural, Food and Forestry Workers (*Gewerkschaft Land, Nahrungsgüterwirtschaft und Forsten, GLNF*) which was part of the Free Trade Union (*Freier Deutscher Gewerkschaftsbund, FDGB*), the umbrella organization of all trade unions. All trade unions were mass organizations under the leadership of the SED. At the time of the fall of the Berlin Wall the GLNF had about 600,000 members. It was unsuccessful at transforming itself into a membership-oriented organization. After unification the GLNF was dissolved and its members were encouraged to join the (West German) Union of Horticultural, Agricultural and Forestry Workers (*Gewerkschaft für Gartenbau, Land- und Forstwirtschaft, GGLF*). However, only a very small share of members joined (Koch 1999: 168, 176).

4.2. Farmers' organizations

The GDR regarded all members of agricultural and horticultural production co-operatives as working farmers. Their organization was the Association for Farmers' Mutual Help (*Vereinigung der gegenseitigen Bauernhilfe, VdgB*). It had been established in the autumn of 1945 in support of the land reform. At that time it was mainly concerned with running machine-lending stations for land reform operations. Later on, the main objective of the VdgB was the promotion of socialist agriculture and the collectivization process (Aschoff and Henningsen 1996: 41). During the late 1980s its membership came up to about 650,000 persons. As a mass organization it had a small quota of deputies who represented them in the national parliament. After the elections of 1986, they had 14 deputies. After the fall of the Berlin Wall, it managed to transform itself into a membership-oriented organization. On 8 March 1990 it became the Farmers' Union of the GDR (*Bauernverband der DDR*). The members of the boards were newly elected and people who were too closely connected with the Socialist Party (SED) were replaced by others. After this transition, membership declined to about 400,000. Furthermore, the Farmers' Union of the GDR established regional organizations in each of the (soon to be established) federal states during the following months; actually copying the organizational structure of the (West) German Farmers' Union (*Deutscher Bauernverband, DBV*). The

branch union in Thuringia was founded as early as 23 June 1990. Similar to the administrative support, the federal branches of the DBV from Rhineland-Palatinate, Hessen and Bavaria gave their support in its establishment (Breitschuh 1999: 103).

Up to that time, agricultural policy in the Federal Republic of Germany was based on a corporatist model. Agricultural associations under the lead of DBV had almost a monopoly in representing the agricultural sector. Over time, an intimate collaboration with the national Ministry of Food, Agriculture and Forestry (BML) had been developed. This monopoly of representation was of high importance with respect to developing and refining the CAP. There had been signals from the EU that competition among agricultural associations should be avoided and the whole sector in Germany should speak with one voice (Lehmbruch 2000: 100). These considerations have to be seen under the general situation in 1990: The agricultural sector in East Germany was in a very deep crisis and politicians tried to avoid anything which might further alarm agricultural producers in the East.

The major farmers' organizations on both sides reacted very flexibly in order to push their own unification within the following months. However, it has to be recalled that they represented completely different farming models; one of large-scale collectivized farms in the East and individual family farms in the West. Nevertheless, there had already been contacts between the East and the West during the 1980s. In 1988 both associations signed a loose collaborative agreement about their future (Bammel 1991: 74). In early 1990 the president of DBV visited East Germany. Upon his return, the East German union had been "adopted" by the DBV. Simultaneously, the East German farmers' union established federal organizations.

In conclusion, the unification between the two German farmers' unions can be seen as a success. The DBV finally secured its monopoly of representing the agricultural sector. However, it had to accept a change of its traditional ideological general principle: This principle was no longer based on the model of private family farms, but, much more general, on a land tenure system based on private ownership. In that way, the decollectivized farms in East Germany were integrated as 'multi-family farms' which were on equal footing with traditional family farms (Lehmbruch 2000: 100). One important reason seems to be the fact that already in West Germany the DBV represented heterogeneous groups of farmers. In order to give them an equal share in decision-making, the

DBV is not hierarchically organized and representatives of each of the federal member-state branches have equal rights in the national board. This allowed the federative organizational structure to react very flexibly to any changes in contrast to centralized-structured organizations (Lehmbruch 2000: 101, 107).

