

# **Resistance in *Rabet oder das Verschwinden einer Himmelsrichtung* by Martin Jankowski**

Lutfi Saksono<sup>1,\*</sup> Fahmi Wahyuningsih<sup>1</sup> Rr. Dyah Woroharsi Parnaningroem<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Faculty of Languages and Arts, Universitas Negeri Surabaya 60213, Indonesia*

<sup>\*</sup>*Corresponding author. Email: lutfisaksono@unesa.ac.id*

## **ABSTRACT**

*Rabet oder das Verschwinden einer Himmelsrichtung* by Martin Jankowski presents a fictional character, but the events in this novel are authentic. This novel describes the origin of the peaceful revolution (*friedliche* Revolution) in East Germany from 1987-1989. At that time East Germany was under authoritarian rule and could not improve the welfare of its people. This condition eventually led to resistance from groups of people who wanted change. According to James C Scott, there are two forms of resistance, namely open resistance and closed resistance. Open resistance is organic, systematic, group (cooperative), selfless, revolutionary, and negates the basis of domination. Meanwhile, closed resistance is irregular, unsystematic, individual, opportunist, without revolutionary consequences, and accepts a system of domination. In this novel, two forms of resistance exist. At the first time the resistance was closed resistance and carried out by several people without proper organization. However, in the end this resistance became an open resistance.

**Keywords:** *Revolution, open resistance, closed resistance*

## **1. INTRODUCTION**

Several years after the end of World War II Germany was divided into two countries, the Federal Republic of Germany (*Bundes Republik Deutschland*) and the German Democratic Republic (*Deutsche Demokratie Republik*). This nation was split into two as a result of the zoning implemented in Germany after Hitler's defeat. The United States, Britain, France and the Soviet Union have invaded Germany and destroyed the German troops led by Adolf Hitler. Then the four countries divided Germany into four zones under their control. Then zone of United States, zone of England and zone of France merged, while one zone remained under the control of the Soviet Union. The joint zone under the United States, France and Britain eventually gave birth to a new country called the Federal Republic of Germany or often called West Germany, while the East German zone under the Soviet Union was named the German Democratic Republic.

On the way as a country, West Germany had better economic growth and had a government that was free from foreign interference. On the other hand, the East German government was still under the control of the Soviet Union and limited the space for its people to express themselves. Better economic growth and a more flexible life without strict supervision made some people from East Germany cross into West Germany.

This defection made the East German government angry and put up a fence along the border of West Germany and East Germany. Even West Berlin and East

Berlin are bordered by a 3 meter high wall. This fence and parapet made the East German people isolated.

West Germany emerged as a new economic power. Income per capita and people's welfare have increased. The ongoing development of West Germany is known as a developed country in the world. The constant political stability made life in West Germany better than in East Germany. The better condition of West Germany triggered East German youth to take action against the East German government in early 1989. This action is natural, because space for power and destructive violence will produce various forms of resistance [1].

This action was met with the arrest of activists by the Stasi (East German Police who have a special task). However, this action did not go out, even though the station arrested and punished the perpetrators. In fact, more and more resistance actions have sprung up in several cities such as Leipzig, Berlin and Dresden. Furthermore, this action developed into a revolution and was known as the peaceful revolution (*friedliche* Revolution). It is called a revolution because this resistance action ended the East German state and initiated the birth of a united Germany. According to Singh, in the revolution, there was the involvement of many layers of society in the whole region to subvert and fundamentally change the political and economic order and replace them with new ones [2].

This peaceful revolution event inspired Martin Jankowski to write a novel with the title *Rabet -oder das Verschwinden einer Himmelsrichtung*. This novel tells the story of the forerunner of the resistance in the city of

Leipzig, East Germany to the union of Germany, accompanied by the intrigue of love. As a person directly involved in the peaceful revolutionary action, Martin Jankowski was able to tell in detail every action that took place in the city of Leipzig. So that this novel can be considered as a text representation of historical reality [3].

