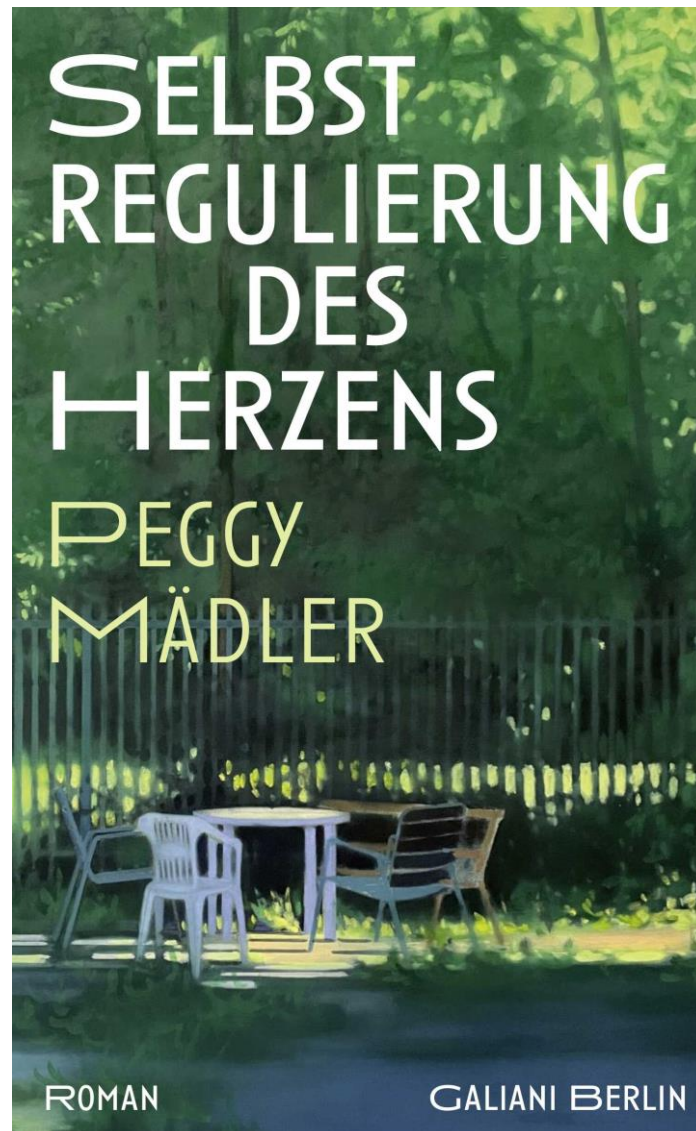


Self-Regulation of the Heart

by Peggy Mädler

Sample translation by Jamie Lee Searle



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Lay out this ground once more. Stretch out this sky. Follow the movements of these chance characters like a child traces the lines of a labyrinth with a finger, without ever finding the exit.

Christa Wolf, *Summer Play*

...the human heart works in a similar way to the pumps that miners use to empty their mines ...

Georg Klaus: *Cybernetics from a Philosophical Perspective*

It is important to note that the “starting values” for the heart under physiological working conditions are never zero...

The heart’s self-regulatory system is able to stabilise its functional state at different levels.

W. A. Listschuk: *The Self-Regulation of the Heart*

in: W. Oppelt / G. Vossius: *The Human Being as Regulator*

Prologue (or old Fritzs)

Some say the area reminded Fritzs of his childhood in East Prussia. This somewhat barren, sandy landscape with its gentle moraine hills. The forest dense with pine, beech and birch, its lakes tucked away like hidden mirrors. He drove off in his Trabant on New Year's Day 1966, the car he hadn't owned for long, and left the city just like that.

Some also say it was a time when people were making the best of things. The wall was built now, after all, the country divided, and the possibilities of movement were limited. The money in his savings account was limited too, but it was enough to create something out here. A place of his own to retreat to in the countryside, for some freedom amidst the fenced-in country, or simply to rest on the weekends, which Fritzs no longer wanted to spend in Berlin.

That very same day, he asked around in the village as to whether there was something to rent or lease here. And there turned out to be two houses empty, both very run-down and already cordoned off by the authorities. One of them, an old farmhouse behind the village school, had a beautiful garden with a view over the fields. But that wasn't what Fritzs really wanted for himself. He was more interested in the wooded slope on the outskirts of the village; hadn't some plots of land already been developed there?

