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**Soviet and East German *Deutschlandpolitik*, 1968–1973:  
Leadership's role in domestic and foreign policy linkage**

Heiser, Meredith Ann, Ph.D.  
The Johns Hopkins University, 1994

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Soviet and East German *Deutschlandpolitik*, 1968-1973:  
Leadership's Role in Domestic and Foreign Policy Linkage

by

Meredith A. Heiser

A dissertation submitted to the Johns Hopkins University  
School of Advanced International Studies

in conformity with the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Washington, D.C.

1994

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **Soviet and East German *Deutschlandpolitik*, 1968-1973: Leadership's Role in Domestic and Foreign Policy Linkage**

From 1968 through 1973, the Soviet Union and East Germany made "agonizing" decisions about foreign policy toward West Germany. By the end of 1969, the Soviet Union under General Secretary Brezhnev's leadership, moved away from a policy of unmitigated hostility vis-à-vis the FRG and moved toward a policy of détente. East Germany followed the Soviet example after Erich Honecker replaced Walter Ulbricht as General Secretary in May 1971.

This dissertation explores the following questions: How was Leonid Brezhnev, who had very little domestic authority at the time, able to convince the rest of the Politburo to pursue a positive foreign policy? How was Walter Ulbricht able to resist Soviet initiatives from 1970 to mid-1971? Finally, how did Erich Honecker unite his Politburo to follow the Soviet example; was there some lingering opposition to Soviet foreign policy initiatives?

The author concludes that a leader's level of domestic authority, coloring the view of domestic and international opportunities, was a crucial factor in predicting foreign policy choice. Ulbricht, who had developed a great deal of domestic authority based on an economic modernization program and an isolationist foreign policy, found it impossible to adapt to the changing consensus in the Soviet and East German Politburos. By way of contrast, both Brezhnev and Honecker, who initially had very little domestic authority, managed to gain political

support by backing a foreign policy which could be used to improve deteriorating domestic conditions in their respective countries.

Finally, this dissertation shows how the political competition model helps in the interpretation of foreign policy making in post-Stalinist communist leaderships. This model analyses the following three factors: (1) policy stands of rival Politburo members; (2) policy preferences of domestic constituents; and (3) the international environment. The main finding of this study is that shifting, overlapping coalitions of leaders bargained with one another and this led to linked changes in both domestic and foreign policy. However, these changes can only be understood within the context of the General Secretary's domestic and international authority building.

## Table of Contents

<i>Preface</i>	vii
<i>Special Terms</i>	viii
<i>Abbreviations</i>	ix
CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION	
Statement of the Research Problem	1
Topic Definition	10
Literature Review	15
Theoretical Literature	15
Methodological Literature	36
Current Relevance	40
CHAPTER II FOREIGN POLICY CHOICE IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT: January 1963-August 1968	
Introduction	43
West German <i>Ostpolitik</i> and Soviet Bloc Response	45
The Development of Soviet <i>Deutschlandpolitik</i>	52
International Factors	52
Domestic Factors	58
The Development of East Germany's <i>Deutschlandpolitik</i>	68
International Factors	68
Domestic Factors	73
Conclusion	77
CHAPTER III BREZHNEV'S POLITBURO: August 1968 to May 1971	
Introduction	81
Leadership Strategy	85
Internal Factors	87
External Factors	92
Political Competition Model	101
The Most Politically Powerful Politburo Members	102
Opponents of Brezhnev and Détente	122
Brezhnev's Sectoral Allies	129
Regional Secretaries Allied with Brezhnev	133
The Remaining Members of the Politburo and Other Influential Foreign Policy Actors	135
Conclusion	145



CHAPTER IV ULBRICHT'S POLITBURO:  
August 1968 to May 1971

Introduction	149
Leadership Strategy	152
Internal Factors	154
External Factors	159
Political Competition Model	172
The Most Politically Powerful Politburo Members	173
Soon-to-be-more Politically Powerful Members	193
Ideological Opponents of Détente	195
Politically Vulnerable Politburo Members	197
Conclusion	200

CHAPTER V BREZHNEV'S POLITBURO:  
May 1971 to December 1973

Introduction	203
Leadership Strategy	207
Internal Factors	212
External Factors	215
Political Competition Model	223
The Most Politically Powerful Politburo Members	225
Opponents of Brezhnev and Détente	241
Brezhnev's Remaining Sectoral Allies	246
Regional Secretaries Allied with Brezhnev	248
The Remaining Politburo Members	252
Conclusion	262

CHAPTER VI HONECKER'S POLITBURO:  
May 1971 to December 1973

Introduction	266
Leadership Strategy	268
Internal Factors	271
External Factors	277
Political Competition Model	286
The Most Politically Powerful Politburo Members	289
Ideological Opponents of Détente	304
Politically Vulnerable Politburo Members	311
New Leaders in Foreign Policy	314
Conclusion	316

## CHAPTER VII CONCLUSION

General Implications of the Study	321
Application of the Political Competition Model	326
The Soviet Case, 1968-1973	326
The East German Case, 1968-1973	328
Future Implications	332
<i>Bibliography</i>	336
<i>Appendix I: Soviet and East German Politburo Membership, 1968-1973</i>	342
<i>Appendix II: East German Politburo Members Who Signed January 1971 Letter</i>	346
<i>Appendix III: Major Soviet and German International Treaties In Chronological Order</i>	347

## **Preface**

The work on this dissertation extended over a five-year period. In that period, the countries under study in this dissertation became historical entities. Luckily, much of the memoir material which has emerged as a result of these changes confirmed my original ideas about the members of each Politburo. 1988-1993 was a very rich time period to be involved in such a study.

I am indebted to the following individuals who reviewed chapters for this dissertation, and whose own work is highly motivating: Bruce Parrott, Ilya Prizel, Vojtech Mastny, Robert Hutchings, Steven Szabo, James Robinson, Fred Holborn, Michael Sodaro, James McAdams, and David Holloway.

I am extremely grateful to those who supplied the necessary technical support. This group includes the two reference librarians at the Hoover Institution, Linda Wheeler and Molly Molloy; a dedicated student who proficiently edited the whole manuscript, Susan Witter; CJ Havill, who ran the computer center at Foothill College; and last but not least, Florence Rotz, the secretary for Russian and East European Area Studies at SAIS.

I would also like to thank the following institutions for supporting my dissertation: the Paul Nitze School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS), Stanford University, Foothill College, Radio in the American Sector in Berlin, and Radio Free Europe in Munich.

Of course, without the support and appreciation of my parents and fiancé, this work would never have been completed. All responsibility for the study is my own.

## Special Terms

- Deustchlandpolitik* Policy vis-à-vis Germany. This term can refer to policy vis-à-vis East Germany, West Germany, or both Germanies. For the purpose of this study it is only used in regard to West Germany.
- Ostpolitik* Eastern policy. This term refers to policy toward Eastern Europe and the Soviet Union. It has frequently been used to refer to West Germany's policies to the East under Chancellor Brandt (1968-1974), but it may refer to any period of history, and may also be used in describing other Western European countries' policies toward the East.
- Ostvertraege* Eastern treaties. This term generally refers to West German treaties with the Soviet Union or Eastern Europe, but it is specifically used to refer to the Moscow Treaty and the Warsaw Treaty, both completed in 1970.
- Westpolitik* Western policy. This term refers to policy toward Western Europe. It has frequently been used to refer to Soviet policies toward Western Europe under General Secretary Brezhnev's leadership (1964-1982), but it refers Eastern European and Soviet policy to Western Europe in any time period.

## Abbreviations

CC CPSU	Central Committee of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union
CDU/CSU	Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union of West Germany
CIS	Commonwealth of Independent States
CEMA	Council for Economic Mutual Aid
CSCE	Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe
DA	<i>Deutschland Archiv</i> (West German monthly publication on East Germany)
EE	Eastern Europe
GDR	German Democratic Republic (East Germany)
FBIS	<i>Foreign Broadcast Information Service, Daily Report</i>
FDP	Free Democratic Party (West German Liberal Party)
FRG	Federal Republic of Germany (West Germany)
INF	Intermediate-range Nuclear Forces
KGB	Soviet Committee for State Security
KPD	Communist Party of West Germany
MBFR	Mutual Balance Force Reductions
MFN	Most Favored Nation Trade Status
MPA	Military-Political Administration
NATO	North Atlantic Treaty Organization
ND	<i>Neues Deutschland</i> (former daily paper of SED)
NPT	Non-Proliferation Treaty
PNW	Prevention of Nuclear War Agreement
PRC	Peoples' Republic of China

SALT	Strategic Arms Limitation Talks
SED	Socialist Unity Party of Germany (East German Communist Party)
SPC	State Plan Commission of East Germany
SPD	Social Democratic Party of West Germany
Stasi	Ministry for State Security in East Germany
US	United States
USSR	Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
UN	United Nations

## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION

#### I. Statement of the Research Problem

Among international relations theorists who assume that domestic policy influences foreign policy, there is great controversy over the question: "when and how" does domestic policy generally affect foreign policy? Moreover, comparativists ask whether theories of domestic and foreign policy linkage, which are usually applied to democratic states, can also be applied to communist-ruled states.<sup>1</sup> Unfortunately for international relations scholars and comparativists, most research in the field of Soviet and East European Area Studies has focused either on domestic or foreign policy in a single-country analysis. By means of a comparative two-country study, this author adds to the small amount of comparative literature on domestic/foreign policy linkage in countries ruled by communist parties.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup>For a review of literature on the "when and how" question in linkage debates, see Alexander Dallin, "The Domestic Sources of Foreign Policy," in Seweryn Bialer, ed., The Domestic Context of Foreign Policy (Boulder: Westview Press, 1980), 335-408. For a review of linkage as it applies to communist-ruled states, see Karen Dawisha, "The Limits of the Bureaucratic Politics Model: Observations on the Soviet Case," *Studies in Comparative Communism*, Vol. XIII, No. 4 (Winter 1980), 300-326.

<sup>2</sup>Jiri Valenta conducted a detailed case study on leadership and domestic/foreign policy linkage, but this study was not comparative and focused mostly on the domestic explanation for the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. See Jiri Valenta, Soviet Intervention in Czechoslovakia, 1968 (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991, revised edition of 1979 publication with same title). William Potter wrote a dissertation dealing with cross-national effects of foreign policy decisions across the whole bloc; however, his work was undertaken at a very high level of abstraction. See William Potter, Continuity and Change in the Foreign Relations of the Warsaw Pact States, 1948-1973: A Study of National Adaptation to Internal and External Demands (Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1976). There are a number of edited volumes, in which individual authors outline linkage in one country. See for example Michael J. Sodaro and Sharon L. Wolchik, eds., Foreign Policy and Domestic Policy in Eastern Europe in the 1980s (NY: St. Martin's Press, 1983). Most two-country comparisons have taken the form of short journal articles. See for example David W. Paul and Maurice D. Simon, "Poland and Czechoslovakia in 1968," *Problems of Communism*, Vol. XXX, No. 5 (September-October 1981), 25-39.

Richard Anderson accurately explains why a leader's role in policy bargaining is critical to an understanding the linkages between domestic and foreign policy:

Exchanges of one leader's recommendation on foreign policy for one another's on domestic policy produces interactions between domestic and foreign policy that cannot be predicted from study of objective domestic and international conditions alone.<sup>3</sup>

This author also agrees with Deborah Larson on different leaders' roles in domestic/foreign policy linkage:

If various policy makers interpret events differently, then state behavior [especially foreign policy] can not be explained solely as a response to geopolitical imperatives, the balance of power [external events], or domestic political constraints [internal events].<sup>4</sup>

However, this author is more concerned than Larson with cognitive and political aspects of a leader's motivations and less concerned with psychological explanations. For the purposes of this analysis, a leader's emotional attachment to a policy is not that important. As Stephen Meyer has written, it is not personalities that matter, but "personal policy agendas, priorities and images of what has gone before and what need to be done now."<sup>5</sup> This author examines a leader's cognitive belief that a policy has been successful in the past and his political belief that the coalition supporting the policy is irreplaceable.<sup>6</sup> These cognitive and

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<sup>3</sup>Richard D. Anderson, Jr., Public Politics in an Authoritarian State: Making Foreign Policy During the Brezhnev Years (Cornell University Press, 1993), 77.

<sup>4</sup>Deborah Welch Larson, Origins of Containment: A Psychological Explanation (Princeton University Press, 1985), 355.

<sup>5</sup>Stephen M. Meyer, "The sources and prospects of Gorbachev's new political thinking on security," *International Security*, Vol. XIII, No. 2 (Spring 1988), 127, 128.

<sup>6</sup>Axelrod has defined a cognitive map as "a way of representing a person's assertions about his beliefs with respect to . . . a given policy problem." See Robert Axelrod, ed., Structure of Decision (Princeton University Press, 1976), 55.



political factors are most important in a leader's decision to adopt or discard a foreign policy, or a domestic policy for that matter.

More importantly, this author does not assume that leadership interaction in a political coalition such as the Politburo must result in "sluggish incrementalism." Bargaining can also result in the adoption of risky policy decisions, either in the initial stages of a leader's ascendancy or when a majority of Politburo members favor a riskier decision.<sup>7</sup> It is quite interesting for those who argue that Politburos make "sluggish" decisions that, although Brezhnev's domestic policy has been characterized as sluggish, his foreign policy was aggressively expansionist; certainly *détente*, in its original conception, can best be described as a risky policy decision. On the other hand, while Gorbachev's domestic policy was quite aggressive, his foreign policy sought out moderation.

This author respectfully suggests that no single description can be applied to all Politburo activities. Moreover, when incremental decisions were made by a Politburo one can not simply assume collectivity is the explanation. It maybe the age and past policy experience of the leaders in the majority, which explain the policy choice.

It is this author's hypothesis that the foreign policy choices of both the Soviet Union and East Germany regarding West Germany from 1968 to 1973 were greatly conditioned by leaders' interpretations of the political implications of domestic and international developments. In particular,

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<sup>7</sup>See Thomas A. Baylis, Governing by Committee (State University of New York Press, 1989), 106. Dennis Ross made the assumption that coalition maintenance must mean stagnation. Although Richard Anderson considers other possibilities, he ultimately makes the assumption that bargaining means decisions will fall in the median range. See Dennis Ross, "Coalition Maintenance in the Soviet Union," *World Politics*, Vol. XXII, No. 2, (January 1980), 258-280. See Anderson, Authoritarian State, 23. These ideas will be discussed in more detail in the third section of this chapter.

the need for a leadership coalition had an impact on each country's foreign policy direction. Domestic policy-making and foreign policy-making, while analytically separate categories, were particularly interconnected in forming a General Secretary's domestic authority, "[his] problem solving competence and political indispensability."<sup>8</sup>

There are two extreme views of domestic and foreign policy linkage, both of which have failed to sufficiently address the factor of leadership. While Marxist scholars have generally characterized foreign policy as the continuation of domestic policy,<sup>9</sup> other scholars, such as Leopold von Ranke, have proceeded from the *realist* point of view, stressing the primacy of foreign policy and the balance of power between states.<sup>10</sup>

Because Marxist scholars stress the influence of dominant social groups who rule the country and view policy choices as inherently conflictual, their concern for a "national interest" is negligible. Moreover, because Marxist scholars emphasize struggle among social groups, they de-emphasize the significance of any one leader and leadership struggles, viewing these struggles as an exact reflection of the struggle between larger social and economic forces within the state.

On the other hand, scholars in the *realist* group assert that foreign policy is a test of a state's greatness in pursuit of its *raison d'état*. Thus,

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<sup>8</sup>Domestic authority is defined throughout this dissertation in these terms. See George W. Breslauer, *Khrushchev and Brezhnev as Leaders: Building Authority in Soviet Politics* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982), 3.

<sup>9</sup>See Vernon V. Aspaturian, "Internal Politics and Foreign Policy in the Soviet System," in R. Barry Farrell, ed., *Approaches to Comparative and International Politics* (Northwestern University Press, 1966), 212-213. A good example of *der Primat der Innenpolitik*, the primacy of domestic politics, could be found under Bismark's leadership. He used foreign policy crises as an "ideological glue for the diverse coalition that kept him and the system he constructed in power." See Peter Gourevitch, "The second image reversed: the international sources of domestic politics," *International Organization*, Vol. XXXII, No. 4 (Autumn 1978), 905.

<sup>10</sup>This latter viewpoint is known as *der Primat der Aussenpolitik*. See Dallin, "Domestic Sources," in Bialer, *The Domestic Context*, 388, footnote 12.

domestic politics are almost always subordinate to considerations of the state. These scholars assume that states have a national mission which is commonly accepted by governmental actors. They assume that the nation rationally weighs the costs and benefits of alternative courses of action. They generally utilize crisis situations as examples for their propositions, because the nature of a crisis lessens actors' conflictual interests.<sup>11</sup> National interest scholars generally de-emphasize the role of individual leaders. From their view point, the interests and goals of a nation matter, not those of individual actors.<sup>12</sup>

Marxist scholars emphasize substate analysis, labeled the second image or second level of analysis by Kenneth Waltz. In contrast, realist scholars, emphasizing the national interest of the state in the international system, employ the Waltzean third image or third level of analysis. This author believes that neither the second or third level of analysis can explain foreign policy adequately. The first level of analysis, the role of individual leaders, also needs to be considered in the case of Soviet and East German détente with West Germany. As Anderson asks,

[i]f domestic and international circumstances alone motivated Brezhnev's change, why did the other . . . leaders, facing identical circumstances, not change with him?<sup>13</sup>

Initially, in the case of Soviet studies, the totalitarian nature of communist leaderships often led to the exclusive application of the third

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<sup>11</sup>Hannes Adomeit makes this point in Soviet Risk-Taking and Crisis Behavior (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982), 38.

<sup>12</sup>In a recent op-ed article, Henry Kissinger emphasized the *realist* view and suggested American politicians focus too much on President Yeltsin's personal leadership role; he called for closer definition and enforcement of US national interest. See *Washington Post*, 23 March 1993.

<sup>13</sup>Anderson, Authoritarian State, 196. For more information on levels of analysis, see Kenneth N. Waltz, The Man, The State, and War (Columbia University Press, 1959).

level of analysis, the national interest model, which is considered both a rational actor model as well as a non-conflict model, to communist governments. However, in the post-Stalin era, economic modernization brought about more political differentiation, accompanied by a diffusion of power and less totalitarian mode of leadership. Therefore the national interest model, became less applicable to the Soviet Union.

Moreover, while it was once argued that a General Secretary would always have an exclusively powerful position, this truism has not been entirely applicable to post-Stalin leaderships.<sup>14</sup> The conflict approach, also known as a Kremlinological approach, was therefore introduced to Soviet and East European area studies. It has been contrasted to the totalitarian approach as follows:

In contrast to the totalitarian approach to Soviet politics, which often underlay the unitary actor perspective, the Kremlinological approach assumed that the Leninist Party, having formally banned factions and elevated 'democratic centralism' to a cardinal principle, did not therefore end internecine conflict but drove it underground.<sup>15</sup>

Carl Linden made the following trenchant observations about the important, but "coalition-oriented" role of the General Secretary in policy formation:

Policy conflict, personal rivalries, and personnel shifts at the top levels bear on [the Soviet leader's] continuing effort to sustain or expand his dominance. . . He inevitably offends some political forces and pleases others in pressing his policies, thereby

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<sup>14</sup>There has been continuing debate over the extent of Khrushchev's power. A good example of the conflict model, which emphasizes the limitations to Khrushchev's power, is Carl Linden, Khrushchev and the Soviet Leadership: 1957-1964 (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1966). For those who supported the non-conflict model, suggesting Khrushchev had almost dictatorial power, see William E. Odom, "A Dissenting View on the Group Approach to Soviet Politics," *World Politics*, Vol. XXVIII, No. 4 (July 1976), 542-67. It would seem that the historical record generally validates the conflict school.

<sup>15</sup>See Arnold N. Horelick, A. Ross Johnson, and John D. Steinbrunner, The Study of Foreign Policy: Decision-Theory Related Approaches (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1975), 36.

generating conflict within the regime. . . . In fact, it is in the way an issue is defined by the leader or faction in power that gives shape and tone to all the tensions and contentions within the present regime.<sup>16</sup>

One could argue that struggle among the leadership, competitive politics, has been more crucial in modern communist societies than in modern democratic societies. Because policy enactment was not based on popular opinion in communist societies and because the stakes were so high, Politburo and Central Committee agreement was more essential than government agreement within a democratic society, which holds more alternative avenues for leaders to gain political support.

This author agrees with Gordon Skilling's ultimate assessment that group conflict was not the predominant feature of communist policy-making, but it was a vital element,

the neglect of which makes the picture of Soviet politics incomplete and distorted, and the inclusion of which renders it richer and more authentic.<sup>17</sup>

Graham Allison also emphasized the importance of political competition within communist leadership:

The dominant feature of bureaucratic politics in the Soviet Union is the continuous 'struggle for power'. . . . Thus while a central problem of life for the leader is managing to stay on top, a large part of the problem for Politburo members is how to keep the leadership collective. . . . Reorganizations, or shifts in resources, constitute redistributions of advantages and disadvantages in the central game.<sup>18</sup>

In Allison's watershed book, Essence of Decision, he drew up models for the second level and third level foreign policy paradigms to indicate that neither domestic or international variables alone could offer a

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<sup>16</sup>Linden, Khrushchev, 5, 15.

<sup>17</sup>H. Gordon Skilling, "Group Conflict in Soviet Politics: Some Conclusions," in H. Gordon Skilling and Franklyn Griffiths, eds., Interest Groups in Soviet Politics (Princeton University Press, 1971), 413.

<sup>18</sup>Graham T. Allison, Essence of Decision, (Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 1971), 182.

complete explanation of foreign policy.<sup>19</sup> Allison's rational actor model<sup>20</sup> emphasized the priority of national interests in foreign policy decision-making and his governmental (bureaucratic) politics model emphasized the primacy of the organizational process and domestic interests. The case Allison examined was the Cuban missile crisis.

One of the most controversial parts of Allison's theory was his proposition that the bureaucratic politics model could be applied to the Soviet Union and, by implication, to other communist-ruled countries.<sup>21</sup> Karen Dawisha, for example, while admitting there were some uses to the conflict model, insisted that it was peripheral to an understanding of Soviet decision-making due to the unique role of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and communist ideology. Another controversial aspect concerned the decisiveness of organizational affiliation in predicting foreign policy choice. This issue will be discussed in detail in the third section of this chapter.

This author believes that the bureaucratic politics model, with modifications, can be applied to communist-ruled nations. A revised bureaucratic politics model, including a first, second, and third level of analysis, has been labeled the **political competition model**. It considers all three levels by examining three sets of information:

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<sup>19</sup>Although Allison originally developed three models in *Essence of Decision* (the rational actor model, the organizational process model, and the government [bureaucratic] politics model), the next year he merged the latter two into one model called the bureaucratic politics model. See Graham T. Allison and Morton H. Halperin, "Bureaucratic Politics: A Paradigm and Some Policy Implications," in Raymond Tanter and Richard H. Ullman, eds., *Theory and Policy in International Relations* (Princeton University Press, 1972), 40-79.

<sup>20</sup>This classical, rational actor model has been modified by Graham Allison and the revised definition is discussed in this dissertation: "limited rationality" suggests actors act rationally given the limits of their information and the difficulty of rational calculation.

<sup>21</sup> See Karen Dawisha, "The Limits of the Bureaucratic Politics Model," *Studies in Comparative Communism*, Vol. XIII, No. 4 (Winter 1980), 325.

- (1) policy stands of rival Politburo members;
- (2) the policy preference of domestic constituencies; and
- (3) the international environment.<sup>22</sup>

While sources of foreign policy change may be internal, the nature of the response is affected by external circumstances and the leadership situation. The independent variable in this model is not constituencies themselves, but leaders' solutions to the political problem of gathering constituent support for a combined domestic and foreign policy. In order to gather constituents, Politburo members must bargain over policies and must develop symbols for various types of constituents.<sup>23</sup> In this author's view, therefore, it is **the particular coalition of leaders able to support the linkage of specific domestic and foreign policies**, which has been crucial to a Politburo's foreign policy choice.

Therefore, the following question is posed in this dissertation: "To what extent does foreign policy choice relate to domestic politics, to the actions of other nations, and to shifting authority and power in the Politburo?" To fully answer this question, one must analyze a change in foreign policy choice among senior leaders as well as new ones. Although Valerie Bunce may well be correct that a General Secretary is most innovative early on in his term, an important question remains: what causes change among the other more senior Politburo members.<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>See Philip E. Tetlock, "In Search of an Elusive Concept," in George W. Breslauer and Philip E. Tetlock, eds., Learning in US and Soviet Foreign Policy (Boulder: Westview Press, 1991), 47.

<sup>23</sup>Anderson, Authoritarian State, 253 and 258-259. In contrast to democratic states where the word constituent refers to the mass electorate, in the case of communist-ruled states, the word constituent refers to bureaucrats (Central Committee members as well as state and party bureaucrats at the federal and local levels).

<sup>24</sup>See Valerie Bunce, Do New Leaders Make a Difference? (Princeton University Press, 1981). If one looked only at new leaders in the case of East Germany, for example, one would only have two cases studies for a forty year period.

All influential members of the East German and Soviet Politburos from 1968 to 1973 are examined in this dissertation, in addition to several influential foreign policy actors who were not Politburo members.

## **II. Topic Definition**

The lengthy, but vacillating nature of Soviet and East German foreign policy vis-à-vis West Germany makes the foreign policy of détente with West Germany worthy of further investigation. This is even more true when one considers the important initiatory role of West Germany in détente in the 1970s, again in the mid-1980s, and in the most recent détente of 1989-1990.

Détente is literally defined as a "relaxation of tensions." The mix of "cooperation and competition" which accompanied détente make it hard to define the policy or its periodization precisely. While détente is usually seen as a crucial part of the US-Soviet relationship, it is not always recognized that it was accompanied by a corresponding détente policy between West Germany and the Soviet Union. There were sporadic attempts at détente in 1955, 1967-1968, as well as the period under study in this dissertation. While the US, the Soviet Union, and West Germany all adopted a policy of détente for similar reasons, to enhance their own national security, these nations had different visions of what "security" meant.

While much has been written on Brezhnev's détente policy vis-à-vis the United States and the policy's domestic and international roots, less has been written on Soviet détente toward West Germany.<sup>25</sup> While much

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<sup>25</sup>Michael Sodaro has written one of the most recent and detailed studies of Soviet détente toward West Germany. See Michael J. Sodaro, Moscow, Germany, and the West: From Khrushchev to Gorbachev (Cornell University Press, 1990).



has been written on the international determinants of East Germany's détente with West Germany, very little has been written on domestic determinants of Ulbricht's and Honecker's foreign policies toward West Germany.<sup>26</sup> Virtually no comparative or cross-national case studies have been undertaken of both Soviet and East German *Deutschlandpolitik*, defined in this dissertation as foreign policy toward West Germany.<sup>27</sup>

Can Soviet/West German or German/German détente be described as the result of a continuous, uni-dimensional national interest? Certainly the foreign policy outcome which we know today, German reunification, did not appear to be in the Soviet national interest prior to Gorbachev's leadership. What about East German/West German détente? German reunification never appeared to be in the East German national interest, at least as it was defined by East German leaders.

This study of Soviet and East German foreign policy vis-à-vis West Germany involves two communist countries' foreign policy choices on détente, an issue which was of great national concern to both, but which may have been subject to a different set of leadership, domestic, and international constraints in each case. This is a two-country study, but it involves four cases: two different Politburos in East Germany, Ulbricht's (1968-1971) and Honecker's (1971-1973), and the same two phases of Brezhnev's Politburo.

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<sup>26</sup>James McAdams's writings are the major exception. See A. James McAdams, East Germany and Détente: Building Authority After the Wall (Cambridge University Press, 1985) and A. James McAdams, Germany Divided: From the Wall to Reunification (Princeton University Press, 1993).

<sup>27</sup>While American authors have not dealt with the topic, German authors have. See Gerhard Wettig, Die Sowjetunion, die DDR und die Deutschland-Frage (Stuttgart: Bonn Aktuell, 1976).

The author has chosen to investigate the time period 1968 to 1973 for, as Grey Hodnett has written,

[t]he period from the 'Prague Spring' through the end of 1973 spans some of the most dramatic developments in the history of post-war Soviet foreign policy, and some of the most 'agonizing' decisions as well.<sup>28</sup>

Immediately prior to 1968 and during the Czechoslovak crisis, each country adopted a negative policy towards West Germany, but by 1973, each country had developed a positive, *détentist* policy toward West Germany.<sup>29</sup>

A negative *Deutschlandpolitik* is defined in this dissertation as the use of aggressive rhetoric, maximal demands, and inflexible negotiating tactics. When a negative *Deutschlandpolitik* was conducted, West Germany was generally portrayed as an unreliable political and economic partner.

A positive *Deutschlandpolitik*, on the other hand, included compromising rhetoric, minimal demands, and flexible negotiating tactics; West Germany was generally portrayed as an acceptable negotiating partner. Certainly, the policy of Soviet *détente* in its heyday of 1971 and 1972 is one of the purest examples of a positive foreign policy.

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<sup>28</sup>Grey Hodnett, "Ukrainian Politics and the Purge of Shelest" (unpublished manuscript submitted at the annual meeting of the Midwest Slavic Conference, 5-7 May 1977), 47.

<sup>29</sup>One could conclude that the second phase ended in June 1973, when the Basic Treaty went into effect. However, that would omit the GDR joining the UN in September 1973, the GDR conducting specific negotiations with West Germany after the Basic Treaty, and East German influence on the Czechoslovak/West German Treaty which was signed in December 1973 (see Appendix III for more information on each treaty). As a result of East German diplomatic success, by the end of 1973 East Germany was recognized by 100 nations where as in 1969, only 13 nations acknowledged East Germany. See McAdams, *Germany Divided*, 104, and Sodaro, *Moscow, Germany*, 252.

In this dissertation, the author examines how each country's foreign policy evolved from a negative to a positive stance vis-à-vis West Germany, and why East Germany ultimately adopted the preferred Soviet policy. One can easily respond to this dilemma by suggesting that East German leaders adopted this policy because East Germany was a "client" state and had no choice in the matter.

Some choice was available, however. We now know that the Soviets wanted to oust Ulbricht from his position as party leader as early as June 1970, because of his opposition to Soviet *Deutschlandpolitik* and other matters, but yet they waited one full year. One has to assume that Brezhnev was compelled to wait for the proper international conditions as well as the proper domestic conditions in both the USSR and the GDR.<sup>30</sup>

In the years 1968 to 1971, East Germany vacillated between a negative and positive policy toward West Germany, while the Soviet Union by and large conducted a positive policy after December 1969. Honecker, who became the East German General Secretary in May 1971, closely followed the Soviet example and, by 1973, both countries had established a productive and positive foreign policy vis-à-vis West Germany. This was symbolized by the conclusion of numerous treaty agreements with West Germany and all three countries' participation in the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE).

Although we know the most of the facts in each country's *Deutschlandpolitik*, the determinants of each country's foreign policy, as

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<sup>30</sup>The example of East German resistance to Soviet foreign policy in the mid-1980s also shows that East Germany resisted Soviet foreign policy more than once before its final resistance in 1989.

well as the interaction between those determinants, have not been sufficiently elucidated. Brezhnev's shift on foreign policy in December 1969 was especially interesting because it occurred almost simultaneously with an important domestic policy shift.

Given the potential opposition of influential Politburo members, why did Brezhnev adopt a "friendlier" foreign policy toward West Germany in the first place? How concerned was he with China as a growing military and political threat? How did Brezhnev, who had acquired little domestic authority by 1968, manage to get the rest of the Soviet Politburo to accept his foreign policy in the period after 1969? How did Brezhnev ultimately convert a majority of the Politburo to positively support his détenteist foreign policy by 1973?

In the East German case, Ulbricht's personal situation was interesting because he identified himself with East German domestic economic policy characterized as "reformist," (he used it to build his personal authority in both the GDR and the Soviet bloc), while also identifying himself with a hard-line foreign policy toward West Germany. Up until recently, it has been unclear exactly where various Politburo members stood with regard to Ulbricht's negative foreign policy vis-à-vis West Germany. We now know that by 1970 and 1971 there was organized Politburo opposition to Ulbricht's foreign policy. However, what was the connection between leaders' foreign policy concerns and their domestic policy concerns? Was the threat of increasing West German influence the primary reason to initially resist Soviet policy? Did Ulbricht's defiance of the Soviet Union become a larger threat than détente with West Germany in the eyes of other East German leaders?

Why did Honecker subsequently adopt a different *Deutschlandpolitik*, as well as an economic policy which so differed from Ulbricht's? To what degree was Honecker's foreign policy adopted to support his new domestic goals or new international goals? Were there Politburo members who disagreed with Honecker's course of action? How were their views ultimately consolidated; what happened to the strongest oppositional voices?

By answering these questions, the author weighs the relative effect of other countries, of domestic disagreement, and of political coalition-building in the Politburo on each nation's foreign policy choice.

### **III. Literature Review**

#### **A. Theoretical Literature**

##### **1. "Inside-out" or "Outside-in"?**

The modern debate on the nature of domestic and foreign policy linkage began in the 1960s. James Rosenau discussed the problem in his seminal book entitled Linkage Politics. As he wrote in a section entitled "Obstacles to Linkage Theory:"

Students of national and international politics are essentially disinterested in each other's research and tend to talk past each other when they get together. . . Each group is trapped, as it were, in its own conceptual jail. . .<sup>31</sup>

The linkage issue has since become a source of debate between authors in many different academic fields ranging from political theory, security studies, and political economy, to area studies. However, they all strive to answer one basic question: "What accounts for variations in process and outcome of foreign policy within and between states?"<sup>32</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>James N. Rosenau, Linkage Politics (NY: The Free Press, 1969), 8.

<sup>32</sup>Matthew Evangelista, "Issue-area and foreign policy revisited," *International Organization*, Vol. XLIII, No. 1 (Winter 1989) 147-171.

An associated question involves the proper level of analysis. Is a state's foreign policy determined by the structure of the international system, the domestic nature of the state, or the political requirements of individual leaders? While the "outside-in" view points an arrow from the international system to the member states, the "inside-out" view suggests that "foreign policy is an outward expression of the internal features of states."

The inside-out view emphasizes the first level, the impact of individual leaders, as well as the second level of substate actors such as bureaucracies.<sup>33</sup> Outside-in theorists, on the other hand, argue that the state represents "national interests" in the international system, so these theorists emphasize the third level of analysis, the nation as actor. One author has summed up the contrast between the national interest argument and the bureaucratic politics argument as follows:

While domestic politics is the sum of many wills, foreign policy must be the expression of a single one, for domestic politics makes itself, and foreign policy is made. . . 'National interest' represents as it were a common denominator on which domestic groups agree to act in concert in relation to the outside world.<sup>34</sup>

Stephen Krasner has provided us with a more specific definition of national interest:

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<sup>33</sup>Michael Mandelbaum, *The Fate of Nations: The Search for National Security in the Nineteenth and Twentieth Centuries* (Cambridge University Press, 1988), 5. Kenneth N. Waltz developed the inside-out view most thoroughly in *Man, the State, and War*, 159-186. He developed the outside-in view more thoroughly in *Theory of International Politics* (NY: Random House, 1979), 161-193.

<sup>34</sup>Richard E. Pipes, "Domestic Politics and Foreign Affairs," in Iva J. Lederer, ed., *Russian Foreign Policy* (Yale University Press, 1962), 147. Pipes, however, is not a proponent of the national interest argument for Russia. In his view, Russia has not even been able to develop a foreign policy based on national interest, because it has been so preoccupied with internal problems. See Pipes, 168-169.

A statist [national interest] paradigm views the state as an autonomous actor. The objective sought by the state can not be reduced to some summation of private desires.<sup>35</sup>

Michael Sodaro has described this viewpoint as "actions . . . tend to speak louder than words."<sup>36</sup>

From the outside-in view, the state has more continuous interests than the sum of its individual bureaucratic components. There are, however, a number of objections to the most extreme forms of national interest argument, which have suggested one can find a central national interest, which is immutable: "For each state, at each particular moment, there exists one ideal course of action, one ideal *raison d'état*."<sup>37</sup>

More recent outside-in analyses have suggested that the national interest is not unitary and permanent but changeable and subject to reinterpretation. This means the analyst must observe how and when leaders redefine the national interest and come up with new hierarchies of national goals. When leaders are faced with a choice between one objective or another, which one is chosen and why?<sup>38</sup> The observer also needs to explain aspirational and operational goals--that which might be desirable and that which actually occurs.<sup>39</sup>

Hannes Adomeit has developed a useful definition of national interest, the basis for the rational actor model, employing the Soviet case and emphasizing a focus on both risk and opportunity:

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<sup>35</sup>Stephen D. Krasner, Defending the National Interest (Princeton University Press, 1978), 5-6.

<sup>36</sup>Sodaro, Moscow, Germany, 14.

<sup>37</sup>Friedrich Meinecke, Machiavellism: The Doctrine of *Raison d'état* and its Place in Modern History (NY: Praeger, 1957), 1.

<sup>38</sup>See Joseph Fraenkel, National Interest (NY: Praeger Publishers, 1970), 16-17, and Fred A. Sondermann, "The Concept of National Interest," *Orbis*, Vol. XXI, No. 4 (Spring 1977), 129, 132.

<sup>39</sup>*Ibid.*, 31.

'Soviet national interest' (like any national interest) is a highly subjective and ambiguous concept, capable of manipulation and almost limitless reinterpretation, so that in reality political leaders are faced with a complex tangle of interests (in the plural), always changing according to specific social, economic, military, political, and ideological conditions, both of an international and domestic dimension, and making it necessary every time to distinguish between costs, benefits, and risks of a long-term or short-term nature.<sup>40</sup>

Outside-in theorists generally see domestic explanations as rarely applicable to foreign policy, and relatively useless in communist states. Moreover, the outside-in theorists suggest that their model is particularly applicable to security issues, where a nation's security is at risk, and to the Soviet Union and other communist countries, where decision-making was more centralized.

It seems, however, that the purest form of national interest may only be consistently valid during periods of short military crisis, where consequences are crucial and decision-making time is very limited. It is, equally possible that centralized systems can be analyzed from the first level of analysis, given the inordinate power of a small number of leaders.<sup>41</sup> Complete hypotheses of communist politics, therefore require application of both inside-out and outside-in theory for, as Anderson has noted,

[b]ehavior of states is responsive to international conditions, but only through the impact of world events on competitors' prospects of winning the domestic contest for constituency support.<sup>42</sup>

Inside-out theorists view their model as applicable both to low politics, economic policy, and to high politics, security and foreign policy issues.

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<sup>40</sup>Adomeit, Soviet Risk-Taking, 334.

<sup>41</sup>Matthew Evangelista, "Sources of Moderation in Soviet Security Policy," in Philip E. Tetlock, Jo L. Husband, Robert Jervis, Paul C. Stern, and Charles Tilly, eds., Behavior, Society, and Nuclear War (Oxford University Press, 1991), Vol. II, 277.

<sup>42</sup>Anderson, Authoritarian State, xiv.



Matthew Evangelista has developed an understandable rationale for the latter viewpoint:

Students of international political economy who favor domestic structural approaches seem mistaken in their inclination to put security policy in a separate class where societal forces have no impact. Few would argue with Krasner's contention that 'all groups in society would support the preservation of territorial and political integrity.' But neither would anyone argue that 'all groups in society support economic prosperity' as a way to discount the effect of domestic factors on foreign economic policy: students of international political economy explore areas of policy debate and choice. By the same token, students of international security are interested in the policy issues over which there is considerable controversy.<sup>43</sup>

Most inside-out theorists would also contend that the Soviet Union was not a special case and their approach is applicable to all countries where conflict occurs, not just democratic countries. Sodaro has phrased this inside-out view of Soviet specialists as follows:

[T]hey assume that signs of disagreement among these key figures indicate genuine alternatives in the elaboration and conduct of foreign policy.<sup>44</sup>

Inside-out theorists believe the state is sensitive to bureaucratic "pushing and hauling" and this, in addition to domestic structure, has a great effect on the process and outcome of foreign policy decision-making. This emphasis has been succinctly described by Raymond Garthoff in the case of the Soviet Union:

In Soviet policy consideration, public opinion is not irrelevant, but it plays virtually no role in moving or limiting foreign policy. Domestic policy issues and internal political maneuvering within the leadership, however, can and do play a role, sometimes critical.<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>Evangelista, "Issue Area," 169.