*Rabet-oder das Verschwinden einer Himmelsrichtung is Martin Jankowski's first novel. Previously he wrote mostly poetry and essays. Through the novel he was able to portray the story of the East German people's resistance to the East German government in a clearer way. There are many things that people don't know about the peaceful revolution in Germany, especially what happened in Leipzig. This novel takes the setting of the city of Leipzig in 1987-1990 and tells the story of a young boy named Benjamin Grassmann who wants to become a musician. He falls in love with a woman named Gesa. Together with Gesa he joined the opposition artist group in the city of Leipzig. Grassmann decided to be politically active and get involved in the struggle of the Leipzig opposition group against the East German government. The covert and open resistance carried out by this opposition group extended throughout East Germany and eventually brought the East German regime to a collapse.*

The characters in the novel are indeed fictional characters, but most of the events in this novel are authentic. On the martin-jankowski.de website, STERN newspaper argues that this novel describes the events of 1989 authentically, especially about young people in Leipzig who fight against a rigid government system and they can finally overthrow it.

In a revolution there is a resistance to power. According to Weber [4], power is the ability of a person or group to impose his will on another party even though there is resistance through resistance. Resistance will be carried out by community groups or individuals who feel oppressed, frustrated, and there is a situation of injustice in their midst.

The greatest motivation for resistance is the desire to uphold justice. Resistance subjects usually have extraordinary courage and fortitude, so they have the ability to continue to resist [5]. Scott [6] defines resistance as any action taken by subordinate groups or groups aimed at reducing or rejecting claims (eg rent or tax) made by a party or superordinate group against them. Scott [6] divides this resistance into two parts, namely: public or open resistance (public transcript) and resistance hidden or closed (hidden transcript).

The two resistances are distinguished by the characteristics of resistance which refer to form, characteristics, social and cultural areas. The characteristic of open resistance usually has open interactions between subordinate classes and superordinate classes. While hidden resistance is usually characterized

by closed, indirect interactions between subordinate and superordinate classes.

To see a clearer distinction between the two forms of resistance above, Scott [6] characterizes open resistance as resistance which is: (1) organic, systematic and cooperative; (2) have principles or are not selfish; (3) has revolutionary consequences, and; (4) includes the idea or intention of eliminating the basis of domination. Thus, demonstrations or protests which take the form of demonstrations, hunger strikes, mass mobilization (and others) are a logical consequence of open resistance to superordinate parties.

Whereas hidden resistance can be characterized as resistance which is: (1) irregular, unsystematic and occurs individually; (2) opportunistic and selfish; (3) has no revolutionary consequences, and; (4) more accommodating to the domination system. Therefore, the symptoms of crime such as: petty theft, blasphemy, cursing, and even pretending to obey (but behind disobedience) are manifestations of hidden resistance. This type of resistance is not intended or changed a system of domination, but is more focused on trying to stay alive in that system now, this week, this season [4]. These experiments are also attempts to hit back, get relief from an exploitation, can result in negotiations about dividing boundaries, can change development, and in some cases bring down the system.

Scott [7] adds that this type of resistance is not so heroic, but ubiquitous, against the effects of system implementation or development by the state. This resistance was individual and often anonymous. It is scattered in small communities and generally without the institutional means of collective action, using local means of resistance and requiring little coordination.

The coordination referred to here is not a concept of coordination that has been understood so far, which originates from formal and bureaucratic ties. But it is coordination with actions taken in communities with dense information networks and sub-cultures - rich sub-cultures of resistance. There were no riots, demonstrations, arson, organized social crimes and open violence. This resistance will continue as long as the social structure is still exploitative and unfair.

In fact, there are four factors that determine the intensity of resistance and the potential to take political action as a way out. First, how severe the level of backwardness or collective communal suffering is compared to other groups. Second, the strength or firm identity of the group that feels threatened. Third, the reliability of the degree of cohesion and group mobilization. And fourth, repressive control or unfair coercion by dominant groups.

For Giddens, social action carried out by individuals will have implications for creating differences in life [8]. Referring to Giddens' statement, resistance which is also a social action will produce change, including resistance

without violence. According to Sharp [9] this nonviolent resistance used the civilian-based method. Usually, societal resistance foments conflict through social, psychological, economic and political means without using threats and violence. Within this resistance there are acts of omission (doing nothing) and acts of commission (doing something) which can be used simultaneously or only one of which is selected. There are many methods such as symbolic protests, economic boycotts, strikes, etc. which are used to mobilize the masses in order to oppose or support different policies, delegitimize the opponent, eliminate or limit the strength of the opponent. This nonviolent resistance also usually comes out of the traditional resistance standards that are generally carried out by people such as lobbying, electioneering, and legislating.