Fritzsche had an eye for it, people say. As an inspector at the planning department, this was his area of expertise. And he also had the right connections; he wasn't the only person looking for land for private purchase. A Berlin district mayor from Pankow whom Fritzsche knew from work soon joined him. Together, they took matters in hand, approached the local mayor and suggested that the wooded slope be rezoned for recreational purposes. That wasn't unusual, people say. Even before the First World War, Berliners had bought plots from the farmers around here, and the city itself had also acquired a great deal of land, including a feudal estate with meadows, woods, lakes and arable land; the city was rapidly outgrowing its borders and needed space for the care and recreation of its inhabitants, for future cemeteries, and most importantly, for its sewage. Some of the plots of land on the slope belonged to city dwellers who now lived on the other side of the wall; this land was communally managed. Other plots belonged to families who were long-time village residents.

An agreement was made. The development plan that Fritzsche drew up on the mayor's behalf for the new recreational settlement comprised twenty-one plots of land – branching off to the right and left of a sandy path – and was authorised in late 1967.

Before the Second World War, old Fritzsche had apparently been a postman. Then he was a soldier. After the war, he apprenticed himself again, becoming

a carpenter and eventually a master craftsman. He worked on various construction sites in the GDR, married, had two daughters, and transferred to the Ministry of Planning and Building Inspection, by which time he was in his mid-40s. In his late 40s, he drew up plans for a plot of land covered in pine trees. In order to fell the trees, he needed authorisation, and in the beginning, he still took the rules seriously. Later, he cut down additional trees without paperwork, which was how everyone here did it, without blowing the whistle on one another.

He constructed the walls of his bungalow out of wooden doors salvaged from condemned buildings. In the Ministry, Fritzsich had been responsible for safety issues, so he knew exactly which houses had been condemned. He also knew about building demolitions along the border strip. Fritzsich managed to procure the doors for himself. If a person knew what they were doing, the heavy, well-carpentered wood could be repurposed into solid walls for a weekend home. The wood wool boards, plasterboard and insulation came next, but the solid, pre-war doors were the foundation of it all.

Word about this sort of thing got around, people say. The thing about the second homes and the thing about the doors. Someone told someone, and that person told someone else. The director of a shoe manufactory, who apparently was friends with the Pankow mayor, heard about the plots of land. He told the

manager of a shoe shop supplied by the manufacturer, and she passed on the news to her hairdresser. The hairdresser told a driver whose children attended the same school as her own. A doctor and an economist from the Ministry for Foreign Trade heard about it, and they informed two or three colleagues. A young chemist was told by one of these colleagues' wives. Fritzsich himself told two of his neighbours, a TV production manager, and an electrician.

Those who heard about it went to see the local mayor and, with a little luck, were presented with a lease agreement. Some say it was less about luck and more about political mindset. After that, the building permit had to be obtained. Some had the funds for a prefab house – with a living room, bedroom, cooking area and bathroom. Others approached Fritzsich about the doors or built with the help of other bartering relationships. Some say the district mayor from Pankow ended up with the loveliest and biggest weekend home in the settlement, closely followed by Fritzsich and the Foreign Trade people, who travelled a lot for work, to Morocco and Syria and the Soviet Union, returning not only with colourfully-decorated crockery, but also a rather lovely special allowance for overseas stays.

The supply of electricity and water was apparently tricky in the beginning. Fritzsich and the Pankow mayor, as the settlement's founders, had each secured their own power connections, but the others had to muddle through

with a few hundred watts per month, which had to be shared between them. Fritzsche hauled up water for the building work in milk cans from a pond, which was a little further down in the forest. And blueberries everywhere, so many blueberries! He brought the water needed for cooking in canisters from home, and when that wasn't enough, he dropped in on the chimney sweep in the village, having once brought him some cement from the city. Eventually, a communal well was dug. From then on, the slope was supplied with water, but now the well pump was consuming electricity too.

A car was essential in order to cope with life here. Fritzsche had bought his Trabant second-hand, forking out more money on it than on a new car. He never loaned it out. But beyond that, everyone helped one another, people say, and why wouldn't they, tools were loaned and brought back clean, neighbours rolled up their sleeves to pitch in or swapped leftover building materials. One person's connections linked up with another's supply sources, and now and again there would even be a home-made cake or pullover.