<sup>44</sup>Sodaro, *Moscow, Germany*, 15.

<sup>45</sup>Raymond L. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1985), 13.

Richard Anderson has given us a useful response to the inside-out/outside-in debate concerning the former Soviet Union and other communist states:

Rather than debate whether domestic policy or an ideologically conditioned response to the external environment determines Soviet decisions, we should assume that the USSR, like any other state, is an actor whose internal politics interact with its external environment. Complete hypotheses will include explanations of this interaction.<sup>46</sup>

## **2. The Rational Actor Model; the Bureaucratic Politics Model**

As for the specific application of models to foreign policy-making, inside-out theorists generally prefer the approach of conflict-oriented, interest group models such as the bureaucratic politics model, while outside-in theorists prefer the unitary approach of national interest models, the rational actor model in particular. Inside-out theorists emphasize domestic processes with their model and outside-in theorists emphasize national interest, which generally assumes minimal disagreement.

Due to a number of problems with both of these earlier models, the political competition model is applied in this dissertation, and will be discussed in detail in the next section. The author believes this newer model incorporates the insights of the rational actor and bureaucratic politics models but avoids most of their theoretical pitfalls. The reader should note, however, that the debate about the applicability of paradigms has sometimes simply been a disagreement on the meaning of the terms.

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<sup>46</sup>Richard D. Anderson, Jr., "Questions of Evidence and Interpretations in Two Studies of Soviet Decisions in the Berlin Crisis," *Slavic Review*, Vol. XLII, No. 4 (Winter 1983), 677.

While Allison originally developed an organizational process model and a government (bureaucratic) politics model, he later combined the two into a bureaucratic politics model. By combining the two, he hoped to put more emphasis on the general sense of conflict between governmental players and less emphasis on conflict which was rigidly linked to an organizational base. Some objections to the bureaucratic politics model have been objections to the organizational process model, objections to the concept that interests are organizationally anchored and actors serve as transmission belts for organizational interests.<sup>47</sup>

This author shares the objections concerning the organizational process model, and, unfortunately, some of the assumptions of this model were included in the government (bureaucratic) politics model. For example, Allison still stated with regard to the government (bureaucratic) politics model: "Positions define what actors may and must do."<sup>48</sup> Positions should *either* define what actors may do (government politics model) *or* what actors must do (organizational process model).

The amalgam model, bureaucratic politics model, was constructed to place more emphasis on bargaining between leaders. Using Allison's updated version of the bureaucratic politics model, Jiri Valenta assessed the Czechoslovak crisis of 1968 as follows:

The decisionmakers responsible for domestic affairs were especially concerned with the possible effect of Prague reformism

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<sup>47</sup>Dawisha actually argued against the organizational model, while calling it a bureaucratic politics model. She wrote, "Soviet groups tend to be loose and transient coalitions of individuals who unite to promote or oppose a particular policy," but it is Allison's intention to focus on bargaining in his updated model. See Dawisha, "Limits of the Model," 307, 317. Krasner suggested that Allison believed, "Any man in the same position would have no choice," but that is an assumption based more on the organizational process model. See Stephen D. Krasner, "Are Bureaucracies Important?" *Foreign Policy*, No. 7 (Summer 1972), 171.

<sup>48</sup>Allison, Essence of Decision, 165.

on the Soviet Union . . . Bureaucrats in the USSR's non-Russian republics . . . , bureaucrats charged with ideological supervision and indoctrination . . . , the KGB and MPA [were all advocates of intervention.] . . . On the other hand, some decisionmakers with responsibilities for foreign affairs appeared to read the Czechoslovak issue somewhat differently, concluding that intervention would be too costly.<sup>49</sup>

In Valenta's opinion, only as events in Czechoslovakia appeared irreversible was there a change in the mood of the Central Committee which affected hesitant decision-makers' perceptions of the cost of intervention.

Of course, another major drawback to the bureaucratic politics model is the necessity of a large data base: a great amount of analysis is required to determine personal and organizational view points.<sup>50</sup> Another drawback is its overemphasis on conflict. In contrast, the national interest model offers a parsimonious approach. However, without balancing factors, it can be simplistic and ignore elements of change in foreign policy. Hans Morgenthau's explanation of the Czechoslovak crisis shows how simplistic a pure definition of national interest can be:

In the measure that Czechoslovakia moved away from Russia, it was bound to move closer to Germany. It was against this threat that the Soviet Union reacted and may well have over reacted in 1968.<sup>51</sup>

The Morgenthau quote illustrates the parsimony of the rational actor model. "It reduces the organizational and political complications of the

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<sup>49</sup>Valenta, *Soviet Intervention*, 15-16.

<sup>50</sup>Fortunately, the demise of communism has allowed for more access to archives in these nations, although complete Politburo archives are still not available. Numerous, overlapping memoirs also help to clarify history.

<sup>51</sup>Hans Morgenthau, "Inquisition in Czechoslovakia," *NY Review of Books*, 4 December 1969, 20-21.

government to the simplification of a single actor."<sup>52</sup> This simplification, however, obscures as well as reveals. Did *all* Politburo members view Czechoslovakia as moving toward Germany? Valenta suggested, for example, that Soviet leaders concerned with ideology may have worried about German influence, leaders focusing on foreign affairs were less concerned with this issue, and military leaders may have had different opinions.<sup>53</sup>

Because an action can rarely be seen as a clear, purposive response to stimuli in the international system, this author employs a political competition model which looks at more than one operational goal and examines the issue of shifting foreign policy goals as well as domestic goals.

The rational actor model with an emphasis on pure national interest has appeared most appropriate for communist studies in the past; in fact, many authors have questioned whether a conflict model is applicable to Marxist-Leninist states.<sup>54</sup> The argument runs basically as follows. Given the centralized nature of the party and state, the overwhelming primacy of the party and a few members of the Politburo, the importance of ideology, the military nature of the state, and the distance between society and government, it would be absurd to argue that a bureaucratic politics model had any relevance in Marxist-Leninist states.

This author agrees that Marxist-Leninist states need to be considered in a special category, but their foreign policies are nonetheless affected by their own internal disagreements. As Peter Gourevitch has written:

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<sup>52</sup>Allison and Halperin, "Bureaucratic Politics," in Tanter and Ullman, International Relations, 40.

<sup>53</sup>Valenta, Soviet Intervention, 6-7.

<sup>54</sup>See for example, Dawisha's argument in "Limits of the Model."

Some leeway of response to pressure is always possible, at least conceptually. The choice of response therefore requires explanation. Such an explanation necessarily entails an examination of politics: the struggle among competing responses.<sup>55</sup>

Michael Sodaro has pointed out that both the non-conflict and conflict approaches are useful because the unitary model best explains foreign policy continuity and the conflict model is most applicable to foreign policy variation.<sup>56</sup> Another author has noted, without use of both types of models, "at one end all is rationality, at the other all is politics."<sup>57</sup>

### 3. Political Competition Model

The political competition model, also known as the policy entrepreneurship model,<sup>58</sup> allows observers to analyze how leaders use domestic and foreign policy to put together a winning leadership coalition. Therefore, domestic and international factors are distilled into foreign policy choices based on the existing framework of **political competition**. Other nations, just as domestic forces, "are moderating but not determining influences;" they are "intermediate rather than independent variables."<sup>59</sup> Leaders have to make policy decisions to deal with internal as well as external challenges. Internal and external factors alone, without consideration of the leadership situation, have little predictive power.

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<sup>55</sup>Gourevitch, "The Second Image Reversed," 911.

<sup>56</sup> See Sodaro, *Moscow, Germany*, 19.

<sup>57</sup>Lawrence Freedman, "Logic, Politics, and Foreign Policy Processes: A Critique of the Bureaucratic Politics Model," *International Affairs*, Vol. LII, No. 3 (July 1976), 441. In spite of this assessment, Freedman clearly preferred the rational actor model.

<sup>58</sup>Evangelista, "Sources of Moderation," in Tetlock, Husbands, Jervis, Stern, and Tilly, *Nuclear War*, 275.

<sup>59</sup>*Ibid.*, 280.

International developments as well as domestic developments are important because they can either provide "policy windows of opportunity" for ideals long favored by some groups, or they can block progress for the achievement of a leader's goals, providing leadership rivals with fewer reasons to bargain. The former appears to have been the case at the outset of Soviet détente toward the US and West Germany in 1969 and the latter was probably the case by 1975 when the Soviets began to give Third World opportunities more value than the maintenance of the American version of détente.

To show how international circumstances fall short as a complete explanation, one need only consider the case of Sino-Soviet relations. Undoubtedly, deterioration of these relations encouraged the Soviets to adopt a détente policy toward the West. However, while Sino-Soviet relations remained quite negative after 1973, the policy of détente with the West also began to deteriorate after 1973. Therefore, it was not negative relations with the Chinese alone that caused détente, but rather the **leadership's ongoing interpretation** of policy opportunities and risks involving China and other nations, as well as domestic factors.

As for internal causes of foreign policy choice and organizational impetus, Kosygin's role in urging consumer goods is often cited as a reason for Soviet détente with the West. First, the observer should realize that Kosygin may have initially supported détente with the West to achieve his domestic goal of providing consumer goods, but this may not have been connected to his role as Soviet Prime Minister. In fact, the linkage of his organizational role and policy advocacy is very unlikely, given that he remained in power as Soviet Prime Minister but became

much less of an advocate for consumer goods, while remaining an advocate of détente.<sup>60</sup>

The political competition model would explain this adjustment by emphasizing the acceptable, main stream role détente had acquired by 1971. In contrast, advocacy of consumer goods never gained the same kind of political support as détente in the 1970s.

As one of the main advocates of the political competition model, Richard Anderson wrote the following about organizational determinism:

[The explanatory value of roles is invalidated] if two . . . occupants of the same collective role made different statements, if an occupant of any role made distinctive statements on issues beyond his formal competence, if an individual's statements remained consistent across a transfer from one role to another, or if a continuing occupant of a role expanded the range of issues on which he developed distinctive public stands.<sup>61</sup>

While leaders may have sometimes come into conflict through institutional affiliation, this does not necessarily mean that conflicts are organizationally based or that organizational affiliation predicts view point. As Richard Anderson also pointed out:

In application to organizations, habit is a misleading metaphor because it distracts attention from the role of leadership and bargaining in cumulating an organization's repertoire of routines from the habits of the organization's individual members.<sup>62</sup>

There are only continuous organizational routines if the underlying constituencies seldom change. As analysts of Marxist-Leninist regimes well know, Politburos, as well as their underlying constituencies, do change.

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<sup>60</sup>See also Karl F. Spielman, Analyzing Soviet Strategic Arms Decisions (Boulder: Westview Press, 1978), 55, for more insight into Kosygin's position.

<sup>61</sup>Anderson, Authoritarian State, 29.

<sup>62</sup>Richard N. Anderson, Jr., "Why Competitive Politics Inhibits Learning in Soviet Foreign Policy" in Breslauer and Tetlock, Learning in US and Soviet Foreign Policy, 126.



What makes this dissertation interesting is the exploration different leaders' views on both domestic and foreign policy, how these views correlated over a relatively short time period (five years), and why leaders ultimately changed or in the case of some, refused to change, their foreign policy choices. The findings of the study are enriched by a comparison of Politburos in two different countries.

The political competition model has been accused of being tautological, arguing that constituencies cause foreign policy to change and that foreign policy change is proof that constituencies exist. However, as Anderson has explained, the model is not concerned with constituencies per se, but with leaders' solutions to the political problem of recruiting support for their policies. One, therefore, does not need to prove the existence of specific constituencies, but instead needs to identify specific pleas for political support in leaders' speeches. As Anderson has phrased the problem:

To retain constituents' loyalties, a leader must join coalitions that either distribute opportunities to 'claim credit' for shaping policy or at least prevent policy from conforming more consistently to any rival's recommendations than to the leaders own.<sup>63</sup>

Leaders accomplish their policy goals through bargaining with one another, using symbolism to attract constituents, and logrolling to combine constituents.<sup>64</sup> For example, Soviet Prime Minister Kosygin initially advocated consumer goods production, a symbol to attract constituents. He gradually became an advocate of détente, logrolling with foreign policy specialists to gather more political support. Finally, Kosygin apparently bargained with Brezhnev after 1971 and became

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<sup>63</sup>Anderson, Authoritarian State, 73.

<sup>64</sup>Ibid., 61.

less of a supporter of consumer goods production, although he continued to offer a moderate amount of support for détente.

The political competition model has the advantage of incorporating two levels of analysis, the domestic view point as well as the national view point, as mediating variables. While the main focus is on the first level of analysis, leaders' rivalry for political backing, sight is not lost of domestic or international developments which is the "stuff" of this rivalry. The same can not be said of the rational actor model or the bureaucratic politics model.

#### **4. Case Studies**

##### **a. The Inside-out Approach**

Domestic/foreign policy linkage has been analyzed in more detail in the Soviet case than in the East German case. However, many of the authors who wrote analyses of Soviet *Deutschlandpolitik* based on inside-out theories, oversimplified their case. Some authors, such as Harry Gelman, viewed the motivation for bargaining in Brezhnev's Politburo as simple political infighting, "use of policies as a weapon in a covert power struggle confined to the Politburo."

Harry Gelman discussed Brezhnev's fear of political vulnerability as an important explanation for Soviet détente policy. He argued that *Deutschlandpolitik* and détente in general were adopted by Brezhnev in 1970 in order "to wrest increased authority from a collective leadership that proved slow to yield."<sup>65</sup>

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<sup>65</sup>Harry Gelman, *The Brezhnev Politburo and the Decline of Détente* (Cornell University Press, 1984). See especially the chapter, "The Politburo as Battleground," 71-104. See also 13-17, 126. In this author's view, while Gelman is correct to analyze bargaining in Soviet foreign policy-making, his specific explanation of motives for détente are insufficient and his view of bargaining as limited to the Politburo alone is mistaken. See also Anderson, *Authoritarian State*, 4.

Other authors, such as Jerry Hough, viewed Politburo members more as brokers, who bargained between interest groups but were independent from bureaucrats' disapproval.<sup>66</sup> While this author concurs with Hough's general view of interest groups, Hough's version of institutional pluralism which assumed that brokers in the Politburo would not want to "go public," to avoid polarizing disagreement among different interest groups, was mistaken. "Going public" is proven in the detailed analysis of Soviet leaders' speeches in this dissertation, which shows how leaders carried their differences into their speeches.

Differing from both Hough and Gelman, this author assumes, as Anderson has, that the Politburo had strong motivation to go public. Moreover, authors Bruce Parrott and Thane Gustafson have both provided specific examples where the Politburo has gone public: in Parrott's case, the issue was civil-military relations and in Gustafson's case, Soviet energy policy.<sup>67</sup>

As far as specific motivations for détente, Dimitri Simes has stated a particularly Machiavellian version of political brokering between interest groups. He suggested that the Soviets wanted to use economic relations with the West to bypass their own central planning and government ministries.<sup>68</sup> Wolfgang Leonhard, relying on a similar argument,

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<sup>66</sup>Jerry F. Hough, Soviet Leadership in Transition (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institute, 1980), 14, cited in Anderson, Authoritarian State, 5. Hough's argument is a further extension of Skilling's earlier arguments. This is made very clear in Jerry F. Hough, "Pluralism, Corporatism and the Soviet Union," in Susan Gross Solomon, ed., Pluralism in the Soviet Union: Essays in Honor of H. Gordon Skilling (London: MacMillan, 1983).

<sup>67</sup>See Bruce Parrott, "Political Change and Civil-Military Relations," in Timothy J. Colton and Thane Gustafson, eds., Soldiers and the Soviet State (Princeton University Press, 1990). See also Thane Gustafson, Reform in Soviet Politics: Lessons of Recent Policies on Land and Water (Cambridge University Press, 1981). Both books are cited in Anderson, Authoritarian State, 5.

<sup>68</sup>Dimitri K. Simes, Détente and Conflict: Soviet Foreign Policy 1972 - 1977, The Washington Papers (Beverly Hills: Sage Publications, 1977), 50.

suggested that Soviet leaders "consciously initiated a policy leading toward rapprochement to avoid liberalization of domestic policies."<sup>69</sup> Peter Volten, in his book entitled Brezhnev's Peace Program: Success or Failure, also argued:

Soviet readiness to become a committed international actor stemmed first of all from domestic factors and in this respect from weakness rather than from strength.<sup>70</sup>

It may be that Brezhnev's use of foreign policy in domestic authority-building was not as purposeful as Simes, Leonhard, and Volten have suggested, but was simply an opportunistic, political response to an increasingly problematic domestic and international situation. George Breslauer has stated this Brezhnevian approach as follows:

Brezhnev [unlike Khrushchev] promised less and sought to diffuse responsibility for policy-making, so that he was less out on a limb when his policies faltered.<sup>71</sup>

Brezhnev, unlike Khrushchev, only gradually made adjustments in domestic and foreign policy. These efforts were apparently directed toward enhancing Brezhnev's prestige vis-à-vis other Politburo members, but also toward gathering a majority coalition to support a combined domestic/foreign policy program.

Volten also argued that Brezhnev's use of foreign policy in domestic politics made Brezhnev's conduct of foreign policy and his domestic authority, a clear target for a composite opposition.<sup>72</sup> Questions remain which make Volten's account insufficient. How does one explain

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<sup>69</sup>Wolfgang Leonhard, "The Domestic Politics of the New Soviet Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. LII, No. 1 (October 1973), 70.

<sup>70</sup>Peter Volten, Brezhnev's Peace Program: Success or Failure (University of Amsterdam, 1981), 317.

<sup>71</sup>Breslauer, Khrushchev and Brezhnev, 288.

<sup>72</sup>Volten, Brezhnev's Peace Program, 186.

Brezhnev's primacy among other Politburo members in 1973, a year in which it became clear that the general direction of his foreign policy was headed down an obstacle course?

In this author's opinion, Brezhnev's creative use of foreign policy as a temporary substitute for a successful domestic policy allowed him to dominate the Politburo for short time periods. While his strategy could have been turned against him, in the period under study, Brezhnev's linkage of domestic and foreign policy allowed him to distract attention from his failures. For example, Brezhnev was able to use his diplomatic and economic victories in détente to distract the Politburo, bureaucrats, and the populace from the disastrous harvest in 1972. He was able to advertise the promise of consumer goods in a way that distracted from the problems of productivity in the Soviet economy.

In the case of East Germany, there has been one extreme advocate of inside-out theory: Peter Ludz, a West German. He vigorously supported an approach which viewed foreign policy only in terms of its function in domestic policy. He based this view on East Germany's peculiarly unstable position, being situated between the Soviet Union and West Germany. As he stated his own case:

GDR foreign policy in the first instance is not oriented toward the solution of international problems but rather the stabilization of political control. . . The extraordinary attention paid in the East German media to the foreign activities of the regime underlines the special function that foreign policy fulfills in domestic affairs.<sup>73</sup>

Ludz overstated his case, by dividing German leaders into three separate categories of modernizers, pragmatists, and dogmatists.

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<sup>73</sup>Peter C. Ludz, "Actual Problems of Political Relations Between the USSR and the GDR" in Peter J. Potichnyj and Jane P. Shapiro, eds., From the Cold War to Détente (NY: Praeger, 1976), 174-175.

However, this author agrees with Ludz's general proposition. East Germany, more than any other Marxist-Leninist regime, suffered from a legitimacy deficit which made domestic authority-building essential to leadership maintenance. Furthermore, East Germany's more advanced industrial economy forced East German leaders, in particular, to deal with the issue of technical economic specialization and cope with its effect on domestic authority.

Ludz went too far in asserting that Ulbricht needed to form a political coalition between three distinct groups, each of which favored a specific economic tendency and a specific foreign policy with West Germany. As Ludz attempted to explain the situation:

Certain groups and individuals have a definite stake in either modernization or preservation by dint of their past history, their philosophy, their organization affiliation, and their career pattern and interests.<sup>74</sup>

In this dissertation, the author adds to the above authors' work, identifying more nuanced categories of linkages between domestic and foreign policy, as well as overlapping political categories for an organized opposition.

### **b. The Outside-in Approach**

Hannes Adomeit has applied outside-in theory in the most consistent fashion in both the Soviet and East German cases. However, as far as this author is aware, Adomeit never conducted a case study of détente but instead wrote case studies of the 1948 and 1961 Berlin crises. In

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<sup>74</sup>Peter C. Ludz, "The SED Leadership in Transition," *Problems of Communism*, Vol. XIX, No. 3 (May-June 1970), 23-31.

particular, he argued that the importance of ideology<sup>75</sup> is unambiguous in a crisis. In reference to the 1961 crisis, he wrote:

[The Soviet Union had no choice] but to safeguard the viability of the socialist community of which the GDR by then had become an integral part.<sup>76</sup>

This leaves an important historical question unanswered. How did the Soviet Union reach the foreign policy decision to build a Wall? Was it simply the most direct response to the East German refugee problem? Or was it due to East German pressure, or possibly to Khrushchev's own domestic authority difficulties, or possibly to all three?

Adomeit dismissed the applicability of the bureaucratic politics model to the Soviet Union, because he argued there was no serious evidence of leadership conflict. Ironically, while arguing one could not find evidence of a hard-line Soviet faction, he himself presented evidence of leadership conflict which can be explained by the political competition model:

It is more convincing to believe that individual military leaders and members of the Party Presidium were concerned that Khrushchev might be going too far in his challenge of the West on Berlin, or that he might act too impulsively.<sup>77</sup>

Simply because it was a few individual military officers and not the whole military who opposed Khrushchev, any sort of political influence deserves further investigation and should not be dismissed for its irregularity. The political competition model considers any changes in domestic constituencies to be significant. Adomeit's analysis of the 1948

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<sup>75</sup>This author adopts Bruce Parrott's definition of ideology as serving different functions, "self serving ideas asserted as truth" as well as "official ideas which can be modified by events." See Bruce Parrott, Politics and Technology in the Soviet Union (MIT Press, 1983), 4. See Adomeit's discussion of ideology in Soviet Risk-Taking, 328-334.

<sup>76</sup>Adomeit, Soviet Risk-Taking, 273-274.

<sup>77</sup>Ibid., 309.

and 1961 Berlin crises greatly bolstered the rational actor approach to foreign policy-making, but he undermined his own approach by not seriously considering aspects of the bureaucratic politics approach as well.

As for the possibility of East German pressure on the Soviet Union, Adomeit argued:

The significance of pressures from the GDR may be similar to that of pressures from the Soviet military: If policies are consistently advocated which ultimately turn out to be compelling on their merits, the adoption of these policies cannot necessarily be interpreted as proof of these actors' 'power' over the policy-making process in the Soviet Union.<sup>78</sup>

While this author agrees that one must carefully analyze a case to distinguish between coincidence of foreign policy change and the power to alter the foreign policy choice, one should not necessarily rule out the latter possibility because one unit is less "powerful" than another. Adomeit did not seriously analyze the possibility of East German pressure or Soviet internal military pressure. He simply dismissed it.

### **c. A Combined Approach**

In contrast to the authors mentioned above, James McAdams and Richard Anderson wrote books which attempt to combine the inside-out and outside-in approach to foreign policy change. Both authors focus on the centrality of leaders' domestic authority-building.

McAdams compared the East German government under Ulbricht's rein, which built domestic authority based on isolation from the West, with Honecker's government in the late 1970s and 1980s, which built domestic authority, in part, through external support from specific Western and Eastern European countries. One fault with McAdams's

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<sup>78</sup>Ibid.



otherwise superior analysis, is a tendency to view the East German regime as more powerful and legitimate than it actually was.

Richard Anderson, in a similar analysis to McAdams's, compares Brezhnev's foreign policy in the period 1964-67 to Brezhnev's foreign policy from 1970-1972. By analyzing five important Politburo members--Brezhnev, Suslov, Kosygin, Podgorny, and Shelest--Anderson attempts to explain Brezhnev's switch from a hostile, negative attitude to a positive attitude concerning Western détente.

Anderson may have overstated his otherwise insightful argument, insisting on the similarities between democracies and communist-ruled countries, with virtually no admission of differences. Anderson insists that détente was a maladaptive foreign policy, because it was adopted for domestic audiences. While Anderson's point may be true after 1975, in the period he analyzes, the early 1970s, détente was quite a successful foreign policy from the Soviet point of view.

McAdams and Anderson ask the same basic question as this author. How were domestic and foreign policy options chosen by different leaders in order to build domestic authority for the East German and Soviet leadership?<sup>79</sup> However, there are several substantive differences in the approach and conclusion of each author.

McAdams deals with East Germany, focusing largely on General Secretary Ulbricht and Honecker; Anderson looks at the Soviet Union, examining five political actors including General Secretary Brezhnev.

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<sup>79</sup>McAdams goes too far, summarizing his main arguments in, "The New Logic in Soviet-GDR Relations," *Problems of Communism*, Vol XXXVII, No. 5 (September-October 1988), 47-60. McAdams implies that "mutual dependence" developed by the 1980s, whereas East Germany was always more dependent on the USSR than vice-versa. Of course, this is easier to see in hindsight. For a summary of Anderson's argument see Anderson, "Competitive Politics," in Breslauer and Tetlock, Learning in US and Soviet Foreign Policy, 100-131.

This author analyzes both the East German and Soviet Politburos, reviewing the speeches of all important political actors for a continuous five year period. This author emphasizes the linkage of domestic and international events in each actor's authority-building, although special emphasis is placed on each General Secretary's domestic authority-building. In particular, this author pays close attention to domestic developments and international coalition-building, which the GDR futilely employed to escape its inherently weak position vis-à-vis the Soviet Union.

### **B. Methodological Literature**

In this work, the author analyzes two countries over two distinct time periods. This results in four case studies. The case study method of structured, focused comparison is employed.<sup>80</sup> The author compares two cases from 1968 to 1971, in which different domestic and international pressures led to different foreign policy choices in East Germany and the Soviet Union, and then two cases from 1971-1973 in which different domestic and international pressures led to similar foreign policy choices by 1973. The author investigates how East German leaders' analyses of East Germany's foreign policy position changed from Ulbricht to Honecker and how the Soviet Politburo's position changed under Brezhnev.

A qualitative content analysis of Soviet and East German Politburo leaders' major speeches (1968-1973) is employed to evaluate the linkage between members' positions on domestic and foreign policy

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<sup>80</sup>Alexander George, "Case Studies and Theory Development: The Method of Structured, Focused Comparison" in Paul Gordon Lauren, ed., Diplomacy: New Approaches in History, Theory, and Policy (NY: Free Press, 1979), 43-68.

issues and the change in these positions over time. All Politburo members who gave significant speeches in the period under study are analyzed. Several additional high-level leaders, who played an important foreign policy role and probably affected coalition-building in the Politburo, are also analyzed. All major published speeches on policy are analyzed, including all Central Committee (CC) plenum speeches and all party congress speeches. All available memoirs of these same officials are examined as well as American, Soviet, West German, and East German memoirs concerning détente in this period.

The most fruitful analysis of policy positions is conducted on the basis of communication that occurred during times of tension or when changes were proposed.<sup>81</sup> While one can argue that both Soviet and East German leaders engaged in meaningless rhetoric, thereby invalidating this method, George Breslauer analyzed both Khrushchev's and Brezhnev's speech over time, convincingly proving that these speeches are (1) political acts in and of themselves and (2) indicative of strategies which are then employed.<sup>82</sup>

Even if Soviet leaders' speeches were completely deceptive, "full of bluffs and concealment," it would not matter for the purposes of this analysis. It is not Politburo members' intentions which are salient, but their problem of sustaining their own authority and that of the Politburo in foreign policy decision-making. What really matters is how they used domestic and international factors in their rhetorical attempt to solve foreign policy problems.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>81</sup>The author concurs with Volten on this matter. See Volten, Brezhnev's Peace Program, 20. Fortunately for the analyst, this period is rich in tension and change.

<sup>82</sup>Breslauer, Khrushchev and Brezhnev, 15.

<sup>83</sup>Anderson, Authoritarian State, 20.

There are three different foci to the author's analysis of speeches at plenums and party congresses, foci which Tom Baylis also employs:

(1) The public elements of discussions: did one group clearly support a policy at a plenum or congress, while another group did not?

(2) The final policy decisions of the plenum or congress: to what degree did final policies appear to reflect the demands and interests, articulated or not, of a group in question? In particular, did final policy decisions represent a change in one group's favor or not?

(3) Finally, which policies were raised at all and which were ignored?<sup>84</sup>

This third question is particularly important as it provides foreshadowing of changing policy trends and shifting coalitions in the Politburo. Fortunately, the critical nature of domestic and foreign policy decisions from 1968 to 1973 caused leaders to be clearer than usual about their political preferences.

The author utilizes Kremlinological methods, which stress the personal power struggle and suggest that this struggle is of crucial importance for policy choice. In addition to the power struggle, the author describes different leaders' personal definition of what should be done about broad policy problems by analyzing leaders' statements and patterns of behavior (especially when similar criticism evolves among a number of disparate leaders), as well as protocol evidence and personnel changes. This focus on Kremlinology should not eclipse the fact that there has been broad agreement among Soviet and East German leaders on at least some issues.

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<sup>84</sup>Thomas A. Baylis, The Technical Intelligentsia and the East German Elite (University of California Press, 1974), 209-211.

From the start, the author acknowledges the difficulties involved in the analysis. For example one could argue that leaders' speeches differed due to other factors than political bargaining--due to different roles, different audiences, different personal opinions, or efforts to conduct international bargaining.<sup>85</sup> However, if speeches related to roles, trends in speeches would only change upon role change; this was not the case. If different audiences were the reason for changes in rhetoric, then two leaders would not address the same audience with quite different speeches, which did occur. If different personal opinions accounted for different types of speeches, as personalities varied, speeches would vary; this model would not account for changes in speeches on the part of Politburo members when no personality change occurred. Finally, as for international bargaining, many of the nuances in Politburo's speech making were never detected by foreign governments, at least suggesting that domestic constituencies were the audience.

The complexity of the interrelationship between domestic policy and foreign policy is formidable, and this is even more true in a communist country. As Thomas Baylis phrased the problem:

Even in polities where direct observation of portions of the decision-making process is feasible, it is difficult to attribute a given policy definitively to the influence of any particular group. In communist systems where decision-making is largely concealed from external view and relevant influential groups are seldom formally organized or even unambiguously defined, the difficulties are still greater.<sup>86</sup>

However, one should not ignore evidence which indicates differences within the Soviet and East German Politburos just because groups, as

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<sup>85</sup>Anderson addresses all of these possibilities. See Anderson, Authoritarian State, 20-30.

<sup>86</sup>Baylis, Technical Intelligentsia, 219-220.

such, are difficult to identify. By focusing on a five-year time period where numerous domestic and foreign crises occurred, the author expects to find evidence of linkage patterns in leaders' domestic and foreign policy debates. The author expects these patterns to be reflected in each General Secretary's leadership strategy. Nonetheless, linkages and strategies may well differ from one leader to the next, one issue to the next, and under the same leader from one time period to the next.

Due to the recent flood of memoirs and archival material subsequent to the downfall of communism in the Soviet Union and East Germany, it is a challenging time to be engaged in such a study. However, even with newly published archival material, the findings of this dissertation will remain tentative until a more complete record of Politburo meetings in both East Germany and the Soviet Union can be assembled.

#### **IV. Current Relevance**

One could argue that the government of the former Soviet Union and especially that of the former East Germany are so unlike their governments today as to make this dissertation irrelevant. However, this author believes that one must understand the Soviet and East German motivations for *détente* if one hopes to understand the ultimate demise of these nations. The assumptions and behavior of leaders in this earlier period served as a harbinger of the events of 1989 and 1991.

Furthermore, after 1971, a degree of foreign policy convergence occurred between Soviet and East German officials which was never to be seen again. This was partially due to the Soviet Union's unquestionable political dominance, but it was also due to a true convergence of diplomatic and economic interests on the part of Soviet and East German leaders.

Ironically, however, as General Secretary Ulbricht more or less predicted, heavy political reliance on the inner-German dynamic ultimately contributed to the downfall of the GDR and the entire Soviet bloc. Why was Ulbricht so reticent to adopt a policy of *détente*? Although he was one of the few leaders to hold out hope that the two Germanies might reunite, he envisioned East Germany as the dominant state in the partnership. He was convinced that under the domestic and international conditions prevalent in 1969 and 1970, West Germany would be the dominant state. More importantly, Ulbricht's personal reputation and his authority were severely endangered by any *détente* which was clearly favorable to West Germany.

Ulbricht also recognized that Soviet leaders, General Secretary Brezhnev in particular, were more concerned about their nation's economic, political, and military security than about the political vulnerability of the GDR. While the Soviets had no intention of "giving up" East Germany to the West in the 1970s, Soviet leaders could and did tolerate more problems and pressure from West Germany than East German leaders found appropriate. A similar situation arose once again in the summer of 1989, when East Germans had to tolerate threats from within their own bloc and from West Germany simultaneously.

At the end of 1973, when international conditions temporarily threatened *détente*, Honecker temporarily followed Ulbricht's example and he tried to resist Soviet pressure for a rapid *détente* with West Germany. However, by 1975, a period which unfortunately goes beyond the reach of this study, Honecker had based his growing domestic authority on his foreign policy prowess, acquired largely through the important East German role at the CSCE. German-German *détente*

became crucial to Honecker's legitimacy as a leader and he supported it in the face of Soviet opposition from 1983 to 1984; he then made an official state visit to West Germany in 1987 despite lingering reservations on the part of some Soviet leaders. German-German détente became essential to East German legitimacy, when reformism in the Soviet bloc began to flower after Gorbachev gained power in the USSR.

East German leaders became so reliant on the economic and political benefits of German-German détente that they no longer saw its long-term ability to undermine the GDR's legitimacy--especially a GDR, which resisted any far-reaching domestic reform. As for the Soviets, under Gorbachev's leadership, positive relations with West Germany and the West were so important that the Soviets ultimately agreed to sacrifice a sovereign East Germany.

In this study, the author examines the leadership factors, in conjunction with internal and external factors, which led to a positive foreign policy toward West Germany by 1973, and which helped the Soviets to convince the East Germans to join the "bandwagon" of German-German détente. This initial redirection of foreign policy vis-à-vis West Germany demands more analysis if for no other reason than its legacy two decades later: the complete destruction of the East German and Soviet states.



## CHAPTER TWO

FOREIGN POLICY CHOICE IN HISTORICAL CONTEXT:  
January 1963-August 1968**I. Introduction**

Before describing the successful *Deutschlandpolitik* which was conducted by the Soviet Union from the end of 1968 to 1973, previous periods of *Deutschlandpolitik* are given attention in this chapter. The Soviet Union made two different efforts in the 1960s to introduce a positive *Deutschlandpolitik* prior to the attempts of 1969. The first attempt occurred under General Secretary Khrushchev from January 1964 until his ouster in October 1964, and the second attempt occurred under General Secretary Brezhnev from July 1967 through July 1968. When the Soviet Union developed a positive policy, East Germany conducted a negative policy.

This chapter's historical analysis begins in January 1963, when East Germany adopted a new economic policy, a policy change which was connected to East Germany's increasingly negative *Deutschlandpolitik*. The chapter ends with the Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia, as this event seems to have caused both countries to reach different, long-lasting conclusions about the possibility of a positive *Deutschlandpolitik* in the future.

The following questions are addressed in this chapter. Which domestic and international factors encouraged Soviet Politburo leaders to change their foreign policy in a positive manner, while East German Politburo leaders only became more negative in their policy? In particular, how did Khrushchev's and Brezhnev's different economic strategies and levels of domestic authority affect their foreign policy

choices? How did Ulbricht's economic strategy and domestic authority affect his foreign policy choices vis-à-vis each Soviet leader?

The author acknowledges that Soviet *détente* policies in this period were brief and were not conducted consistently--especially in 1967 and 1968. Nonetheless, they merit further attention, because similar factors may well have played a role in the initiation of a more successful *détente* in the 1968 to 1973 period and in the ultimate demise of East Germany and the Soviet Union.

As both East German and Soviet *Deutschlandpolitik* were, in part, a response to West Germany's overall *Ostpolitik*, that policy is reviewed first. The reader should note, however, that Soviet policy changes vis-à-vis West Germany often preceded the inauguration of new West German government coalitions. This suggests that shifts in Soviet *Deutschlandpolitik*, although possibly made in anticipation of a change in the West German government, were not simply an automatic response to West Germany's changing *Ostpolitik*.

When the West German Grand Coalition<sup>1</sup> came into office under Chancellor Kiesinger in 1966, West Germany introduced a major change in foreign policy vis-a-vis the Soviet bloc, adopting a more open policy toward the whole Soviet bloc, with the exception of East Germany. This new government essentially abandoned the Hallstein Doctrine, which had ruled out the establishment of diplomatic relations with any state recognizing the East German regime.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> For the first time in West German history, the Christian Democratic Union/Christian Social Union (CDU/CSU) formed the government with the Social Democratic Party (SPD).

<sup>2</sup> The Hallstein Doctrine was declared in 1957. Its purpose was to uphold the West German claim that the FRG was the sole democratically elected government representing the German people. Diplomatic relations between the USSR and West Germany were established in 1955 and therefore pre-dated the Hallstein Doctrine.

In an ironic sense, as the Hallstein Doctrine maintained West German legitimacy, it had also maintained East Germany's legitimacy. By offering an exchange of ambassadors with all states in the Soviet bloc except East Germany, the West Germans were able to successfully isolate East Germany for a first time.

Clearly General Secretary Ulbricht was completely opposed to the idea that members of his own bloc would assist in the isolation of East Germany, and the end of the Hallstein Doctrine appeared to harden his resolve with regard to West Germany. Moreover, in this period, Ulbricht did not see the Soviets, not to mention Brezhnev, as the final arbiter of bloc disagreement, especially when that disagreement involved foreign policy to West Germany.

Unfortunately for Ulbricht, Brezhnev turned out to be more politically skillful than Ulbricht thought, closely binding his domestic authority to improved West German economic and political relations. Both men made use of international opportunities to pursue their domestic and foreign policies, but as the head of a superpower involved in bilateral and multilateral negotiations, Brezhnev ultimately had more international opportunities than Ulbricht to implement his foreign policy choices.

## **II. West German *Ostpolitik* and Soviet Bloc Response**

In contrast to the later policy of West Germany's Grand Coalition, while West Germany was under the leadership of the Christian Democratic Chancellor Konrad Adenauer, the focus of its *Ostpolitik* was to negotiate only with Moscow and not with Eastern Europe. Although it is not well-known, the Soviets began some of their first probes at improving their relations with West Germany while Adenauer was still Chancellor. In April 1963, Soviet Ambassador Andrei Smirnov and the

retired German Ambassador to the Soviet Union, Hans Kroll, discussed the possibility of talks between Adenauer and Khrushchev.<sup>3</sup>

According to Kroll, Ambassador Smirnov suggested that the Soviet Union was prepared to negotiate and that Khrushchev wanted to visit West Germany to discuss the German question.<sup>4</sup> While one could argue that Khrushchev was merely trying to take advantage of a weak West German leadership (it was well known that Adenauer would soon leave office), the fact that Khrushchev adopted exactly the same *Deutschlandpolitik* with the next West German administration suggests that his initial negotiation with Adenauer was not just a tactical ploy.

Chancellor Ludwig Erhard's coalition government,<sup>5</sup> which replaced Adenauer's in October 1963, was more active vis-à-vis Eastern Europe, initiating a policy known as "the policy of movement." The West German government opened up trade missions in Eastern Europe (Poland, Hungary, Romania, and Bulgaria) and began to deal directly with East European leaders.<sup>6</sup> East German leaders viewed this new policy as an extreme threat, potentially resulting in both the economic and political isolation of East Germany. East German delegations traveled to each East European state to get a reaffirmation of solidarity with the GDR.