## 2. METHODS

In order to understand and describe the art and character of resistance in the novel, the author used James C. Scott's paradigm of resistances. According to him, there are two kinds of resistances; those are public transcript and hidden transcript and their characters. Moreover, this study also used Gene Sharp's theory of nonviolent action. Both of the theories can reveal the resistances in the novel completely.

## 3. DISCUSSION

Since its establishment as a country, East Germany has implemented a communist system like the system adopted by the Soviet Union, even for some East German affairs it still refers to the policies in the Soviet Union. This policy did not only apply in East Germany, but also in several European countries that were under the influence of the Soviet Union.

In the novel *Rabet oder Das Verschwinden einer Himmelsrichtung*, the East German Government or the *Deutsche Demokratische Republik (DDR)* is described as an authoritarian government and carries out very strict supervision of several aspects of the lives of its citizens. One form of authoritarianism is the arrest of its citizens who protest. The following quote shows the atrocities of the East German government. *AUF GRUND FUNDAMENTALER VERSTOESSE GEGEN DIE GRUNDLEGENDEN REGELN DER GESELLSCHAFT IST MIT DEM TODESURTEIL ZU RECHNEN* [10]. The above quote shows that protest against excessive state is punishable by death.

The system of government in East Germany is different from West Germany. In the West, people have room to express and channel their opinions. In addition, the West German economy grew well and became one of the world's economic powers. In East Germany, on the other hand, the lives of citizens were closely watched.

The state controls all aspects of life, including freedom of expression. The economy of East Germany did not grow well, even East Germany was a poor country in Europe at that time. The difference between East Germany and West Germany both in terms of governmental and socio-economic aspects sparked resistance from the people.

One of the settings of this novel is the city of Leipzig in East Germany. It was in this city that the resistance against the East German government began. The resistance carried out by the people is closed or clandestine resistance. According to Scott, the characteristics of closed resistance are unstructured and systematic. In this novel, closed resistance is carried out by several people who have different professional backgrounds. Initially they were just a group of people who often met and discussed many things, from hobbies to social issues. From these meetings they finally discussed the protest against the government in East Germany.

Closed resistance was carried out because the police carried out very tight supervision of residents' activities. In addition, among the figures who fought had no experience in managing a resistance action. Each character can express their opinion based on the conditions observed and then take action.

Benjamin Grassmann and the other characters' first resistance was to fly a balloon into the air. The balloons were released into the air when the figures were in the crowd. Balloons are initially stored in a bag, then flown into the air. This certainly attracted the attention of the masses. The police did not know who flew the balloon, because the crowd was very large. So that the police find it difficult to identify or recognize the perpetrators.

The crowd who were gathered were shocked when they saw the balloons. They thought the balloon was deliberately brought by people from West Germany. For the figures who took action, this resistance action had two objectives, namely (1) to attract the attention of the masses and the police; and (2) want to show that people are being asked to look to West Germany. *Ein Schwarm schwarzer Luftballons stieg bedaechtig in den Himmel. SPUTNIK stand auf jedem davon. In breiter, heftchenroter Schrift, handgemalt. Ein Ereignis, Luftballons waren nicht einfach zu besorgen in der beduerfnisorientierten sozialistischen Planwirtschaft* [10].

This resistance was closed resistance, because it was carried out without good organization and had no clear purpose. The masses were only impressed by the balloons being flown, but the masses were not interested in the message the resistance group wanted to convey.

Resistance was indeed carried out in groups consisting of several people. However, resistance was not carried out regularly. Then after the balloon was released into the air there was no further action, even the

resistance group did not conduct an evaluation. They just feel satisfied with the actions they have done. Moreover, the coverage in the newspaper made it the main headline of *SABOTAGEAKT PROWESTLICHER ROWDYS (SABOTAGE ACTION BY THE PRO-WEST GROUP)*.

