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In your view, which of the questions that GDR citizens were asking themselves in the fall of 1989 are questions that we should still be asking ourselves today? What can we learn from history?

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“In the fall of 1989, those of us who were part of the civil rights movement still believed in the concept of socialism with a human face. I’m still not sure whether socialism and democracy really go together or whether this is merely an illusion. If we look back at history, democratic societies are the best form of government that humanity has produced so far. However, this doesn’t mean that this form of government is perfect and cannot be improved. Having grown up in a dictatorship, I have an especially strong appreciation of democracy. Democracy should not be taken for granted; it is a system of values that has to be achieved and sustained. In the fall of 1989, we witnessed a seemingly indestructible state crumble in a very short time. On the one hand, this shows that dictatorships are not eternal, but can be ended if enough people have the courage to do so. On the other hand, it shows that states — even democratic ones — depend upon the support, courage, and engagement of its citizens. Democracy — the main goal of the fall of 1989 — is always a work in progress, and every single citizen has a responsibility to contribute sustaining and improving it.”