Meanwhile, Khrushchev continued to suggest that relations between Moscow and Bonn could be improved just as he had at the end of

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<sup>3</sup>Presumably, Kroll was chosen for this particular purpose, and not the acting ambassador, in order to maintain the utmost secrecy.

<sup>4</sup>Boris Meissner, *Moskau Bonn*, Vol. II (Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1975), 755.

<sup>5</sup>Chancellor Erhard led a coalition government (1963-1966) between the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) and the more liberal, Free Democratic Party (FDP).

<sup>6</sup>Last minute pressure from the Soviets convinced the Czechs not to open a trade mission. See A. James McAdams, *East Germany and Détente: Building Authority After the Wall* (Cambridge University Press, 1985), 51.

Adenauer's administration. In fact, in January 1964, Khrushchev reportedly told Polish General Secretary Gomulka that he wanted to conduct an entirely new and different policy toward West Germany and that he wanted to sign a treaty with West Germany.<sup>7</sup> After this date, Soviet and West German representatives met frequently. In mid-March, the Soviet Ambassador met with Chancellor Erhard to discuss Soviet/German relations and, shortly thereafter, there was discussion of a possible Erhard/Khrushchev meeting.

In June 1964, when Ulbricht was in Moscow signing a Twenty Year Treaty of Friendship, Mutual Aid, and Cooperation with the Soviet Union, the Soviet embassy in Bonn provocatively announced that Chancellor Erhard was also welcome in the Soviet Union. In July, Khrushchev's son-in-law, Alexei Adzhubei, who worked as the editor of *Izvestiia*, traveled to West Germany with a group of Soviet journalists and reached an agreement in principle for the meeting between Erhard and Khrushchev. In August a very positive account of Adzhubei's visit, emphasizing the greater political realism of West German leaders, appeared in *Izvestiia*.<sup>8</sup>

However, in October 1964, when Khrushchev was ousted from office, Soviet efforts at détente with West Germany dissipated. The new leaders, First Secretary Leonid Brezhnev and Prime Minister Alexei Kosygin, postponed the West German trip indefinitely (although West

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<sup>7</sup>Wladislaw Gomulka, "Fourteen Years, The Reminiscences of Wladislaw Gomulka," *Noviny Kurier* (April-July 1973), as cited in Meissner, *Moskau Bonn*, 757.

<sup>8</sup>See Thomas Wolfe, *Soviet Power and Europe* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1970) 121-123. Ulbricht had always advocated a more far-reaching peace treaty, and the Twenty Year Treaty was, in Ulbricht's view, an unworthy substitute. Of course, Ulbricht also objected to the whole positive trend in Khrushchev's *Deutschlandpolitik*.

Germans made an effort to keep the initiative going) and put relations with West Germany on hold.

The West German Grand Coalition, including the CDU/CSU and SPD, came into office in December 1966 and focused its efforts more than ever on Eastern Europe, forging ahead with both economic and political initiatives. The Kiesinger/Brandt government<sup>9</sup> seemed to recognize that German reunification could only take place within a larger, improved European setting, and the government initiated a policy which became known as "the policy of bridge building."<sup>10</sup>

In December 1966, Chancellor Kiesinger, in his first major speech, offered to exchange ambassadors with all states in the Soviet bloc, except East Germany. If this new policy had been effectively enacted, East Germany would have been completely isolated. After the Chancellor announced this new policy, in order to make some effort at including East Germany in the peace process, the West German government offered East Germany a catalogue of concrete steps toward cooperation in the technical, economic, and cultural field.

All Soviet bloc states were at least somewhat interested in this new initiative, with the exception of Poland and East Germany. Rumania agreed to diplomatic relations with the FRG in January 1967 and Yugoslavia followed suit in December 1967. Czechoslovakia, Hungary, and Bulgaria considered establishing diplomatic relations but were persuaded not to by Soviet pressure.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup>Kiesinger (CDU) was Chancellor and Willi Brandt (SPD) served as Foreign Minister (1966-1969).

<sup>10</sup>The US adopted a policy of the same name under President Lyndon B. Johnson.

<sup>11</sup>Edwina Moreton, East Germany and the Warsaw Alliance: The Politics of Détente (Boulder: Westview Press, 1978), 57-58.

While Soviet pressure persuaded Czechoslovakia not to exchange ambassadors, it could no longer be persuaded, as it had been in 1963, to divert its trade relations away from West Germany. In August 1967, West Germany and Czechoslovakia signed a trade treaty and a trade mission was established in Czechoslovakia. In June 1968, Czechoslovakia announced it would seek a loan of \$500 million to restructure its economy, and if it could not gather the money from Soviet bloc countries, it would try to secure the loan from West Germany. In mid-July 1968, the West German Federal Bank President traveled to Czechoslovakia to discuss such a loan.<sup>12</sup> This step, in addition to the general ideological liberalization in Czechoslovakia, may have served as a catalyst for the Soviet decision to invade. It may also have served as a useful pretext.

The Soviet leaders initially responded negatively to the Grand Coalition as the East German leaders also had, although for different reasons. The Soviets were quite concerned about the economic and political implications of the Kiesinger/Brandt policy. Not only could Soviet hegemony over Eastern Europe be undermined by this policy, but Eastern Europe could take the lead in garnering economic benefits from West Germany. As Angela Stent astutely observed:

Whereas Soviet economic needs in this period dictated closer ties with West Germany, the political need to control [Eastern European] responses to Schroeder's and Brandt's *Ostpolitik* overrode economic considerations.<sup>13</sup>

The Soviet Union, however, also stood to gain politically and economically from a more flexible West German *Ostpolitik*. In response to the Kiesinger/Brandt policy, the Soviet leadership eventually

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<sup>12</sup>Angela Stent, *From Embargo to Ostpolitik* (Cambridge University Press, 1981), 135.

<sup>13</sup>*Ibid.*, 152. Gerhard Schroeder (CDU) was Foreign Minister (1962-1966) under both Chancellor Adenauer and Erhard.

developed a sort of dual track *Deutschlandpolitik*, which Stephen Larrabee has referred to as the "carrot and stick" approach.<sup>14</sup> On the one hand, Soviet leaders would quietly investigate overtures made by the West German government, while simultaneously conducting a public campaign with East Germany and Poland, denouncing the capitalist and neo-fascist nature of all West German governments, including the present one. If the Soviets were frustrated with their gains in secret negotiations, they would loudly and publicly withdraw.

For example, a trade treaty between West Germany and the Soviet Union was negotiated from 1964 through 1967, but as Soviet leaders became alarmed at West German political and economic inroads in Eastern Europe, Foreign Trade Minister Patolichev loudly announced in April 1967 that the Soviets did not need a treaty with West Germany and cited the fact that trade relations with Finland, Japan, and the rest of Western Europe were developing well.<sup>15</sup>

In spite of the dangerous implication of Rumanian-West German relations, established at the beginning of 1967, diplomatic initiatives between the West Germans and Soviets remained negotiable. In February 1967, the mayor of West Berlin submitted a draft of a Mutual Renunciation of Force Agreement to the Soviet Ambassador to West Germany Tsarapkin. This treaty, later known as the Moscow Treaty, was to establish a codification of the West Germans' and Soviets' common interests in maintaining a peaceful status quo in Central Europe.

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<sup>14</sup>F. Stephen Larrabee, The Politics of Reconciliation: Soviet Policy Towards West Germany (Ph.D.dissertation, Columbia University, 1978), 118.

<sup>15</sup>Stent, From Embargo, 144-145.



Six months later, in July 1967, Foreign Minister Brandt handed over a fourteen-point catalogue of possible discussion points, adding that West Germany was prepared to discuss anything that the Soviet Union considered important. The Soviets responded that they were most interested in a Mutual Renunciation of Force Treaty. A number of notes went back and forth; the Soviets submitted important memoranda on 12 October and 21 November 1967 concerning such a treaty.<sup>16</sup>

The Soviet position hardened in 1968: the Soviet leadership set conditions for the negotiations that they knew would be unacceptable to the West Germans. However, the Soviet position softened from May to July 1968, when Foreign Minister Brandt met with the Soviet Ambassador to East Germany Abrassimov for secret talks. One of the main items discussed was the status of Berlin.<sup>17</sup> Moreover, these Soviet/West German negotiations occurred in conjunction with a Soviet diplomatic offensive vis-à-vis the U.S. In mid-July 1968, however, the glimmer of better relations with West Germany was dashed when *Izvestiia* published some of the secret memoranda which had been under discussion.<sup>18</sup>

It is noteworthy that the Soviets broke off negotiations at this point because, in April 1968, Brandt published an article in which he clearly stated that reunification was *not* a precondition for a treaty with the Soviet Union and that West Germany could wait on reunification until there was

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<sup>16</sup>Meissner, *Moskau Bonn*, 768.

<sup>17</sup>Jiri Valenta, *Soviet Intervention in Czechoslovakia, 1968* (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1991), 43.

<sup>18</sup>See *Izvestiia*, July 11-14, 1968.

a general settlement in Europe.<sup>19</sup> These were some of the specific concessions which the Soviets had demanded in negotiations.

The timing of the breakdown in negotiations suggests that the Soviet leaders were more concerned about maintaining control over Eastern Europe and about their own domestic leadership struggles regarding Eastern Europe, Czechoslovakia in particular, than about foreign policy victories in Western Europe. The West German government was open to some major concessions, and yet the domestic implications of reform in Czechoslovakia carried more weight. The Soviets were not yet prepared to seriously redefine the Soviet national interest vis-à-vis West Germany in the face of domestic criticism *as well as* criticism from allied communist countries such as China and East Germany.

### **III. The Development of Soviet *Deutschlandpolitik***

Why did Khrushchev pursue a positive diplomacy with West Germany in 1964? Why did General Secretary Brezhnev discontinue this policy in 1965 and 1966, then flirt with a positive policy in 1967 and 1968, and finally push a negative policy in July 1968? Soviet policy, while a reaction to West German administrations and Eastern European policy, was also an initiatory policy, designed to achieve both domestic and foreign policy goals of the Soviet Union. In the next subsections, the changing Soviet assessment of international and domestic factors is analyzed.

#### **A. International factors**

The need to overcome the political loss of prestige incurred by deteriorating Sino-Soviet relations was one pressing reason for

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<sup>19</sup>Willy Brandt, "German Policy Toward the East," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. XLVI, No. 3 (April 1968), 476-486.

Khrushchev to accommodate the West. Khrushchev's foreign policy reputation had already suffered greatly in the Cuban Missile crisis, in which Khrushchev was viewed as the loser. To make matters worse, throughout 1962 and 1963, the Chinese emphasized the seriousness of the Soviet capitulation which had occurred in Cuba. While Khrushchev hoped to expel China from the world communist camp at a conference of communist parties, the conference was repeatedly postponed, suggesting that other nations, and possibly other Soviet leaders, were not as interested as Khrushchev in confronting China.<sup>20</sup>

Khrushchev's *Deutschlandpolitik* was not a direct outgrowth of improved US/Soviet relations. While international agreements were concluded with the US in 1963, they were of a limited nature. In fact, both 1963 and 1964 represented an ambiguous period in US/Soviet relations. A truce existed on some cold war issues, but the Soviets did not surrender their political initiative on most European issues.

In fact, Khrushchev may well have hoped to drive a wedge between the US and NATO and create divisions within Europe at the same time. When Moscow initiated positive relations with West Germany in 1964, it also began to court France. Speaking in Hungary in April 1964, Khrushchev underscored the "splits, cracks, and breaches in the Western alliances."<sup>21</sup>

The Soviets were particularly worried about the possibility of a Multilateral Force Agreement (MLF) discussed in 1963 and 1964, which

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<sup>20</sup>Wolfe, *Europe*, 103-126. The reader should note that a number of East German party officials, and Ulbricht in particular, did not endorse Khrushchev's plans to expel the Chinese from the international communist movement. The GDR was trying to actively use China to check Khrushchev's moves in the German question. See the fourth section in this chapter.

<sup>21</sup>*Pravda*, 10 April 1964, as quoted in Sodaro, *Moscow, Germany*, 52.

would have meant the acquisition of nuclear weapons by the West German Army. The MLF was dropped in late 1964, and this may have been a changing international factor, which contributed to Brezhnev's and Kosygin's shift to a new, tougher *Westpolitik*.<sup>22</sup>

Khrushchev may also have hoped to outpace the Eastern Europeans in 1963 and 1964 in their potential to improve relations with Bonn. The Soviets were increasingly unable to control Eastern European economic policy and foreign economic policy through the Council for Economic Mutual Assistance (CEMA), the East European Common Market. Better West German relations could allow the Soviets to regain economic domination over Eastern Europe in the long run.

In sum, Khrushchev had a number of compelling international reasons to conduct a positive *Deutschlandpolitik*. Most of all, he wanted to overcome Chinese criticism by producing a foreign policy victory. However, as Edwina Moreton suggests:

It would certainly seem a gross oversimplification to assess Soviet policy in terms of a straightforward Europe versus China dichotomy, if only for the reason that Soviet policy in Europe and especially with respect to the Germanies can be seen as traditionally too important to become a mere function of the Soviet Union's dispute with China.<sup>23</sup>

Khrushchev also appeared determined to woo Bonn from Washington, to create disagreement within NATO, and he may have hoped to outpace Eastern Europeans' progress in their future economic and diplomatic relations with West Germany.

The new policy adopted by Brezhnev and other Soviet leaders at the end of 1964 may have been due to a new *interpretation* of the

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<sup>22</sup>Stent, *From Embargo*, 130.

<sup>23</sup>Moreton, *Warsaw Alliance*, 91.

international environment as well as to recent *changes* in the international environment. As mentioned previously, the Soviets were no longer threatened by MLF, which had gone down in flames in 1964. The new Soviet leaders believed they could improve their fortunes in the communist camp by improving relations with China, thus gaining a stronger political grip on Eastern Europe. The US was increasing its involvement in Vietnam, introducing new strains within NATO, especially with France, and making it an uncomfortable negotiating partner for the Soviets. These changing international factors could have made caution vis-à-vis West Germany more attractive than Khrushchev's rapprochement.

As for China, First Secretary Brezhnev and Prime Minister Kosygin initially tried to postpone problems by deferring the "preparatory meeting" of communist parties from December 1964 to March 1965 and changing it to a "consultative session."<sup>24</sup> The new leaders also called for further consolidation of the Warsaw Pact, and better coordination of foreign policy, in the desire to develop a military and political stance worthy of a superpower.<sup>25</sup>

Brezhnev and Kosygin continued to deal with the US on certain specific foreign policy issues, but they maintained an overall critical attitude to US foreign policy, especially American policy in Vietnam. More importantly, there was no direct dialogue with the US on European issues as there had been in the late period under Khrushchev. In fact, in July 1966 after the Bucharest Conference of the Warsaw Pact, the Soviet

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<sup>24</sup>Wolfe, Europe, 256.

<sup>25</sup>Robert L. Hutchings, Soviet-East European Relations: Consolidation and Conflict (University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 32.

Union shifted to an offensive posture vis-à-vis Western Europe, arguing for a Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE), without American participation. This may have been a desire to further aggravate the problems between Western Europe and the US: France withdrew from the integrated military command of NATO in July 1966.<sup>26</sup>

At this point relations with West Germany were put on the "back burner" while relations with the rest of Western Europe were put on the "front burner." In the summer of 1966, de Gaulle visited Moscow and numerous Soviet leaders visited France. In both February and July 1966, the British Prime Minister visited Moscow. Gromyko visited Italy in April 1966, and in this same year, Kosygin visited Austria and Podgorny was in Finland.<sup>27</sup> The reader should note in this period, Brezhnev was not yet as diplomatically active as other Soviet leaders, which stands in stark contrast to his strong diplomatic role after 1971.

Simultaneously, the Soviets showed a renewed interest in SED-SPD dialogue, suggesting that they hoped to develop a common line between communists and social democrats.<sup>28</sup> Meanwhile, relations with China hit an all time low in 1967 and 1968.<sup>29</sup> The exclusion of China from the consultative session of sixty communist parties in Budapest in February 1968 was an example of the hostile diplomacy the Soviets conducted toward China after 1967. Positive negotiations with other socialist/communist parties, *as well* as the governments in the US and West Germany, may have become more attractive at this point.

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<sup>26</sup>Sodaro, Moscow, Germany, 84.

<sup>27</sup>Wolfe, Europe, 292-293.

<sup>28</sup>Larrabee, The Politics of Reconciliation, 89.

<sup>29</sup>Wolfe, Europe, 257-258. Sino-Soviet trade was also at an all time low in this period.

It is significant that other Soviet leaders appeared to advocate better relations with the US prior to July 1968, when Brezhnev first began to back the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT). Brezhnev's openness to US/Soviet negotiations appeared to increase simultaneously with his commitment to invade Czechoslovakia and with his decision to temporarily stop negotiations with West Germany. With this shift on arms control negotiations, he may have hoped to minimize the damage of the Czechoslovak invasion on Soviet diplomacy, and to strengthen anti-military sentiments in the West.<sup>30</sup>

West German/Soviet dialogue temporarily ceased during the third week of July 1968, approximately one week before the decision to invade Czechoslovakia was seriously considered. By August, the Soviet leadership had probably concluded that the domestic and ideological repercussions of the Czech experience in the Soviet bloc would be more serious than the temporary international repercussions of invasion.

Khrushchev and Brezhnev both used *Deutschlandpolitik* to fortify their domestic and international strategies. In both Khrushchev's and Brezhnev's case, Eastern Europe initially took precedence over Western Europe. In Khrushchev's case, Eastern Europe might have gone too far in following his détenteist example, and this certainly worried other Politburo members.<sup>31</sup> In Brezhnev's case, it was possible that Eastern European countries would follow the Czechoslovak example without a Soviet bloc invasion, so this temporarily took precedence over an

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<sup>30</sup>Bruce Parrott, *Politics and Technology in the Soviet Union* (MIT Press, 1983), 202. See also Valenta, *Soviet Intervention*, 47, who appears to agree with Parrott that Brezhnev's shift may only have been tactical. Valenta mentions that in July 1968, Brezhnev described the US as "the rotting, degrading, and decomposing society."

<sup>31</sup>The individual concerns of other Politburo members will be discussed in more detail in the next section of this chapter.

improved *Deutschlandpolitik* and improved international relations with the West as a whole. Although relations with China were deteriorating under both leaders, relations with the Third World and Western social democratic parties improved under Brezhnev from 1968 to 1969, so Brezhnev could politically afford to more openly alienate China. He may in fact have even seen a political benefit in acting as a leader who could scare China.

Finally, under Brezhnev, good diplomatic relations were established with a number of Western European countries as well as the US, and Brezhnev knew these relations would probably not be disturbed in the long term. In contrast, Khrushchev had more clearly placed all his cards on better relations with West Germany, alone.

Just as the beginning of Soviet dialogue with West Germany, in January 1964 and again in mid-1967, was caused in part by international factors, the cessation of dialogue with West Germany in October 1964 and July 1968, was also caused in part by international factors. Both Khrushchev's and Brezhnev's decisions, however, were related to the Soviet domestic leadership struggle. It is the domestic side of the Soviet equation to which we now turn our attention.

## **2. Domestic Factors**

Domestic factors were important in Khrushchev's and Brezhnev's decision to adopt a more positive *Deutschlandpolitik* and their decisions to abandon such a policy. In Khrushchev's case, economic issues alone made détente with West Germany attractive. While the Soviet economy grew from six to ten percent annually in the 1950s, the rate of growth



dropped to three percent from 1962 to 1963.<sup>32</sup> In the summer of 1963, a drought crippled the agricultural sector, the primary sector upon which Khrushchev relied in his authority-building. It is no accident that as Khrushchev improved the Soviet Union's political relations with West Germany in March 1964: negotiations on a new West German/Soviet trade treaty began, and the Soviet Union intensified its business relations with an important West German firm, Krupp.<sup>33</sup>

Unfortunately for Khrushchev, he was not only losing the battle over resource allocation for agriculture, he was also losing the battle against those who favored the military and heavy industrial sectors. While Khrushchev wanted resources to be allocated to an upgraded chemicalization program, to agriculture, and to consumer goods, Suslov and Brezhnev, as well as other Politburo members, wanted resources to be allocated more favorably to the military and heavy industry. If Khrushchev had conducted a successful *Deutschlandpolitik*, he could have probably taken the steam out of his opponents' economic priorities and gained technology for his favored programs by easing the West German military threat.

Michael Sodaro described the leadership situation in the Soviet Union under Khrushchev as follows:

These leanings toward détente, however limited, were not universally shared within the Kremlin hierarchy. Some individuals (such as Frol Kozlov, a powerful party secretary) evinced more consistently hard-line attitudes. On occasion they took advantage of Khrushchev's foreign policy embarrassments (such as the U-2 incident in 1960) to strengthen their own hand at Khrushchev's

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<sup>32</sup>Wolfe, *Europe*, 101.

<sup>33</sup>See Sodaro, *Moscow, Germany*, 52. The Soviet Ambassador to Germany Smirnov also met with Chancellor Erhard in March 1964.

expense and to press for a tougher stance on East-West relations.<sup>34</sup>

According to Carl Linden, Khrushchev's pro-consumer policy lost ground in the period between 1960 and 1962, between the U-2 incident and the Cuban missile crisis. "Traditional" policy defenders, defined by Parrott as those who "emphasized the aggressiveness of the USSR's capitalist competitors and advocated the development of Soviet military technology as an overriding priority,"<sup>35</sup> successfully resisted those who supported Khrushchev's reformist approach. However, at the June 1963 Plenum, Khrushchev returned to the offensive on his economic policy, and his performance at the February 1964 Plenum represented one of the strongest defenses of his policy.<sup>36</sup> The reader is reminded that one month prior to this plenum, Khrushchev reportedly told Gomulka he planned to adopt a new and different policy course vis-à-vis West Germany.

However, after February 1964, Khrushchev's political fortunes began to decline. As Bruce Parrott has observed:

By February [1964], it was evident that the military and heavy industrial lobbies were resisting implementation of the targets that the Central Committee had authorized. This pressure on his economic program was one of the principle factors that prompted Khrushchev to explore a rapprochement with West Germany.<sup>37</sup>

At this point, February 1964, Khrushchev had more domestic reasons than ever before to change his leadership strategy and opt for a positive *Deutschlandpolitik*.

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<sup>34</sup>Ibid., 45.

<sup>35</sup>Parrott, Politics and Technology, 5.

<sup>36</sup>Carl Linden, Khrushchev and the Soviet Leadership: 1957-1964 (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1966), 186-196.

<sup>37</sup>Parrott, Politics and Technology, 148.

General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev and CC Secretary for Ideology Mikhail Suslov clearly disagreed with Khrushchev's *Deutschlandpolitik*. While these disagreements were apparent in 1963, they were blatant by October 1964. Brezhnev and Suslov consistently argued a hard-line position. Suslov was quoted as saying, West Germany could not use a commercial deal to undermine Soviet/East German solidarity: friendly Soviet/GDR relations were "not for sale even if all the gold in the world were offered for them." Brezhnev proclaimed at East Germany's fifteenth anniversary celebration that East German interests could never be sacrificed in any diplomatic bargain: "The Soviet Union has always stood and will in the future stand by the side of the GDR."<sup>38</sup>

After Khrushchev was ousted in October 1964, continuing division within the Soviet Politburo was the main reason *Deutschlandpolitik* toward both Germanies was put on hold. As Sodaro observed, it was not so much Khrushchev's opening to Bonn that caused his ouster as his leadership style itself, which his insistence on a détente policy toward West Germany further exacerbated.<sup>39</sup> Learning from Khrushchev's mistakes, Brezhnev hoped to rely on a more "inclusive" leadership strategy.

As a result, Soviet foreign policy under Brezhnev took on the mark of "a conservative regime still in the process of sorting out its internal power structure and its political priorities."<sup>40</sup> The subsequent dual postponement of East and West German relations is most logical if one

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<sup>38</sup>Suslov's speech is in *Pravda*, 6 October 1964, 1, 3; Brezhnev's speech is in *Pravda*, 7 October 1964, 3.

<sup>39</sup>Sodaro, *Moscow, Germany*, 68.

<sup>40</sup>*Ibid.*, 73.

assumes not only a lack of domestic authority on Brezhnev's part, but also continued leadership conflict.

The Soviets decided to postpone decisions with regard to a number of countries, including China and the US, and the first foreign policy advances only occurred after the XXIIIrd Party Congress in March 1966. At this time, Brezhnev gathered more political backing, symbolically changing his title from First Secretary to General Secretary, the same title which Stalin had enjoyed.

Moreover, Brezhnev appeared to adopt his position on *Deutschlandpolitik* in order to secure the strongest political backing in the Politburo. Initially, Brezhnev was very reliant on Suslov's support. Suslov was a key figure in Khrushchev's ouster,<sup>41</sup> so it is logical that Brezhnev would want to clearly distinguish himself from his two potential rivals, Nikolai V. Podgornyi and Alexei Kosygin, as well as from other reformists. He could best accomplish this by forcefully advocating the traditional economic and foreign policy program favored by Suslov. This is not to say that Brezhnev did not personally back such a traditionalist program, but simply that he could use the program to gain authority.

As Harry Gelman described the situation,

It should not be forgotten that Brezhnev was severely hemmed in when he began his struggle to expand his authority after Khrushchev's fall. At the outset he was constrained by the make up of the leadership inherited from Khrushchev, since in the party Presidium [after 1966, the Politburo] that assembled after the coup, he could count with certainty on only one close ally, Andrei Kirilenko. The remainder of his first set of colleagues was a

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<sup>41</sup>Suslov was not only a key player in Khrushchev's removal in 1964, but he helped prevent Khrushchev's removal in 1957.

heterogeneous group including senior figures such as Suslov and Kosygin; outright rivals for his own job such as Podgornyi. . .<sup>42</sup>

Kosygin and Podgornyi were both advocates of consumer interests, light industry, as well as more research and development, so Brezhnev had more reason to create a leadership strategy, based on preference for the military and heavy industry sectors. Brezhnev also knew that Suslov supported these two sectors, and that opposition to these sectors had cost Khrushchev his job.<sup>43</sup>

From the start, signs of differences were apparent between Brezhnev and other leaders, in addition to Kosygin and Podgornyi. For example, at the XXIIIrd Party Congress, Foreign Minister Gromyko and General Secretary Brezhnev gave very different analyses of West German intentions. Gromyko praised former Chancellor Adenauer for acknowledging that the Soviet Union wanted peace, saying:

We know that far from all Germans are poisoned by the ideas of revanchism . . . There are forces that come out for a resolute departure from the militaristic past.<sup>44</sup>

Given Gromyko's function as Foreign Minister and his responsibility for a successful foreign policy, this positive statement is quite understandable.

Brezhnev, in contrast, loudly and broadly condemned all aspects of West German foreign policy, stating, "The FRG intends to continue its aggressive and revenge seeking policy."<sup>45</sup> Moreover, Brezhnev

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<sup>42</sup>Harry Gelman, The Brezhnev Politburo and the Decline of Détente (Cornell University Press, 1984), 71.

<sup>43</sup>Podgornyi was one of the first leaders to really speak out on the economic allocation question, saying in May 1965, around the time Kosygin advocated more trade with the West, that the Soviet population should not suffer "material restrictions" for the sake of strengthening the military. *Pravda*, 22 May 1965, as quoted in Sodaro, Moscow, Germany, 82.

<sup>44</sup>*Ibid.*, 80. Gromyko was responding to remarks made by Adenauer at the March 1966 CDU conference that the Soviet Union's intentions were peaceful. The sentiments were apparently not shared by Chancellor Erhard who maintained there was no real indication that the USSR wanted peace. See also Stent, From Embargo, 278, footnote 5.

<sup>45</sup>Stent, From Embargo, 131.

described an Erhard speech as revanchist. Brezhnev also appeared to hold out no hope for a breakthrough in relations with France at this time, citing it after other Western European countries.

By 1968, Prime Minister Kosygin, an early advocate of Western trade and positive US/Soviet relations, had come out in support of the Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT) and an early start on SALT negotiations.<sup>46</sup> His advocacy of détente with the US appeared to spill over into support for détente with West Germany. It is unclear how much Kosygin's *Deutschlandpolitik* represented his personal interests in a political struggle with Brezhnev and how much it represented his own personal convictions but, regardless of his motivations, he clearly disagreed with Brezhnev on Germany in this period.

The differences between Brezhnev and Kosygin became crystal clear by early 1968, when they made two very different speeches concerning the topic of Western trade. Kosygin was concerned about the Soviet ability to compete with the West. In a February 1968 speech in Minsk, Kosygin lamented the fact that the gap between science and production remained large, the level of innovation low, and the organization of production inefficient. Moreover, he specifically cited the Western model as an alternative.

In what appeared to be a direct response to Kosygin, Brezhnev made quite the opposite observation in Moscow in March 1968:

In discussing scientific-technical progress, some workers obviously underestimate the achievement of scientific-technical thought in our country and other socialist countries. By the same

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<sup>46</sup>Valenta, *Soviet Intervention*, 16.

token, these people are inclined to overestimate the achievements of science and technology in the capitalist world.<sup>47</sup>

Later, in June 1968, Foreign Minister Gromyko appeared to back Kosygin, when Gromyko delivered a controversial speech to the Supreme Soviet's Commission of Foreign Affairs, a meeting chaired by CC Secretary Suslov. Gromyko suggested that the USSR was ready for an examination of an exchange of views with West Germany.<sup>48</sup> The reader is reminded that the Soviet Union was already conducting secret negotiations with West Germany at this point, so Gromyko was probably trying to gather more political support for these negotiations.

Ironically for Brezhnev, by mid-1968, Suslov apparently changed his initial views and appeared to also support better relations with West Germany. Suslov was preoccupied with the World Communist Conference, which had been rescheduled for November 1968. He wanted this conference to ideologically discredit China and he wanted international conditions, including relations with the West, to be as propitious as possible.<sup>49</sup>

To some extent Gromyko, Kosygin, and Brezhnev may all have been responding to rapidly deteriorating relations with China by the end of 1968. They may have realized that Politburo members who otherwise would not support a positive *Deutschlandpolitik*, such as Suslov, would temporarily support such a policy in 1968 because of international challenges, especially from China.<sup>50</sup> Kosygin, Gromyko, and Suslov backed a positive *Deutschlandpolitik* immediately after the Czechoslovak

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<sup>47</sup>As quoted in George Breslauer, Khrushchev and Brezhnev as Leaders: Building Authority in Soviet Politics (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1982), 165-166.

<sup>48</sup>Valenta, Soviet Intervention, 44-45.

<sup>49</sup>Suslov did not, however, advocate better relations with the US.

<sup>50</sup>In 1967 and 1968, the USSR staged an all out attack on Mao during the worst years of the cultural revolution. See Wolfe, Europe, 257-258.

invasion and this strong political coalition was certainly influential in Brezhnev's ultimate adoption of a détente policy with West Germany in 1969.

In addition to the emerging leadership controversy over foreign policy, in 1967 and 1968, poor Soviet economic performance resulted in a renewed call for economic reforms, including more reliance on Western trade. The growth rate fell from 8.6% in 1967 to 7.5% in 1968; the industrial output growth rate fell from 5.2% in 1967 to 4.4% in 1968.<sup>51</sup> Conflict over economic priorities resulted in planning delays. In May 1968, Gosplan Chair Baibakov said outlines of the 1971-1975 plan would be published in August 1968. However, no projections were published for the next two years.

Meanwhile, consumer goods, Kosygin's and Podgornyi's favored sector, gradually gained priority in 1967 and 1968. In a Supreme Soviet session held in October 1967, it was announced that the percentage increase of consumer goods in 1968 would be greater than that of producer goods. That same trend continued in 1968.<sup>52</sup>

Brezhnev began to change his position on the state of the Soviet economy in December 1968. He subsequently became a leading critic of the Soviet economy and an advocate of détente. This suggests that Brezhnev initially hoped to set a good ideological example for the Soviet bloc, especially while the Czechs were enacting a dangerous economic experiment. However, when the Czech crisis was over, relations with China worsened further and Soviet economic requirements increased.

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<sup>51</sup>In 1969, the growth rate of the economy fell to 6.1%. See Wolfe, *Europe*, 244-245.

<sup>52</sup>In the 1968 plan, there was an 8.6% increase in consumer goods versus a 7.9% increase in producer goods. In the 1969 plan, the consumer category had a planned growth rate of 7.5% compared to 7.2% for producer goods.



Thus, a positive *Deutschlandpolitik* looked like a better alternative to Brezhnev, because it achieved a number of overlapping political goals. The Soviet Union could import Western technology; Brezhnev could still avoid serious domestic economic reform; and reformist leaders such as Kosygin might be passified.

In fact, Brezhnev used the Czech crisis to gain dominance in foreign policy, switching over to the side supporting invasion at the last moment and enhancing his "conservative credentials."<sup>53</sup> He improved his conservative record further in 1968 by continuing to argue for increased military spending and against increased Western trade.

Whereas Khrushchev's attempt to renew his domestic authority with a positive *Deutschlandpolitik* failed, Brezhnev developed a conservative leadership strategy which appeared to produce the desired results. Brezhnev first reconsidered his domestic policy position at the end of 1968, because the political price of suppressing competing demands for resources became unmanageable. Meanwhile, changes in the international environment, especially West German political developments (the possibility of the SPD becoming the main actor in a new West German coalition government), made a positive *Deutschlandpolitik* more attractive. Later, with Brezhnev's conservative credentials intact and the proper international environment, Brezhnev was able to support a much more détente approach to foreign policy.

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<sup>53</sup>See Sodaro, Moscow, Germany, 132-133. Piotr Shelest, a political enemy of Brezhnev's reportedly called Brezhnev's initial, compromising approach to Czechoslovakia a "policy of kisses." See Valenta, Soviet Intervention, 187.

#### **IV. The Development of East Germany's *Deutschlandpolitik***

For East Germany, the international situation was no less complicated nor less compelling than that of the Soviet Union, but it was certainly much less ambiguous. Unlike the changing leadership situation in the Soviet Union, the GDR was led by General Secretary Walter Ulbricht, "a man of definitive views," who had kept political control of East Germany for two decades in spite of many internal and external threats.<sup>54</sup>

Whereas the Soviet Union as a superpower had to be concerned about numerous international actors,<sup>55</sup> East German leaders could focus on the actions of two main international actors: West Germany and the Soviet Union. Ulbricht's main goal in this period was to gain a "veto right" over Soviet policy toward West Germany.<sup>56</sup> However, while Ulbricht could try to manipulate Eastern Europe and Western Europe to accomplish this goal, ultimately East Germany had less political and economic leverage than the Soviet Union, which had many more options in its international relations.

##### **A. International Factors**

Ulbricht was extremely alarmed by Khrushchev's conciliatory actions vis-à-vis West Germany in 1964. From the East German viewpoint, none of the countries in the Soviet bloc should have had strong economic or political ties with West Germany, and, most importantly, the Soviet Union should have set an example by its opposition to such relations.

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<sup>54</sup>Sodaro, Moscow, Germany, 53, 70.

<sup>55</sup>The Soviets were faced with the ideological threat of China, military parity vis-à-vis the US, the policies of Eastern and Western Europe, plus the actions of international organizations such as NATO and the Warsaw Pact.

<sup>56</sup>Sodaro, Moscow, Germany, 53.

In June 1964, Ulbricht made a twelve-day trip to the Soviet Union and emphasized that Erhard's government had retained a completely revanchist policy.<sup>57</sup> However, by 1967 and 1968, while Ulbricht was surely concerned about Soviet détente actions, he appeared to be even more preoccupied with the immediate threat of Czechoslovak revisionism. Under Ulbricht's leadership, East Germany was known as one of the most hard-line members of the bloc and the reputation of the bloc was threatened by reformist members such as Czechoslovakia.

From 1963 to 1964 and from 1967 to 1968, East Germany, similar to the USSR, improved its economic relations with West Germany. However, Ulbricht knew he could rely on these economic developments without making serious political concessions to West Germany. Ulbricht especially disapproved of improvement in Soviet economic relations with West Germany, because the relatively poor economic situation in the Soviet Union might cause leaders to make devastating political concessions. We know that Ulbricht constantly boasted about East German economic achievements while emphasizing Soviet economic weakness, a fact which greatly annoyed General Secretary Brezhnev from 1965 onward.<sup>58</sup>

East German opposition to improved Soviet/West German relations was shared mainly by China, and Ulbricht took advantage of this. In 1964, Ulbricht toned down his attacks on China, while Soviet attacks continued. At the GDR's fifteenth anniversary celebration in October

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<sup>57</sup>Ibid., 59-60.

<sup>58</sup>Take for example Ulbricht's comment in a communique dated 21 August 1970, where Ulbricht is quoted as saying, "We want to develop [economic] cooperation as a genuine German state. We are not Belorussia, we are not a Soviet republic." See Peter Przybylski, *Tatort Politbüro: Die Akte Honecker* (Berlin: Rowohlt, 1991), 296.

1964, the East Germans published the complete text of a Chinese congratulatory letter which stressed that the German problem could never be solved "without the GDR." This letter was published at the time Khrushchev began publicizing his trip to West Germany.<sup>59</sup>

The East German response to the West German "policy of movement" from 1963 to 1966 was to also demand more vis-à-vis both Western Europe and Eastern Europe. Ulbricht began to initiate more economic ties with France, England, and Italy.<sup>60</sup> As James McAdams pointed out, the ironic effect of West Germany's opening to the East was East Germany opening itself to the West. Better economic and political relations were established in particular with France and Austria, two countries which had complicated relations with West Germany. As for Eastern Europe, Ulbricht became more active in lobbying individual Eastern European countries and improving East Germany's bilateral relations within Eastern Europe.<sup>61</sup>

While Khrushchev's removal from office in October 1964 must have been very good news for Ulbricht and other East German leaders, his removal did not banish the possibility of a positive Soviet *Deutschlandpolitik*. East German leaders appeared to conclude that the best guarantee of influence over Soviet policy could be secured through improved East German/Soviet trade. In December 1965, a trade treaty was signed with the Soviet Union which, at least on the planning level, tied more than one-half of the GDR's trade to the Soviet Union for the

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<sup>59</sup>McAdams, East Germany, 55-56.

<sup>60</sup>*Ibid.*, 53.

<sup>61</sup>His active role in persuading other members of the Warsaw Pact to invade Czechoslovakia is one example of Ulbricht's successful use of leverage within his own bloc.

years 1966 to 1970. From 1963 to 1966, while the East Germans only increased their trade with the USSR slightly, they doubled their trade with capitalist countries, in particular with West Germany.<sup>62</sup> From the Soviet economic view point, this imbalance had to change and from the emerging East German political viewpoint, a readjustment was also required. Therefore, East Germany's potential trade with the West was sacrificed in the interest of securing political support from the Soviet Union.

This trade treaty was only the beginning of a worrisome trend for the East Germans: the Soviet imposition of serious external economic constraints. This topic was publicly introduced by Prime Minister Kosygin at the XXIIIrd Party Congress, when he proposed that the USSR increase its exports of finished products in order to improve the efficiency and profitability of Soviet foreign trade. Obviously East Germany was one country which the Soviets designated as a reliable future importer of Soviet goods.

In response to an extreme ideological, economic, and military challenge from West Germany under Foreign Minister Schroeder and Chancellor Erhard, Ulbricht needed to position East Germany as a reliable partner for the Soviet Union. At the same time, however, Ulbricht, the consummate politician, tried to gain political leverage over the Soviet Union. For example, Ulbricht suggested a speaker exchange between the SED and the SPD in February 1966. Once viewed solely as a policy adopted at the behest of the USSR, it was probably an East

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<sup>62</sup>Statistisches Jahrbuch (Berlin: Staatsverlag der DDR, 1989), 32.

German attempt to gain inroads into Soviet and East European initiatives.<sup>63</sup>

To make matters worse, by December 1966 Ulbricht faced a West German administration under the leadership of Chancellor Kiesinger and Foreign Minister Brandt, which threatened to isolate East Germany politically by "building [diplomatic] bridges" to all other East European countries. Ulbricht denounced this new government before it was even constituted.