After taking the first action by flying balloons, the next action was to distribute posters in places accessible to the public. The method used by these characters is the way Sophie Scholl and her siblings have done. Sophie Scholl is a woman who dared to challenge Hitler. He and his brothers spread resistance posters. The methods used by Sophie Scholl and her siblings were aimed at awakening the public and exposing the atrocities of Hitler and the Nazis. But Hitler's regime was so strong and cruel that Sophie Scholl and her siblings were arrested and sentenced to death.

Resistance groups in East Germany did distribute posters in public places, but the distribution was carried out at night or at arm's time and away from police observation. For example, posters are placed in post boxes, in public telephone booths and city bus stops. *Briefkaesten waren nur im Notfall geeignet. Besser war es, die Zettel in Telefonzellen, in Bushaueschen oder an Strassenbahnhaltestellen abzulegen. Ueberall dort, wo man sich nachts ungestraft aufhalten konnte und trotzdem moeglichst viele Leute erreichte* [10]. The posters distributed were posters containing economic injustice or inequality or all social problems that occurred in East Germany. This method was quite successful because many people read and paid attention to the poster. However, this does not mean that poster distribution is not a risk. Two people from the resistance group, Gesa and Andrian, were arrested and jailed by the police.

The poster distribution campaign came after a member of the East German resistance group, Benjamin Grassmann, visited an opposition group in Czech. The Czech resistance group was more structured and had a clear program. It was from this Czech group that the resistance group in East Germany received an explanation of the forms of resistance that had to be carried out. The Czech movement set an example for the resistance movement in Leipzig. *Ich soll den Dank der Leipziger Reformgruppen an die Charta 77 ueberbringen. Seit Februar haben wir in der Nikolaikirche ein offenes Forum. Moeglicherweise gibt es auch bei uns bald eine dritte Stimme im Land, neben der Partei und den Westmedien. Die Zahl der Leute, die beiden nicht laenger trauen, waechst* [10].

According to Scott [3] open resistance has the following characteristics: (1) organic, systematic and cooperative; (2) have principles or are selfless; (3) has revolutionary consequences, and; (4) have an idea or intention to eliminate the basis of domination. From Scott's view, it can be seen that there has been a change in the pattern and way of working of the East German resistance groups. Initially their actions were carried out

sporadically and without a pattern. But then their actions were more structured, patterned, and purposeful. Even so, their actions were still carried out in secret.

Another thing that distinguished after the visit from the Czechs, the East German resistance groups began to lead to a revolution, namely a change in the system of government. The dialogues they are building are becoming more serious and aiming for goals that can change the system of government. Hence, the action plan was made better. They are aware that if there is no systematic, organized and corrective action, resistance action cannot achieve a revolution.

To become a good organization and to be able to discuss and do work related to the revolution at any time, an office is needed. The existence of an office proves that this group is starting to be well organized. They called the office they gathered in as *Buero illegales*.

In the office there is also a telephone and typewriter. These two tools became important in the context of the resistance movement in East Germany. The telephone was used to communicate with resistance groups in other cities, such as Berlin, and other countries, such as the Czech Republic. In addition, telephones are also used to contact western media. While typewriters were used to make manuscripts to be read at the Nikolai Church. *Wir besaessen eine Schreibmaschine, auf der wir Manuscripte fuer die montaeeglichen Versammlungen in Nikolai vorbereiten koennen* [10].

In fact, offices, telephones and typewriters were dangerous devices for the East German government if they were used by certain groups. The police can arrest the owner. Therefore the resistance groups in East Germany were very careful in their every action. *Wir waren privilegiiert! Niemand im uns bekannten Teil der Welt hatte, was wir hatten. Unsere Gespraechspartner staunten, warnten und beglueckwuenschten uns. Vorsichtig!* [10].

The poster leaflets only made people aware of the social and economic conditions in East Germany, but could not make them take any action. Therefore we need an effective way to influence the masses. The East German resistance group had the idea to make a speech at Nikolaikirche. Nikolaikirche is a church in the city of Leipzig which has a large congregation. Through a charismatic pastor, Christopher Frist, the East German resistance group gave a lecture or oration containing the social situation in East Germany.

The sermon material has been prepared at the resistance group's office. This sermon about the realities of social life in East Germany was very interesting. The goal is for people in the City of Leipzig to realize that something is wrong in their government and the people must do something.