The Farmers' Union of the GDR also had to revise its guiding principle. At its transition congress on 8 March 1990 it still called for the protection of collective property and the need for national market protection measures against (West German) agricultural imports. Nevertheless, this Farmer's Union accepted private individual farming as an alternative mode of agricultural production. During the Summer 1990, it recognized private ownership of production factors as its guiding principle which is pretty close to the changed position of the DBV (Bammel 1991: 75). Once the federal branches of the Farmers' Union of the GDR became operational, they joined the DBV in their federal capacity. On 30 April 1991, Thuringia was the first East German branch to join the Farmers' Union. Once all five federal branches had joined the DBV, the national (East German) federation was formally dissolved on 21 December 1991 (Breitschuh 1999: 106).

Besides the Farmers' Union of the GDR, several other farmers' unions represented returning and newly established family farmers; actually, the traditional clientele of the West German DBV. However, these associations had been relatively small and quarreled among each other. A few of them finally joined DBV. There seems to remain only two independent competitive associations: the Federation of German Farmers (*Bundesverband Deutscher Landwirte*, VDL) and the German Farmers' Association (*Deutscher Bauernbund*, DBB). The VDL had been set up in June 1990. It advocated a very radical decollectivization process (Bammel 1991: 77) and sees itself as the spokesman of private individual farmers and of private land owners in East Germany. It is highly critical of all other farm types which it sees as leftovers of the forced collectivization (during the 1950s) (Bundesverband 2010: 1). The DBB was established in 1999 and considers itself a representative of all family farms in East Germany (Deutscher Bauernbund 2011: 1). The size of these organizations is unknown, neither association provides any information about the number of its membership.)

In this way, the unification of agricultural unions is unique in associational development in Germany. In general, there was an associational transfer from the West to the East. Any ideas and experiences from the East were

supplanted. Only the agricultural unions reacted very flexibly to this challenge (i.e. collapse of the socialist regime and unification) in a highly integrative and organizationally adaptive manner. This is reflected by the fact that the DBV is the only large association where all East German branches are solely managed by East Germans and these had not been replaced by 'imported' West Germans (Lehmbruch 2000: 100). The DBV could maintain its position as the key farm lobby group.

The East German branches of the Farmers' Union showed that they mastered the art of dealing in the western-style political system when it came to privatization of state-owned land (see Chapter 3). As discussed above, this pertained to land that had been expropriated during 1945-1949. After unification the German Ministry of Finance was interested in auctioning off all of the former GDR state property to the highest bidder. The expropriated owners, or their heirs, lobbied hard to get at least some of their family's land returned to them. At that time, most of the state land was rented to the successors of the collective farms, but tenants were not supposed to buy that respective land. This changed when the East German producers, through their federal branches of DBV, were able to rally public opinion in their favor. During that period of fundamental transformation, public opinion and fear of public protests were foremost in the minds of politicians. Social peace was considered one of the most valuable pre-requisites of a successful transition (Beckmann and Hagedorn 1997: 125-126). In the final compromise of the EALG in September 1994, the expropriated farmers were less well organized as a group and played a marginal role. Now, tenants were given priority in buying rented state land. Having failed, agricultural production in East Germany might be organized completely differently today.

5. Conclusion and major lessons

When looking back at the transformation of the agricultural administration in East Germany, it can be stated that it had been a complete success. It had been an "institutional transfer" (Lehmbruch 2000: 88) from the West to the East, i.e. the East fully adopted the Western system of administration. In 1990 the East Germans had to dismantle their socialist type of (agricultural) administration,

and to also build up a new administration system within a very short period. Two aspects were relevant: (1) the administrative structure had been revised with the re-establishment of the five federal states as a new decision-making level, which required a revised territorial structure of administration hierarchy to be built up from scratch; and (2) agricultural administrations had to fulfill new tasks in order to secure the survival and the competitiveness of the agricultural sector. During this period billions of Deutsch Marks were distributed as emergency aid to agricultural producers, the decollectivization process had to be administratively assisted and policy outlines for agricultural and rural development had to be drafted and negotiated at federal state and national levels. But to do that, staff had to be completely newly recruited.