At the East German VIIth Party Congress in April 1967, the most obvious differences between Ulbricht and Brezhnev emerged. Ulbricht made the following statement about West Germany prior to the party congress,

Some politicians maintain that they wanted to help the Kiesinger government and Mr. Brandt to separate West Germany from the US and eliminate US influence in Europe. So far, however, all the facts show that Kiesinger, Strauss, and Brandt are trying to strengthen the Bonn Washington axis and create close relations. Brandt backs the payment of billions to the US. He hopes that no US troop reductions will be made. His policy adheres strictly to the Paris agreements, according to which the GDR is also to be incorporated into NATO.

It is not true that there are leading politicians who want to separate West Germany from the US. On the contrary, Bonn wants to act as Washington's main ally.<sup>64</sup>

Brezhnev, in contrast, stated at the party congress that millions of West German citizens wanted peace, and "these forces will increasingly influence West German foreign policy."<sup>65</sup> Brezhnev still wanted to keep his options with West Germany open.

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<sup>63</sup>Ulbricht called it off in June 1966 on a pretext. See Gerhard Wettig, *Die Sowjetunion, die DDR und die Deutschland-Frage* (Stuttgart: Bonn Aktuell, 1977), 38-40.

<sup>64</sup>Special supplement to *ND*, 16 February 1967, as quoted in Sodaro, *Moscow, Germany*, 94.

<sup>65</sup>*Pravda*, 19 April 1967, as quoted in Sodaro, *Moscow, Germany*, 96.

In August 1968, Ulbricht raised the political stakes, suggesting the possibility of trade talks with West Germany. He probably hoped to gain more leverage over Moscow and force its hand on the Czechoslovak invasion. If the Soviets did not stop Czechoslovak domestic and foreign policy revisionism, East Germany could reach its own accommodations with West Germany.<sup>66</sup> The reader is reminded the Soviets had loudly ended their trade treaty negotiations with West Germany in April 1967, over one year earlier.

In the mid-1960s the clarity of the East German regime's goals vis-à-vis West Germany and Ulbricht's dominance helped keep East German leadership disagreement to a minimum. The definition of East German goals, however, became more murky as the definition of Soviet foreign policy goals began to change after 1969. Furthermore, Ulbricht's growing tendency to challenge Brezhnev must have raised alarm signals within the East German Politburo. It is to this domestic leadership issue that we now direct our attention.

## **B. Domestic Factors**

Ulbricht faced the external threat of improving Soviet/West German relations, while also facing domestic threats to his reformist economic program, upon which he had built his domestic authority and international reputation.

However, Ulbricht was fortunate in two senses. First, East Germany was not in as bad an economic position as the USSR from 1963 to 1968. In January 1963, East Germany adopted a new innovative economic program, the New Economic System (NES), at the VIth Party Congress.

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<sup>66</sup>Sodaro, Moscow, Germany, 122.

This program symbolized a move away from economic centralization and toward decentralized economic management. It was a response to economic failure in the two previous years and to the dialogue about economic reform in the Soviet bloc.<sup>67</sup> Secondly, Ulbricht dominated and controlled his Politburo in a way which Brezhnev could only dream of: both the Wall and Ulbricht's economic program had fortified his domestic authority.

The NES was also a means for Ulbricht to increase his international authority. As Peter Marsh has written,

Ulbricht sanctioned the increase in influence of technocratic elements in the GDR such as economists, managers, and technical specialists, at the expense of traditional party functionaries in the belief that economic modernization could bring domestic political legitimacy and international recognition more quickly than simple reliance on Soviet backing.<sup>68</sup>

Ulbricht, however, was gradually forced to retreat from the original NES program. One sign of the retreat was the 1965 trade treaty with the Soviet Union, which clearly marked a victory for those party members who argued that loyalty to the USSR was more important than trade opportunities in the West. Nonetheless, there appeared to be a difference of opinion between Honecker and Ulbricht on the interpretation of the Soviet trade treaty at its inception in 1965. Honecker said:

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<sup>67</sup>The NES differed from the Liberman discussion in the USSR as it applied to microeconomic management while the Liberman reforms were more macroeconomic in nature.

<sup>68</sup>Peter Marsh, "Foreign policy making in the German Democratic Republic," in Hannes Adomeit, Robert Boardman, and William Wallace, eds., Foreign policy making in Communist Countries (Westmead, Great Britain: Saxon House, 1979), 82.



No one in the world is in the position to disturb the firm alliance of our parties and people. German/Soviet friendship, this is no formal notion for us, but a matter of conviction of the heart.<sup>69</sup>

Two days later, Ulbricht emphasized the importance of world trade, saying the GDR should still leave room to develop its "relations with new national states, and capitalist and industrial states."<sup>70</sup>

At the VIth Party Congress in April 1967 a further retreat occurred as the NES was renamed the Economic System of Socialism (EES). The new policy placed more emphasis on the party and scientific planning. Ulbricht, apparently, wanted to avoid any criticism from the party on ideological grounds and therefore reemphasized party control. The timing was paramount as the Soviet Union was in the midst of recentralizing its own economy, while improving its political and economic relations with West Germany.<sup>71</sup> To further blur the distinction between technical, economic elites and party members, Ulbricht introduced the vague concept of *sozialistische Menschengemeinschaft* (socialist human community) in April 1967.

In April 1968 a state resolution was passed, which began the "structure determining" campaign. The reader is reminded that this date coincided with the beginning of secret talks between the Soviets and West Germans concerning, among other issues, the status of Berlin. The resolution was a compromise program which called for more centralization, but also placed emphasis on the production of technically advanced goods which were profitable and easily exportable. This

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<sup>69</sup>ND, 16 December 1965, 3-7.

<sup>70</sup>ND, 18 December 1965, 3-12.

<sup>71</sup>The reader is reminded that, at the beginning of 1967, a trade treaty and the Mutual Renunciation of Force Treaty were under discussion between West Germany and the USSR.

structure-determining resolution was implemented in December 1968, after the Czechoslovak invasion.<sup>72</sup>

It was coupled with the "by our own means" campaign, introduced at the end of July 1968. This latter campaign directly emphasized "building on one's own strength" and not becoming economically dependent on the West, especially West Germany.<sup>73</sup> It was a lesson drawn from the example of Czechoslovakia and an attempt to capitalize on a temporary lull in Soviet/West German relations.

Ulbricht's economic retreat became explicit when he ultimately announced at the IXth Party Plenum in October 1968 that dependence on Western imports was too risky. While Ulbricht was clearly referring to Czechoslovakia and its dependence on trade with West Germany, he was also speaking to the Soviet Union.

After the Czech invasion, Ulbricht may well have believed that his country's foreign policy goals and those of the Soviet Union would be more in sync. As Marsh has observed, after the invasion, Ulbricht seemed to believe,

[he could] increase his authority and standing with the Soviet Union by reemphasizing the GDR's staunch support for the leading role of the Soviet Union on questions of ideology and policy.<sup>74</sup>

However, his support for the leading role of the Soviet Union extended to the policy of August 1968 and *not* to the positive *Deutschlandpolitik*, which would develop after 1969.

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<sup>72</sup>Martin McCauley, The German Democratic Republic Since 1945 (NY: St. Martin's Press, 1983), 124.

<sup>73</sup>Thomas A. Baylis, The Technical Intelligentsia and the East German Elite (University of California Press, 1974), 228.

<sup>74</sup>Marsh, "Interplay," in Adomeit, Foreign Policy Making, 93.

In this period, Ulbricht concluded that his domestic economic program, as well as elements of international relations, could be used to maintain his domestic authority. China could be played off against the Soviets especially at a time of increasing Sino-Soviet tension. Diplomatic connections could be established with the rest of Western Europe at the continued exclusion of West Germany. Eastern Europe could be pushed to follow the East German example, as it had been in Czechoslovakia, even if the Soviets were not immediately supportive.

While the Soviets probably believed the Czechoslovak invasion reassured Ulbricht of Moscow's resolve to use force to protect the GDR as well as Czechoslovakia, Ulbricht's flexibility and willingness to compromise with Bonn remained at a "low ebb."<sup>75</sup> Ulbricht was under more pressure than ever before to show tangible results from his foreign and domestic policies to the East German populace as well as the East German Politburo. Neither group expected that, in order to achieve these results, Ulbricht would defiantly stand up to the Soviet leadership as he did from 1969 to 1971.

## **V. Conclusion**

It appears that one of the most important factors predicting foreign policy choice in Khrushchev's, Brezhnev's, and Ulbricht's case from 1963 to 1968 was the relative level of domestic authority achieved so far in combination with domestic and international opportunities. Khrushchev was in a period of declining domestic authority due to domestic and foreign policy failures; he hoped a successful *Deutschlandpolitik* would remedy his leadership problems. Brezhnev, who was in the first stages

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<sup>75</sup>Sodaro, *Moscow, Germany*, 134.

of domestic authority-building, hoped to use *Deutschlandpolitik* to gather the support of overlapping issue coalitions in the Politburo in the face of great Sino-Soviet tension. Ulbricht, on the other hand, had achieved a great deal of domestic authority. However, he hoped to use the Czechoslovak crisis to stave off the threat of a positive *Deutschlandpolitik*, which was anathema to his authority maintenance. While all leaders stood to gain economically from a positive *Deutschlandpolitik*, the Soviets were more economically needy and more politically vulnerable to Western pressure than the East Germans in both 1964 and 1967 to 1968.

Moreover, Ulbricht and Brezhnev drew the opposite conclusions from their experiences immediately prior to and after the Czechoslovak invasion. Ulbricht viewed himself as having reasserted his influence over the Soviet Union, Brezhnev, the East German population, and the East German Politburo through his strategic readjustments in economic and foreign policy. Undeniably, Ulbricht played a major role in convincing Brezhnev to side with the portion of the Soviet Politburo advocating the Czechoslovak invasion. Ulbricht had not been consistently challenged by any member of his own Politburo in this time period, and he probably assumed his domestic authority was higher than ever. He saw himself in the perfect position to force new political concessions from West Germany with Soviet backing.

There is no question that Ulbricht saw himself as personally superior to his own Politburo and Brezhnev both before and after the Czechoslovak invasion. John Dornberg has provided us with an excellent description of Ulbricht's and Brezhnev's relationship:

To understand the relationship between Ulbricht and Brezhnev, it is necessary to appreciate that Ulbricht, thirteen years older than Brezhnev, had always regarded the Soviet Party Chief as somewhat of an upstart--one of those junior apparatchiki who needed to be put in their places. He never failed to remind his younger Soviet peers that he had met and known Lenin personally. After all, Ulbricht had already been a Secretary of the German Communist Party Central Committee when young Leonid Brezhnev left Kamenskoe to study land reclamation in Kursk. Ulbricht's seniority in the communist world obviously gave him great prestige and influence which he never failed to wield, often roughly, whenever, he came to Moscow.<sup>76</sup>

Brezhnev, in contrast to Ulbricht, was the consummate vacillator and consensus seeker. From Brezhnev's viewpoint, the results of the invasion showed that Brezhnev's skill in compromising would be rewarded.<sup>77</sup> Brezhnev must have felt vindicated in his decision: he had finally secured his leadership position in the Soviet Politburo and, with strong conservative credentials, he was now ready to tackle economic and foreign policy from a new position of domestic authority. Brezhnev no longer had Ulbricht breathing down his neck; he was probably even able to exact some promises of closer economic and political cooperation with the USSR from Ulbricht in return for the Czechoslovak invasion. We know that in October 1968, directly after the invasion, Ulbricht signed a trade protocol announcing that Soviet exports of machines and equipment were to be increased by 30%; Brezhnev also convinced Ulbricht to participate in the exploitation of Siberian natural gas. Of course, Ulbricht expected a greater political voice for the GDR in intra-bloc policy in return for these favors, as well as a firm rejection of Bonn's *Ostpolitik*.<sup>78</sup>

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<sup>76</sup>John Dornberg, *Brezhnev : The Mask of Power* (London: André Deutsch Limited, 1974), 260. See also footnote 56 in this chapter.

<sup>77</sup>It should be added that Ulbricht's domineering approach was also rewarded.

<sup>78</sup>See Marsh, "Interplay," in Adomeit, *Foreign Policy Making*, 93-94.

After the Czechoslovak crisis, Brezhnev must have wondered how much weight to accord Ulbricht in the future determination of *Deutschlandpolitik* as well as other policies. Following Ulbricht's own advice concerning Czechoslovakia, Brezhnev concluded that giving Eastern European countries too much *Spielraum* (room for maneuver) was a mistake. However, from Brezhnev's viewpoint, this advice extended to the GDR as well, and the USSR could now enter into Western political and trade negotiations unencumbered by worries in their own bloc. Now that the Soviets were the final arbiters of bloc disagreement, Eastern European domestic developments which did not fit with the Soviet model, no longer had to be tolerated.

## CHAPTER THREE

## BREZHNEV'S POLITBURO: August 1968 to May 1971

**I. Introduction**

This chapter explores Brezhnev's changing leadership strategy which, in conjunction with certain internal and external factors, resulted in a more durable *détente* policy with West Germany, certainly more durable than the *détente* of 1967 to 1968. Moreover, the chapter analyzes important Soviet Politburo members' speeches and identifies various leaders' impact on foreign policy choice.

When examining Brezhnev's leadership, analysts should address the following two considerations: "How much Politburo support did Brezhnev personally receive and how much was available for his *détente* policies in this time period?" Many authors have described Brezhnev as a transitional leader, suggesting that Brezhnev needed policy preeminence to counter his personal weakness as a leader.

James Richter, Harry Gelman, Fedor Burlatskii, Alexander Yanov and Grey Hodnett have all commented on Brezhnev's leadership qualities. James Richter suggested that Brezhnev was chosen as General Secretary, because he was a compromiser and incapable of "strong, dynamic leadership."<sup>1</sup> Gelman noted, "He was frequently appraised as a temporary, transitional figure."<sup>2</sup> Burlatskii, a former Central Committee consultant and well-known Soviet journalist, made the following

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<sup>1</sup>His account is based on an article by Fedor Burlatskii in the 14 September 1987 issue of *Literaturnaia Gazeta*. See James G. Richter, "Making an Impact: The US and the Domestic Politics of Khrushchev's Foreign Policy" (unpublished manuscript submitted to Princeton Press, 12 April 1991), 19.

<sup>2</sup>Harry Gelman, *The Brezhnev Politburo and the Decline of Détente* (Cornell University Press, 1984), 74.

observation about Brezhnev, although he admits he only met him one time,

Nobody took him to be a serious pretender to the role of leader; in fact he himself in every way possible stressed that he was devoid of such ambitions. I remember that when a speech was being prepared for a trip abroad [before he was General Secretary] . . . , he asked his speech writers to be 'a bit more modest . . . I am not a leader, not a ruler.'"<sup>3</sup>

Alexander Yanov, a Russian political writer exiled to the West in 1974, captured Brezhnev's incongruities particularly well. He suggested that Brezhnev, although a capable bureaucrat, was a weak decision-maker and leader:

Brezhnev, who [was] unquestionably a genius in dealing with the bureaucracy and Grand Master of *apparatus* intrigue, . . . proved to be weak as a political leader.<sup>4</sup>

Analyses from George Breslauer and Michael Sodaro have focused on Brezhnev's coalition-building in policy decision-making. Sodaro apparently holds the more commonly accepted view of Brezhnev as a complete conservative:

His basic inclination [was] to make sure that the government's principal policy choices [were] acceptable to the more conservative members of the ruling coalition.

Breslauer, however, views Brezhnev as a flexible reformist and coalition-builder, who was successful, especially in foreign policy. According to Breslauer, although Brezhnev had a "protector role in domestic policy," he had an "initiator-broker role in foreign policy."<sup>5</sup>

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<sup>3</sup>See Burlatskii's memoirs. Fedor Burlatskii, *Khrushchev and the First Russian Spring* (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1991), 211.

<sup>4</sup>Alexander Yanov, *Détente After Brezhnev: The Domestic Roots of Soviet Foreign Policy* (Regents of University of California, 1977), 20.

<sup>5</sup>See Michael J. Sodaro, *Moscow, Germany, and the West From Khrushchev to Gorbachev* (Cornell University Press, 1990), 25. See George W. Breslauer, *Khrushchev and Brezhnev as Leaders: Building Authority in Soviet Politics* (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1982), 284.



Breslauer and Sodaro do disagree, but they also used different approaches to evaluate Brezhnev. Breslauer focused more on "means" in defining Brezhnev's leadership, evaluating Brezhnev's political skills. Sodaro focused on "ends," evaluating Brezhnev's final policy output.

In fact, in this author's view, Brezhnev was partially a conservative and partially a reformist. Hodnett incorporated these interpretations in his insightful description of Brezhnev's leadership approach:

Brezhnev's success as a leader can be attributed to the ability he demonstrated to mediate among these conflicting tendencies, reassure the most important institutional sectors that their vested interests would not be violated, and pursue policies which--in combination--rallied sufficient support to his banner to make it difficult for others to move against him even on issues where he did stray somewhat from center ground.<sup>6</sup>

Burlatskii suggested a more "centrist" interpretation:

An extremely cautious man who had not taken a single rash step in his rise to power, Brezhnev adopted a centrist position. From the very start he avoided the extremes.<sup>7</sup>

This author agrees with Hodnett's and Burlatskii's views of Brezhnev as a leader who was neither completely conservative, nor reformist and who managed remain more or less in the center. In this study, however, the author is more concerned with Hodnett's line of inquiry, investigating how Brezhnev built political coalitions, which allowed him to "stray somewhat from center ground."

While authors differ in their analysis of Brezhnev as a leader, there is a consensus that Brezhnev had very little strong political support in the Politburo. Harry Gelman argued, for example, that Brezhnev's only real supporter in the Politburo was his old friend, Kirilenko, the Secretary for

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<sup>6</sup>Grey Hodnett, "Ukrainian Politics and the Purge of Shelest" (unpublished paper submitted at the annual meeting of the Midwest Slavic Conference, 5-7 May 1977), 5.

<sup>7</sup>Burlatskii, Khrushchev, 215.

Party Affairs.<sup>8</sup> Grey Hodnett appears to generally concur with Gelman, arguing that Brezhnev only significantly increased the number of secure "clients" among Politburo members in April 1971, and "he still by no means enjoyed a majority."<sup>9</sup>

This chapter, in addition to the following three chapters, will analyze the position of each Politburo member on both détente with West Germany and détente-related issues, such as the need for consumer goods and Western trade. This chapter distinguishes between Politburo members (1) who owed Brezhnev their loyalty, (2) who genuinely supported détente with West Germany, (3) who could gain "political capital" by supporting a positive *Deutschlandpolitik*, and (4) who combined aspects of the first three categories. Viewed in this manner, Brezhnev and his détente policies had more Politburo support than previously recognized.

In this author's view, Brezhnev's leadership abilities during and after the Czechoslovak invasion were those of a clever tactician, making it extremely difficult to ascertain his political stance. However, by means of *overlapping issue coalitions*, Brezhnev obtained majority support in the Politburo, albeit a very unstable majority support limited to certain policies. It must be emphasized that this was not *necessarily* majority support for Brezhnev as a leader, but overlapping support from a policy perspective.

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<sup>8</sup>Gelman, *Decline of Détente*, 71.

<sup>9</sup>See Grey Hodnett, "Succession Contingencies in the Soviet Union," *Problems of Communism*, Vol. XXIV, No. 2 (March-April 1975), 8. Among Brezhnev's firm supporters, Hodnett counts A.P. Kirilenko, F.D. Kulakov, D.A. Kunaev, and V.V. Shcherbitskii, the latter three were added at the April 1971 Party Congress.

### **A. Brezhnev's Leadership Strategy**

Did Brezhnev employ a consensual leadership strategy, resembling that of a political broker, or a confrontational one, resembling that of a popular hero?<sup>10</sup> Was he the head of a coalition or a directive regime, the latter being distinguished by a greater degree of power and authority on the part of a leader?<sup>11</sup>

Breslauer implied in Khrushchev and Brezhnev as Leaders that these distinctions are somewhat overdrawn. In Breslauer's opinion, what is important is how authority-building strategies are manipulated and how these strategies evolve over time.<sup>12</sup> Breslauer has focused more on procedure than ends in leadership strategy and that is the focus in this chapter as well.

Brezhnev appeared to change his leadership strategy annually from 1969 through 1971. By the end of 1969, Brezhnev changed his leadership position on two important issues. He became quite critical of lackluster growth in the Soviet economy, especially in the area of science and technology, and he became supportive of détente with West Germany and the US. These were both positions which he had previously opposed and which were supported by his rivals in the Politburo, such as Kosygin.

Brezhnev took a great risk in simultaneously adopting a new approach in both domestic and foreign policy. As Peter Volten stated:

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<sup>10</sup>Breslauer, Khrushchev and Brezhnev, 10.

<sup>11</sup>Sodaro, Moscow, Germany, 22.

<sup>12</sup>Breslauer, Khrushchev and Brezhnev, 11.

His possible intention . . . to use foreign policy in domestic politics made Brezhnev's conduct of foreign policy a clear target for a composite opposition.<sup>13</sup>

This author, however, views Brezhnev's mixture of domestic and foreign policy from the angle of its benefits to Brezhnev. By gathering support from two different camps--those who wanted *détente* with West Germany and/or the US and those who wanted to achieve a better standard of living through Western trade--Brezhnev could put together various coalitions which might only directly support one policy direction, but would agree on the other policy direction in return for Brezhnev's favoritism.

By 1970, Brezhnev appeared to develop a new leadership strategy--appeal to the masses. This stood in stark contrast to his leadership approach in the 1960s, which focused on the stability of the cadres. Apparently, he was attempting to use the threat of mass discontent against other leaders who were not supportive of his new policy approaches, especially in domestic economic policy. Brezhnev began to demand "frankness in the public revelation of shortcomings," a statement reminiscent of the Khrushchevian approach to authority-building.<sup>14</sup> After 1970, he appeared to drop this appeal to mass discontent--possibly because it became too threatening to other leaders and/or because it had achieved its purpose.<sup>15</sup>

At the XXIVth Party Congress from 30 March through 9 April 1971, he made another strategy shift by presenting a unity program. He softened

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<sup>13</sup>P.M.E. Volten, Brezhnev's "Peace Program": Success or Failure (Amsterdam: Free University, 1981), 186.

<sup>14</sup>Breslauer, Khrushchev and Brezhnev, 195, 217.

<sup>15</sup>In 1971, 1972, and 1973, he continued to appeal to mass opinion but *not* mass discontent: he made extensive tours around the country designed to indirectly pressure other leaders for their support.

his 1969 commitment to criticize the economy, to favor light industry and agriculture over heavy industry and the military, and to support détente. He returned to a more cautious approach to the economy and foreign policy.

Tactically speaking, Brezhnev was an expert at using "the diplomacy of détente--particularly summit meetings and negotiations with foreign heads of state--to expand his own role"<sup>16</sup> in the Politburo and to reduce the role of other powerful members such as Suslov and Kosygin. In this period, and even more so from mid-1971 to 1973, he used meetings with Brandt and Nixon to gain authority within the Politburo.

Brezhnev further employed détente to gradually eliminate his strongest rivals who wanted to usurp his power, such as Shelepin, and those who disagreed with his policies, such as Shelest. While Brezhnev's leadership strategy in this period was generally successful, he still had to be cautious: he had only a very thin margin of Politburo support for détente.

## **B. Internal Factors**

Angela Stent has convincingly argued that Brezhnev took the détente path, at least partially for economic reasons:

The Soviet decision to pursue détente was partly the result of the increased salience of economic factors in determining Soviet foreign policy. In March 1969, a decision was taken in the Central Committee to import large amounts of Western technology. The Kremlin hoped it could be a substitute for far-reaching, decentralized domestic economic reform.<sup>17</sup>

Michael Sodaro has seconded this view:

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<sup>16</sup>Hodnett, "Succession Contingencies," 12.

<sup>17</sup>Angela Stent, *From Embargo to Ostpolitik* (Cambridge University Press, 1981), 171.

Brezhnev . . . and Honecker . . . justified détente with Bonn on the basis of its recognized economic benefits, though their rationales sometimes differed.<sup>18</sup>

It was not a coincidence that Brezhnev began his domestic economic criticism after the invasion of Czechoslovakia. Brezhnev could not risk domestic criticism as long as there was international and intra-bloc instability. Moreover, Brezhnev chose to criticize the economy while blame could still be attached to others such as Kosygin, Voronov, and Mazurov. As had been true for some other Soviet leaders in 1968, by 1969, Brezhnev, too, was motivated to pursue détente to achieve economic modernization, to incur savings and to gather more political and economic support for certain sectors.<sup>19</sup>

The Soviet Union faced serious economic circumstances by 1968. The state of the economy began to reach crisis proportions in 1969 with only a 2.3% rate of increase in GNP, the lowest since 1963. Moreover, the percentage increase in economic productivity fell from 1968 to 1971: overall growth in GNP dropped from 5.3% during the eighth five-year plan (1966-1970) to 3.7% during the ninth five-year plan (1971-1975).<sup>20</sup>

In 1969, in particular, economic results were poor in agriculture and labor productivity; there were serious problems in the development of new technology. It was no overstatement, when John Dornberg wrote, "1969 was one of the most disappointing years in peace time history."<sup>21</sup>

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<sup>18</sup>Sodaro, Moscow, Germany, 40.

<sup>19</sup>East Germany, by way of contrast, viewed détente as a reason to follow the path of domestically based economic modernization, a program with which Ulbricht was personally associated. Such an approach allowed East Germany to isolate itself from Western dependence and to establish an international reputation and prestige in the communist bloc. See *Ibid.*, 165.

<sup>20</sup>Roger A. Clark and Dubravko J. Matko, Soviet Economic Facts, 1917 - 1981 (London: MacMillan Press, 1983), 195. See also Werner G. Hahn, The Politics of Soviet Agriculture, 1960-1970 (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1972), Chapter 9.

<sup>21</sup>John Dornberg, Brezhnev: The Masks of Power (NY: Basic Books, 1974), 242.

Instead of increasing by 6.1%, gross agricultural production decreased by 3% in 1969. Weather conditions included a "long, cold winter with insufficient snow cover, spring deluges, summer drought and early autumnal rains."<sup>22</sup> Everything that could go wrong with the weather did go wrong. The weather was so bad that cities experienced an acute meat shortage by the end of the year.<sup>23</sup> Moreover, labor productivity which was planned to increase by 5.9%, increased by 4.4%, the lowest since the year of Khrushchev's fall. All goals for the five-year plan were revised downward as were the target figures for the 1970 annual plan.<sup>24</sup>

Brezhnev chose to ignore the weather and instead criticized Kosygin and his administration. Brezhnev was committed to combating production disasters, caused by bad weather and agricultural mismanagement, with increased financial outlays. Furthermore, when agriculture failed, it meant not only that food would have to be imported but that domestic food subsidies, paid by the government, also would have to be increased. The growing number of overall claims on scarce resources meant increased reliance on Western imports, not only of grain, but also of iron and steel.

While there was some economic improvement by 1970 (GNP reportedly increased by seven percent), the ambitious initial targets of the 1966-1970 plan could not be met. This led to more political conflict over economic priorities. In 1970, industrial and consumer investment were curtailed, while investment in agriculture, Brezhnev's favored sector, was increased.<sup>25</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Ibid., 243.

<sup>23</sup>Breslauer, Brezhnev and Khrushchev, 180.

<sup>24</sup>Gelman, Decline of Détente, 83.

<sup>25</sup>Ibid., 85-6, 125.

In 1971, the GNP grew by approximately four percent. These results were worse than in 1968 and 1970, but better than in 1969. Ultimately, however, the ninth five-year plan had the highest degree of underfulfillment since the first five-year plan of 1928-1932.<sup>26</sup> In April 1971 at the XXIVth Party Congress, consumer goods imports became an obvious priority: importation of non-food consumer goods went up by \$90 million in 1971.<sup>27</sup> Continuing disagreement over economic goals caused the draft directives of the ninth five-year plan to be published after considerable delay in February 1971, after the opening of the first year of the plan.<sup>28</sup>

Economic failures and differing economic priorities within the Politburo combined to make 1968 to 1971 a period of great political tension. One of the largest disagreements concerned long-term economic priorities. Should more resources go to the military, agriculture, heavy industry, or light industry? Brezhnev fought hardest for the first three sectors and Kosygin for the latter sector. By the early 1970s, a compromise was achieved, resulting in large gains for agriculture, some intermittent losses for consumer goods, and severe losses for heavy industry.

Another controversial issue was the role of Western imports. Some Soviet leaders wanted to import advanced technology from West Germany and other western countries in order to jump start the economy

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<sup>26</sup>Breslauer, *Brezhnev and Khrushchev*, 202.

<sup>27</sup>Gertrude Schroeder, "Consumer Problems and Prospects," *Problems of Communism*, Vol.XXII, No. 2 (March-April 1973), 23.

<sup>28</sup>Richard F. Staar, ed., *Yearbook on International Communist Affairs, 1972*, (Hoover Institution Press, 1972), 86. Moreover, although Kosygin asked at the XXIVth Party Congress that this five-year plan be adopted by August 1971, the plan was not adopted by the Supreme Soviet until November 1971. See Hahn, *Soviet Agriculture*, 250.



without enacting "far reaching decentralized domestic economic reforms."<sup>29</sup> Other Politburo leaders were opposed to trade with the West under any circumstances; they worried about economic and political dependencies it might foster.

The former group won the argument. While the total foreign trade of the USSR increased by 27% from 1968 to 1969, imports from West Germany rose by a staggering 52%. In 1968, the Soviets began to directly deal with German firms and in April 1969, Thyssen announced the conclusion of a contract with the Soviets for the joint construction of a pipe factory in the USSR and one in the FRG. This deal added impetus to the Mutual Renunciation of Force negotiations, which were successfully concluded in August 1970. Moreover, new trade treaty negotiations took place from February to March 1971, while Soviet concessions were being made in the Berlin negotiations. The ninth five-year plan showed that foreign trade was the confirmed way to deal with expanded claims on resources--foreign trade was scheduled to increase by 33%.<sup>30</sup>

Once Brezhnev realized his political interests were better served by relying on Western trade, he was launched on the path of détente with West Germany. Undoubtedly, he chose this strategy not only because it solved the country's economic and international problems, but because it allowed him to replace Kosygin as a major actor in economic and foreign policy. Brezhnev delivered the main speech to the Council of Ministers in June 1970: this was the first time a party leader delivered a major

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<sup>29</sup>Stent, From Embargo, 171.

<sup>30</sup>Ibid., 164-169 and 187.

speech at such a session.<sup>31</sup> Later in 1970, he also signed the directives of the ninth five-year plan instead of Kosygin. Brezhnev wisely used his gains in domestic authority over the economic sector to gain more authority in foreign policy in 1970 and 1971.

### **C. External Factors**

External events were also responsible for the Soviet Politburo's decision to pursue détente with West Germany. In particular from 1967 through 1969, the period which Gelman describes as the "years of crisis," external events appear to have influenced the leadership to seriously consider détente.

After the Israeli Six Day War in 1967, Soviet defense capabilities were questioned and conservatives called for increased defense expenditures. After the successful invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, Soviet ground forces were expanded and the Defense Minister became a more important political actor. In March 1969, a very dangerous situation erupted, shooting on the Sino-Soviet border.<sup>32</sup>

After the break of relations with China in March 1969, the US and Western Europe, especially West Germany, became more important prospective partners. As Volten expressed the Soviet dilemma:

Either to preclude a Sino-American rapprochement or to prevent unacceptable increases in defense expenditures, the Soviet leadership was forced to come to better terms with either adversary.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Christian Duevel, "Brezhnev Personally Intervenes in USSR Government Session," *Radio Liberty Dispatch* (3 June 1970), 1-2.

<sup>32</sup>Gelman, *Decline of Détente*, 96-104.

<sup>33</sup>Volten, *Brezhnev's Peace Program*, 75.

The Soviets, as the Russians before them, had always been preoccupied with the costs of fighting a battle on two fronts, fighting with an Asian power in the East and a European power in the West at the same time.

In this period, the Soviets were also worried that the US would seek to utilize vulnerability in the communist bloc as leverage. By 1969, the Soviets may well have seen negotiations with West Germany as a means to establish their own leverage on the US, which may have been Khrushchev's plan as well in 1964.<sup>34</sup>

The most important aspect of US/Soviet relations took the form of SALT negotiations. The talks were announced in June 1968, but postponed after the Czechoslovak invasion, and began in November 1969, after the West Germans signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty, NPT. These delays illustrate that the SALT talks represented political risks as well as opportunities. Ironically, as one example of opportunity, the first Sino-Soviet border negotiation took place on the same day the SALT negotiations were announced: 25 October 1969.<sup>35</sup> Numerous SALT meetings occurred in 1970 and 1971, but real breakthroughs only developed after a back channel was established in 1971.

Thomas Wolfe summed up Brezhnev's approach to the West during this time period as a mixture of caution and militance. Brezhnev may have adopted this stance to represent separate views within the Soviet

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<sup>34</sup>See this author's "*Die Wechselwirkung deutscher und amerikanischer Interessen bei der Konzipierung und Operationalisierung der Ostvertragspolitik (1969-1972)*" (unpublished *Diplomarbeit* submitted to the Free University of Berlin, 1981). To see how much Kissinger himself was concerned about such a possibility, consult Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown, & Co, 1979), 408-409.

<sup>35</sup>John Newhouse, *Cold Dawn: The Story of SALT* (London: Pergamon-Brassey's International Defense Publishers, 1989,) 165.

leadership on the importance of SALT negotiations or it simply may have been the most useful posture, given his overall leadership strategy.<sup>36</sup>

Ironically, the USSR entered into negotiations with two of its strongest ideological enemies, the US and West Germany, at the same time. The catalyzing factor was probably deteriorating relations with China. Détentist policies with West Germany were being considered previously, as discussed in Chapter II. However, a positive *Deutschlandpolitik* was on the "back burner" until deteriorating relations with China made improved relations with the West look like a necessity. The coincidence on 25 October 1969 of the first Sino-Soviet border talks and the announcement of negotiations concerning SALT tend to confirm this connection. The Soviet use of the West to deal with China became quite blatant by July 1970, when the Soviets asked the US to agree to joint actions against provocative steps by third-party nuclear powers.<sup>37</sup>

As regards the motivation behind the simultaneous détente with the FRG and the US, John Rhinelanders suggested that Brezhnev may initially have decided to back the SALT talks as:

the most effective and prudent way to advance Soviet interests in the light of the vulnerabilities of Western societies, as against the risks and costs of a more militant policy.<sup>38</sup>

Or one can view the initial motivation for SALT talks as being due to more immediate tactical reasoning:

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<sup>36</sup>Thomas Wolfe, *The SALT Experience* (Cambridge: Ballinger Publishing Co., 1979). See Chapter 12. His description of Soviet behavior in these negotiations resembles Larrabee's description of the Soviet "carrot and stick" approach to negotiations on West Germany.

<sup>37</sup>Newhouse, *Cold Dawn*, 188-189.

<sup>38</sup>John B. Rhinelanders and Mason Willrich, *SALT: The Moscow Agreements and Beyond* (NY: Free Press, 1974), 106.

to encourage anti-military sentiment in the West or as a 'peace' gesture to minimize the damage to Soviet diplomacy should the USSR decide to invade Czechoslovakia.<sup>39</sup>

At first, Brezhnev treated American willingness to negotiate as a sign of weakness, but by the conclusion of SALT I, in May 1972, Brezhnev had co-opted the issue and developed a new policy approach which emphasized SALT's defense savings for the Soviet military. At the latest, by the XXIVth Party Congress, it appeared Brezhnev had consolidated the government's approach to the negotiations. As John Newhouse observed:

Soviet leaders were split, though into how many factions and on what issues no one can say . . . Very probably the leaders were slowly sorting out their differences and trying to reach consensus on SALT before the start of the XXIVth Party Congress.<sup>40</sup>

These internal Soviet negotiations finally resulted in a back channel accord in May 1971, directly after the XXIVth Party Congress. Although it seems odd that the Soviets would treat the West more favorably than its ideological partners, this adjustment to national goals can best be understood as an overall shift in Soviet political identity. Superpower status was becoming just as important as Marxist-Leninist ideological status. This development could be seen more clearly by the end of 1973.

To alleviate the impression that the Soviets were "selling out" to West Germany and the US, the Soviet leaders, even those opposed détente, rhetorically emphasized relations with more ideologically acceptable countries such as Finland, Austria, France, and Italy. This may have been an effort to sow disunity in Europe, but it may simply have been an effort to diversify and thereby ideologically justify a positive *Deutschlandpolitik*.

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<sup>39</sup>Parrott, *Politics and Technology*, 202.

<sup>40</sup>Newhouse, *Cold Dawn*, 193.

Brezhnev's summitry illustrates how hierarchies in Soviet national goals were shifting. Brezhnev spent four hours with Chancellor Brandt after the Moscow Treaty was signed on 12 August 1970. That was more time than Brezhnev often had for East European leaders. As regards President Nixon, after January 1971, Brezhnev spent considerable time working with him in back channel negotiations.

Of course one assumes the Soviets were not only concerned about the effect of Soviet/West German negotiations on Sino-American relations, but on European relations as well. Hutchings suggested that the Soviets found themselves caught between a defensive and an offensive strategy in this regard. The former focused on cohesion and integration in Eastern Europe, while the latter focused on the possibility of exploiting NATO.<sup>41</sup>

The reader is reminded that even the early Brezhnev regime, covered in the preceding chapter, tested out the possibility of splitting NATO. The USSR made its first official overture to the West German Social Democrats in March 1969, when serious Sino-Soviet border hostilities broke out, in a general effort to be more friendly with all social democrats. However, the first and strongest Soviet overtures to nations in Western Europe occurred with regard to France, and this was especially true after President de Gaulle resigned in April 1969. The Soviets may have hoped to use both France and West Germany to further loosen NATO,<sup>42</sup> or they may have hoped to "play off" both countries against one another to prevent France from becoming a closer American ally.

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<sup>41</sup>Robert L. Hutchings, Soviet East European Relations: Consolidation and Conflict (University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 61.

<sup>42</sup>See Thomas Wolfe, Soviet Power and Europe, 424-426.

Of course, once the West German SPD came into office in October 1969, negotiations with West Germany became a more attractive proposition. This was even more true after the new West German administration signed the NPT in November 1969.

The Soviet position on East-West European relations was generally characterized by paradox in this period. While the Soviets wanted Eastern Europeans to share in détente with Western Europe, Soviet policy to Western Europe could become constrained by an activist East European détente.<sup>43</sup> In many ways, for Soviet leaders, the most dangerous aspect of détente with West Germany was its effect on Eastern Europe, especially East Germany. Soviet ability to suddenly threaten Western Europe or discipline Eastern Europe could be diminished by détente.<sup>44</sup>

The defensive issue of cohesion and integration in Eastern Europe must have been paramount after the riots in Poland in mid-December 1970. These riots, over increasing food prices, were associated with new consumer tendencies and openness toward the West. The riots delayed détente in the short run and temporarily increased Ulbricht's influence just as the Czechoslovak crisis had. However, the Polish crisis ultimately showed, just as the Czechoslovak crisis had, the Soviets were more concerned with the long run than the short run in their renewed diplomatic initiatives. They wanted long-run stability in Eastern Europe *and* Western European recognition of Soviet control.

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<sup>43</sup>This was certainly born out by INF and other events in the early 1980s.

<sup>44</sup>See A. Ross Johnson, The Impact of Eastern Europe on Soviet Policy Toward Western Europe (Santa Monica: RAND, 1986), xii.

As for East Germany, the majority of the Soviet Politburo must have gradually come to the decision that Ulbricht's obstructionist actions were simply too costly and that détente with both West Germany and the US was more important than upholding East German national and international demands. We now know it took Brezhnev and important members of the Soviet Politburo approximately one year after mid-1970 to come to the conclusion to remove Ulbricht.<sup>45</sup> By mid-1971, the deteriorating East German economy, the Polish uprising, and the possible alleviation of Soviet economic problems made détente with West Germany more attractive to the majority of the Soviet Politburo, and East German objections looked less relevant.