After the foundations, walls and ceiling, Fritzsche moved on to the bungalow's interior. Always at the weekends, and on holidays too. Some say that as he worked, he fell more and more in love with the area. In front of the bungalow, he constructed a concrete terrace with a view of the forest, where even today the evening sun still becomes entangled in the treetops. His wife planted

vegetable beds up the slope, according to their taste and without the restrictions typical of allotment gardens, where there were all kinds of regulations for the height of hedges, the number of fruit trees and berry bushes, the distance between the vegetable beds. The fruit here was harvested by the birds and squirrels anyway.

Human society and its economics have always been cybernetic, self-regulating systems, regardless of whether the humans had realised it or not.

G. Klaus, H. Liebscher: *What is Cybernetics, and what is its function?*

1960 – 2023

Georg

In early March, he cuts back the hedges and bushes, then rakes the entire plot once more. It sprawls up the slope, the ground almost entirely blanketed with wet beech foliage and sand-grey pine needles. When the wind blows from the East, the rush of traffic on the nearby Autobahn can be heard. Some of the new, younger neighbours are bothered by it, but Georg barely notices the constant undertone anymore; it's just there, like the sound of the sea. He notices the drumming of a woodpecker in the treetops, interspersed with the cooing of two doves, they're also new to these parts, and must have made themselves a love nest somewhere on the plot. A blackbird flies past Georg, low to the ground. He takes his time with the raking, conserving his energies. Last spring, he fell from the old wooden ladder while cleaning out the rain gutters and broke his wrist. His doctor admonished him. "In your early 80s," she said, "you really need to be careful with ladders and breaks." Add to that the asthma from his Covid infection two years before, and the pain in his hips. The property is getting too much for them, Annelie's right, they can't manage it anymore. He hears the lawnmower firing up next door at Fritzsche's place, he died a couple of years ago, and his son-in-law has been busy there for days now. Georg pauses briefly, leans the rake against an old pine tree, wipes the

sweat from his brow with his arm. He looks around, a trace of farewell in his eyes. Land like this, beneath pine trees and beech trees, can be an island. It's easier to think and speak beneath trees than elsewhere. He thinks back to the first summer here, with Helga, his first wife, when there wasn't yet any sign of a bungalow, just forest all around. A small, overgrown dugout right in the middle, and that became the base of the construction. He threw himself into the work, in August 1968 after the end of the Prague Spring, more than half a century ago now, after the end of a hope, but no, the word hope suddenly seems so pretentious to Georg. After the end of an idea. He had numbers, formulas and cybernetic systems in his head. Electronic computers – which set off full of promise, and yet seemed worlds away from today's artificial intelligence. A term like self-regulation held such impact and fascination for him back then. Now, it was almost impossible to imagine they had even thought it – that within a centrally-organised planned economy, of all things, they had dreamt of more self-regulation in socialism. “In this totalitarian state,” as Roland would have said. Dream is also such a big word. Ultimately, for them it was also about control. The question was: how is it possible to control highly-complex systems, and the answer was: without mechanisms of self-regulation, it isn't. A country's economic system cannot be overseen and steered by one person. No one can see the whole picture. Not even when the helmsman is a multi-headed central committee with its own planning commission. Effectively, the production figures showed this early on. They

also showed the aftermath of the war, the devastation, the country's division, the reparations to the Soviet Union. The murders, the guilt. The abyss. "The violence in people's heads and hearts can't be reprogrammed overnight," Mona had once said to him during a conversation about their fathers. Shortly after Georg began to build here on the slope, Mona took on a condemned farmhouse behind the village school with some friends. Her nature immediately reminded him of Roland, though her thoughts came across as more earnest, less derisive. He was struck by the number of people who affect and influence you, lingering in your mind even after they've disappeared, like a country, from your life. And by the many variations of yourself that are possible, depending on who you meet, on how you interact with your surroundings. He still sees Mona sometimes, walking past along the settlement path into the forest. Before, she used to mainly get around by bike. Whenever she greets him over the garden fence, he waves back. Today, there's no one walking along the sandy path. Georg reaches for the rake again, and gets back to work. The slope makes things easier; he pulls the leaves and needles downhill in piles. The rake scratches roughly across the forest floor, getting caught here and there on a root or a sinewy vine of ivy. In the spots where Annelie has sown grass, he is more cautious, gentler, as though he were combing someone's hair. He doesn't want to pull out a single blade. The lawn doesn't have it easy in these surroundings, it needs large quantities of water, fertiliser, and in summer, protection from the sun. If they were to leave this