The major lessons can be summarized as follows:

- Staff from former East German institutions could be recruited who showed a high level of dedication, work spirit, and was open to accept new tasks. They understood that this had been a historical opportunity for themselves and their country. Although it was said that East Germans became lethargic, because the Socialist Party used to decide all and everything for them; dedicated personnel was available showing a high level of decision-making capabilities. The staff could improvise and worked under difficult logistical conditions.
- In order to build a trusted workforce, people who had worked as informal collaborators for the former secret service were ineligible for employment. The recruitment of East German staff was quite often interrupted by the fact that some of the people who had been hired did not reveal their past. However, once their past was revealed they had to be dismissed. The new decision-makers categorically refused to employ any of these people for the new administration and hiring and training had to begin again.
- The twinning model proved to be very effective. An “institutional transfer” had not been possible without the secondment of dedicated staff from the West. While also trained in a highly hierarchical system, these people had to show the same qualifications in getting things done in a still “fluid” situation as their new East German colleagues.
- Similarly, this transfer had not been possible without an intensive training program for the East German staff. This included training-on-the-job in the new ministries and district offices, practical training in the West

(for several weeks) and special training courses (from one day up to a week).

Decision-makers could not estimate what the costs would be for this transition. They did not have a model to follow. They planned an “ideal” administrative structure but in the end it was too expensive to maintain. Although the number of agricultural district offices had been trimmed down compared to the socialist period so that each agricultural office was responsible for several districts, the following years showed that this system had to be downsized even further. Already some years later the density of agricultural district offices had to be revised and an additional number had to be closed. In this respect, the lesson is to plan very conservatively at the beginning and build according to the resources available.

For a smooth transformation process, specialized organizations are required. In Germany, the privatization of state-owned agricultural and forest lands had been entrusted to a specialized organization (i.e. first THA and since July 1992 BVVG). Originally it had been anticipated that this task could be accomplished within a short period and the organization would be dissolved quickly; instead, it became a longer process. Hence, one has to be prepared that certain tasks with the necessary administrative back-up may only be fulfilled satisfactorily if a long-term approach is followed from the beginning. In Germany, the privatization of agricultural land has already taken more than two decades and the end is not in sight.

On the other side, the transformation of agricultural associations shows that institutional transfer and innovation is not just a one-way street. The German Farmers’ Union with its federative setup showed that East German farmers, although representing a completely different farming model, could be quickly integrated into a common organization. The representatives of the East German side quickly learnt how to use the German political system to enforce their own objectives vis-à-vis well organized adversaries. The privatization of state-owned land in East Germany might have taken a complete different course if the East German farmers had chosen a different type of organization. The West German side also gained through this merger; no relevant competing farmers’ organization has been established in the East. In this respect, the lesson is that when the East German side was accepted as an equal partner it became an active player in the political system and not just a passive recipient.

In this way, we conclude that the institutional change of the agricul-

tural administration and associations in East Germany before and after unification represent an exceptional case among other transition countries on their way from a socialist central planning system to a pluralistic democracy and market economy. The radical breach with past administrative institutions had been one of the most remarkable differences to the development in the other transition countries. Contrary to them, transition in East Germany consisted of two separate, but closely interlinked processes; the transformation of the socialist system on the one side, and its integration into the political and economic system of West Germany, i.e. unification, on the other (Lehmbruch, 1996: 64-65). In comparison, lessons for the other transition countries in Central and Eastern Europe or the former Soviet Union are very small. However, the German experience seems to provide some guidelines for a potential developmental path on the Korean Peninsula. Here, both processes, i.e. transition and unification, will take place simultaneously and cannot be executed - as in Germany - separately. Hence, models have to be developed with strong pressure to keep transition periods short and get the tasks accomplished as quickly as possible.

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