Due to these changes in domestic and international factors, the questions the Soviet Politburo had to address by mid-1971 were *how quickly* to enact détente and economic reform; *how much* to rely on trade with the West to fuel this economic reform; *how strongly* to react to the Eastern European, especially the East German, response? As will be illustrated in this chapter, the responses to these questions were quite different among the various Politburo members.

Moreover, a number of specific incidents occurred at this time, which indicates that opposition to Brezhnev's rapid détente was stirring. In November 1970, a functionary at the Soviet embassy in Prague gave a speech, in which he said the last remnants of "Krushchevism" would be dealt a death blow at the XXIVth Party Congress. After the Polish riots in December 1970, Soviet leadership arguments clearly flared up. At the end of December 1970, the Ukrainian press, possibly due to Shelest's

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<sup>45</sup>In letters to Honecker, Brezhnev mentions that he is not informing the Politburo as a whole but "Kirilenko, Kosygin, Podgornyi, Suslov and others." See Przybylski, *Politburo*, 281.



request, reported the discovery of mass graves of Ukrainians who were slaughtered by the Nazis, and the extradition of the guilty West Germans was demanded. In January 1971, an article in a Latvian paper, possibly at the request of Pel'she, argued that the Moscow Treaty confirmed "unalterable borders," when this wording in fact had been discarded for "inviolable borders."<sup>46</sup> Finally in February 1971, reports circulated in the Western press, which stated Moscow was disappointed with Brandt and was not so interested in seeing the Moscow Treaty ratified. These reports argued that Brandt's goal was to create dissension in Eastern Europe and that his policies were responsible for the Polish riots.<sup>47</sup>

The Soviet embassy in Bonn issued a statement disassociating itself from these leaks to the Western press, but the existence of such reports is significant. If Brezhnev's *détente* policies enjoyed the complete support of the Politburo, or even continuous majority support, such developments would probably not have been possible.

It is striking that, from 1968 to 1971, the Soviet Politburo began to reverse its course on domestic policy *and* foreign policy to the West. While previously defending the economy, most of the Politburo began to point out its shortcomings. Whether the leaders liked it or not, there was no other politically viable choice than some type of domestic economic reform. If an economic policy change had not been made by the early 1970s, the Politburo would have had to defend severe economic failure. If Brezhnev personally ended up in this position, he could have been vulnerable to attack from Kosygin and/or Podgornyi. By making a shift in

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<sup>46</sup>Christian Duevel, "The Soviet Conservative Press Brain Trust Changes Its Line on the Moscow-Bonn Treaty," *Radio Liberty Dispatch* (25 January 1971), 1-7.

<sup>47</sup>Larrabee, *The Politics of Reconciliation*, 315-316.

focus to consumer goods, Brezhnev mainly faced Shelepin and Shelest as opponents, and by 1969 they were politically weaker than Kosygin or Podgornyi.

However, to maintain his conservative domestic credentials, and to maintain some support among hard-line ideologues such as Suslov and Shelepin, Brezhnev cracked down on society and ideology.<sup>48</sup> The evidence suggests that Brezhnev and many other members of the Soviet Politburo realized from the end of 1968 to 1971 that they could use détente with the US and FRG to establish a more politically and economically stable Soviet Union as well as more long-lasting dominance over the Soviet bloc.

Brezhnev, moreover, could use détente in conjunction with domestic policy to upstage Kosygin, although these personal advantages may not yet have been clear to Brezhnev when he initially agreed to West German/Soviet negotiations in the summer of 1969. While Brezhnev appeared to personally benefit, the majority of the Politburo may first have been willing to accept a détenteist redefinition of the Soviet national goals by the XXIVth Party Congress in April 1971.

By this point, the first substantive steps occurred in the SALT and the Berlin negotiations: this was probably not a coincidence.<sup>49</sup> The other members of the Soviet Politburo may have decided in April 1971, it was an opportune time to take advantage of relations with the West as well as time to bow to Brezhnev's preeminence in foreign policy. Ultimately, the following international factors, in combination with the Soviet domestic

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<sup>48</sup>See Wolfgang Leonard, "The Domestic Politics of the New Soviet Foreign Policy," *Foreign Affairs*, Vol. LII, No. 1 (October 1973).

<sup>49</sup>For comments on SALT, see Newhouse, *Cold Dawn*, 193. For comments on the Berlin negotiations, see Birnbaum, *A modus vivendi*, 41-42.

situation, made a positive *Deutschlandpolitik* attractive to the Soviet Politburo: (1) continuing Chinese military and ideological aggression; (2) economic crises in East Germany and Poland; (3) signs of progress in SALT negotiations; and (4) West German and American concessions in the Berlin Treaty negotiations.

## II. Political Competition Model

In this section, the author describes the policy positions of thirteen of the fifteen full Politburo members as of April 1971, and how their different positions influenced Soviet foreign policy choice. Defense Minister Andrei Grechko, CC Secretary for International Affairs Boris Ponomarev, Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko, who were not members of the Politburo but who were very influential foreign policy actors, are also analyzed. All three men later became members of the Politburo.

Brezhnev's *détente* policy triumph was reflected by personnel triumphs at the end of this period. Four new members were added to the Politburo in April 1971, three of whom were clearly Brezhnev supporters: First Secretaries Dinmukhamed Kunaev and Vladimir Shcherbitskii and CC Secretary for Agriculture Fedor Kulakov. With his responsibilities in the agricultural sector, Kulakov was a natural ally, and he became a full member of the Politburo without being a candidate member. Kunaev and Shcherbitskii were from other republics, making them relatively weak in political terms and susceptible to Brezhnev's dominance. The fourth new member, First Secretary of Moscow Viktor Grishin may also have been a Brezhnev supporter or he may have been politically independent.<sup>50</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>Of the full members of the Politburo, Kulakov, CC Secretary for Agriculture, and Grishin, First Secretary of Moscow, are left out because they made very few speeches. Grishin's position is unclear as he appeared to stay clear of political debate, possibly because he was under attack by Brezhnev's economic reformism in this period. Dornberg viewed Grishin as an independent. See Dornberg, *Brezhnev*, 258. However, Hahn

The author first analyzes the speeches of the three most powerful members of the Politburo, General Secretary Leonid Brezhnev, Prime Minister Alexei Kosygin, and CC Secretary for Ideology Mikhail Suslov, to show the nuances in their support for détente with West Germany. Brezhnev's clearest opponents, Aleksander Shelepin, Piotr Shelest, and Gennadii Voronov, and their objections to Brezhnev's foreign policy are examined next. This is followed by an analysis of Nikolai Podgornyi and Dmitri Polianskii, who owed Brezhnev allegiance for temporarily increasing consumer allocations and for long-term increases in agricultural allocations. Next, the regional secretaries, Vladimir Shcherbitskii, and Dinmukhamed Kunaev, who were politically weak and probably therefore supported Brezhnev, are analyzed. Finally, Andrei Kirilenko, Arvids Pel'she, and Kiril Mazurov, all of whom had reasons to oppose Brezhnev's foreign policy, are examined.

#### **A. The Most Politically Powerful Politburo Members**

As General Secretary in August 1968, Brezhnev had to face two very powerful members on the Politburo: Suslov and Kosygin. Brezhnev used détente with West Germany and the US to become more powerful than either man. Shevchenko described the political importance of these three men as follows:

It had come as quite a surprise to all of us at the UN when Brezhnev was elected--or more precisely, selected--as First Party Secretary. Michael Suslov or even Kosygin seemed to be far more prominent. Brezhnev was simply one among many ordinary faces that from time to time appeared and disappeared on the political horizon.<sup>51</sup>

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portrayed Grishin as a Brezhnev supporter. See Hahn, *Soviet Agriculture*, 255. See also Myron Rush, "Brezhnev and the Succession Issue," *Problems of Communism*, Vol. XX, No. 4 (July-August 1971), 9-15.

<sup>51</sup>Arkadii N. Shevchenko, *Breaking with Moscow* (NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 128.

As CC Secretary for Ideology and "defender of the faith," Suslov clearly had leverage over other party members. He was also known as the "kingmaker" for his role as supporter and then dethroner of Khrushchev.<sup>52</sup> Brezhnev ultimately overshadowed Suslov by convincing him to continue supporting détente with West Germany in 1969 and 1970. Brezhnev also appeared to encourage Suslov to occasionally admit the need for domestic economic reform.

Since 1965, Kosygin had served as Prime Minister and "had been the Politburo's chief economic expert and the leading spokesman of industrial reform" as well as serving as a foreign policy leader.<sup>53</sup> Brezhnev began arguing loudly for economic "reform" in December 1969 and managed to gradually replace Kosygin's version of domestic reform with a more limited program of domestic economic reform, relying more on Western trade to create productivity. Brezhnev further overshadowed Kosygin by identifying himself with détente and control of foreign affairs after he had coopted Kosygin's economic reform program.

#### BREZHNEV

Brezhnev became a "reform" leader in the economic sector first and subsequently an advocate of foreign policy reform. In 1968, Brezhnev first criticized the domestic economy. In 1969 and 1970, Brezhnev advocated heightened emphasis on consumer goods and East-West trade. In 1970 and 1971, he became the main proponent of détente with West Germany. In this section, the onset and interaction among new domestic and foreign policies are identified as part of Brezhnev's overall leadership strategy.

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<sup>52</sup>Gelman, *Decline of Détente*, 72.

<sup>53</sup>Bruce Parrott, *Politics and Technology in the Soviet Union* (MIT Press, 1983), 250.

As early as the October and December 1968 plenums, Brezhnev began to show signs of dissatisfaction with the economy. At both plenums, he mentioned problems with livestock production. In mid-1969, Brezhnev launched a major campaign to increase efficiency in livestock production.<sup>54</sup> However, while criticizing this one sector, he still indicated satisfaction with Soviet economic development overall. Brezhnev even advocated a crackdown on "consumerite tendencies" citing situations in which collective farmers received more pay but did not produce more output.<sup>55</sup>

Adopting statements reminiscent of Kosygin, Brezhnev first spoke about the Western economy in relatively favorable terms in June 1969. In his speech to the International Communist Conference, Brezhnev indicated that he might favor a détente policy in trade or, at least, support the emulation of Western achievements when he said:

First and foremost, we cannot afford to ignore the fact that the imperialism of our day still has a powerful and highly developed production mechanism . . . In some countries this is leading to a certain enhancement of the efficacy of social production.<sup>56</sup>

Although signs of Soviet interest in détente with West Germany preceded the West German federal elections of September 1969, the election of the Social Democrats ensured the possibility of trade with a less ideologically hostile West.<sup>57</sup> In Brezhnev's June 1969 speech he also conceded in the ideological struggle against social democrats.

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<sup>54</sup>See Hahn, Soviet Agriculture, 218-319. Voronov's political decline was directly associated with Brezhnev's actions.

<sup>55</sup>As quoted in Breslauer, Khrushchev and Brezhnev, 187.

<sup>56</sup>*FBIS USSR*, 9 June 1969. See also Parrott, Politics and Technology, 234-235.

<sup>57</sup>In fact, according to one German observer, a decision had already been made at the March 1969 CC Plenum to import large amounts of technology from the West. See Stent, From Embargo, 171. We also know that the Soviets indicated renewed interest in the Mutual Renunciation of Force negotiations as early as September 1969. See Boris Meissner, Moskau Bonn, Vol. II (Cologne: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1975), 773.

While this concession had already been introduced by Ponomarev and Suslov in March 1969, Brezhnev made the following comments in June:

Our stand in relation to social democracy could not be clearer. We are combatting and shall continue to combat our ideological and political opponents in its ranks from the principled position of Marxism-Leninism. At the same time, we agree to cooperation, to joint action, with those genuinely prepared to fight imperialism, for peace, for the interests of the working people.<sup>58</sup>

The decisive change in Brezhnev's position on the Soviet domestic economy occurred six months later at the December 1969 Plenum, when Brezhnev was so critical that his speech was initially not published. The reader is reminded that 1969 was a disastrous year, economically, and these poor results would have been hard to defend. Brezhnev said:

Damages that were incurred due to capricious weather and natural disasters are always significant. But I would not like to stop at this . . . Let's go on to the second category of reasons for our troubles--working in the old way when we need new methods and new decisions.

This statement is particularly significant when we consider that a number of the more conservative leaders excused these same economic problems precisely because of the weather. At the end of Brezhnev's speech, he said, "The problem of management is above all a political and not a technical problem,"<sup>59</sup> laying the political blame for a bad economy directly on administrative leaders such as Kosygin.

Although Brezhnev was on the offensive, he tried to maintain a cautious tone as well, saying:

Our insufficiencies, difficulties, and problems are not so small that we can afford to close our eyes. . . We have to evaluate efforts from every side--looking at what is good about it as well as what is bad about it . . . We should not only point out troubles and

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<sup>58</sup>FBIS USSR, 9 June 1969, A60.

<sup>59</sup>L. I. Brezhnev, *Ob osnovnykh voprosakh ekonomicheskoi politiki KPSS na sovremennom etape*, Vol. I (Moscow, 1975), 416-417, 421.

insufficiencies but we should correctly determine the way to overcome them.<sup>60</sup>

A *Pravda* article published two months after Brezhnev's December 1969 speech showed the strong political opposition to Brezhnev's critical approach: "Criticism should not take the form of demagogic fault-finding, squabbling, and squaring of private accounts."<sup>61</sup> Moreover, it was rumored that three leaders, Suslov, Shelepin, and Mazurov, wrote a damning letter about Brezhnev's speech, suggesting it produced only hysteria and no solutions to the problems at hand.<sup>62</sup>

Brezhnev was prepared to respond to these criticisms in April 1970 in a speech at a surprising location, a Kharkov truck factory, saying, "The issue is not to name difficulties but to draw the necessary conclusion for their resolution."<sup>63</sup> At this point, Brezhnev began to openly appeal to the masses and their interest in consumer goods. He admitted people might suggest (as some had) that the growing demand of the population, not the lack of food products, was the problem. He commented, however, that while this answer in and of itself would be correct, it was not a sufficient answer. He added, people do not just want more pay, they "want more products."<sup>64</sup>

Brezhnev repeated this comment one week later at the celebration of Lenin's 100th birthday in Moscow,

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<sup>60</sup>Ibid., 415-416.

<sup>61</sup>*Pravda*, 13 February 1970, 1.

<sup>62</sup>*Politicheskii dnevnik*, No. 67 (April 1970) as quoted in Parrott, *Politics and Technology*, 240 and in Gelman, *Decline of Détente*, 128. The reader should also note that Mazurov, Suslov and Shelepin represented the ideological hard-line on domestic economic issues, and argued strongly against Western trade. Mazurov stood to lose bureaucratically as he was an economic administrator.

<sup>63</sup>*Pravda*, 14 April 1970, 1-2. In this same speech Brezhnev twisted the usual definition of consumer goods (light industrial goods) to include Brezhnev's preferred sector of animal husbandry products (meat and dairy products).

<sup>64</sup>Ibid.



People's requirements grow constantly as society develops and culture increases. Lenin spoke very aptly on the point. 'When we see new demands on all sides,' he emphasized, 'we say: "This is as it should be. This is socialism."'<sup>65</sup>

Brezhnev also mentioned that Lenin "regarded factionalism and group action in the Party as the greatest evil, an evil which had to be fought resolutely and relentlessly."<sup>66</sup> This warning indicates that Brezhnev was facing opposition in the Party leadership.

Two months later, Brezhnev repeated the theme of lackluster consumer goods production in his June 1970 election speech for the Supreme Soviet:

But for a fuller and therefore more correct evaluation of the state of affairs in agriculture, it is necessary to take into account not only how agriculture has grown in comparison with the past, but above all how much this growth intensifies the population's current need for food products, and industry's need for raw materials.<sup>67</sup>

As the reader can see, by June 1970, Brezhnev was also supporting consumer goods with Polianskii, Kulakov, and Kosygin, whereas in July 1969, Brezhnev only favored Sector A production, heavy industry and the military sector, with Suslov and Kirilenko.<sup>68</sup>

In this June 1970 speech, Brezhnev showed his first overt public support for *Westpolitik*, referring cautiously to improvements in relations with France and Italy, and only then to improvements with West Germany.

On relations with West Germany, he commented:

We consider this exchange of opinions [on the Mutual Renunciation of Force Agreement] useful, and, for our part, we are ready to continue the talks to bring them to a positive conclusion.

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<sup>65</sup> *Pravda*, 21 April 1970, 1-2.

<sup>66</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>67</sup> *Pravda*, 13 June 1970, 1-2.

<sup>68</sup> Hahn, *Soviet Agriculture*, 236.

Still an obvious element of caution remained. He said, relations with West Germany could be good "if revanchist forces are bridled."<sup>69</sup> In this same speech, Brezhnev criticized enemies of the Soviet Union who use self-criticism to "slander the Soviet Union" and weaken Soviet determination.

In July 1970, there were more signs of opposition to the new Brezhnev line. Brezhnev had frequently emphasized that the XXIVth Party Congress would be held in 1970. At the July 3rd Plenum, delegates were told they would be held over for a second unannounced plenum. At the second July Plenum, ten days later, it was announced that the Party Congress would be held in April 1971.

At the first July Plenum, Brezhnev's speech centered on agriculture and consumer demand. He repeated the themes of his June election speech:

In this year, agriculture achieved essential results. However, if we consider its development compared with the growing demands of the country for food products and raw materials for industry, then the present level of agricultural production is unacceptable.<sup>70</sup>

The speeches of the second July Plenum were never published. One explanation for these back-to-back plenums would be that Kosygin offered his resignation: Arkadii Shevchenko, a former Soviet Foreign Ministry official, has written that Kosygin frequently threatened to resign. John Dornberg and Harry Gelman have suggested that Brezhnev hoped to force Kosygin's resignation at the first plenum, but did not succeed. Therefore, Brezhnev held the second plenum to ask Kosygin to remain.<sup>71</sup>

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<sup>69</sup>*Pravda*, 13 June 1970, 1-2.

<sup>70</sup>*Pravda*, 4 July 1970, 1-2.

<sup>71</sup>Shevchenko, Breaking with Moscow, 136. Dornberg, Brezhnev, 247-250 and Gelman, Decline of Détente, 128-129.

Either way, the XXIVth Party Congress had to be delayed because Prime Minister Kosygin was one of two keynote speakers. Hahn has offered another alternative explanation: he suggested there was profound disagreement over the agricultural budget.<sup>72</sup> Quite possibly, some combination of all these issues led to the party congress's delay from 1970 to 1971.

In August 1970, Brezhnev used foreign policy to ultimately upstage Kosygin. Brezhnev signed the Mutual Renunciation of Force Agreement, commonly known as the Moscow Treaty, with West Germany instead of Kosygin. Clearly, as the head of government, Kosygin should have signed the document.

To gain even more leverage in the government and more support from the people, Brezhnev toured three Soviet republics in 1970 after the Moscow Treaty was concluded. His first speech was held in August in Kazakhstan, his second speech was held in October in Azerbaijan, and his third speech was held in November in Armenia.

The first secretaries in each republic lavished him with accolades, especially Kunaev.<sup>73</sup> In Kazakhstan, Brezhnev spoke about his own accomplishments in exultant language:

We regard the conclusion of the treaty with the FRG as a very important event which, as the treaty comes into effect, will have great positive significance not only for the development of mutual relations between our two countries, but also for the international situation in Europe now and in the future.<sup>74</sup>

However, it was still clear that Brezhnev faced opponents in foreign policy when he made his October speech in Azerbaijan:

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<sup>72</sup>Hahn, Soviet Agriculture, 246-247.

<sup>73</sup>Kunaev's speech is covered in the following section on Kunaev.

<sup>74</sup>*Pravda*, 29 August 1970, 1-2.

It must be said that the arguments one encounters in some places as to which side 'won more' from the treaty and which 'won less' are completely unfounded in our view. Everyone won in equal measure: the socialist countries, the FRG, and all those who are interested in strengthening peace in Europe and in easing international tension.<sup>75</sup>

By October 1970, with the success of the Renunciation of Force Treaty behind him, Brezhnev had become an unmistakable advocate of détente with West Germany, and he appeared to be on the offensive against those who opposed it. In his October speech, he was probably addressing East German opponents of the treaty as well as Soviet opponents.<sup>76</sup>

In Brezhnev's November speech in Armenia, his comments on the Berlin Treaty negotiations seemed targeted mostly at an antagonistic East Germany. Absolutely no commentator had been as optimistic as Brezhnev regarding the Berlin Treaty's conclusion:<sup>77</sup>

The August 1970 treaty struggle was between those who assess the situation realistically and revanchists. We believe that the normalization of the situation with regard to West Berlin is fully attainable. For this purpose all that is required is that the interested parties display good will and work out decisions that will meet the wishes of the West Berlin population and will take into account the legitimate interests and sovereign rights of the GDR.<sup>78</sup>

All previous East German and Soviet commentary had referred only to West Berlin's "sovereign rights" and never to their "wishes." "Wishes" indicated much more concern with good political relations, at potential cost to East Germany, which only wanted to grant West Berliners the legal minimum.

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<sup>75</sup>*Pravda*, 3 October 1970, 1-2.

<sup>76</sup>The reader should note that Ulbricht's strongest opposition occurred in November 1970, while Ulbricht was under pressure to start German/German negotiations in the framework of the quadripartite negotiations.

<sup>77</sup>See A. James McAdams, *East Germany and Détente: Building Authority After the Wall* (Cambridge University Press, 1985), 112.

<sup>78</sup>*Pravda*, 30 November 1970, 1-2.

Brezhnev's speech at the December 1970 Plenum represented another shift in leadership strategy, which laid the groundwork for the unity program that Brezhnev advanced at the XXIVth Party Congress. He mentioned that people kept talking about Sector A and Sector B and which would have priority, but that growth was required in both sectors for the economy to function well.<sup>79</sup> Brezhnev may have wanted to reassure the general population, who were concerned about consumer goods, as well as those conservative Politburo members, who favored heavy industry.

The reader should also note that *Pravda* first indicated on 20 January 1971 that the Politburo was "headed" by General Secretary L.I. Brezhnev. This expression suggested that Brezhnev had secured a dominant position in the Politburo.

At the XXIVth Party Congress which met from March 30 through April 9 1971, Brezhnev delivered a unifying speech. Leonard Shapiro noted the following reason for a renewal of political unity at the party congress:

[I]t would seem that the months preceding the Congress--the months gained by its postponement, in fact--were put to good use for the purpose of securing at least an appearance of unity. The events of December 1970 in Poland may well have spurred the desire of the party leaders to reestablish unity.<sup>80</sup>

All sides were represented at the party congress and Brezhnev wove together previous comments on the economy, consumer goods, and détente. While a compromise note was struck, Brezhnev emerged politically triumphant from the party congress, linking the results of a successful *Deutschlandpolitik* with improvement in the economy.

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<sup>79</sup>Brezhnev, *Ob osnovnykh voprosakh*, Vol. II, 109.

<sup>80</sup>Leonard Shapiro, "The 24th CPSU Congress: Keynote--Compromise," *Problems of Communism*, Vol. XX, No. 4 (July-August 1971), 8.

He clearly reminded leaders about the seriousness of domestic economic problems as he had in his December 1969 speech:

The Central Committee attaches special significance to the task of satisfying the growing pent up demand of the population for foodstuffs, manufactured goods and services. Consumer goods production must go up at a higher rate than the cash incomes of the Soviet people . . . Repetition of old formulas where they have become worn out, and an inability or reluctance to adopt a new approach to new problems harm the cause and create additional possibilities for the spread of revisionist counterfeits of Marxism-Leninism.<sup>81</sup>

However, this time, Brezhnev held out trade with the West as a desirable solution to domestic economic problems.

The party is still aware of shortcomings in the economic field, of the unresolved problems. But they do not obscure the main point--the basic positive results of our five-year plan . . . With respect to capitalist countries, our line is to consistently and fully practice principles of peaceful coexistence, and to develop mutually advantageous ties.<sup>82</sup>

Brezhnev, however, was most triumphant in the area of foreign policy, where he could boast about specific results. Aware of the need for ratification of the Moscow Treaty in the USSR and West Germany, he repeated his ideas on realistic circles in West Germany:

Now the treaties of the Soviet Union and Poland with the FRG have confirmed with full certainty the inviolability of borders including those between the GDR and FRG, and the western border of the Polish state. There is a sharp demarcation of political forces in West Germany over the ratification of these treaties. One would assume that realistic minded circles in Bonn, and also in some other Western capitals, are aware of this simple truth: Delay over ratification would produce a fresh crisis of confidence over the whole of the FRG's policy and would worsen the political climate in Europe and the prospects for easing international tensions.<sup>83</sup>

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<sup>81</sup>Ibid., 20, 31.

<sup>82</sup>FBIS USSR, 30 March 1971 (No. 61, Supplement 16), 15, 18.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., 14.

Brezhnev had numerous reasons to feel triumphant. The economy looked better in 1971 than 1969. While not taking responsibility for the problems of 1969, Brezhnev was able to take responsibility for the modest success of 1971. Brezhnev not only gained dominance in his own Politburo, but also appeared to be victorious over Ulbricht, who would resign as East German General Secretary less than one month after the XXIVth Party Congress.<sup>84</sup> Brezhnev appeared to be triumphant in his international summitry. Most importantly, Brezhnev had successfully used his leadership strategy in domestic and foreign policy to displace Kosygin, his clearest rival for power in the Politburo.

#### KOSYGIN

Prime Minister Kosygin, as Chair of the Council of Ministers, initiated the call for economic reform as early as 1965 and probably supported *détente* with West Germany for economic reasons. The evidence indicates, however, that he may well have preferred a slower *détente* than Brezhnev. Possibly he adopted this approach for political reasons. His cautious tone may have been the main reason why Brezhnev could not gather support to remove Kosygin from the Politburo.

Kosygin's major leadership strategy shift occurred at the XXIVth Party Congress, where he appeared to be less critical of the domestic economy than ever before. This may have been in response to Brezhnev's usurpation of the economic reform issue. Kosygin probably questioned Western trade as *the* solution to Soviet economic problems.

Interestingly, Brezhnev and Kosygin used the same language and often exactly the same words in this period. Was this a matter of protocol,

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<sup>84</sup>Recent East German publications have clarified that the majority of the East German Politburo wanted Ulbricht removed by the end of January 1971. See Peter Przybylski, *Tatort Politburo: Die Akte Honecker* (Berlin: Rowohlt, 1991), 297-303.

coincidence, agreement, or competition? It is hard to say who was influencing whom until the XXIVth Party Congress, when Kosygin adopted Brezhnev's policy positions and Brezhnev's own words. However, in the period prior to the party congress, Brezhnev generally adopted Kosygin's language on foreign policy and Kosygin adopted Brezhnev's language on the domestic economy. It is quite possible that Kosygin used Brezhnev's words on the economy to suggest that they were in agreement on a more "radical" (in Soviet terms) approach, and Brezhnev used the same tactic in the foreign policy sector. Both men may have hoped to appeal to the median opinion in the Politburo.

Volten has suggested that Kosygin, while an advocate of détente, never supported East-West trade:

He generally paid relatively little attention to East-West cooperation, often mentioning it in one and the same breath with Third World countries, or relating its effect directly to security and peace rather than to its domestic economic leverage.<sup>85</sup>

This author, however, believes that Volten is confusing separate issues. Kosygin's economic approach as described above was based solely on his tactics of caution, not his final goals.

Kosygin, in fact, mentioned East-West trade more frequently than all other Politburo leaders. His statement at a CEMA meeting in April 1969 shows, however, how he approached this topic cautiously:

We can not tolerate economic dependence of our country on capitalist countries. But this is not a policy of autarky, artificially isolating the economy of our country from economic relations with other countries. . . We, as before, intend to develop mutually profitable trade and other connections with all countries which are actually prepared to expand business contacts with world socialism.<sup>86</sup>

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<sup>85</sup>Volten, *Brezhnev's Peace Program*, 159.

<sup>86</sup>A.N. Kosygin, *Izbrannye Rech'i i Stat'i* (Moscow, 1974), 452.



Moreover, Kosygin focused on the problem of unfulfilled consumer demand as early as 1965, indicating he was not afraid of "radical" economic stances. Notably, once Brezhnev backed the consumer issue in April 1970, Kosygin adopted Brezhnev's language:

Our industry and trade *does not always satisfy the growing demands of the population*, does not always succeed in a timely preparation of seasonal wares, and slowly renews the assortment of goods.<sup>87</sup> (added emphasis)

As far as foreign policy and détente were concerned, Kosygin appeared to publicly promote the idea of détente with the US in March 1970, in advance of Brezhnev, who made his first public statements in June 1970. In reference to SALT in March 1970, Kosygin said:

The USSR attaches great importance to the dialogue which began at the end of last year about the limitation of strategic weapons. We are with all seriousness prepared for negotiations on this issue.<sup>88</sup>

In April 1970, Kosygin was also positive, but cautious, in his support for the Mutual Renunciation of Force negotiations, saying the negotiations were "ongoing," but it was "too early to talk about concrete results."<sup>89</sup> In May 1970 in Czechoslovakia, however he sounded more positive with regard to the same treaty. The reader is reminded that the Bahr/Gromyko round of talks was concluded in this same month:

We are sure that in this treaty the expression of both sides' decisiveness in achieving a better European climate and the creation of an effective security system in Europe will meet with understanding and support of all peoples who are interested in a lasting peace.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>87</sup>Ibid., 473.

<sup>88</sup>Ibid., 465.

<sup>89</sup>Ibid., 475.

<sup>90</sup>Ibid., 482.

Unlike Brezhnev, Kosygin was very cautious in his June 1970 election speech. One assumes the caution was due to the conflict over Kosygin's role in the leadership. The one forceful comment Kosygin made may have been a challenge to those in the leadership who kept insisting revanchists were alive and well: "All we can say is that politically the revanchists are just so many corpses, since their ideas, though dangerous, will never materialize." He went on to make a statement urging slow negotiations, a position quite opposed to Brezhnev's at this time:

As for all kind of speculation in the Western bourgeois press concerning the change in the relations between the Soviet Union and FRG, at present *there is no need to rush ahead*. In our opinion, the Soviet-West German exchange of opinions in recent months on the question of repudiating the use of force was useful.<sup>91</sup> (added emphasis)

Two days later, Brezhnev also termed the negotiations "useful" but said we are ready "to bring them [the negotiations] to a positive conclusion."<sup>92</sup>

When the Renunciation of Force Treaty was signed on 12 August 1970, and after the two July plenums, Kosygin followed Brezhnev's lead and spoke out against opponents of the treaty. Kosygin even indicated that the treaty might serve as a lesson to the US and/or China:

It should be noted that all of this [bilateral progress] has been noted in political and social circles in Europe, and not only in Europe, by those who have followed our negotiations closely. . . . [T]hose who object are removed from political realism.<sup>93</sup>

The reader should note that Brezhnev used Kosygin's formulation about political reality three months later in November 1970.

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<sup>91</sup>Towards New Successes in Communist Construction (Moscow: Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, 1970), 38.

<sup>92</sup>*Pravda*, 13 June 1970, 1-2.

<sup>93</sup>Kosygin, *Izbrannye*, 488.

In the period after August 1970, Kosygin made very few statements on foreign policy. One assumes some sort of Central Committee and Politburo agreement was hammered out after July, whereby Brezhnev would be more responsible for the foreign policy sector and possibly the economic sector as well.

Kosygin may have tired of this arrangement by the XXIVth Party Congress in April 1971, because, ironically, it was Kosygin who defended the Soviet economy at the XXIVth Party Congress. He argued that the Soviet economy "at all stages of its development has always clearly demonstrated indisputable advantages over the capitalist economy."<sup>94</sup> While it is true that the Soviet growth rate looked *relatively* better than that of the US since 1969, the Soviet economy still did not exhibit "indisputable advantages" over capitalist economies. It seems Kosygin had political motives for this statement.

Parrott, for example, has noted this may have been a tactical response to Brezhnev's challenge.<sup>95</sup> It is also significant that Kosygin used Brezhnev's same words to describe heavy industry, calling it the "foundation of the country's economic might,"<sup>96</sup> and that, while Kosygin backtracked on reforms for the domestic economy, he remained an advocate of long-term East-West trade, including the US as a logical trading partner:

We stand for broader commercial relations also with the industrially developed capitalist countries . . . with Finland, France, Italy, Japan, FRG, and Austria . . . We do not rule out the development of economic relations with the US to a point where

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<sup>94</sup>XXIV s'ezd, Vol. II, 19, 24 as quoted in Parrott, Politics and Technology, 250.

<sup>95</sup>Ibid.

<sup>96</sup>Breslauer, Khrushchev and Brezhnev, 197.

the extent would be more consistent with the economic potential of the two countries.<sup>97</sup>

When the directives were issued for the five-year plan, Kosygin's language was even more explicit:

If industrial and commercial circles in the capitalist countries display sufficient interest in expanding economic relations with the USSR, our trade with those countries will grow more considerably.

The scope of our economic relations with the Western countries could be entirely different, of course, if constructive steps were taken towards resolving the outstanding problems that complicate the international situation at present.<sup>98</sup>

By April 1971, Kosygin appeared to develop an authority-building strategy which stood in opposition to that of Brezhnev on some matters, such as the domestic economy and the pace of détente, but was parallel to Brezhnev on other matters, such as East-West trade. Possibly Kosygin relented on domestic economic reform in exchange for Brezhnev's promises to slow down the pace of détente and to back off from sudden, immediate increases in East-West trade. Possibly Kosygin had no more leverage, having lost the political battle for dominant influence on the Politburo.

#### SUSLOV

As the member of the Politburo responsible for ideology, CC Secretary Suslov could have been threatened politically and personally by détente with West Germany and the US. The evidence indicates that he greatly preferred détente with West Germany over détente with the US. He, however, continuously opposed Kosygin's and then Brezhnev's emphasis on domestic economic reform as a potential threat to Soviet ideological stability.

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<sup>97</sup> *FBIS USSR*, 6 April 1971 (No. 66, Supplement 21), 16-17.

<sup>98</sup> A.N. Kosygin, Directives of the 24th Congress of the CPSU for the Five Year Economic Plan Development Plan of the USSR, 1971-1975 (Moscow: Novosti Press Agency Publishing House, 1971), 101.

Suslov's opposition to moving quickly in foreign policy, even with regard to West Germany, was illustrated by his failure to officially acknowledge the Mutual Renunciation of Force Treaty until November 1970, three months after the treaty was signed.<sup>99</sup> A major advocate of a strong military defense, his main motivation in both arms control and détente was to save more money for the Soviet defense budget.

Ironically, along with Ponomarev, another opponent of rapid détente, Suslov opened the door for diplomatic relations with West Germany's Social Democrats at the fiftieth anniversary of the Comintern in March 1969, when he made the following admission:

The Comintern undoubtedly made some mistakes such as the idea of the twenties and the thirties that the Social Democrats were the main enemy. The Communist Party wanted to speak to the masses. Because of bypassing the Social Democrats the Communist Party entered into a certain isolation and sectarian position.<sup>100</sup>

Many observers saw this as a first step to use the West as a balance against Chinese aggression.<sup>101</sup>

Suslov made it clear that while he would support détente with West Germany, he did not support improving economic relations with the West. He had a very high opinion of Soviet economic performance and its contribution to Soviet political superiority, writing optimistically in the fall of 1969 that, "Soviet power will overtake and surpass the capitalists and our prize will turn out to be not only purely economic."<sup>102</sup> He reminded

<sup>99</sup>See M.A. Suslov, *Izbrannoe Rechi i Stat'i* (Moscow, 1972), 625. See also Sodaro, *Moscow, Germany*, 194.

<sup>100</sup>*Kommunist*, No. 5 (March 1969), 9.

<sup>101</sup>Ulbricht saw this as an improper tactic, immediately asserting that the West German Social Democrats were still the main enemy. See Gerhard Wettig, *Die Sowjetunion, die DDR und die Deutschland-Frage* (Stuttgart: Bonn Aktuell, 1976), 62 and Edwina Moreton, *East Germany and the Warsaw Alliance: The Politics of Détente* (Boulder: Westview Press, 1978), 90.

<sup>102</sup>M.A. Suslov, *Marksizm-Leninizm* (Moscow: Mysl', 1973), 63.

those who thought otherwise, possibly meaning Kosygin and/or Brezhnev, that Lenin demanded struggle against "panickers, capitulationists, and opportunists who violate the party's general line."<sup>103</sup> Furthermore, he stated that the USSR was already achieving excellent growth and compared favorably in industrial production with the US, Great Britain, France, and Japan.<sup>104</sup>

However, one year later, in his election speech of June 1970, he did adopt Brezhnev's language when criticizing slow growth in consumer goods. He mentioned that there had been some economic success, "but not enough to fulfill the population's demands." He did not, however, suggest that the answer lay in trade with the West. Suslov believed quite the opposite. He asked the question, "Is there anything making us similar to parliaments in bourgeois countries?", and he answered, "No."<sup>105</sup> This line of argument reminds one of the *Abgrenzung* (isolation) campaign, which was later propagated by East German leaders, especially General Secretary Honecker.

One wonders if Suslov, after the Bahr/Gromyko agreement in May 1970, agreed to acknowledge the consumer problem, at the same time Kosygin agreed to be a more moderate proponent of economic reform, based primarily on East-West trade. In exchange, both men probably expected Brezhnev to slow down the Soviet Union's movement toward détente.

In Suslov's November 1970 speech commemorating the October revolution, Suslov mentioned his worries about potential problems for the

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<sup>103</sup>Ibid., 52.

<sup>104</sup>Ibid., 63.

<sup>105</sup>Suslov, *Izbrannoe*, 607.

USSR, pointedly noting the problem of economic dependency for colonial nations:

This policy [of economic dependency] sometimes gives imperialists some temporary results and creates double the effort for the young nations in connection with their economic weakness and terrible insufficiencies in their technical workers.

In this same speech, after a tirade against imperialism and against China, he made the following lukewarm comment about the Moscow Treaty:

It is necessary to acknowledge the significance of the conclusion of an agreement between the USSR and FRG in August of this year . . . By strengthening the inviolability of European borders, including the Oder-Neisse, which forms the western border of Poland and borders between the FRG and GDR, this treaty improves the general situation in Europe.

He added that West German revanchists and extremists were still opposed to the treaty's ratification.<sup>106</sup>

It is curious that Suslov was not given an opportunity to speak at the XXIVth Party Congress.<sup>107</sup> Possibly Brezhnev was concerned about what he might have to say or possibly a political bargain was struck between the two leaders, resulting in Brezhnev's compromising tone at the party congress. Although Suslov did not appear to personally support Brezhnev, that did not automatically make him an opponent of Brezhnev's policies. Suslov supported *slow* détente with the FRG and *cautious* criticism of the domestic economy. He, however, clearly opposed large increases in East-West trade and détente with the US, two

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<sup>106</sup>ibid., 625-626.

<sup>107</sup>The only Politburo speakers at the Congress were Brezhnev, Kosygin, Shelest, who spoke as the chief Ukrainian leader, and Podgorny, who formally introduced the Congress. Shelest opposed Brezhnev. He was probably chosen as a speaker because he was a regional leader and not as powerful as Suslov.

programs which Brezhnev strongly supported after the XXIVth Party Congress.

### **B. Opponents of Brezhnev and Détente**

The evidence indicates that Shelepin, Shelest, and Voronov strongly opposed both Brezhnev and his policies. Shelepin and Shelest advocated "a more consistent, ideologically oriented posture across the whole range of issues"<sup>108</sup> including foreign policy, the domestic economy, and East-West trade. Voronov objected to Brezhnev's agricultural approach of throwing money at agricultural problems. Brezhnev used his political influence against all three Politburo members, and eventually they were forced to leave the Politburo.

#### **SHELEPIN**

In 1965, Shelepin had been well placed to threaten Brezhnev, as Shelepin had important party and government posts. However, in 1967, Shelepin was removed from his party post on the Secretariat and instead became Chair of the Central Trade Unions' Council.<sup>109</sup> He remained a personal enemy of Brezhnev's and disagreed with both his domestic and foreign policies. The fact that Brezhnev was not able to remove Shelepin from the Politburo until April 1975 is a sign of Shelepin's political strength and Brezhnev's political weakness.