As time went on, the congregation who attended the services at Nikolaikirche was increasing. The number of congregations that continues to increase makes the

church no longer able to accommodate congregations. Hundreds of people who did not get a seat inside were still willing to listen to speeches from outside the church. *Die Nikolaikirche fasste nicht mehr alle Besucher. Mehr als hundert Leute warteten draussen unter den kreisenden Kameronen darauf, dass die Tueren doch noch aufgingen und sie hereinliessen* [10]. This situation proves that an organized and purposeful resistance action can attract sympathy from the people.

The speech that was delivered was able to move the people of the City of Leipzig. After each sermon, the congregation held a demonstration. They walked down the streets of the City of Leipzig. This action received supervision and obstruction from the police. Several people were injured and arrested. Even so, the demonstrations continued peacefully without acts of anarchy. *Mannschaftswagen Mannschaftswagen. Hundegebell. Mannschaftswagen. In einer Seitenstrasse wartete eine Kampfgruppe at Marschformation. Rufende Leute mit Kerzen und flatternden Transparenten liefen mit Abstand daran vorueber* [10] is a quote that shows that many people participated in the demonstration. Even so they did not commit any destructive action.

*WIRSINDDASVOLK-KEINE GEWALT* [10] is a piece of writing that was raised during the protests against the East German government. The sentence on the banner explained that they were just ordinary people and asked the authorities not to abuse them. The people are aware that what they are facing is the police, who usually can never be compromised. Police arrests of persons or groups deemed to be against the East German government are common.

However, arrests and violence only occurred during the first demonstrations. In subsequent actions, the apparatus did not experience any more violence. According to Sharp, [9] the resistance carried out without causing violence usually uses community-based methods or civilian-based methods. Evidence of the use of this civilian based method is by utilizing public facilities such as places of worship to spread revolutionary ideas. In these public facilities, people gather in large numbers. In addition, the influence of the church or religious elements in resistance has an impact on the security of the community because they come to church to worship.

The action carried out by the resistance group in East Germany was a smart action, because they understood the psychological and social conditions of the surrounding community. People who are under economic and social pressure pour out their hopes and grievances on the church, which is a representation of God. The presence of the East German resistance group in Nikolaikirche not only conveyed the implicit ideas of the revolution, but the people were also invited to act against them.

People who were initially silent and never protested or did nothing (acts of omission) turned into people who

carried out movements against the government (acts of commission). In this resistance there was no economic boycott and no strike. Community life continues normally as usual. The method used is symbolic protest through peaceful demonstrations and not coming to the polls, even though the government claims 99% of the people participate in the general election. Demonstrating and refusing to come to the polls was a way for the resistance groups and the people to delegitimize the East German government.

The resistance movement in the city of Leipzig carried out by Benjamin Grassman and his friends influenced the political situation in East Germany. The longer the demonstration took place, the more massive and occurred almost every day, followed by large numbers of people. Demonstrations followed by masses of great numbers had never previously occurred in countries under the Soviet Union. Therefore the movement in the City of Leipzig is considered capable of inspiring people in other cities in East Germany and other countries to hold similar protests. *"Ben! --- Schreib auf! Sie demonstrieren! Der Wenzelplatz von Menschenhen ueberfuellt! Die ganze Altstadt ist in Aufruhr! " ---- "Anna, ist das wahr?" ---- "Y, Ben. Es wurden sogar Reden gehalten. Die mutigen Menschen von Leipzig sind unser Vorbild, hat einer gesagt. "----" Wahnsinn ... Was tut die Miliz? " ---- "Noch halten sie still. Aber ich denke, sie werden nicht soviel Angst haben wie bei euch. Hier kann niemand abhauen. "[10]*

#### 4. CONCLUSION

Based on the explanation in the previous section, it can be concluded that the resistance movement that occurred in East Germany had two forms of resistance. The first resistance is closed resistance. Closed resistance can be characterized by a well-structured and patterned absence of action. The perpetrators only took action sporadically and had no revolutionary objective. The second form of resistance is open resistance. The perpetrators fought systematically and had a clear plan. The resistance action in East Germany was successful after being carried out openly. Many communities have joined the resistance because they regularly received information from the proponents of action and wanted to make change jointly.

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