land to its own devices, the lawn would soon be covered in moss and then disappear entirely, and eventually everything would become forest again. This kind of self-regulation wasn't what they had had in mind back then. They had wanted to reform the planned economy, not do away with it, though Roland may have secretly entertained the thought; Marlies had sometimes accused him of this when they debated market-based levers and incentives, cybernetic interactions between supply and demand, and the greater autonomy of nationalised companies. More freedom in planning, more efficiency, better production figures, more democracy. That was the idea, or rather the hope. Georg needed to take another break already, he quickly felt short of breath when exerting himself physically, as though his lungs were contracting beneath his skin. Nowadays, a term like self-regulation suggests neoliberalism and an uncontrolled market, and Georg can't help but smile at the thought, because back then these had been the accusations of the old, Stalinist-trained comrades (as a young man, he still saw them as resistance fighters and heroes) who thoroughly rejected cybernetics and economic reform: Was this, in the name of a theory they could barely comprehend, a challenge to the Party's leading role – and, with it, to socialism itself? Was capitalism slipping back in through the back door, bringing with it all the afflictions the comrades remembered from the Great Depression era, the associated unemployment, existential hardship, and fascist rule? The plans for reform were continually twisted, trimmed back, thinned out, until very

little innovation remained. In the end, none of that had really surprised Georg. What seemed more astonishing to him, later, was their euphoria, their desire, or rather audacity, to believe in change. Or had it been naivety?

After his school days and an apprenticeship in the construction industry, Georg was delegated to study; the university acceptance arrived at short notice in the summer of 1960. The construction site manager wasn't happy; he had very few people as it was, so it didn't help when those he did have were sent off to study. "So, you want to be a pencil pusher, do you," Georg's father commented at home, whistling through his teeth. His mother stirred the pea stew silently while his father sat straddle-legged at the kitchen table, studying Georg through narrowed eyes until he felt as stubbed out as the cigarette butt before him in the ashtray. "Just think for a moment," his father added, "about how much you could earn on the construction site in that time." Georg felt sick. Whether it was from the smell of the pea soup, the cold cigarette smoke or other smells in the apartment, he didn't know, but he knew one thing for sure: he would rather become a pencil pusher than take on the baton of this stale life from his father. You could no longer tell by looking at the old man that he had been handsome in his youth, the type the ladies had flocked around, as he liked to boast after a few beers. Youth had been frozen off him in the war like the big toe on his right foot. Georg had inherited his physical build; he was tall and sinewy, and muscular from the construction

work. His skin remained tanned even in winter and formed an attractive contrast to his thick, ash-blonde hair and greenish-grey eyes which, in his father, now looked watery. Georg hadn't inherited his father's swaggering, boastful nature. "He's more milksop than man," his father had declared after he returned home from the war and imprisonment. Shy, nervous, a cissy. As his mother set the pea stew down on the table, Georg left the apartment. Downstairs in the fresh air, the nausea suddenly felt like excitement. Anticipation. Like butterflies in the stomach of a person newly in love. It was one of those bright, warm July days that made autumn and winter seem very far away. Beneath a brilliant blue sky, Georg wandered aimlessly through the streets, carrying an expectation that hadn't yet taken on concrete form, that drifted around untethered in his body like the soft breeze on that summer's day.

In his first year of study, the anticipation was initially followed by a degree of disappointment, or more accurately: boredom. How does our socialist planned economy function? Political Economics of Socialism, Political Economics of Capitalism, History of the German Workers' Movement, Marxism-Leninism – Georg learnt entire paragraphs and pages from books and papers off by heart, like a multi-versed poem, primarily because the answers were so unwieldy and clumsy. He wouldn't have been able to get

them into his head otherwise. To begin with, there was no talk of any kind of happiness.