Shelepin's opposition to Brezhnev strengthened as soon as Brezhnev began to simultaneously favor reforms in economic and foreign policy. Shelepin made the following statement at the Central Trade Unions' Council in January 1970, where Shelepin discussed the December 1969 Plenum:

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<sup>108</sup>Gelman, Decline of Détente, 123.

<sup>109</sup>*Ibid.*, 77-78.



[It] examined questions of enormous political and national economic importance and outlined an extensive program of work, the implementation of which will raise the economic might of our state to a still higher level, make it possible to increase the standard of living of our country's population and facilitate a further rise in the Soviet Union's prestige in the international arena. . . In appraising the year 1969 which has just ended, and entering a new decade, we can note with pride that a worthy contribution has been made to the construction of the material and technical base of Communism.<sup>110</sup>

Shelepin's speech, to put it mildly, did not mirror Brezhnev's critical tone at the 1969 Plenum.

Shelepin continued this obstructionist pattern in his election speech in June 1970. Just when other leaders showed signs of compromising with Brezhnev's critical stance, Shelepin noted a sizable increase in housing and said:

Of course, it may be said that the housing problem in your city is still acute. Yes, this is correct. But you know very well that the Party, the government, and Leningrad's party and Soviet agencies are devoting a great deal of attention to the development of housing construction in your city.<sup>111</sup>

More importantly, Shelepin had absolutely no praise for détente with West Germany, although his negative comments dealt more with the US than with West Germany:

Imperialism is still strong, dangerous, and insidious. The successes of socialism engender in imperialism more and more new fits of frenzied malice and aggressive actions.<sup>112</sup>

The reader is reminded that the Moscow Treaty was in the final negotiating stage when this speech was made.

Shelepin showed a stronger defiance of détente with West Germany in a speech at the twentieth session of the World Federation of Trade

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<sup>110</sup>*Trud*, 28 January 1970, 2.

<sup>111</sup>*Pravda*, 5 June 1970, 2-3.

<sup>112</sup>*Ibid.* See also Sodaro, Moscow, Germany, 181.

Unions in mid-October 1970, a speech made shortly after the Moscow Treaty was signed. While the Rumanian and East German delegates both praised the Moscow Treaty, Shelepin did not even mention it. Instead, he argued vehemently for a continuation of the anti-imperialist battle.<sup>113</sup>

Other Politburo leaders appeared to stop their strong opposition to détente with West Germany by 1971. However, Shelepin continued his opposition, refusing to make concessions which might favor Brezhnev politically.

#### SHELEST

Ukrainian First Secretary Shelest also opposed détente with West Germany, economic reform, and Brezhnev personally. Shelest was an extremely conservative member of the Politburo, who, in addition to being a Ukrainian nationalist, was also a supporter of heavy industry, the military, and hard-line ideological orthodoxy. Because his region suffered some of the severest shortages in consumer goods, he was probably under great pressure to follow the reformed Brezhnev line.<sup>114</sup> When Brezhnev had criticized shortcomings in agriculture, he was attacking Shelest and Ukraine, the Soviet "breadbasket."

In October 1969, when others were making positive comments about the new social democratic government in West Germany, Shelest said:

*Militarism, revanchism, and new fascism in West Germany has actually risen to the level of government policy . . . The West*

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<sup>113</sup>*Trud*, 15 October 1970, 3.

<sup>114</sup>See Hodnett, "Ukrainian Politics," 13. Shelest was finally demoted in May 1972, when he became Deputy Premier and no longer First Secretary of the Ukrainian Communist Party. In April 1973, he was removed from the Politburo. The reader is reminded that Ukraine was historically opposed to "fascist" West Germany.

German policy of building bridges . . . is an attempt to destroy socialist unity.<sup>115</sup>

Shelest continued his opposition to détente with West Germany in April 1970, saying:

If the rows of fighters are united and strong then they don't need to fear any enemy. . . Imperialists well understand the strength of working peoples' solidarity.<sup>116</sup>

Shelest's June 1970 election speech was so anti-imperialist, and so out of sync with the tone of other Politburo leaders, that parts of it were only published in *Pravda Ukrainy* and not in *Pravda*:

The present international situation is characterized by the growing attack of world revolutionary forces against capitalism. The aggressive actions of the imperialists threatened to ignite the flames of a new world war, which with contemporary armaments could lead to the destruction of the civilization and culture of all humanity. The CC of the CPSU and the Soviet government are taking all measures not to permit the unleashing of a new war, to strengthen the defense capability of our country.<sup>117</sup>

In addition to opposing détente with West Germany, Shelest continually defended the Soviet economy and insisted it was evolving dynamically. He only minimally admitted to problems in April 1970: "We should be proud of our success, but this should not distract us, or prevent us from acknowledging our insufficiencies."<sup>118</sup> Shelest admitted at a Ukrainian Plenum in July 1970 (one month after Suslov's speech) that some popular demands were not being fulfilled. His language was reminiscent of Brezhnev's:

The results of agricultural growth have to be evaluated above all from the goal of satisfying the growing demands of the population for food products and industrial resources. If we proceed from this

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<sup>115</sup>P. Shelest, *Idei Lenina Pobezhdaiut* (Kiev, 1971), 234.

<sup>116</sup>Ibid., 255. The reader is reminded Brezhnev gave a speech at the same time, suggesting a more liberal understanding of socialism, emphasizing the importance of consumer goods.

<sup>117</sup>*Pravda Ukrainy*, 9 June 1970, as cited by Hodnett, "Ukrainian Politics," 52.

<sup>118</sup>Shelest, *Idei Lenina*, 23.

view, then the current level of agricultural production can not be considered satisfactory.<sup>119</sup>

This statement does not sound very genuine, and one assumes that Shelest was being pressured to carry out self-criticism, especially given his subsequent comments.

By the end of October 1970, Shelest apparently decided to oppose détente with West Germany in stronger terms. Possibly he knew in advance that the Soviets planned to make concessions in the Berlin negotiations, concessions which took place the first week in November, and that more pressure would be applied to Ulbricht to begin German/German negotiations in November.<sup>120</sup>

In a talk at a factory on 29 October 1970, Shelest openly rejected self-criticism:

Our successes are great. But everything does not go smoothly. For that reason, we boldly and decisively criticize insufficiencies of our work. But at the same time, it is impossible not to admit that the slogan of criticism and self-criticism has degenerated into groundless, spiteful criticism, into cheap sensationalism. Unfortunately, there are cases, where various critics . . . use our individual difficulties to fan and inflame fears. This has most often occurred where the Party, Soviet and economic organs do not offer a decisive rebuff to different types of critics and slanderers.<sup>121</sup>

At the XXIVth Party Congress Shelest almost completely avoided direct mention of economic policy and foreign policy. He gave a highly ideological speech that seemed to contain veiled criticism of Brezhnev:

The ideologists of imperialism place their main stakes on anti-Sovietism and anti-communism. Today all the dark forces of reaction--from aggressive American imperialism and frenzied Zionism to White Guard remnants, bourgeois-national riffraff,

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<sup>119</sup>ibid., 158.

<sup>120</sup>Karl Birnbaum, East and West Germany: A Modus Vivendi (Westmead, UK: Saxon House, 1973), 14, 57-58.

<sup>121</sup>Shelest, Idel Lenina, 147. See also Parrott, Politics and Technology, 244-245. Moreton points out that Gromyko was applying pressure to East German leaders in East Berlin from the 29th to the 30th of October. See Moreton, Warsaw Alliance, 158-160.

traitors and opportunists of various sorts--close ranks on this position. They try to denigrate our country, our ideals and our shining goals and to undermine the ideological conviction of Soviet people. But they will not succeed in this. The ideological steadfastness of the Soviet people is unshakable.<sup>122</sup>

When Shelest returned to Ukraine to report on the Congress, he stepped up his rhetoric. He did not specifically mention Brezhnev's "Peace Program" and instead, greatly stressed the world revolutionary movement as he had in his June 1970 Ukrainian speech.<sup>123</sup> By the XXIVth Party Congress it was clear that Shelest supported neither Brezhnev's economic reforms nor détente with the West. While Shelest was willing to temporarily relent on his rhetoric, he would not relent on his overall political position.

#### VORONOV

Unfortunately, Russian Prime Minister Voronov, whose economic ideas were progressive, found himself facing off against Brezhnev and an entire agricultural lobby that kept demanding more money. According to a recent publication, The Rise and Fall of the Politburo, Voronov was critical of building of gigantic factories, power stations, and irrigation projects, because they were "too expensive and too damaging to the environment."<sup>124</sup>

Voronov, who preferred to achieve technical progress in agriculture that would result in cost reduction through better organization and, in particular, *links* (decentralization of agricultural production) was virtually without political allies in the Politburo.<sup>125</sup>

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<sup>122</sup>*Pravda*, 1 April 1971, 3-4.

<sup>123</sup>*Pravda Ukrainy*, 18 April 1971, as cited by Hodnett, "Ukrainian Politics," 52.

<sup>124</sup>See John Loewenhard, James R. Ozinga, Eric van Ree, The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Politburo (NY: St. Martins Press, 1992), 64.

<sup>125</sup>See Hahn, Soviet Agriculture, 251.

Some signs of Voronov's opposition to Brezhnev's agricultural program occurred in 1970 when a decision was made to raise cattle prices to increase private production despite Voronov's opposition. In June 1970 Voronov gave an election speech, which contrasted with many others, saying defensively:

The Party Central Committee and the Soviet government have taken concrete steps during the current five-year plan to increase the production of consumer goods.<sup>126</sup>

In this same speech he called for technical progress and, above all, cost reduction.

By November 1970, he appeared to be completely alienated from the Brezhnev leadership saying straightforwardly that an increase in prices was a "bad idea." Regarding the economy he said, "far from all has been done and not always done well."<sup>127</sup> Voronov clearly lost his political battle when his ideas on *links* and meat cattle were not even represented at the XXIVth Party Congress.<sup>128</sup>

While he almost never commented on foreign policy, it is believed he was opposed to détente with the US.<sup>129</sup> One assumes that, since he was such a personal enemy of Brezhnev's, he would not have supported Brezhnev's foreign policy with West Germany either.

It is impossible to determine whether there was a consciously shared defiance between Voronov, Shelest, and Shelepin against Brezhnev and détente. However, it may not be coincidental that their collective

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<sup>126</sup>*Pravda*, 9 June 1970, 2.

<sup>127</sup>*Sovetskaia Rossiia*, 25 November 1970, as cited in Hahn, *Soviet Agriculture*, 242.

<sup>128</sup>See Hahn, *Soviet Agriculture*, 242, 260-261. The reader should note that Voronov was replaced in his position as Chair of the Russian Republic's Council of Ministers in July 1971 and demoted to Chair of the All-Union People's Control Commission. He stayed on the Politburo until April 1973, when he was removed along with First Secretary Shelest.

<sup>129</sup>Parrott, *Politics and Technology*, 256.

defiance grew in October and November 1970 just as Brezhnev was building enough authority on the basis of his foreign policy achievements to pressure General Secretary Ulbricht into German/German negotiations.

### **C. Brezhnev's Sectoral Allies**

The following two men supported Brezhnev in his fight for higher agricultural allocations. Podgornyi supported higher allocations for agriculture, light industry, and consumer goods, while Polianskii exclusively supported agriculture. While Polianskii said little about Brezhnev's foreign policy, he appeared to support Brezhnev personally. Podgornyi supported a policy of détente with West Germany and the US.

#### **PODGORNYI**

President Podgornyi, chair of the Supreme Soviet, was one of the earliest advocates of increased spending for light industry, consumer goods, and agriculture. He generally found himself in agreement with Prime Minister Kosygin on these issues. However, when Kosygin began to retreat somewhat on his position in the summer of 1965, Podgornyi still insisted on this position in "terms that were exceptionally offensive to the consensus."<sup>130</sup>

Moreover, Podgornyi was genuinely enthusiastic about arms control from an early date, a position which probably cost him Suslov's political support. Being an early advocate of East-West trade, he supported détente with West Germany in this regard too.

While Gelman noted that Podgornyi's experience in party administration was second only to Brezhnev's, it is also true that

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<sup>130</sup>Gelman, Decline of Détente, 82.

Podgornyi's associates viewed him "with some derision" as "lacking steel in his make up."<sup>131</sup> Beginning in 1970, when Brezhnev began to clearly adopt the Podgornyi/Kosygin reform approach to the domestic economy, Podgornyi became politically connected to Brezhnev. Brezhnev clearly was opening a policy window, one which also interested Podgornyi. The reader should note that Podgornyi was one of the only Politburo members who publicly backed up Brezhnev's critical December 1969 speech.<sup>132</sup>

Even prior to Brezhnev's own criticisms of the economy in December 1969, Podgornyi said:

Despite all the successes and all that has been done and is being done to improve the life of the people, we of course, are not closing our eyes to the well-known difficulties that exist. The level of well being is rising, perhaps not as rapidly as we would all like it to. . .

As for relations with West Germany, Podgornyi said:

An ever larger part of the West German population is beginning to realize the great danger--above all for the FRG itself--of the policy of tension in European affairs. We are all convinced that the pursuit by the new FRG government of a policy that is in fact based on existing realities in Europe would greatly promote the attainment of this goal. We have stood and continue to stand for an improvement of our relations with the FRG on this basis.<sup>133</sup>

In his June 1970 election speech, Podgornyi continued his positive tone on détente and used language later adopted by Kosygin, arguing that West German foreign policy was now "heavily influenced by forces that regard the state of affairs soberly and realistically."

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<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, 73.

<sup>132</sup> Parrott mentioned the other supporter was Kirilenko, whose political position can be explained by his close friendship with Brezhnev. Podgornyi was not a close friend. See Parrott, *Politics and Technology*, 240.

<sup>133</sup> *Pravda*, 7 November 1969, 1-3.



As for East-West trade, he spoke supportively in his June 1970 speech:

The Soviet Union consistently stands for maintaining contacts and ties with the capitalist states on the principles of peaceful coexistence. It is characteristic of trade and economic relations between the USSR and many bourgeois countries that they are increasingly being placed on a long-term basis and are being planned for prolonged periods. . . .<sup>134</sup>

Podgornyi reinforced these statements with a strong domestic policy statement in February 1971 at the fiftieth anniversary of *Trud*. One wonders if this may have been an intentional snub to Shelepin, who did not attend. Podgornyi was well known as an economic reformer and consumer goods advocate, while Shelepin was known as an opponent of economic reform and increased consumer goods:

Not much is accomplished in just revealing insufficiencies. It is still necessary to apply energy and persistence, to use one's knowledge and experience, in order to liquidate insufficiencies. It is also necessary in the future to carry out principled criticism and self-criticism; to be uncompromising with bad management, ambivalence, and backwardness; and to decisively stand up against those who carry out such policies.<sup>135</sup>

Podgornyi's main reason to back Brezhnev was to achieve policy outcomes which Podgornyi personally supported. Since Brezhnev viewed Podgornyi originally as a rival, as he did Kosygin, Podgornyi did not necessarily gain any political dominance in the Politburo when these programs were adopted. In fact, Podgornyi was purged from the Politburo leadership in 1977, when Brezhnev took over Podgornyi's position as Soviet President.

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<sup>134</sup>*Pravda*, 12 June 1970, 1-2.

<sup>135</sup>*Pravda*, 21 February 1971, 1, 3.

## POLIANSKII

From Hahn's carefully documented analysis of the disagreements over Soviet agriculture from 1960 to 1970, we know there was continued disagreement between Polianskii and Voronov. Like Brezhnev, Polianskii consistently advocated more spending on agriculture, while Voronov wanted to improve the productivity of the agricultural sector. Polianskii as First Deputy Chair of the Council of Ministers, was the top governmental actor responsible for agriculture and he surely sought out Brezhnev's political support. His few statements in this period bear this out.

Polianskii's comments on consumer demand were clearly patterned after Brezhnev's:

Despite progress in the development of this branch [livestock], it does not yet satisfy the needs of the public for meat, milk, and other products.<sup>136</sup>

In another statement in his June 1970 election speech, he clearly defended Brezhnev from criticisms of leaders such as Shelest:

One must know how to heed the truth, to distinguish demagoguery and fault-finding from true businesslike criticism, *not to reject such criticism and not to assail people for this but to thank them.*<sup>137</sup>  
(added emphasis)

It is interesting that Polianskii had very little to say after mid-1970. It seems possible, given the absence of statements by his Party counterpart, Kulakov, that Brezhnev became the primary actor in not only foreign policy and economic policy, but especially in the agricultural sector, after the July 1970 plenums.

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<sup>136</sup>Breslauer, Brezhnev and Khrushchev, 230-231.

<sup>137</sup>*Pravda*, 4 June 1970, 2-3.

#### D. Regional Secretaries Allied with Brezhnev

Whether regional first secretaries were inherently conservative or not has been widely disputed. In the specific cases of Kunaev and Shcherbitskii, their conservatism and their "client" relationship with Brezhnev was quite clear. While in some issues, regional secretaries who were not Moscow based, such as Kunaev and Shcherbitskii, had less overall power than those such as Grishin, who were Moscow based, Kunaev and Shcherbitskii were certainly present and informed on important détente decisions.<sup>138</sup>

#### KUNAEV

First Secretary of Kazakhstan Kunaev, described Brezhnev as head of the Politburo as early as the spring of 1969.<sup>139</sup> No other member of the Politburo made the same distinction until years later. Kunaev's adulation for Brezhnev continued when, in August 1970, Brezhnev first appeared in Kazakhstan before visiting two other republics. At the speech to honor the fiftieth Anniversary of the Kazakh Communist Party, Kunaev introduced Brezhnev as an "outstanding" leader with "dynamic and tireless" energies, "a true Leninist who heads the Central Committee."<sup>140</sup>

Kunaev also published several articles in *Kommunist* in this period. In a similar fashion to Suslov, Kunaev noted the negative effect of foreign capital on former colonies and talked about stopping American aggression in general. His other article berated imperialist propaganda

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<sup>138</sup>Gelman, *Decline of Détente*, 55-56. He argued that first secretaries absent from Moscow would not receive routine decision memoranda.

<sup>139</sup>*ibid.*, 127. Gelman cites *Kazakhstanskaia Pravda*, 17 April 1969. The reader is reminded that *Pravda* itself first paid homage to Brezhnev in this capacity on 20 January 1971. See Hahn, *Soviet Agriculture*, 255.

<sup>140</sup>*Pravda*, 29 August 1970, 1, 3-4.

for trying to incite conflict between the Soviet Republics.<sup>141</sup> In this period, Kunaev remained silent about the Moscow Treaty.

One assumes Kunaev hoped to support Brezhnev personally as a leader but still remain in favor with the more conservative leaders. Kunaev's 1970 election speech in which he discussed economic insufficiencies in Kazakhstan in ritualistic detail further indicated his support for Brezhnev's domestic reforms and Brezhnev as a leader.<sup>142</sup>

#### SHCHERBITSKII

Shcherbitskii served as Chair of the Ukrainian Council of Ministers in this period. In 1972, he replaced Shelest as First Secretary of Ukraine, and one assumes this was a reward for Shcherbitskii's cautious support of Brezhnev's policies. Shcherbitskii certainly could not be described as "soft" like Podgornyi, but he did seem more concerned with the development of light industry, consumer goods, and food products than Shelest was. As for foreign policy, he consistently defended Brezhnev's "Peace Program" and Brezhnev's role in Soviet diplomacy.<sup>143</sup>

Shcherbitskii's election speech in 1970 showed that he supported Brezhnev's domestic initiatives introduced at the December 1969 Plenum:

We should not underestimate our accomplishments, nor should we overestimate them. Lenin emphasized that in the first place we should concentrate our attention on unresolved issues . . . At the December Plenum, it was noted that in certain sectors of the economy, there are still insufficiencies.<sup>144</sup>

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<sup>141</sup>*Kommunist*, No. 17 (November 1969), 50-60 and *Kommunist*, No. 12 (August 1970), 24-34.

<sup>142</sup>*Pravda*, 28 May 1970, 2.

<sup>143</sup>Hodnett, "Ukrainian Politics, " 31-32.

<sup>144</sup>*Pravda*, 28 May 1970, 2.

Shcherbitskii spoke at the XXIVth Party Congress and basically followed Brezhnev's example, emphasizing unity. Shcherbitskii mixed conservative with reformist reasoning by stressing people's living standards as well as the economic and defense might of the Soviet Union:

The CC has secured peaceful conditions for the labor and life of the Soviet people, the growth of our motherland's economic and defense might, and a substantial increase in the people's living standard.<sup>145</sup>

Shcherbitskii, similar to Kunaev, may well have been trying to court the more conservative members of the Politburo, while also maintaining Brezhnev's approval.

### **E. The Remaining Members of the Politburo and Other Influential Foreign Policy Actors**

The remaining members of the Politburo, Kirilenko, Pel'she, and Mazurov, are generally described as quite conservative. Nonetheless, Kirilenko appeared to be somewhat supportive of Brezhnev and his foreign policy, probably because of their personal friendship, while Mazurov and Pel'she appear to have been opponents.<sup>146</sup> As for foreign policy actors, Gromyko remained supportive of détente, Grechko became more supportive, while Ponomarev remained a firm opponent.

#### **KIRILENKO**

There has been some disagreement concerning the degree of Kirilenko's conservatism and his influence over Brezhnev. His speeches indicate that he was quite conservative, especially on the issue of West

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<sup>145</sup>*Pravda*, 7 April 1971, 8.

<sup>146</sup>Mazurov apparently so personally disliked Brezhnev that Mazurov informed Brezhnev of his daughter's involvement in speculation. Mazurov was removed from the Politburo in 1978. See *Rise and Fall*, 65.

Germany. However, Kirilenko's public silence from June 1970 up to and through the XXIVth Party Congress indicates that Kirilenko did not want to carry any political differences into the public arena after Brezhnev achieved his first foreign policy successes. As CC Secretary for Party Affairs, Kirilenko would have had similar reasons as Suslov to object to détente with West Germany.

In March 1969, Kirilenko rendered a very conservative view of West Germany:

The government of the FRG steers a clearly revanchist course, its goal being the acquisition of nuclear weapons, the reshaping of borders on the continent, the swallowing up of the GDR and the weakening of the international position of the socialist states.<sup>147</sup>

By February 1970, Kirilenko sounded only slightly more positive. In a speech to the French Communist Party, he conceded, "The FRG has some new ideas and some achievements, but it is still pursuing the same old goals."<sup>148</sup>

Volten made the point that Kirilenko was the embodiment of "bold conservatism," and therefore concluded that there must have been conflict between Kirilenko and Brezhnev.<sup>149</sup> Gelman, on the other hand, defined Kirilenko as Brezhnev's "one close ally."<sup>150</sup> Other authors have implied that Kirilenko had a great deal of influence on Brezhnev.<sup>151</sup> While it is true that Kirilenko and Brezhnev remained good friends in this period, it simply can not be proven how much influence Kirilenko may have had on Brezhnev or vice-versa. Whatever the motivation was,

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<sup>147</sup>A.P. Kirilenko, *Politika Sozidaniia i Mira* (Moscow, 1980), 22.

<sup>148</sup>Ibid., 215.

<sup>149</sup>Volten, *Brezhnev's Peace Program*, 146.

<sup>150</sup>Gelman, *Decline of Détente*, 71.

<sup>151</sup>Sidney Ploss, "Politics in the Kremlin", *Problems of Communism*, Vol. XIX, No. 3 (May-June 1970), 6-7. Hahn noted that Kirilenko was the only Politburo member, until the addition of Kunaev in 1971, who glorified Brezhnev. See Hahn, *Soviet Agriculture*, 219.

Kirilenko's silence after June 1970 probably meant that he did not want to challenge Brezhnev or Brezhnev's détente program.

#### PEL'SHE

As the aging party leader of Latvia, Chair of the Party Control Committee Pel'she was quite conservative. He apparently did not support Brezhnev's détente program with West Germany or the US. The reader is reminded that the Baltic states, similar to Ukraine, had a historic hatred of "imperialist" Germany. In April 1969, Pel'she made a very negative speech on West Germany and the US. However, in June 1970, he showed some support for Brezhnev's economic reforms, saying:

We ought not to take comfort in the fact that instances of red tape, bureaucratism, and indifference are becoming fewer; rather our fight against them ought to become sharper.<sup>152</sup>

Nonetheless, Pel'she never made a speech in this period actively indicating support for Brezhnev's policy of détente with West Germany. In November 1970, he made the following reticent comments on *Westpolitik* to the Italian Communist Party. The reader should note that similar to Suslov, Pel'she did not comment on the Moscow Treaty until three months after it was signed:

[Rapprochement] is a normal development in the relations of the Soviet Union and of the other socialist countries with Italy, France, and with a number of West European governments--this includes the Soviet/German agreement and there are also important negotiations between Poland and the FRG.<sup>153</sup>

The reader should also note how relations with West Germany were described as an afterthought after relations with France and Italy. Moreover, this portion of the speech was followed by an appeal to

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<sup>152</sup>*Pravda*, 4 June 1970.

<sup>153</sup>A.Ia. Pel'she, *Izbrannye Rechi & Stat'i* (Moscow, 1978), 435.

continue the struggle against imperialism. There is little doubt that Pel'she's response to a positive *Deutschlandpolitik* was more hard-line than Suslov's and was comparable to Shelest's inflexible response.

#### MAZUROV

A Belorussian added to the Politburo in 1965, Mazurov was well respected because of his role in WWII. Dornberg noted that Mazurov's ties to the military may have been as good or better than Brezhnev's.<sup>154</sup> As First Deputy Chair of the Council of Ministers with responsibility for industry, he was somewhat under attack from Brezhnev's domestic reform program.

Nonetheless, he appeared to be more flexible on domestic policy than on foreign policy. He made the following supportive comment on domestic initiatives in his June 1970 election speech:

No matter how rapidly we grow, the country still has to contend with a shortage of housing and of several goods in mass demand, and there are a good many shortcomings in the sphere of services. This is explained briefly by the fact that we still have not created the necessary material potential in agriculture, industry, trade, and the communal economy for the full satisfaction of all the requirements of our people. . . . There are frequent instances of bureaucratism, lack of organization, and even irresponsibility.

Meanwhile, Mazurov took a hard-line position on foreign policy:

Since the hopes our class adversaries had placed in the policy of building bridges collapsed, they have been employing various other, more camouflaged methods with the aim of bringing about an erosion of socialist society including our own Soviet society.<sup>155</sup>

Immediately after the Moscow Treaty was signed in August 1970, Mazurov gave a speech in North Korea that was one continuous tirade against American imperialism with *no* praise for détente with any country:

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<sup>154</sup>Dornberg, *Brezhnev*, 277.

<sup>155</sup>*Pravda*, 5 June 1970, 2.



"The current situation in the world calls for all socialist countries . . . to fight against the aggressive policies of imperialism."<sup>156</sup>

While this speech may have been tailored to the North Korean audience, the timing of this speech--immediately after the conclusion of the Moscow Treaty--and the aggressive content of this speech show how greatly Mazurov opposed Brezhnev's détente trend in foreign policy.

#### GRECHKO

Defense Minister Grechko was not a member of the Politburo at this time. However, his gradual approval of détente with West Germany and the US is symbolic of Brezhnev's growing ability to bargain with the military and win them over as supporters of his foreign policy with the West.

After December 1969, Brezhnev actively sought out Grechko's support as well as that of the military at large.<sup>157</sup> It seems that Brezhnev offered to continue to support rapid growth of the military sector as long as Grechko did not oppose SALT negotiations. While Grechko sometimes spoke quite negatively of West Germany, he spoke approvingly of SALT and other diplomatic agreements with the West in May 1970, saying:

[T]he socialist countries do not call into doubt the efficacy of these or those concrete agreements with the capitalist world or the possibility or necessity of regulating unsolved problems by diplomatic means.<sup>158</sup>

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<sup>156</sup>*Pravda*, 16 August 1970, 2.

<sup>157</sup>Roy Medvedev's 1976 interview with Edward L. Warner III as cited in Edward L. Warner III, The Military in Contemporary Soviet Politics (NY: Praeger, 1977), 53.

<sup>158</sup>*Pravda*, 9 May 1970, as cited in Bruce Parrott, "Political Change and Civil-Military Relations," in Timothy J. Colton and Thane Gustafson, Soldiers and the Soviet State (Princeton University Press, 1990), 52. For an example of a negative approach, see *Kommunist*, No. 3 (February 1970), 51-64 where he referred to West Germany as "the main hotbed of danger in Europe."

By November 1970, Grechko, characterized the Moscow Treaty as "important" in a tone that greatly resembled that of Suslov. While he said the USSR "will constantly perfect and arm the Soviet army and navy with the most-up-to-date weapons,"<sup>159</sup> he was still willing to acknowledge his acceptance of the Moscow Treaty.

Grechko appeared to gradually become a supporter of détente. In return for his political support of Brezhnev and détente, he, along with Suslov, could rest assured that the military sector and ideological sector of the government would continue to receive Politburo support.

#### PONOMAREV

Although not a member of the Politburo, Ponomarev, in his position on the CC Secretariat and in his role as Chair of the International Department, was quite influential in foreign policy-making circles. As has been noted, Ponomarev, along with Suslov, introduced the opening to West German Social Democrats in March 1969. However, Ponomarev, in contrast to Suslov, remained an opponent of improved relations with West Germany and instead emphasized the importance of a strong Soviet military defense.<sup>160</sup>

In a speech in Czechoslovakia in November 1969, Ponomarev emphasized the continuing importance of the struggle against imperialism.<sup>161</sup> In a January 1970 speech to the Ministry for Foreign Affairs, he criticized the reactionaries in the US and revanchists in West Germany.<sup>162</sup> In Ponomarev's election speech of June 1970, he argued that Soviet economic and defense capacity should be strengthened and

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<sup>159</sup>*Pravda*, 7 November 1970.

<sup>160</sup>Sodaro, *Moscow, Germany*, 181.

<sup>161</sup>B.N. Ponomarev, *Izbrannoe Rech'i i Stat'i* (Moscow, 1977), 348-349.

<sup>162</sup>*Ibid.*, 366.

mentioned "the continuing activity of revanchist and reactionary forces in the FRG."<sup>163</sup> There were no positive statements about the FRG such as those made by other leaders.

As far as this author could determine, Ponomarev never made any positive comments about the Moscow Treaty after it was signed in August 1970. Sodaro appears to be correct in suggesting that Shelest and Ponomarev together were the strongest Soviet skeptics of détente with Bonn in 1970.<sup>164</sup>

### GROMYKO

The reader is reminded that Foreign Minister Gromyko was less influential in this time period than after his April 1973 appointment to the Politburo.<sup>165</sup> While the following analysis shows Gromyko sometimes made bold opening gestures in foreign policy, he may have identified with Brezhnev's more conservative instincts in foreign policy as well.

Gromyko always set limits in negotiations. As Arkadii Shevchenko, who had a chance to observe the Foreign Minister, reports, Gromyko excelled in knowing "when to compromise and when to bully."<sup>166</sup> In the case of *Westpolitik*, he tried to play up relations with France to remind West Germany that alternative policies still existed. One of his most important roles was as chief negotiator of the 1970 Bahr/Gromyko round which led to the Moscow Treaty.

Although Gromyko was the chief negotiator, there were limits to his flexibility on the German question. Falin, who was a German expert in

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<sup>163</sup>*Pravda*, 3 June 1970, 2.

<sup>164</sup>Sodaro, *Moscow, Germany*, 200.

<sup>165</sup>In fact Gelman argues that Ponomarev was more influential than Gromyko both in this time period and after Gromyko's appointment to the Politburo. Gelman, *Decline of Détente*, 60-61.

<sup>166</sup>Arkadii N. Shevchenko, *Breaking with Moscow* (NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 154

the Soviet Foreign Ministry at this time and later became the Soviet Ambassador to Germany, apparently helped compose the Letter on German Unity, assuring West Germans that unification was still a viable option, which was crucial to the ratification of the Moscow Treaty; colleagues continually threatened to leak this fact to Gromyko to undermine Falin's influence on him.<sup>167</sup> Sodaro confirmed this image of caution, writing that Gromyko's remarks about the FRG were "distinguished mainly by their blandness."<sup>168</sup>

However, it was Gromyko who renewed the offer of negotiations on the mutual renunciation of force at the UN General Session in October 1968. His comments started out cautiously, but he then spoke more openly:

Different views can be taken on the processes going on in West Germany. However, nobody will venture to dispute the fact that forces praising revanchism as almost a national duty of every German are acting openly in that state . . . The Soviet Union does not object to good relations with the FRG. We are ready to cooperate with it in various fields. We are ready to continue the exchange of views with the FRG on the non-application force, having in mind that the government of the German Federal Republic will show a constructive approach to this problem.<sup>169</sup>

Gromyko took the same approach in a speech to the Supreme Soviet in July 1969, where he made another cautious plea for improved relations with the FRG and for the resumption of the renunciation of force negotiations. The reader should note, however, that a good portion of

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<sup>167</sup>See *Die Zeit*, 20 March 1992, 7-8. Georgii Arbatov, an important foreign policy advisor, also reported that he was asked by Brezhnev to entertain Egon Bahr, so there would be time to "make Gromyko shut up." Georgii Arbatov, *The System: An Insider's Life in Soviet Politics* (NY: Random House, 1992), 172.

<sup>168</sup>Sodaro wrote about the period 1973-1977, but this view of Gromyko is equally true in earlier periods. Sodaro, *Moscow, Germany*, 243.

<sup>169</sup>*FBIS USSR*, 4 October 1968, A4.

the rest of the speech was devoted to the successes of the GDR.

Gromyko said:

We would be sinning against the truth if we were to discount the common features shared by pre-war Germany and the present Federal Republic, if we were to ignore certain related trends in their policy and ideological atmosphere . . . The Soviet Union has stated more than once that the FRG has no fewer opportunities than other countries for developing normal relations with the Soviet Union. It is not we who created difficulties in these relations. The matter is that the FRG wants to get as a price for better relations nothing less than our departure from the principles of our policy in European affairs. And this is ruled out. . . We shall not agree, of course, to any steps doing harm to the legitimate interests of the GDR and affecting the special status of West Berlin.

At the same time, Gromyko was supportive of SALT talks with the US:

The US President's pronouncements in favor of a well prepared Soviet/American summit meeting have not of course, gone unnoticed in the Soviet Union.<sup>170</sup>

However, Gromyko set limits on the importance of East- West economic relations at a speech to the UN in September 1969:

Even the most successful resolution of economic problems can be cancelled out at any moment, reduced to nothing by political developments.<sup>171</sup>

He bragged of Soviet accomplishments in trade relations in a speech commemorating Lenin's birthday in 1970:

In recent times the unity of economics and politics in the foreign affairs of the Soviet Union have had successful results. The Soviet Union has become a major world power. Its trading partners include more than 100 countries.

Gromyko then mentioned trade with Finland, France, Italy, England, and the FRG, in that order.<sup>172</sup>

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<sup>170</sup>A.A. Gromyko, *Vo Imia Torzhestva Leninskoi Vneshnei Politiki* (Moscow, 1978), 153-154.

<sup>171</sup>Ibid., 181.

<sup>172</sup>A.A. Gromyko, *Leninskim Kursom Mira* (Moscow, 1984), 22.

This support for East-West trade was repeated in an October 1970 speech for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The emphasis was again on countries other than the FRG:

We are now much closer to mutually beneficial contact between socialist countries and the countries of Western Europe. In this connection, the important development of relations between two powers of continental Europe should be mentioned--between France and the Soviet Union.<sup>173</sup>

At the XXIVth Party Congress, Gromyko mentioned the importance of improved relations with France before addressing the FRG. Gromyko also introduced a new emphasis on the parallel nature of agreements to secure peace in Europe, arguing against Brandt's *Junktim*, insistence that a Berlin Treaty must be achieved before the Eastern treaties could be ratified. Gromyko may have been responding to pressure from the Soviet leadership not to concede more than was necessary.

Gromyko's concern with China and/or with opponents in the Soviet leadership was indicated at the party congress by his criticism of those who believed as follows:

[Any] agreement with the capitalist states is said to be almost a conspiracy . . . This is most likely not believed by those who themselves make such statements.<sup>174</sup>

It is unclear to what extent Gromyko personally supported a positive *Deutschlandpolitik*. It may have been his role as Foreign Minister that led him to speak about West Germany positively or his desire to increase the chances of successful US/Soviet relations. Regardless of Gromyko's motivations, as he became an official proponent of a positive *Deutschlandpolitik*, he needed to ally himself with Brezhnev politically.

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<sup>173</sup>Gromyko, *Vneshnei Politiki*, 215-216.

<sup>174</sup>*FBIS USSR*, 6 April 1971 (No. 66, Supplement 21), 80-81.

### III. Conclusion

In short, Brezhnev chose to implement détente with West Germany because, at a time of very negative relations with China, it appeared to be a "quick-fix" solution to a complicated set of international challenges. More importantly, the Politburo members who opposed détente with West Germany were politically vulnerable while the most politically powerful, Suslov, Kosygin, and Podgornyi, supported détente with West Germany for a variety of reasons.

Did Brezhnev have the majority support of his Politburo for détente with West Germany? While he probably did not have a personal majority in the Politburo, by the XXIVth Party Congress, he had put together a coalition, which would support détente with West Germany due to a mixture of domestic and international factors. This is not to say that he did not have to work at keeping the coalition together nor to say that their support was continuous.

In this author's view there were four main groups who were willing to, at least temporarily, support Brezhnev and/or his détente policy:

- (1) personal Brezhnev supporters such as Kirilenko;
- (2) genuine détente supporters such as Kosygin and Podgornyi;
- (3) single issue supporters, such as Suslov, who only supported détente with West Germany, not détente as a whole, and only in return for other policy favors; and
- (4) the politically vulnerable such as Shelest.

Of course there was some overlap between these groups. Shcherbitskii, for example, was politically vulnerable, as a Ukrainian, but was also a Brezhnev supporter.

This first group, personal supporters, appeared to consist originally of Kirilenko and, in April 1971, this group was joined by Kunaev, Shcherbitskii, and Kulakov, all of whom had been added to the Politburo.

The second group of genuine détente supporters consisted of Brezhnev, Kosygin, Podgornyi, and, in his role as Foreign Minister, Gromyko. Kosygin and Podgornyi both hoped that a domestic improvement in the supply of consumer goods would result from détente.

The third group of single issue supporters included Suslov, Grechko, and Polianskii. Suslov, for example, supported gradual détente with West Germany in exchange for a domestic emphasis on ideology and a reduced focus on détente with the US. Grechko supported détente in return for generous allocations for the military. Polianskii probably supported Brezhnev's foreign policy in return for Brezhnev's support on domestic, agricultural policy.

The fourth group of the politically vulnerable included Voronov, Shelepin, and Shelest. Voronov was politically weak, because he opposed Brezhnev's agricultural spending and was outvoted on the Politburo. Shelepin was politically assailable because he had tried to oust Brezhnev in 1965 and failed. Shelest was politically vulnerable simply because he was Ukrainian. Notably, many strong opponents of détente with West Germany were in the politically vulnerable category, with the exception of Ponomarev, Pel'she and Mazurov.

Six out of eleven Politburo members may have supported détente with West Germany in 1969 and 1970, or at least would not oppose most of Brezhnev's foreign policy decisions: Brezhnev, Kosygin, Podgornyi, Suslov, Polianskii, and Kirilenko. In April 1971, the new Politburo consisted of fifteen members; Brezhnev could count on the same



supporters plus Kunaev, Shcherbitskii, and Kulakov. That would mean nine members out of fifteen, who supported Brezhnev and/or détente with West Germany. Of course, it must be stressed that this was not necessarily continuous support but support on some issues sometimes.

Having made the case that Brezhnev had at least a temporary policy majority on the Politburo, a more interesting question arises. How and when were Politburo members convinced to join the détente bandwagon, and when did they resist the most? A major shift in leaders' rhetoric occurred around June 1970. At this point a number of leaders who opposed, or at least did not support détente with West Germany, changed their rhetoric, if not on foreign policy, then on domestic policy. This was probably due to Brezhnev's combined victory in the agricultural sector, given the resources he directed toward agriculture, and the international sector, given the substantive results of the Bahr/Gromyko talks in their final phase in May 1970.