And yet the question in itself was interesting: How does a complex economic system function? And how does it function within the context of a socialist planned economy? Roland gave this considerable thought; he was a first-year student like Georg, except equipped with a significantly better education and a self-confidence that impressed and amused Georg in equal measure. He was shorter and stockier than Georg, and had a broad scar across his chin, but as soon as he began to speak, everyone listened. On the very first day, he squeezed into the row next to Georg with his folders, in a sweat-stained shirt that was half untucked, seemingly underwhelmed by the grandeur of the lecture hall with its oval ceiling stucco, the adjustable board behind the professor's lectern and the ascending rows of seats (this was surely also because he came from an educated, Communist home, as Georg soon discovered, with volumes by Goethe, Hegel and Marx on the bookshelves; his father, a Germanist and antiquarian, had been shot by the Gestapo). After the lecture, he asked Georg's name, they introduced themselves, and from then on, they often sat together after seminars to continue the conversation about the material (or rather: Roland talked and Georg tried to keep up). Roland seemed more interested in philosophical than economic contexts. As soon as he began to ponder a question, Georg's painstakingly-memorised

answers were no longer enough, because in Roland's thoughts and words, everything immediately linked to everything else, and with every additional cigarette he lit as he talked, new ideas, problems and contexts would arise, until eventually Georg's head was steaming and, from the springboard of that one question, the entire world had appeared before his eyes: from a small village shop and supplier to the largest chemical and steel works in the country, including all trade relations, regardless of whether they were with socialist or nonsocialist countries. Goods were taken into consideration too, the turnover and spending power in the GDR. The shortages and insatiable demand. Politics and money. Communal property and private property. The international situation with its predictable and unpredictable events. The climate and nature; everything that grew, was hunted or kept in a stable. The world's natural resources of coal, bronze, oil and gas. The lack of natural oil and gas deposits in their own country. Technological progress and the competition between systems. The wars, the reparations, the reconstruction. Work, love and starting a family – and perhaps, though Georg only thought about this later, even the weekend cottage out in the country.

The situation had no longer been sustainable, Professor Hartman declared in his summary of the international situation in September 1961, two and a half weeks after the closure of the internal borders in Berlin. Crossings to West Berlin had been stopped, and the streets were filled with barbed wire, concrete

posts, and armed and civilian task forces. A protective measure in case of attack, that's how it was defined in seminars, in the newspaper, on the radio. A reaction to secret attack plans from Bonn, to Western warmongering, revanchists and militarists, incendiary propaganda, enemy agents. (Back then, Georg didn't notice the war in the language, it was the language he had grown up with, even his father had talked about traitors and enemies of the people.) Barely a word about the country's economic situation, and yet just a few weeks beforehand Professor Hartman had estimated the loss in production through cross-border commuting and desertion from the Republic at over thirty billion marks. Georg made a note of such sums as a power of ten, 30×10^9 , he liked the order and clarity of figures and had a head for them. By this point he also had subjects like Statistics and Accounting on his timetable – seminars that Roland tolerated in a more dreamlike than awake state, but in which Georg exhaled with relief; he was much better with numbers and formulas than words, as some of his teachers had already noticed back in his school days. (He might have been able to study Maths or Physics, had it not been for his father and the GDR's study programme guidance.)

The news of the border closure had taken them by surprise in the middle of the holidays, while they were on a harvesting mission with their seminar group. The first gathering took place in the field on their lunchbreak, the sun burning down on their sweaty, dusty skin. *The students of the Economics*

faculty also demand that our supreme representative body put a stop to the activities of the crooks, kidnappers, agitators and speculators orchestrated from West Berlin. “Anyone who doesn’t take sides now,” Roland whispered scornfully into Georg’s ear, “is betraying our victorious working class.” After the meeting, they signed with their dirt-caked hands the student body’s declaration of consent. As the son of a bricklayer and an unskilled saleswoman, Georg was part of that working class, which celebrated their leading role in the new socialist state, and the end of exploitation and fascism, on banners, placards and wall newspapers. His father couldn’t care less about these word acrobatics, he preferred to look in his pay packet than at banners, and had nearly sent Georg’s mother to Sunday cleaning jobs in West Berlin in the weeks before the border closure, and then Georg could have forgotten about his study place! Earning a brown Fifty over there and exchanging it here 1:4, that was two hundred East German Marks in one go! If everyone did the same, they might as well pack in the country and socialism! Georg was receptive to the problems and demands of this young state, what were a mere twelve years for a new start, for a new societal order, born out of fascism, which was focused on the well-being of the collective? These and other solutions resonated with him, making his heart swell; he was only nineteen years old, after all. Luckily his mother had had little interest in slogging her guts out on Sundays too. Still, Georg was ashamed of his father, of his flagrant self-interest.