Take, for example, two well known hard-liners such as Suslov and Mazurov who acknowledged economic problems and/or consumer goods shortages in the summer of 1970, issues which they previously failed to address. Moreover, Shelepin, although clearly hostile to détente, chose at this point to focus his hostility more on the US than West Germany.

However, in the period from October 1970 to February 1971, renewed opposition to détente began on the part of Ukrainian First Secretary Shelest as well as Shelepin and Suslov. Shelest became very verbal about his opposition to self-criticism; Shelest's negative comments coincided with Ulbricht's own obstructionist comments about the Berlin negotiations. Suslov appeared to object to the increasingly rapid rate of

negotiations; he probably thought the Soviets were conceding too much. Shelepin pointedly refused to acknowledge the Moscow Treaty. Possibly, this opposition resulted from the combination of suggested Soviet concessions in the Berlin negotiations with Soviet pressure on the East Germans to open their own negotiations with the West Germans. There may have also been disagreement over the optimal response to the Polish riots with more conservative Politburo members, such as Pel'she and Mazurov, suggesting that less emphasis on détente and East-West trade could quell popular demands for consumer goods.

Shelest, has sometimes been viewed as a lone oppositional wolf, but he may well have been trying to persuade those Politburo members who had some question about détente--members such as Shelepin, Suslov, Pel'she, Mazurov, and Voronov-- to join his ranks.

However, the XXIVth Party Congress, a clear victory for Brezhnev personally as well as for his détente policy with West Germany, was a watershed event in Brezhnev's authority-building. However, the fact that Brezhnev could only win Politburo approval by emphasizing a unity program shows that the party congress fell short of a final, complete political victory. As Chapter V will show, Brezhnev never did win a final and complete victory within the Politburo for his détente policy with West Germany, making political bargaining essential to maintain support for détente among Politburo members.

## CHAPTER FOUR

## ULBRICHT'S POLITBURO: August 1968 to May 1971

**I. Introduction**

In this chapter, the author analyzes East German Politburo members' speeches from the end of August 1968, when the invasion of Czechoslovakia occurred, to the XVIth Plenum, which began on 3 May 1971. Ulbricht resigned as General Secretary at this plenum. The chapter focuses on the relationship between Politburo leaders' attitudes on *Deutschlandpolitik* and (1) the changing domestic environment, especially the East German economy, and (2) Soviet pressure and other international factors. Of course, these two factors interacted with one another.

In the East German case, the question of how much Politburo support was available for General Secretary Ulbricht and how much was available for his "anti-détente" policies appears to be much clearer than in Brezhnev's case. Initially, support for Ulbricht and his policies was clearly unanimous. However, as Ulbricht began to use questionable tactics to oppose Soviet foreign policy, support for Ulbricht in the East German Politburo faded.

In fact, Ulbricht ultimately lost the support of his Politburo in 1971, because (1) he failed to address the problems with the East German economy, while (2) failing to respond to Soviet demands for concessions in German/German negotiations. Ironically, Ulbricht was one of the first East German leaders to make rhetorical concessions on *Deutschlandpolitik*, but he never changed the hard-line substance of his demands.

Ulbricht made several defiant speeches as a response to Soviet pressure to comply with Soviet negotiation concessions. One of Ulbricht's defiant speeches occurred in March 1969, when the Soviets made their first concessions to the West German Social Democrats. Another extremely defiant speech occurred in November 1970, when the Soviets made their initial concessions in the Berlin negotiations. In these speeches, Ulbricht strongly requested modification of Soviet foreign policy.

Ulbricht also made concessionary speeches on West Germany in June, July, and December 1970. They apparently occurred when Ulbricht faced clear indications of domestic economic failure while also facing external Soviet pressure. In the summer of 1970, Ulbricht's concessionary speeches coincided with the published results of the 1970 one half-year plan and the successful results of the Bahr/Gromyko negotiations. In December 1970, his concessionary speech coincided with the publication of the results of the annual 1970 plan; internationally, he faced the pressure of successful Polish/West German negotiations and the prospect of further Soviet concessions in the Berlin negotiations.

One would misunderstand the pressures on Ulbricht, however, if one attributed all twists and turns in his leadership strategy to Soviet pressure and ignored the pressure of domestic economic developments. Egon Krenz, Erich Honecker's successor as General Secretary in 1989, as well as other recent sources, confirm that East Germany's deteriorating economy was one important reason members of the East German Politburo first considered ousting Ulbricht.

Moreover, new evidence shows how the Soviet Politburo carefully tracked East German economic developments and tried to influence both the East German economy and *Deutschlandpolitik* in directions which would be most positive for the Soviet Union.<sup>1</sup> As for specific Soviet pressure tactics, Ulbricht's major rhetorical concessions vis-à-vis West Germany occurred after he had spent time in the Soviet Union or after Soviet officials had contacted him either through letters, visits to Berlin, or Warsaw Pact meetings.

Although a large degree of dissension and disalignment existed between the Soviets and East Germans during this period, the nature of the disalignment should not be exaggerated. This chapter focuses both on the means which Ulbricht used to resist combined West German and Soviet pressure, and the final failure of Ulbricht's *Deutschlandpolitik*. However, the reader is reminded that the overall foreign policy goals of East Germany and the Soviet Union, to gain economic and political compromises from West Germany and to increase Soviet bloc influence, remained in sync throughout this period.

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<sup>1</sup>Egon Krenz, *Wenn Mauern Fallen* (Vienna: Paul Neff Verlag, 1990), 53-54. Egon Krenz was one of the first to reveal Honecker's private notes for this period, notes which Honecker distributed to the whole Politburo at the beginning of 1989. Honecker recalled a conversation between Brezhnev and Ulbricht in August 1970, after the Moscow Treaty was signed. In the August conversation, Brezhnev allegedly said, "There are signals and rumors of conflict in the [East German] Politburo. Antagonisms have developed. The CPSU is very sensitive to such issues and very aware of them. The unity of the Politburo is, especially in the present situation, of extraordinary importance." In a letter sent two months later, Brezhnev reportedly wrote that there should be a "common position on the approach to West Germany and West Berlin, but also to the development of bilateral economic relations and to societal development under socialism." Krenz quoted Brezhnev as strongly demanding that Ulbricht "further improve the structure of the East German economy." Some of Honecker's actual documents were published one year later in Peter Przybylski, *Tatort Politburo: Die Akte Honecker* (Berlin: Rowohlt, 1991).

### **A. Ulbricht's Leadership Strategy**

Who was Ulbricht as a leader? Ulbricht had great gifts as a tactician, possibly even greater gifts than Brezhnev. Unfortunately for Ulbricht, he greatly overestimated his own talents, underestimated those of others, and suffered from unlimited ambition. The following description of Ulbricht by former East German Politburo member Ernst Wollweber, CC Minister for Security and Internal Affairs in the 1950s, seems very appropriate for the late 1960s, even though Wollweber dictated this secret report in 1964:

Because he (Ulbricht) monopolized power and reserved all important decisions for himself, a real collective discussion was prevented. No single person can think through complicated problems and make important decisions by himself--not even if he were a genius. Moreover, he simply was not capable of mastering these tasks. That does not speak against him. No person would be able to master these tasks. His mistake was that he could not see the limits of his capabilities.<sup>2</sup>

Michael Sodaro also described General Secretary Ulbricht and his government as lacking collectivity, naming it a "prototypical, directive regime:"

While Ulbricht was always limited in his options (as well as in his personal power) by what the Soviets were willing to allow, the primacy of the German communist leader was unchallenged within the leadership of the Socialist Unity Party of Germany from the late 1950s until shortly before his dismissal in 1971.<sup>3</sup>

There were, nonetheless, objections to Ulbricht's leadership, and these became widespread by the end of 1970. As Wollweber's comments indicate, Ulbricht wanted to make all decisions himself, did not

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<sup>2</sup>Ernst Wollweber, "Aus Erinnerungen, Ein Porträt Walter Ulbrichts," *Beitraege zur Geschichte der Arbeiterbewegung*, Vol. 32, No. 3 (March 1990), 350-378. Wollweber's wife apparently gave this testament to Honecker in 1974.

<sup>3</sup>Michael J. Sodaro, *Moscow, Germany and the West: From Khrushchev to Gorbachev* (Cornell University Press, 1990), 24.

respect collective leadership, and was extremely stubborn, almost unwilling to admit mistakes. In another passage, Wollweber described Ulbricht as "always on the attack."<sup>4</sup>

Ironically, Ulbricht was probably ahead of other Politburo members in realizing that rhetorical concessions on *Deutschlandpolitik* could possibly allay Soviet pressure. However, he also believed he could disregard the substance of Soviet policy and follow his own course of action. Birnbaum quite accurately described Ulbricht's method as one of "tactical flexibility and substantive rigidity."<sup>5</sup>

While General Secretary Walter Ulbricht has sometimes been seen as the main advocate of a recalcitrant, negative foreign policy vis-à-vis West Germany, this is a simplification of his complicated tactics. By comparing his speeches with other members of the Politburo, one sees that his oratory became less negative while a number of other Politburo members became increasingly vituperative in their oratory concerning West Germany. It is quite probable that Ulbricht was simply using a vacillating approach toward West Germany as a tactic to avoid revealing his long-term negative strategy.

As other East German leaders, especially Honecker, gradually reached the conclusion, by the end of 1970, that East Germany needed more ideological and political cooperation with the USSR, Ulbricht resisted. Moreover, Ulbricht failed to address the problem that ultimately undermined his domestic authority and legitimacy.<sup>6</sup> While he made

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<sup>4</sup>"*Aus Erinnerungen*," 354.

<sup>5</sup>Karl E. Birnbaum, *East and West Germany: A modus vivendi* (Westmead, UK: Saxon House, 1973), 61.

<sup>6</sup>A recent East German publication referred to 1970 as the crisis year precisely because of the economic problems the country faced. See Gerhard Naumann and Eckhard Truempfler, *Von Ulbricht zu Honecker, 1970: ein Krisenjahr der DDR* (Berlin: Dietz

rhetorical concessions in the area of *Deutschlandpolitik*, he made virtually no concessions on his failing economic policy until it was too late. The reader is reminded that Ulbricht built his domestic authority on an economic strategy which he had adamantly followed since 1963.

Unfortunately for Ulbricht, genuine accommodation with the Soviets on economic policy or *Deutschlandpolitik* was not a component of his leadership strategy. He appeared to believe he could strengthen his domestic authority, based on economic expertise, by developing his own personal expertise and strategy vis-à-vis West Germany. He was wrong.

Ultimately, as was true for Khrushchev, it was neither Ulbricht's domestic or foreign policy specifically that caused his downfall, but his inflexible attitude and unwillingness to follow the changing consensus in his own Politburo. Ulbricht overestimated his authority within his own country as well as in his relations to the Soviet Union. He appeared more threatening to the Soviets when he tried to use China as an ally opposing Soviet *Deutschlandpolitik*. The Soviets called Ulbricht's bluff in April and May 1971, and, after it was too late, Ulbricht realized that he had no strong allies, not even Erich Honecker.

## **B. Internal Factors**

While Ulbricht's economic strategies from 1963 to 1968 had been rather successful, his economic strategies from 1969 to 1970 were not. While economic problems were serious in 1969, they were critical by the winter of 1970. Although the 1968 plan goals had been filled, the structure-determining campaign, which had been adopted in December 1968, began to create bottlenecks and shortages by 1969. These

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Verlag, 1990). In this publication, previously unpublished, critical plenum reports appeared for the first time.



problems were so serious by December 1969 that monthly reports were required to supplement yearly plan reports.<sup>7</sup>

East German officials and CEMA members began to complain. Delivery quotas were not fulfilled and in spite of previous promises, the GDR's exports to the Soviet Union were beginning to decline.<sup>8</sup>

By February 1970, official complaints began to be publicized in the GDR. Professor Hahn from Leipzig University published the following in the SED's economic journal, *Die Wirtschaft*:

The new developments in our planning system must, just like other elements of the EES, be tested out in certain enterprises and branches and must be proved essential in practice. It should be clarified which prerequisites are required in economic operations so that these goals can be understood in their relationship to other elements of the socialist planning system . . . Until now, we have found no answers for our questions.<sup>9</sup>

This complaint appeared in the same publication which carried Ulbricht's speech to the East German Chamber of Technology, where he elaborated on his "overtake without catching up campaign." This new campaign, introduced toward the end of February 1970, was a continuation of the structure-determining campaign. East German workers were now meant to increase labor productivity and "not just catch up but overtake" the West German economy.<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup>Jacob Naor, "How Dead is the GDR New Economic System?" *Soviet Studies*, Vol. XXV, No. 2 (October 1973), 277.

<sup>8</sup>Peter Marsh, "Foreign policy making in the German Democratic Republic: the interplay of internal pressures and external dependence," in Hannes Adomeit, Robert Boardman, William Wallace, eds., Foreign policy making in Communist Countries (Westmead, UK: Saxon House, 1979), 95-96. Marsh noted that previously Ulbricht had been willing to follow Soviet suggestions on economic policy to maintain Soviet political support. He cited examples from 1953, 1956, and from 1962 to 1963.

<sup>9</sup>*Die Wirtschaft*, 26 February 1970, 10.

<sup>10</sup>This campaign had a historical precedent: the Main Economic Task introduced in 1958. The goal was to overtake West Germany. This campaign was simply discontinued in 1960 with no mention of the fact it had failed.

The reader should note that, prior to the introduction of this campaign, the Soviets signed a large trade deal with the West Germans and made their first real breakthrough in the Moscow negotiations.<sup>11</sup> Ulbricht probably felt challenged to come up with his own successes. Ulbricht's economic strategy in this new campaign was to rely on excellent results in the structure-determining industries: electronics, chemicals, and plastics. The campaign was clearly political propaganda as the chance of overtaking the West German economy was dismal at best.<sup>12</sup>

Even Ulbricht admitted in March 1970 that the fulfillment of the 1970 plan would not be simple. He was quoted as saying:

Because of the effects of the last winter and the extremely long hardships of the last year, a number of problems must be expected.<sup>13</sup>

Not only was Ulbricht's campaign unsuccessful but it had the unfortunate side effect of further aggravating the workers' situation. In addition to a lack of consumer goods, workers were now expected to tolerate additional work shifts. At the end of April 1970, *Die Wirtschaft* reported that workers were demanding to know how long they would have to work extra shifts.<sup>14</sup>

The "overtake without catching up" campaign was also associated with a renewed emphasis on cooperation with the Soviet economy. Draft directives for the five-year plan, published in 1970, projected a 65% increase in GDR trade with the USSR compared to an average increase

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<sup>11</sup>See Michael J. Sodaro, "Ulbricht's Grand Design: Economics, Ideology, and the GDR's Response to Détente," *World Affairs*, Vol. CXLII, No. 3 (Winter 1980), 159 and Birnbaum, *A modus vivendi*, 38. When Birnbaum, interviewed State Secretary Egon Bahr, Bahr identified 12 February 1970 as a crucial negotiation date.

<sup>12</sup>See Sodaro, "Ulbricht's Grand Design", 147-168.

<sup>13</sup>*Der Tagesspiegel*, 7 March 1970.

<sup>14</sup>Reported in *Die Welt*, 29 July 1970.

of 59% in trade with other CEMA states.<sup>15</sup> As mentioned before these planned increases were not actually achieved.

By mid-1970 the Politburo's focus inevitably returned to domestic economic problems, due to the results of a disastrous winter and the forced growth of the structure-determining campaign. The economic disturbances which occurred in 1969 could be covered by the "fat year" of 1968, but nothing was left over from 1969 to cover up for 1970. When the one-half year plan was presented in July 1970, it clearly showed that the new plan targets were not being met.

Monthly goals for January, February, and March 1970 were not met. While production plans were fulfilled in April and May, the one-half year average did not achieve the plan goal of eight percent growth over the previous year. In order to better enforce growth after the summer of 1970, the SED began to emphasize the control of the main bookkeeper and the strict enforcement of labor laws.<sup>16</sup>

In several recent East German publications, previously unpublished reports and speeches indicated just how serious the economic situation was in 1970. Beginning in April 1970, the first secretaries of various districts began to send secret reports to Ulbricht complaining that they could not fulfill the plan.<sup>17</sup> This was followed by a discussion between Brezhnev and Honecker in July, where Brezhnev indicated he was quite concerned about the East German economy. Finally in August 1970, there was a meeting between East German and Soviet officials; the protocol of this meeting indicates Brezhnev was still concerned about the

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<sup>15</sup>Marsh, "Internal Pressures," in Adomeit, Foreign policy making, 93.

<sup>16</sup>*Wirtschafts-Telegraf*, 5 July 1970.

<sup>17</sup>Naumann and Truempfer, Von Ulbricht, 60-67.

East German economy while Ulbricht denied the serious nature of the economic problems.<sup>18</sup>

Nonetheless, by September 1970, it was clear that centralized, corrective economic measures would have to be taken. In response to the poor results of the one-half year plan, and probably due to Soviet pressure as well, new targets were issued for both the 1970 annual plan and the five-year plan following a meeting of the Politburo on 8 September 1970. New targets were also issued at a Council of Ministers meeting on 23 September 1970.<sup>19</sup>

These economic and political difficulties resulted in problems for the planning process itself. In November 1970, it was clear that the 1971 annual plan, the first year of the 1971-1975 plan, would be late.<sup>20</sup> Not only was the 1971 plan late but, when it was finally issued in December 1970, it was one of the shortest and least detailed plans ever issued in East Germany.<sup>21</sup>

This was especially noteworthy because it was the first year of a new five-year plan, a plan that normally would be quite detailed. Moreover, the content of the 1971 plan was indicative of the economic problems which had accumulated by the end of 1970. Compared to the 1970 plan, the 1971 plan foresaw lower production goals for industry in general, the construction industry in particular, and lower investment in structure-determining industries. It also foresaw a decrease in exports and an

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<sup>18</sup>See Przybylski, *Politburo*, 280-296.

<sup>19</sup>Sodaro, "Ulbricht's Grand Design," 164.

<sup>20</sup>Kurt Erdmann, "Neue Grundsatzregelung fuer den Prespektivplanzeitraum 1971-1975," *DA*, Vol. III, No. 11 (November, 1970), 1199-1202.

<sup>21</sup>Peter Mitzerscherling, "Konsolidierung durch Wachstumsverzicht? Die Wirtschaft der DDR an der Jahreswende 1970/1971," *DA*, Vol. 4, No. 2 (February 1971), 175-183. See also *Handelsblatt*, 28 January 1971.

increase in imports. The 1971 plan was clear evidence that Ulbricht's structure-determining campaign was a failure.<sup>22</sup>

Economic difficulties were further mirrored in the planning process of the 1971-1975 plan. While it was supposed to be completed by December 1970, it was not completed until June 1971.

Although Ulbricht had been able to use East Germany's economic stature as an argument for foreign policy independence in the late 1960s, by 1970 this leadership strategy became more difficult. Mounting economic difficulties weakened Ulbricht's domestic legitimacy and diminished his support from East German and Soviet leaders. Ulbricht was not prepared to deal with the political consequences of economic failure. By the end of 1970, East Germany needed Western and Soviet economic cooperation more than in the previous decade.

### **C. External Factors**

The Soviet Union was clearly the most important external factor affecting East Germany policy to West Germany. However, it is important to recognize that East Germany's initial policies, emphasizing extreme economic and foreign policy isolation, were also in response to Soviet policy innovations. At this early point, Ulbricht's posturing enjoyed widespread East German Politburo support. However, while Ulbricht and other leaders were very much against any diplomatic concessions to West Germany, Ulbricht still held out hope that reunification could occur

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<sup>22</sup>As mentioned before, Ulbricht suffered politically for his unwillingness to admit economic failure. Both Krenz and Przybylski report that the Politburo declined to publish a speech that Ulbricht gave at a SED district leadership meeting in Leipzig in November 1970, refused to publish Ulbricht's conclusions at the December 1970 Plenum. In both cases the Politburo believed Ulbricht's economic estimates and demands were out of line with the real situation in East Germany. See Krenz, *Wenn Mauern Fallen*, 54-55 and Przybylski, *Politburo*, 306.

one day because West Germany would accept socialism. Meanwhile, most of the Politburo had abandoned any expectation of reunification.<sup>23</sup>

By the summer of 1970, it appears that most East German Politburo members began to accept that Soviet successes would make a negative *Deutschlandpolitik* untenable in the future. The Soviets' path-breaking, victorious foreign policies from 1970 to mid-1971 undoubtedly influenced East German foreign policy, both directly and indirectly.

Ulbricht's strategy from October to December 1968, which was accepted by the Politburo at the time, was to strengthen the East German economy with the structure-determining campaign and make economic deals favorable to the Soviet Union to guarantee Soviet political support. However, it became clearer in 1969 that the Soviets intended to make major economic agreements with West Germany, and this strategy of "GDR economic attraction" became doubtful. Even if the East German economy had not been failing, it is doubtful that East Germany's economic cooperation could have been as attractive as West German cooperation.<sup>24</sup>

Ulbricht, as well as other leaders, surely felt betrayed when the Soviets gradually focused more and more on trade with West Germany. This feeling of betrayal was intensified when the Soviets, in the face of the Sino-Soviet conflict, announced West German Social Democrats were no longer the main enemy. Not only Ulbricht, but also those leaders who later plotted against him, Honecker and Matern, tried to

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<sup>23</sup>A James McAdams, Germany Divided: From the Wall to Reunification (Princeton University Press, 1993), 91.

<sup>24</sup>The GDR openly acknowledged its disappointment in the July 1970 issue of *Einheit*, the SED journal, after a high ranking GDR delegation visited the USSR to discuss greater technological cooperation in July 1969, and the final communique did not mention a number of goals the GDR was seeking. See Sodaro, "Ulbricht's Grand Design," 157.

obstruct the ideological foundation for cooperation between the Soviets and the West German SPD.<sup>25</sup>

Ulbricht, however, was the most obstinate. At the June 1969 International Communist Conference, while other leaders identified China as the main threat to peace, Ulbricht said the main threat was social democracy.<sup>26</sup> Not surprisingly, other East German leaders did not follow through on Ulbricht's support of China. Quite the opposite occurred. Honecker and Hager both attacked China vociferously at the May 1969 Plenum; Stoph and Axen repeated these criticisms at the August 1969 Plenum.

*Neues Deutschland* often reprinted Chinese attacks on Soviet *Deutschlandpolitik* in this period: Ulbricht must have approved this or these comments would not have been published. In January 1970, for example, *Neues Deutschland* reprinted a statement by the Chinese Charge d'Affaires officially declaring the support of the Chinese people and government for the GDR's struggle to retain sovereignty.<sup>27</sup>

The Sino-Soviet split, which solidified after the March 1969 border incident, provided Ulbricht with more ammunition to influence Soviet *Deutschlandpolitik*. While the GDR's role as a junior partner prevented Ulbricht from openly courting China, as he had Rumania in the past, he could still make rhetorical use of China to influence the Soviets. Ulbricht believed that the USSR could not face a challenge on three fronts, from China, from the West, and from its own bloc partners.

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<sup>25</sup>This will be discussed further in the sections in this chapter covering each of these leaders.

<sup>26</sup>Edwina Moreton, East Germany and the Warsaw Alliance: The Politics of Détente (Boulder: Westview Press, 1978), 87.

<sup>27</sup>*ND*, 10 January 1970, as quoted in *Ibid.*, 129.

At the same time, the improvement in Soviet/West German relations left East German leaders with no choice, but to develop better relations with the rest of Eastern and Western Europe. It was not only the Soviets, who were acting against the East German national goals: Poland also began to show more interest in negotiations with West Germany in 1969.<sup>28</sup> Stephen Larrabee described the different perceptions of the international situation from the viewpoint of East Germany and other Soviet bloc countries:

Whereas the Soviet Union saw in it (*Ostpolitik*) the possibility of achieving one of its major goals since World War II--Bonn's recognition of the post war status quo, the GDR saw its chances of obtaining diplomatic recognition being eroded.<sup>29</sup>

In 1969, events at three Warsaw Pact meetings did not bode well for the East Germans' ability to further influence the Soviet bloc's *Deutschlandpolitik*. A few East German leaders offered rhetorical support for the Soviet policy, but this support was always accompanied by assertive demands for recognition of East Germany's borders and membership in the UN as prerequisites for successful negotiations.

At the Budapest Warsaw Pact meeting in March 1969, it became clear that the USSR was no longer trying to drive a wedge between the US and West Germany. It probably came as a shock to the East Germans that there was such a clear lack of polemics versus Bonn.<sup>30</sup>

The Prague Warsaw Pact meeting, occurring two days after Brandt's inaugural address in October 1969, was devoted to approving negotiations on the Moscow Treaty, approving expanded trade, and

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<sup>28</sup>Polish and West German officials announced in May 1969 that a decision had been reached to begin official negotiations.

<sup>29</sup>F. Stephen Larrabee, *The Politics of Reconciliation: Soviet Policy Towards West Germany* (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1978), 256.

<sup>30</sup>*Ibid.*, 196



approving other contacts with West Germany.<sup>31</sup> If Ulbricht had tried to oppose these measures, he would have been outvoted by the other Soviet bloc countries.

Finally at the December 1969 Warsaw Pact meeting held in Moscow, Ulbricht made a plea for a multilateral, bloc approach to West Germany instead of bilateral Soviet/West German or Polish/West German relations. Again, Ulbricht was unsuccessful. As Larrabee wrote, "By not specifically endorsing a multilateral approach, the way was left open for a bilateral approach."<sup>32</sup> The decision was reached in spite of the fact that Ulbricht had gone to Moscow several days before the Warsaw Pact meeting to lobby for the East German position.

Shortly after the December 1969 Warsaw Pact meeting, the East Germans submitted a draft treaty to the West Germans for discussion. At this point, East Germany no longer had a choice whether or not to get involved in the negotiating process. Lack of involvement simply meant being outpaced by the USSR and other Eastern European countries. The question was not *whether* to be involved but *how* to be involved.

However, when the USSR and FRG agreed in February 1970 to the largest East-West trade deal ever made between these countries, Ulbricht, who was still very recalcitrant, convinced the Politburo to launch the "overtake without catching up campaign" in response. Ulbricht backed this economic campaign personally, and he lashed out at West Germany's Foreign Minister Scheel for imagining that the Soviet Union's presumed economic difficulties opened the way "to penetration and

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<sup>31</sup>Ibid., 223.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid., 227.

softening up" of all the states of the Warsaw Pact.<sup>33</sup> Viewed from this perspective, it is obvious why Ulbricht backed away from his previous emphasis on Western trade in 1970.

This trade agreement was all the more threatening, because it took place just prior to the Bahr/Gromyko session, establishing the basis for the Moscow Treaty. The trade agreement was "clearly meant to improve the atmosphere for substantial political agreement."<sup>34</sup> The Soviets were to provide the West Germans with 52 billion cubic meters of natural gas in return for 1.2 million tons of large diameter steel pipe. The West Germans also loaned the Soviets \$400 million at low interest rates.

Interestingly, when Foreign Minister Gromyko visited East Berlin in February 1970, the Chinese response to the Bahr/Gromyko talks *and* the Soviet/West German trade agreement were reprinted in East Germany. China accused "Soviet revisionist social imperialism of selling out the sovereignty and interests of the German people" by making "this dirty deal with German militarism."<sup>35</sup>

The first two official rounds of German/German negotiations, discussing both Germanies' conceptions of détente, subsequently took place between the new West German Chancellor, Willy Brandt, and the East German Prime Minister, Willi Stoph. The first took place at Erfurt, East Germany on 19 March 1970 and the second took place at Kassel, West Germany on 21 May 1970. At both meetings, the two sides agreed to disagree. If anything, the East German negotiating position was tougher at the second set of negotiations. Unconfirmed Western press

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<sup>33</sup>Ibid.

<sup>34</sup>Sodaro, "Ulbricht's Grand Design," 160.

<sup>35</sup>*Peking Rundschau*, No. 8 (24 February 1970), as quoted in Moreton, Warsaw Alliance, 129.

reports suggested that East German leaders, particularly Stoph, wanted to work for a complete breakdown of the talks at Kassel.<sup>36</sup> Citing an interview with Herbert Haerber, a specialist in inter-German relations, James McAdams suggested that these talks were part and parcel of Ulbricht's independent initiatives.<sup>37</sup>

Surprisingly, during the summer of 1970, Ulbricht became noticeably more flexible, at least rhetorically, on the topic of *Deutschlandpolitik*. This was especially true in comparison with his more hard-line colleagues. Meanwhile, some important members of the Politburo flirted openly with Soviet support and abandonment of Ulbricht's nationalist ideas after the Moscow Treaty was signed in August 1970. Most Politburo leaders adopted a new emphasis on the *Abgrenzung* campaign (a policy of social and ideological isolation/insulation from West Germany) and began to indicate some willingness to drop previous East German demands for *de jure* recognition. It is interesting that Ulbricht never mentioned the word *Abgrenzung* until January 1971.<sup>38</sup> Nonetheless, most Politburo members' speeches still contained lots of negative rhetoric about West Germany.

After the Moscow Treaty was signed in August 1970, Ulbricht once again returned to his use of the China card. *Neues Deutschland* printed Chinese accusations that the Soviets were betraying East German interests.<sup>39</sup> Meanwhile, it should be noted that *Pravda* printed a rebuttal

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<sup>36</sup>Moreton, *Warsaw Alliance*, 131.

<sup>37</sup>McAdams, *Germany Divided*, 89.

<sup>38</sup>Axen first used the term in September 1970, followed by Stoph and Honecker, who used the term in October. Norden and Ebert used the term in November. Verner and Mittag used the term at the XIVth Plenum in December. See Robert Bleimann, "Ostpolitik and the GDR," *Survey*, Vol. XVIII, No. 3 (Summer 1972), 42, 43.

<sup>39</sup>The statement was placed with other countries' comments on the Moscow Treaty, whereas statements from China were generally placed in a separate section of the paper.

of the Chinese article, at the same time a negative review of The Political Economy of Socialism and Its Application in the GDR, a book touting East Germany's and Ulbricht's accomplishments, was printed.<sup>40</sup> To make matters worse, in September 1970 after the Moscow Treaty was signed, the Soviets agreed to renew talks with the West Germans in order to negotiate a trade treaty, placing more pressure than ever on the East Germans to show economic results.<sup>41</sup>

By the end of October 1970, Ulbricht was losing in his struggles with the Soviet Union and his own Politburo on *Deutschlandpolitik*. After Gromyko came to Berlin that same month, a surprising announcement was made that inter-German negotiations would begin again.<sup>42</sup> In November, progress was made in the quadripartite talks, talks which Ulbricht adamantly opposed, because Berlin was the key to his claim of East German sovereignty.

Surprisingly, the East German Politburo appeared to prevail temporarily over the Soviets when the Soviets reversed their position at the next quadripartite meeting on 16 November 1970. However, by the end of November 1970, Brezhnev put more pressure on East German leaders by making a speech in which he spoke of the "wishes" of the West Berlin population, while East Germans only referred to their interests and requirements. The word wishes granted West Berliners much more political latitude than the word requirements.

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See Gerhard Wettig, *Die Sowjetunion, die DDR und die Deutschland-Frage* (Stuttgart: Bonn Aktuell, 1977), 204, footnote 313. See also Moreton, *Warsaw Alliance*, 159.

<sup>40</sup>*Pravda*, 22 September 1970, 4. The 900-page book published in September 1969 contained contributions from Mittag, Jarowinsky, and Halbritter, but Ulbricht claimed to be one of the main contributors.

<sup>41</sup>Stent, *From Embargo*, 172.

<sup>42</sup>Larrabee, *The Politics of Reconciliation*, 280.

In spite of his tactical talents, after the Moscow Treaty was signed, Ulbricht appeared to lose the international struggle to define Soviet foreign policy goals. Nonetheless, in the period from September to November 1970, while the first substantive concessions were being made in Soviet policy to West Germany, Ulbricht and other leaders continued to work at influencing both Eastern and Western Europe. Stoph suddenly visited Poland in September 1970, while Polish/West German negotiations progressed. Ulbricht visited Czechoslovakia in October 1970; this was his first visit since 1968.<sup>43</sup> Subsequently, the first official East German delegation visited France in October 1970.<sup>44</sup> In November, when it was clear the West German/Polish agreement was completed, East Germans disrupted Polish goods traffic in transit through East Germany to the West. When the final West German/Polish agreement was published, there was very little official comment on the part of East Germans.<sup>45</sup>

Larrabee suggested that Verner, Stoph, and Honecker, three of the most politically powerful Politburo members aside from Ulbricht, decided they wanted to acquiesce to the Soviet Union after the Moscow Treaty was signed. As McAdams phrased the situation:

Those in particular, like Honecker, who defined East German interest in terms of loyalty to Moscow, must have viewed his (Ulbricht's) proud challenges to the Soviet Union as the height of arrogance.<sup>46</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>In his speech, Ulbricht emphasized that Czechoslovak/GDR relations were based on the 1967 Treaty of Friendship, which postulated that West Germany was the main threat to European peace. See Moreton, Warsaw Alliance, 158.

<sup>44</sup>Larrabee, The Politics of Reconciliation, 281. One can surmise that Ulbricht hoped to drive a wedge into the West European alliance and to isolate West Germany.

<sup>45</sup>Moreton, Warsaw Alliance, 167-168.

<sup>46</sup>A. James McAdams, East Germany and Détente: Building Authority After the Wall (Cambridge University Press, 1985), 114. Moreton makes the additional point that East German leaders may have been divided over the degree of acquiescence to Soviet

The Moscow Treaty had negative connotations for the GDR because the treaty did not demand recognition of the GDR and it put pressure on East Germany to conclude successful agreements of its own with West Germany. The reader is reminded that a failing economy also caused Politburo leaders to doubt Ulbricht's leadership.

It is equally possible that Ulbricht struck a deal with the Soviets to be as cooperative as possible with West Germany until Soviet treaties with West Germany were ratified. Regardless of any possible understanding with the USSR, however, Ulbricht wanted to maintain enough East German flexibility to negotiate with West Germany as a semi-independent actor from the Soviet Union.

However, by September 1970 at the latest, Soviet leaders understood that West Germany would not ratify the Moscow Treaty with so many unclarified problems concerning the status of Berlin. It thus became clear to East German leaders that the GDR could lose its sovereignty vis-à-vis Berlin in the four-power negotiations.<sup>47</sup> Moreover, largely due to Soviet pressure at the end of October 1970, the SED government agreed to begin confidential talks with West Germany, a continuation of the Erfurt and Kassel meetings, without insisting on any preconditions, such as *de jure* recognition of the GDR.<sup>48</sup> These talks ultimately resulted in the Transit Treaty, a protocol which was added to the quadripartite agreement.

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strategy, but they were united in the ultimate goal of achieving full diplomatic relations with as many states as possible, including West Germany. See Moreton, Warsaw Alliance, 141.

<sup>47</sup> The West Germans first began talking about a *Junktim*, a connection, between these two treaties as early as July 1970. See Dennis L. Bark, Agreement on Berlin: The study of the 1970-1972 quadripartite negotiations (Washington D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1974), 57.

<sup>48</sup> Larrabee, The Politics of Reconciliation, 280-283.

Ulbricht may have still hoped to regain control of the Soviet policy agenda by bringing the Berlin issue to the inter-German level and by creating his own framework for inter-German talks concerning Berlin. He jockeyed for position in the upcoming German/German talks: he wanted these talks to take place outside of the framework of the quadripartite negotiations on Berlin. Ulbricht announced on 8 November 1970:

The government of the GDR has declared itself willing--with the condition that in West Berlin *every activity by other states* that is contrary to the international-legal status of the city and which violate the interests of the GDR and other socialist states is suspended--to enter into negotiations with the government of the FRG on questions of mutual transit of persons and goods. *In this formulation every word is significant.*<sup>49</sup> (added emphasis)

Ulbricht's reference to "activity by other states" may well have been a reference to the Soviet Union, suggesting they not interfere in Ulbricht's interpretation of West Berlin's legal status. Ulbricht's comments are quite defiant considering that in October 1970, Ulbricht received a note from Brezhnev requesting a "common position on the approach to West Germany and Berlin."<sup>50</sup>

On 4 November 1970, the Soviets made their first concessions on Berlin at the quadripartite talks.<sup>51</sup> The Soviets conceded that talks concerning traffic through the DDR "should no longer be made dependent on prior Western acceptance of Soviet demands concerning West Berlin."<sup>52</sup> Subsequently, on 27 November 1970, renewed inter-German discussions began again.

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<sup>49</sup>ND, 9 November 1970, 3-4.

<sup>50</sup>Krenz, *Wenn Mauern Fallen*, 54

<sup>51</sup>Bark, *Agreement*, 59. Ambassador Abrassimov, however, reportedly reversed this position at the next meeting on 16 November 1970.

<sup>52</sup>Moreton, *Warsaw Alliance*, 165.

Throughout November, Ulbricht's disillusion with Soviet policy became clearer. Ulbricht failed to appear at the Xth Party Congress in Hungary and he postponed a trip to Rumania. It is believed that the Hungarian Party Congress was to be an informal meeting of the heads of the Warsaw Pact states to try to reach agreement on an Eastern détente policy after the Bonn/Warsaw accord was initialled.

Ulbricht ordered the harassment of West German traffic to West Berlin from 28 November to 2 December 1970. The fact that an unexpected meeting of the Warsaw Pact was convened on 2 December 1970 in East Berlin<sup>53</sup> suggests to this author that the harassment took place without Soviet approval.<sup>54</sup> This meeting may well have been an attempt to rein in Ulbricht who, while participating in negotiations with the West Germans, was trying to set his own priorities and run negotiations at his own pace.

The Polish riots over price increases occurred from 15 to 19 December 1970 and showed the long-term necessity of a Soviet settlement with the West. Once a settlement was achieved, the West could no longer exploit episodes of instability in the bloc. Moreover, Western economic cooperation could provide sufficient consumer goods to satisfy the populace in the East.

Ironically, however, Ulbricht was granted a short-term reprieve when the Polish riots began. For a short while, the Soviets had to worry about

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<sup>53</sup>Larrabee, The Politics of Reconciliation, 280-283.

<sup>54</sup>See *Economist*, 5 December 1970, 14-15. The author of this article writes that Ulbricht, wanted to "show Mr. Brezhnev that East Germany is against making concessions to the West over Berlin and he deplores the whole trend of Mr. Brezhnev's *Westpolitik*." Ulbricht ordered traffic harassment of West German traffic in March 1969 when the Soviets made some of their first concessions to West German Social Democrats. Ulbricht ordered renewed harassment of traffic in January and February 1971.



the ability of the East Germans to prevent a chain reaction.<sup>55</sup> Ultimately, the long-term effect was to increase Soviet readiness to make concessions on Berlin.

At the beginning of February 1971, when the Soviets once again became more flexible at the quadripartite negotiations, Ulbricht began a series of trips to confer with officials in the Soviet Union.<sup>56</sup> All together, he spent five weeks in the USSR. The fact that Ulbricht could no longer influence Soviet foreign policy-making was one of the first signs that he would soon be pushed aside in the East German leadership.

One of the most interesting episodes in this period is Ulbricht's change of tone in the summer of 1970. Ulbricht vacillated much more on *Deutschlandpolitik* after the summer of 1970. Edwina Moreton has suggested that Ulbricht's change was due to one of three reasons: (1) Soviet pressure, (2) nuanced differences of opinion in the East German Politburo, or (3) a desire to act as a reasonable leader.<sup>57</sup>

Considering what we now know, it is quite possible that all three of Moreton's explanations for Ulbricht's behavior are true. Ulbricht probably suspected some East German Politburo members wanted to force him out of his position due to the following reasons: (1) Soviet dissatisfaction, (2) disarray in the East German Politburo, and (3) Ulbricht's leadership style. This change of tone may well have been reinforced by the successful conclusion of the Moscow Treaty and increasing Soviet interest in the Berlin negotiations, developments which called for a continuing command performance on Ulbricht's part.