Roland saw matters in a less moralistic way. (“You don’t need morals in order to understand the system,” he said to Georg again and again). Ideal people and plans are good on paper, but in practice, it’s about the contradictions. The interests and personal advantages. “It has to be possible to have a good life here,” he admonished, “because without economic success, there won’t be any new state!” This was his demand and the focal point of his thinking, and perhaps his hope in autumn 1961 came from that too: now that the borders were shut for the time being (they weren’t able or willing to contemplate a lasting closure at this point), people would have to concentrate on their own problems and contradictions. “Let’s take off the state’s practice wheels and start making some demands!)

Things they didn’t have enough of in autumn 1961: meat, sausages, cheese, butter (Eat margarine instead of butter!), fruit, vegetables (Carrots only for little kids!), woollen clothing, winter shoes, children’s shoes, batteries, irons, toothbrushes, toothpaste, medication, washing products (according to Roland’s sister, the crockery in the hospital kitchen was now being washed with just water). There weren’t enough oil, gas or solid fuels (and there were repeated power outages). There was a shortage of materials at construction sites, transportation vehicles, public transport infrastructure, and living space. Sometimes, there was even a shortage of screws. There was a shortage of a realistic, critical view of the country’s economic and political situation. There

was a shortage of workers, everywhere, on building sites, in businesses, in hospitals (you really wouldn't want to be on our ward right now, commented Roland's sister).

How was a new society supposed to emerge under these conditions? There was a shortage of democratic and constitutional structures in this German Democratic Republic, but they barely paid attention to this contradiction; only later, when things began to feel constrictive for Roland in the self-declared workers' and farmers' state, did the questions and doubts grow.

When, in their third year of study, the tone changed, Roland immediately pricked up his ears. Socialist society has laid the foundation for an entirely new economic direction, Professor Hartman explained to them, but it's still being frequently impeded here. Roland straightened up and elbowed Georg in the side. He repeated the sentence in a whisper and stared at Georg, frowning. It wasn't exactly a bombshell, but Roland was right, something about this sentence had strayed from the usual tone. They watched as Professor Hartman brushed the chalk dust from his palms, his eyes behind his thick bifocals flitting briefly across the rows before he returned to the manuscript. The central plan, he read out in a rasping voice, was lacking the requisite flexibility, and the current system of planning and leadership in general didn't always do justice to the requirements of the practice. "This is

it!” murmured Roland, fidgeting tensely on his seat. His unrest rubbed off onto Georg. Were the paltry pay checks and half-empty shelves finally going to be addressed? Regardless of what successes the newspapers might report again tomorrow, in this moment they heard Professor Hartman say loudly and clearly: The demand for high output was not achievable through planning specifications and morale alone!

For the rest of his days, Georg would never forget how Roland first shook his head in disbelief, then in the next moment, beamed at him triumphantly.

A short while later, they heard the plans for comprehensive economic reform. *We believe we are unable to continue running the economy in this way*, this was the statement from the Chairman of the GDR State Council they discussed in their seminar. *WE ARE UNABLE TO CONTINUE RUNNING THE ECONOMY IN THIS WAY!* Roland wrote in his notebook, pinning the torn-out page that evening like a pamphlet to the wall of his furnished bedroom, which was as narrow as a towel and yet a fitting castle in the air when Georg sat on the hard edge of the bed and followed Roland’s explanations. This wasn’t about patching up small isolated parts! Suddenly they were reading Liberman, the Russian economist who wrote in his essays against rigid planning specifications and argued for a flexible system of different economic incentives. Based on the principle: *That which is*

advantageous to society as a whole must also be advantageous to each individual business and every individual employee.

Is it any surprise that they dreamt their way beyond reality's shortcomings, even beyond reality itself? That they obsessed over an idea or hope? (Even the belief in an idea can be a refuge and sanctuary.) The confidence may have seemed excessive to Georg in the beginning, but he loved the maelstrom of enthusiasm that Roland unleashed, and enjoyed being swept along by it. It triggered a vibration in Georg's neural pathways. This unconditional claim and intent to understand the system and have an impact on it. To make a difference. As Marx had written, and as the inscription in the university's entrance hall read: The point is not only to comprehend the world, but also to change it. In their last year of study, they received the offer of transferring to the Humboldt's Academy of Sciences after graduation as PhD candidates. Georg would never have dreamt of an academic career, even the degree itself sometimes seemed to him like an accident, a deviation from the control mode of his background, but Roland already saw himself as a university professor and leader of research groups.

Professor Dr. Benders at the Academy was completely different to Professor Hartmann. He was in his late fifties, a skilled mechanical engineer with a PhD in economics, a renowned expert in his field. Though his thinning hair had

already retreated far beyond his high forehead, his entire stance felt dynamic and youthful. His tone towards the PhD students was friendly but firm. “We won’t make any progress if you treat planned and market economies as mutually exclusive opposites. Start to see them as poles of a dialectic unit! This includes recognising that our socialist planned economy, in its foundations, is still a market economy!” Roland burst into spontaneous applause and the other post-grads, too, felt this pull in Professor Bender’s presence. The desire for independent thought that arises when supposed certainties are suddenly called into question. “We want a socialist economy that is effective, efficient, quick to respond and economically viable! Get cracking! Think. Where is central leadership necessary, and where is it holding us back?”

And they did think. About the particularities of the goods-money-relationship in publicly-owned businesses, and against the backdrop of state-defined standard specifications and allowances. About ways of strengthening the autonomy of these national enterprises, and making higher performance more tangible to employees via their pay packets. “So you want to economise on labour, materials and financial outlay?” Professor Benders asked the group, and Georg’s pencil darted across the lines of his notebook. “Then you should make achieved profit – not, as is currently the case, quantitative production – the measure of the work and bonuses. Because it’s not only how *much* we

produce that should count, but also: to what quality and at what cost, and whether we can actually sell the product in the end! We have to reward savings in raw materials, the use of new computer technologies and needs-based production! We should be talking about prices, and whether they're appropriate to the expenditure on labour and material. All these are levers and incentives that we can use. And in future, our business leaders will only receive bonuses if they stop planning ranges where it's clear from the start that citizens won't like them." The post-grads laughed and whispered to one another, but Professor Benders didn't smile: "It's to be expected that there will be significant resistance."

The air in the room with its drawn-in walls and ceilings smelt stale and musty. Georg gazed longingly out of the closed window. The Academy building was located on Leipziger Strasse. After the First World War, the Workers' and Soldiers' Councils had gathered here, then, in the Weimar Republic, the Prussian State Council. It was the last building this side of the sector border, which ran across the street just a few metres on. Under the fascists, it had been the Reich Office for Regional Planning. Now it bore the scars of war, a fire bomb had destroyed the glass ceiling and magnificent plenary hall, the building's formally tall rooms had been hung with suspended ceilings and divided into narrow offices. You could tell by looking at the building that the state lacked money and materials. You could tell by looking at the entire

country. And this lack was supposed to be resolved through economic reform? Georg tore his gaze away from the grey-blue sky and turned back to Professor Benders.

“The art,” he was saying, while gathering his notes and tucking them inside his leather briefcase, “consists of properly planning the changes and then having the courage to implement them.” A smile danced on his lips. “In economics, we are working with models of reality. Even if we think through and calculate everything in theory – nothing is 100% calculable. The experiment and its adaptation to reality are part of it!” He slung his jacket over his arm and reached for the briefcase in front of him on the desk. “But at the end of the day, our current planning methods are an experiment too – and as our analyses show – one which isn’t very successful in the long term.”

Under Bender’s influence, a cybernetic interplay of planned and market economies suddenly seemed plausible and conceivable. The idea of an economy which, aided by incentives, could predominantly regulate itself, like an organism, and adapt flexibly to internal and external changes. With businesses that navigate independently, like cells and organs, while the brain considers overarching values and central goals. With neural pathways and synapses that ensure the exchange of information all around the body. In conversation with Professor Benders, systems seemed dynamic and adjustable, ready to learn from their mistakes. This felt good, and sensible.

[END OF SAMPLE]