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<sup>55</sup>Birnbaum, *A modus vivendi*, 59.

<sup>56</sup>Sodaro, *Moscow, Germany*, 209. See also Wettig, *Die Deutschland-Frage*, 100.

<sup>57</sup>Moreton, *Warsaw Alliance*, 135.

## II. Political Competition Model

There is little evidence to support Peter Ludz's theory that there were three separate groups in the East German Politburo with matching positions on economic and foreign policy. However, there is evidence that disastrous economic results in 1970, in addition to Soviet pressure, brought about extreme leadership disunity, which affected Ulbricht's ability to conduct a semi-independent *Deutschlandpolitik*.

This section focuses primarily on the speeches of ten of the fifteen full Politburo members and one other important East German leader. The full members covered here include Walter Ulbricht, Willi Stoph, Erich Honecker, Guenter Mittag, Paul Verner, Hermann Matern, Hermann Axen, Kurt Hager, Albert Norden, and Horst Sindermann. The other leader covered is Gerhard Schuerer, Chair of the State Planning Commission (SPC).<sup>58</sup>

The speeches of full members Paul Froehlich,<sup>59</sup> Alfred Neumann,<sup>60</sup> Friedrich Ebert, Gerhard Grueneberg, Erich Mueckenberger, and Herbert Warnke are not examined as they rarely spoke at party congresses and plenums and, with the possible exception of Neumann, were clearly less influential Politburo members. Candidate member Werner Jarowinsky appeared to gain some influence in this period, but his views are clearly mirrored by Schuerer's comments.

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<sup>58</sup>Schuerer was clearly very junior, only becoming a candidate member of the Politburo in October 1973.

<sup>59</sup>Froehlich, First Secretary of Leipzig, died in December 1970 and was replaced by former candidate member Axen.

<sup>60</sup>Neumann has been described as "a carpenter who rotated in and out of chairmanship of the SPC as if he were stuck in the wings of a revolving door." See John Dornberg, The Other Germany (NY: Doubleday & Co, 1968), 56.

## A. The Most Politically Powerful Members

### ULBRICHT

General Secretary Walter Ulbricht was one of the first Politburo members to publicly admit the possibility of conducting a rhetorically positive *Deutschlandpolitik*; he was also one of the earliest and most consistent proponents of trade with Western European countries, including West Germany. He asserted, throughout 1968 and 1969, that such trade was necessary in order to reach world standards. When East Germany reached world standards, it could serve as a "motor of expansion" within the Soviet bloc.

Although Ulbricht was under attack for his economic policy as early as May 1969, he still defended world trade at the August 1969 Plenum. Ulbricht admitted to criticisms at the May 1969 Plenum, saying:

Although the long-term plan was being prepared, certain comrades believed we had been too bold in looking into the future and that we had formulated tasks that were difficult to implement.<sup>61</sup>

At the August 1969 Plenum, Ulbricht still said the following about world trade:

The radio stations of an imperialist state have claimed that we intend only to expand our relations with socialist countries. This is an error. We are naturally in favor of worldwide economic and trade relations.<sup>62</sup>

After his defense of world trade and his domestic economic program at these previous plenums, his first semi-acceptance of the new Soviet foreign policy came at the December 1969 Plenum. The reader is reminded the East Germans presented a draft treaty to the West Germans at this time, and the negotiations on the Moscow Treaty also began in

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<sup>61</sup>FBIS EE, 14 May 1969, E2.

<sup>62</sup>FBIS EE, 7 August 1969, E10.

December 1969. While Ulbricht's statement at the plenum was rather tentative, it stood in marked contrast to his statements at the three previous plenums, where he simply condemned West German foreign policy as imperialistic:

[As far as West German foreign policy is concerned,] there are changes in one part of the West German public which could be an expression of tendencies that are directed toward a more realistic policy.<sup>63</sup>

Other statements indicated that while he was willing to consider acceptance of the Soviets' new *Deutschlandpolitik*, his main motivation was a desire to achieve East German national goals à la Ulbricht. Ulbricht's backhanded support of the Moscow Treaty at this December 1969 Plenum is a good example of his overall attitude,

In an interview on 9 November, Mr. Brandt said, 'The West German government wants to regulate practical issues in a way which lies in the interest of the people and serves peace.' We will see how true this is in the negotiation between the Soviet Union and West Germany concerning the draft of the Renunciation of Force Treaty. It is in the interest of peace that this treaty acknowledges all existing borders.<sup>64</sup>

Interestingly, in the Moscow Treaty, the Soviets agreed, under West German pressure, that existing borders were inviolable, *not* unalterable.

Starting in the summer of 1970, Ulbricht often described West Germany's *Ostpolitik* as realistic, while other leaders, Honecker and Mittag in particular, spoke about West Germany's foreign policy in increasingly negative terms. At this point, Ulbricht apparently realized the Moscow Treaty would be successfully completed by the fall; his intent was probably to secure an active role in the inevitable German/German negotiating process. It is also significant that beginning in 1970, Ulbricht

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<sup>63</sup>*ND*, 14 December 1969, 3-9.

<sup>64</sup>*ibid.*

no longer defended world trade. Perhaps it was too much to be fighting the other Politburo leaders on international economic issues and foreign policy at the same time.

At the June 1970 Plenum, Ulbricht was clearly more positive in his assessment of Soviet and West German political achievements:

Some people say that nothing has changed in Brandt's foreign policy. This is too simple. His willingness to discuss and negotiate a Renunciation of Force Treaty shows that something has changed . . . Parts of Brandt's policy appear to be more realistic.<sup>65</sup>

However, Ulbricht made the following qualification at the same plenum, "No important event shows this to be true of East German/West German relations."<sup>66</sup> He added that the West German Social Democratic Party and East German socialism were not similar, a point which had already been conceded by the Soviets in March 1969, one year earlier.

At Rostock, in July 1970, Ulbricht defended the East German economy, saying:

When a state has to withstand the problems of two bad winters and is still able to carry out a structure-determining policy, it is only possible because of excellent planning and great stability of the East German economy.

The reader is reminded that the one-half year plan, presented in July 1970, showed that East German plan targets were *not* being met. In this same speech, Ulbricht implemented a "carrot and stick" approach to foreign policy. First came the carrot:

[A]fter the formation of the new government in Bonn under Chancellor Brandt a certain measure of recognition of realities has become apparent.

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<sup>65</sup>DA, "Die 13. Tagung des ZK der SED (II)," Vol. III, No. 8 (August 1970), 845.

<sup>66</sup>ibid., 855.

He added that the Moscow Treaty should be completed (in essence, it was already completed), and then came the stick, emphasizing East German expectations:

[A]fterwards, it should be possible to complete a treaty for equal relations on a legal basis between East Germany and West Germany.<sup>67</sup>

The Moscow Treaty, however, had set a precedent, substituting *de facto* for *de jure* recognition of borders. The latter had been a long standing East German demand.

A few weeks later in July 1970, Honecker received a letter from Brezhnev, indicating that Ulbricht was on his way out as General Secretary of the SED. One can sense not only Brezhnev's outrage at Ulbricht's policies, but also Brezhnev's personal anger at Ulbricht:

Ulbricht can not do anything [to oppose us]. We will react to every step which does not correspond with our common interests. If necessary, we will react strongly . . . Ulbricht wanted [in 1964] to tell me how to run the country, how to work, how to govern. He hardly let me speak. His complete arrogance was obvious, his lack of respect for the thoughts and experiences of others. Did the Soviet Union, the CPSU and the Soviet people not change the world? Why does even the US respect our concerns? . . . The decision has been made. He (Ulbricht) can work for a few more years as President.<sup>68</sup>

Brezhnev went so far as to remind Honecker that Soviet troops were stationed in East Germany, implying that in a worst case scenario Soviet military force could be employed against East Germany.

Beginning in November 1970, the month when the Soviets made progress in the Berlin negotiations and when German/German negotiations began again, one saw Ulbricht rely on a threatening and

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<sup>67</sup>ND, 17 July 1970, 3-4.

<sup>68</sup>Przybylski, *Politburo*, 285, 287-288. Ulbricht held the position of President, head of *Staatsrat* (State Council), after his removal from the post of General Secretary, until his death in August 1973.

defiant foreign policy approach more frequently.<sup>69</sup> Although in letters to Ulbricht, Brezhnev had emphasized the importance of a common position on economic and foreign policy vis-à-vis West Germany, Ulbricht said the following at a November conference commemorating the 150th anniversary of Engel's birth:

The resolution of the Conference of Communist and Workers' Parties of 1969 contained many theoretical problems which require common interpretation or a least consultation between fraternal parties. We are of the opinion that not enough use has been made of these possibilities for joint consultation on theoretical problems or at least consultation on certain basic theoretical questions.<sup>70</sup>

At the December 1970 Plenum, Ulbricht said he approved of the treaty process because of the implication that East German borders would be recognized, referring positively to inter-German negotiations. It is noteworthy that no other Politburo member mentioned either the inter-German talks or Berlin at this plenum. Ulbricht said:

In view of the interest of both sides concerning movement of goods and persons over East Germany to West Berlin, it would be the most natural thing in the world that the GDR and the FRG, two states independent of one another, should meet and conclude a proper treaty on the reciprocal transit of goods and persons. But the government of the FRG today still avoids negotiations on such an agreement.<sup>71</sup>

In case the central role of East Germany was still not clear, Ulbricht added:

At the PCC (Warsaw Pact) meeting some speakers emphasized that recognition of the GDR by all European states is *the central*

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<sup>69</sup>The reader is reminded that Ulbricht failed to make planned trips to Hungary and Romania at this time, and a Warsaw Pact meeting was convened at the beginning of December in Berlin.

<sup>70</sup>ND, 14 November 1970, 3.

<sup>71</sup>ND, 10 December 1970, 3-4.

*issue* in normalizing the European situation, *the central issue* for fruitful cooperation.<sup>72</sup> (added emphasis)

The reader is reminded, Ulbricht was referring to the hastily convened Warsaw Pact meeting, which was probably designed to rein in Ulbricht.

Ulbricht still maintained a negative position on West Germany, insisting that West German social democracy had not changed its character and that a change in the legal relationship between the two Germanies was a prerequisite for political change:

The USSR/FRG treaty is of greatest importance for the creation of European security . . . We also highly appreciate the importance of the border treaty [signed in December 1970] between the People's Republic of Poland and the FRG government. In the treaty the FRG government recognizes the Oder-Neisse border as the western frontier of the People's Republic of Poland . . . Our assessment of the background of Bonn's new Eastern policy and *its intention to penetrate the socialist countries by means of social democratism remains unchanged*, but we strive to develop state relations on the basis of international law with the FRG with the meaning of peaceful coexistence.<sup>73</sup> (added emphasis)

In his 1971 New Year's speech, Ulbricht continued to advocate central East German interests. He emphasized the GDR was ready to conclude a transit agreement with the FRG *if* West Germany put an end to its illegal activity in West Berlin. Moreover, Ulbricht stressed he was ready to work on a similar agreement, not just with the West Germans, but with the West Berlin *Senat*.

Ulbricht asserted that West German attempts to hide behind the need for approval of the three western powers was not in the interests of the FRG or the West Berlin population.<sup>74</sup> This statement appeared to be addressed to the Soviet Union as well, given that it was the fourth power. Although Brezhnev had been referring to the "wishes" of the West Berlin

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<sup>72</sup>Ibid.

<sup>73</sup>Ibid.

<sup>74</sup>ND, 1 January 1971, 1-2. See also Moreton, Warsaw Alliance, 176.



population since the end of November 1970, Ulbricht continued to speak about the "needs" or "requirements" of the West Berlin population.

Moreover, East German authors Naumann and Truempler pointed out that Ulbricht gave another speech on 19 January 1971, which emphasized that when West Germany formed a separate state in 1949 and signed the Paris Treaties of 1955, there was no longer a possibility of a unified nation. Previously Ulbricht had advocated the idea of two states in one nation. Now he was advocating the final establishment of two separate German nations and no longer demanding that West Germany become socialist. This hint of a foreign policy transition has been overlooked by most observers.<sup>75</sup>

We now know that two days after this speech and eight days before the January 1971 Plenum, Honecker and eight other full Politburo members wrote a letter to Brezhnev, complaining about Ulbricht's defiant actions and requesting that Ulbricht be removed as General Secretary.<sup>76</sup> They also wrote that Ulbricht made a speech in Leipzig in November 1970 to the SED district representatives that did not follow the Politburo's new line on the economy, emphasizing the necessity of revision. The same was true of Ulbricht's conclusion at the December 1970 Plenum, which strayed so far from the general economic consensus that the Politburo could not allow it to be published. Last but not least, Ulbricht wanted to introduce material to the VIIIth Party Congress, which had not been seen by other party members. Finally, the letter stated:

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<sup>75</sup>Gerhard Naumann and Eckhard Truempler, *Der Flop mit der DDR Nation: 1971* (Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1991), 70-72.

<sup>76</sup>See Appendix II for a list of those Politburo members who signed.

In addition to domestic policy, Comrade Walter Ulbricht is also following a personal course, to which he stubbornly adheres, in our policy toward the FRG.<sup>77</sup>

When the XVth Plenum took place at the end of January 1971, Ulbricht may have heard rumors concerning Politburo members' doubts about his leadership. He finally acknowledged some economic problems which had been discussed by other Politburo members in harsher terms at the previous plenum. Ulbricht said:

It became particularly obvious in the course of 1970 that we had overrated ourselves with regard to the number and scope of important structural projects and with regard to public construction projects.<sup>78</sup>

Ulbricht said that the success of the structure-determining campaign was necessary to guarantee the achievement of world standards, but he admitted to concerns about the success of the economic program:

If we concentrate too few funds on structure-determining projects, we will not reach world standards in decisive fields. But if we concentrate funds on such a scope that the projects cannot be balanced, then this will lead to disproportions and a slow down in the development rate.<sup>79</sup>

Ulbricht also seemed to retreat on his "progressive" ideology of trade with the West, which had permitted some elements of capitalism in East Germany. Ulbricht specifically cited the income of owners of private enterprises and partially state-owned enterprises as too high. He had defended this same category of owners at the December 1969 Plenum, when Mittag had spearheaded the ideological attack on these groups and their privileges.

However, Ulbricht's economic concessions only went so far. He still suggested that East Germany was an economic success story on its own:

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<sup>77</sup>Przybylski, *Politburo*, 298.

<sup>78</sup>FBIS EE, 5 February 1971, E8.

<sup>79</sup>ibid., E21.

We are aware of the fact that already during the process of securing the developed social system of socialism certain elements of the transitions to communism are created.<sup>80</sup>

Ulbricht's words can be interpreted as a challenge to the Soviet Union because up to this point the Soviet Union had been the only state theoretically capable of making the transition from socialism to communism.

Moreover, as regards foreign policy, Ulbricht maintained a somewhat demanding tone in February 1970:

We need to counter effectively the policy of the FRG imperialists directed against the GDR and the ideological aggression originating from the FRG directed against socialism in the GDR . . . It is to this realization [impossibility of revanchism] also that we attribute the FRG government's readiness to recognize the status quo in a treaty with the USSR. We value the treaties between the USSR and FRG government and between the Polish and FRG governments as important documents for securing European peace . . . The treaties recognize the status quo, the inviolability of existing borders, and the principle of non-interference.<sup>81</sup>

TASS reported only the content of Honecker's speech at this plenum, not Ulbricht's, further substantiating the view that Soviet leaders were not pleased with Ulbricht's appraisal of foreign policy.<sup>82</sup> We now know the letter sent by the East German Politburo requesting Ulbricht's removal was sent before this plenum even began.

Ulbricht--with his continued insistence on East German demands and East German sovereignty over Berlin--had simply gone beyond the limits which Brezhnev's Politburo and the rest of Ulbricht's own Politburo would tolerate. While Ulbricht was willing to relent somewhat on domestic economic programs, the structure-determining program, and world trade,

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<sup>80</sup>ND, 30 January 1971, 3-5. See also Moreton, Warsaw Alliance, 189.

<sup>81</sup>FBIS EE, 5 February 1971, E5, E11. It should be noted, however, that he acknowledged the *Abgrenzung* campaign for the first time at this plenum.

<sup>82</sup>Moreton, Warsaw Alliance, 184.

it was too little, too late. Moreover, he made only tactical concessions on foreign policy toward West Germany at a time when the Soviets, and eventually the rest of the East German Politburo, were prepared to make genuine concessions.

## HONECKER

Erich Honecker, who served as CC Secretary for Internal Affairs and Military Security, held a position on *Deutschlandpolitik*, which was one of the most negative in the entire Politburo. Honecker made no speeches in the summer of 1970, when Ulbricht's approach to *Deutschlandpolitik* became more flexible. This has been attributed to his disagreements with Ulbricht over the proper foreign policy direction.<sup>83</sup>

Honecker took a hard-line ideological approach with virtually all issues. Without the Soviet leaders' explicit political support, one wonders what sort of impact a positive *Deutschlandpolitik* might have had on Honecker's career, a career based entirely on ideological hostility toward West Germany. When one considers this question, it is clear why Honecker's leadership strategy either required the full support of the Soviets, or a successful, negative *Deutschlandpolitik*. The latter was no longer a possibility after the summer of 1970.

Honecker spoke only in terms of a uniformly, unrealistic FRG. The following statement from the December 1970 Plenum is representative of Honecker's tone:

It (the FRG) now wants to adapt to the changed situation by concentrating all forces and means in Europe of penetrating socialist countries, and particularly the GDR, in an ideological way. If our party gives so much attention in ideological tasks, this is

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<sup>83</sup>See Moreton, *Warsaw Alliance*, 141. See also Heinz Lippman, *Honecker and the New Politics of Europe* (NY: MacMillan Co., 1972), 213. This suspicion has been confirmed by the letters published in Przybylski, *Politburo*.

caused by the fact that the building of the new society in the GDR takes place under conditions of the irreconcilable ideological fight waged by the FRG against socialism in our republic.<sup>84</sup>

As for Ulbricht's economic program, Honecker made the required perfunctory statements, while remaining an advocate of economic cooperation with the Soviet Union and an opponent of consumer goods and Western trade. However, unlike other Politburo leaders who openly criticized the domestic economy, Honecker never did. At the December 1970 Plenum, when others used strong language on the economy, Honecker said:

They (Communist Party members) stressed that a realistic plan correlated in the main categories, strengthens the confidence in the party and state leadership.<sup>85</sup>

Honecker's conservative support for the economy appeared to be based on his ideological beliefs and loyalty to Ulbricht. However, we now know that he encouraged Stoph, Mittag, and Verner to be the "hatchet men" on Ulbricht's economic ideas.<sup>86</sup>

Honecker eventually grew terribly reliant on Economic Minister Mittag in particular, because Honecker did not understand economics and needed Mittag's economic expertise and influence. Schuerer recently said the following regarding the relationship between Mittag and Honecker: "Honecker was never a great economist. In latter years, he believed he was, but he always relied on Mittag."<sup>87</sup>

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<sup>84</sup>*FBIS EE*, 21 December 1970, 9. The reader should note that Honecker's statement is similar to Ulbricht's at the plenum, except Honecker omits to mention Social Democrats as the main perpetrators.

<sup>85</sup>*Ibid.*, 6.

<sup>86</sup>Stoph, Axen, and Matern were the foreign policy "hatchet men."

<sup>87</sup>See recent interviews with Gerhard Schuerer in Hans-Hermann Hertle, "Der Weg in den Bankrott der DDR Wirtschaft," *DA*, Vol. XXIV, No. 2 (February 1992), 134.

Peter Przybylski substantiated this view of Honecker as a dependent leader, quoting Politburo member Krolikowski's memoirs concerning Honecker's political reliance on Mittag:

The close connection between Honecker and Mittag came in the last phase of Ulbricht's work as General Secretary as Honecker used all methods to depose Ulbricht and gain power. A number of comrades characterize the source of the close relationship between Honecker and Mittag as follows: together they both buried the body of Walter Ulbricht.<sup>88</sup>

Concerning Honecker's combined stance on economic and foreign policy in this period, Sodaro has rendered a very accurate portrayal:

To be sure, he (Honecker) had frequently echoed Ulbricht's call for *de jure* recognition (and continued to do so even after Ulbricht's removal, as we shall see) and he had explicitly linked the GDR's economic policies of 1969 to the challenges emanating from West Germany, lending his own voice to the 'by our own means' campaign. Nevertheless, Honecker tended to back away from such slogans as 'overtake without catching up.' And while he had joined in the SED's vehement anti-SPD rhetoric, Honecker's adherence to the notion of *Abgrenzung* at the end of 1970 probably signaled his acceptance of a normalization of inter-German relations that would fall shy of *de jure* recognition.<sup>89</sup>

Honecker's domestic and foreign policy positions were probably related to his professional focus on ideology as well as his need to maintain the support of Soviet leaders. Therefore, it made perfect sense that Honecker allied himself with the protective ideology of *Abgrenzung*, a campaign which was probably instigated by the Soviets to justify increasingly close political and economic relations with West Germany.<sup>90</sup>

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<sup>88</sup>See Przybylski, *Politburo*, 104-5. This portion of Krolikowski's memoirs is located at the Central Party Archive in Berlin.

<sup>89</sup>Sodaro, *Moscow, Germany*, 210-211.

<sup>90</sup>The Soviets used this term as early as January 1967, although East German leaders first used it in September 1970. See Naumann and Treumpler, *Der Flop*, 59. See also McAdams, *Germany Divided*, 91.

Honecker's ultimate replacement of Ulbricht as General Secretary at the XVth plenum on 3 May 1971 was filled with irony. Ulbricht had always assumed Honecker was his loyal ally when, in fact, from mid-1970 to mid-1971, Honecker spearheaded the effort to gain Soviet support for Ulbricht's removal. Honecker, one of the strongest ideological opponents of a positive *Deutschlandpolitik* in this period, subsequently adopted the Soviet position on the Berlin negotiations and on international recognition of the GDR. At the VIIIth Party Congress, in June 1971, Honecker would introduce a new consumer-oriented economic campaign similar to that of the Soviets, but he understood very little about economics.<sup>91</sup>

One has to conclude that Honecker knew his loyalties lay first with the Soviet Union. This relationship outweighed his own ideological evaluation of foreign policy toward West Germany and economic policy in East Germany. It certainly outweighed his personal loyalty to Ulbricht.<sup>92</sup>

## STOPH

Prime Minister Willi Stoph was categorized as a pragmatist by Peter Ludz and, while there is some truth to this description, in the area of *Deutschlandpolitik*, Stoph's position very much resembled Honecker's. For example, at the June 1970 Plenum, Stoph said:

How can one understand the superior attitude of the West Germans? The reactionary CDU/CSU in particular and the

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<sup>91</sup>Mittag made the point in his memoirs that Honecker relied too much on Stoph, Neumann, and Schuerer because of a lack of economic expertise. Guenter Mittag, *Um Jeden Preis* (Berlin: Aufbau Verlag, 1991), 337-341.

<sup>92</sup>A final irony is that by the late 1980s, Honecker began to see East German national goals as more important than Soviet national goals, as Ulbricht had before him. This ultimately led to Honecker's downfall in 1989.

SPD/FDP government in Bonn see the European and world situation falsely.<sup>93</sup>

Stoph's critical stance may have been a tactical one. He would not want to appear too positive, given the fact that he was head of the Council of Ministers and therefore would have been expected to negotiate concessions from the West Germans. The tactical nature of his position was further reinforced by the fact that Stoph, not Ulbricht, informed Brandt in October 1970 of the GDR's intention to resume dialogue with the FRG without the prerequisite of *de jure* recognition.<sup>94</sup> It was also Stoph who made the official suggestion in February 1971 that Berlin negotiations begin between the East German government and the West Berlin *Senat*.<sup>95</sup> Possibly his change of tune was simply due to Soviet pressure, as Foreign Minister Gromyko was in East Berlin just prior to each announcement.

Stoph was most pragmatic in the area of East West trade. Brandt described Stoph's viewpoint very accurately: "Stoph [was] solely interested in recognition in international law [but] did not hide his strong interest in a flourishing development of trade."<sup>96</sup>

As regards the domestic economy and consumer goods production, Stoph differed from Ulbricht and Honecker, who both tended to present the economy in a positive light. Stoph may well have been concerned, as Kosygin was, that in his professional position, he would be accountable for the economic realities, with which he dealt on a daily

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<sup>93</sup>"Die 13. Tagung (II)," 857.

<sup>94</sup>See Sodaro, Moscow, Germany, 192 and William E. Griffith, The Ostpolitik of the Federal Republic of Germany (MIT Press, 1978), 201-202.

<sup>95</sup>Bark, Agreement, 73-74. These negotiations began at the end of March 1971.

<sup>96</sup>Willy Brandt, My Life in Politics (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1992), 212.



basis. Stoph had to answer regularly to both the Council of State and the State Planning Commission.<sup>97</sup>

Prime Minister Stoph's awareness of economic problems was clearly stated at the December 1970 Plenum. His criticism regarded problems with the plan, consumer goods production, and people's general working and living conditions:

We have striven to present an equalized plan . . . We must however openly state that there are a few problems with the proportional development of the national economy . . .

Good quality means high economic results in foreign trade and the mounting prestige of our republic, but it also means strengthening the working people's confidence in their state . . .

Various problems have also matured which concern the better utilization of the economic laws of socialism . . . for further shaping the people's working and living conditions. *Now they must be resolved.* All this is an issue of better utilizing the economic laws of socialism so that particularly the efforts of the worker's class and its position in society and production can receive greater consideration . . .

Of late, people have increasingly criticized, *and with good reason*, the development of retail prices of certain consumer goods . . .<sup>98</sup> (added emphasis)

It is interesting that Stoph waited until December 1970 to openly criticize the economy, when Brezhnev and other Soviet leaders had already been critical.

By December 1970, Stoph was much more critical than Honecker about economic results. While the two leaders were initially quite similar in their strong opposition to a positive *Deutschlandpolitik*, both gradually appeared to acquiesce to Soviet views on the subject by the fall of 1970. Stoph, as well as Honecker, had opportunistic reasons to court Soviet

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<sup>97</sup>See Peter Joachim Lapp, *Der Ministerrat der DDR* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1982), 52.

<sup>98</sup>*FBIS EE*, 21 December 1970, 35, 44, 49, 52.

support, as he was probably next in line after Honecker to be General Secretary.<sup>99</sup>

## MITTAG

Ludz viewed CC Secretary for the Economy Mittag as a modernizer, but this is only true of Mittag's attitudes prior to 1966. Thomas Baylis has given us a much clearer view of Mittag's political nature:

Since his election to full Politburo membership in 1966, he has become (at least publicly) one of the most vocal party spokesman on behalf of the strengthening of party authority, the strict application of democratic centralism to the economy, and the meticulous study of the example of the Soviet Union.<sup>100</sup>

Similar to Honecker and Stoph, Mittag was initially quite negative on *Deutschlandpolitik*. He differed from the others in that he never really moved away from this initial position. The following statement, made at the June 1970 Plenum, is representative of his general attitude: "Everything connects us with the Soviet Union and socialist states, nothing with West Germany and the West."<sup>101</sup>

Mittag, in contradiction to Ulbricht and Stoph, was not supportive of trade with the West. His statement from the December 1970 Plenum is typical:

All idle talk by West German entrepreneurs about extending assistance to the GDR, about generously helping it in the development of science and technology and engaging in economic cooperation free of ideology can not camouflage the real objective of imperialism . . . An intensifying political, and ideological, but simultaneously an equally important economic delimitation between the two social systems is developing.<sup>102</sup>

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<sup>99</sup>See Mittag, *Preis*, 338. Mittag referred to Politburo member Krolkowski's memoirs which indicate that Stoph always had his eye on this post.

<sup>100</sup>Thomas A Baylis, *The Technical Intelligentsia and the East German Elite* (University of California Press, 1974), 214.

<sup>101</sup>"*Die 13. Tagung des ZK der SED* (I)," Vol III, No. 7 (July 1970), 766.

<sup>102</sup>*FBIS EE*, 21 December 1970, 25.

Mittag was similar to Stoph in his ultimate willingness to criticize the economy. Although he was not very critical at first, he became progressively more critical after the summer of 1970. At the December 1969 Plenum, he already conceded:

While we have done better in many areas, there is still not enough supply in some areas: children's shoes, children's clothes, underwear, socks, and briquettes.<sup>103</sup>

At the June 1970 Plenum he said, "We are still lacking textiles, shoes, furniture, and household items. Consumer conditions will improve."<sup>104</sup> However, at this same plenum, while admitting some deadlines had been missed by more than one-half year, he still insisted that, "People who believed that planned goals were too high and should be lowered"<sup>105</sup> were wrong.

Mittag backtracked on one other economic questions in 1970 and 1971. While in December 1969 he indicated that shift work was not an emergency measure but a means to reach world standards, by June 1970, he indicated that shifts were necessary "because of bad management, bad technical and organizational preparation." This comment suggests that Mittag adjusted his evaluation of the economic situation: shift work was now a permanent measure to deal with a crisis.<sup>106</sup>

To resolve this crisis situation, Mittag suggested in the summer of 1970 that prices be increased. He suggested that prices for raw

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<sup>103</sup>*ND*, 15 December 1969, 3.

<sup>104</sup>"*Die 13. Tagung (I)*," 733.

<sup>105</sup>*ibid*, 732.

<sup>106</sup>*ibid*, 742. The statistics showed the growing proportion of the working population involved in shift work. At the end of April 1970, the figure was approximately 350,000 but one month later it had almost doubled to 640,000 (approximately 7% of the East German work force at the time). See Naumann and Truempfer, *Von Ulbricht*, 23.

materials be raised, subsidies for basic consumer goods held stable, and greater price differentiations made among consumer items.<sup>107</sup> This was apparently a "last ditch" effort to save Ulbricht's structure-determining campaign and Mittag's reputation. However, this portion of Mittag's speech was not made public.

Mittag's ideas, and implicitly Ulbricht's ideas, were severely criticized by Stoph, as we have already seen, at the December 1970 Plenum. CC member Hanna Wolf also criticized Ulbricht's and Mittag's economic ideas at the plenum, showing that leadership division extended beyond the Politburo. It is interesting that these criticisms by Hanna Wolf were never made public in the GDR:

Each of us know that price increases are being discussed. Each of us knows that there are no toothbrushes, just to take toothbrushes as a symbol. But this is a problem. What I have missed, comrades, and I want to say this openly, is that this year we have not often discussed the fact that we were not able to improve on the production of tooth brushes. This is something I don't understand. *Of course the structure-determining policy is correct and decisive. But for the people, prices and toothbrushes are a problem. It seems to me that we must take action very soon, without making big promises in advance or publishing some grand article in ND.*<sup>108</sup> (added emphasis)

It appears that Mittag, a relatively consistent opponent of a positive *Deutschlandpolitik* and trade with the West, gradually relented in his defense of the East German economy. Probably the chorus of economic criticism became too loud, and the promises from Honecker became too attractive, so Mittag deserted Ulbricht as well as Ulbricht's economic program, which Mittag had helped create. By joining the *Abgrenzung*

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<sup>107</sup>Naumann and Truempler, *Von Ulbricht*, 27-28, 71-78.

<sup>108</sup>*Ibid.*, 118-119. Politburo member Neumann was also very critical of the economy at this plenum. In spite of these criticisms Mittag insisted that Neumann sided with Ulbricht, citing the fact that Neumann did not sign the letter requesting Ulbricht's removal. Mittag, *Preis*, 339.

campaign, Mittag also set up the ideological basis by which he could eventually support a positive *Deutschlandpolitik*.

#### VERNER

Paul Verner, First Secretary of East Berlin, held an ideological position similar to Honecker's. Verner's hard-line position on *Deutschlandpolitik* was exemplified at the December 1970 Plenum:

If imperialism attempted to adjust to changed conditions, this certainly did not mean that anything in the nature of imperialism has changed.

Verner also opposed Western trade, arguing for better cooperation with CEMA and the USSR:

At the same time we strengthen and consolidate the socialist GDR in all fields, we consistently develop the GDR's integration with the socialist community and we wage an offensive ideological struggle against imperialist ideology.<sup>109</sup>

At this same plenum, Verner criticized export delivery problems; this was an oblique reference to East German exports which should have reached the USSR.

By the December 1970 Plenum, Verner was still defending the GDR's overall economic system, but criticized Ulbricht's excessive ideas:

What matters is by no means a correction of the economic system. It is only necessary to correct certain excessive desires and concepts not in line with the material possibilities . . .

The effectiveness of ideopolitical work, however, is always lower where the unity of structural policy and the planned, proportional development of the national economy has not been observed and where the tasks of structural policy has not been linked with the general social development and the further improvement of the working and living conditions of the working people. *This is particularly the case where the priority assigned to structural policy has been transformed into something which excludes everything else.*<sup>110</sup> (added emphasis)

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<sup>109</sup>FBIS EE, 18 December 1970, 24-25.

<sup>110</sup>ibid., 7, 16.

Verner addressed Stoph's theme of consumer goods deficiencies as justification for public criticism:

The people justly criticize the fact that the irresponsible and superficial work of managers of enterprises and state organs is creating shortages of goods which are not justified from the viewpoint of material supply.

Verner specified deficit areas as Mittag had earlier. According to Verner deficits existed in "warm underclothing, training clothes, work and professional clothes, shoes suitable for the winter, slippers, stoves, and ovens."<sup>111</sup>

Verner's comments show that he had a negative position on *Deutschlandpolitik* and Western trade similar to that of Honecker. He, however, was also concerned with the structure-determining program and lack of consumer goods, as Stoph was. It is conceivable that Verner only became concerned about these latter issues to criticize Ulbricht.

However, we now know that Verner, as First Secretary of Berlin, was one of the first to send secret reports to Ulbricht, documenting his economic complaints.<sup>112</sup> Verner sent his complaints as early as June 1970, before the Soviets had written to Honecker about the possibility of removing Ulbricht. This suggests either that Verner was sincere in his economic complaints and his objections to Ulbricht's economic ideas and his *Deutschlandpolitik*, or that oral communication with the Soviets took place prior to their written communication with Honecker.

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<sup>111</sup>Ibid., 13.

<sup>112</sup>Naumann and Truemptler, *Von Ulbricht*, 67-71.

## B. Soon-to-be-more Politically Powerful Politburo Members

### MATERN

Hermann Matern, CC Secretary for Personnel, held a political position that was similar to that of Honecker. He was negative on both *Deutschlandpolitik* and Western trade. As he said at the May 1969 plenum, "Their 'new East policy' [is] a policy of infiltrating and undermining the socialist states."<sup>113</sup> As Sodaro pointed out, Matern joined the chorus of other Politburo members in criticizing the SPD in 1969, although the Soviets conceded they were not the main enemy.<sup>114</sup>

In 1969, Matern made the following comment concerning Western trade:

The fanning of hostility against socialism has prevented many West German workers from recognizing the incompatibility of their vital interests and reactionary objectives of monopoly capital.<sup>115</sup>

Matern made no comments on Ulbricht's structure-determining program or on the lack of consumer goods. Matern was probably won over to Honecker's campaign, when the East German economy began failing and when Ulbricht first used concessionary rhetoric to defy the Soviet Union in the summer of 1970.

In the July 1970 protocol of a Brezhnev/Honecker discussion, Brezhnev wrote "inform only Comrades Stoph, Matern, and Axen."<sup>116</sup> This incantation is repeated in later letters indicating that Matern was working quite closely with Honecker, Stoph, and Soviet leaders to remove Ulbricht.

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<sup>113</sup> *FBIS EE*, 2 May 1969, E5.

<sup>114</sup> Sodaro, *Moscow, Germany*, 149.

<sup>115</sup> *FBIS EE*, 2 May 1969, E5.

<sup>116</sup> Matern's signature is not on the Politburo letter, requesting Soviet support for Ulbricht's removal, but that is because he died the same month the letter was written, January 1971. See Przybylski, *Politburo*, 285, 302-303.

## AXEN

Hermann Axen, who was CC Secretary for Propaganda, was added as a full member to the Politburo in December 1970, following Paul Froehlich's death in September 1970. Similar to Honecker, Axen clearly changed his position on *Deutschlandpolitik* from 1968 to 1971. While he was very negative at the October 1968 Plenum, he was much more positive by the December 1970 Plenum.

At the October 1968 Plenum, Axen said:

Because the socialist states of Europe with their combined economic, political, and military potential are able to play a determining role in Europe, they are also able to repel the aggressive machinations of West German imperialism.<sup>117</sup>

At the December 1970 Plenum, Axen stressed East German achievements in *Deutschlandpolitik*:

The transit talks it will be remembered, are due to a proposal of the GDR government . . . to the FRG government that negotiations be entered into in due and proper form on concluding a treaty regulating the mutual transit of persons and goods of the GDR and FRG.<sup>118</sup>

He, like Honecker and Mittag, was sure to emphasize the importance of political connections with the USSR. As a new member of the Politburo, Axen may well have decided his most important task was to make a good impression on Soviet leaders.

Moreover, it is now believed that Axen, the Politburo member who introduced the *Abgrenzung* campaign in a speech on 13 September 1970, was doing so at the behest of the USSR, in order to work against Ulbricht's hopes that West Germany could someday be converted to

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<sup>117</sup>ND, 24 October 1968, 5.

<sup>118</sup>FBIS EE, 10 February 1971, E14-15. One author has suggested that Axen's reference to "due and proper form" was an inherent criticism of Ulbricht's approach. See Bleimann, "*Ostpolitik*," 47.



socialism.<sup>119</sup> This view is further reinforced by the fact that the *Abgrenzung* campaign was adopted by both Stoph and Honecker in October 1970. Moreover, Soviet letters indicate that Axen was actively cooperating with the Soviets to have Ulbricht removed.

### **C. Ideological Opponents of Détente**

#### HAGER

Kurt Hager, CC Secretary for Ideology, had obvious ideological reasons to oppose both *Deutschlandpolitik* and Western trade. His reasoning was probably similar to Honecker's: these two policies were very threatening to the ideological claims of the SED. The following is a statement Hager made about West Germany at the October 1968 Plenum:

The West German imperialists and right-wing SPD leaders have recently been trying to influence Czechoslovakia along the line of this [convergence] program.<sup>120</sup>

He never appeared to readjust his initial negative evaluation of *Deutschlandpolitik*.

As for the economy, Hager had a hard-line attitude as early as a CC meeting in December 1964 when he said that earlier, economic questions had been neglected in favor of political propaganda, but now ideological work was shunted partially into the background.<sup>121</sup> As for Western trade, Hager stated at the May 1969 Plenum that monopoly capital used the aid of "right-wing social democratic leaders." He kept this same position on the economy throughout the period.

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<sup>119</sup>See McAdams, Germany Divided, 91.

<sup>120</sup>ND, 29 October 1968, 3.

<sup>121</sup>As cited in Baylis, Technical Intelligentsia, 246.

While there is no evidence that Hager was actively involved in the 1970 scheme to remove Ulbricht, we know that he signed the January 1971 letter requesting Ulbricht's removal. Ulbricht's personal line in domestic and foreign policy was probably very upsetting to the CC Secretary for Ideology.

Recent interviews with Hager indicate that he, along with Axen, greatly opposed Ulbricht's belief that East Germany could win in the national question.<sup>122</sup> From Hager's viewpoint, East and West Germany were clearly separate nations and Ulbricht should have followed these simple ideological guidelines. Ulbricht's attempted transition on the national issue, in January 1971, came too late for Hager, in particular.

#### NORDEN

As CC Secretary for Propaganda vis-à-vis West Germany and West Berlin, Albert Norden had good reasons to oppose a positive *Deutschlandpolitik* and Western trade. At the June 1970 Plenum, Norden said:

Ulbricht warned us about the rightest course in East Germany. In the last months we have seen proof showing the correctness of his warning.<sup>123</sup>

Norden, similar to Honecker, Mittag, and Axen, also frequently discussed the importance of cooperation with the Soviet Union in both trade matters and security issues.

Norden was willing to concede problems in the economy but did not choose to emphasize the issue of consumer goods. At the June 1970 Plenum, he said:

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<sup>122</sup>Interview with Hager cited in McAdams, Germany Divided, 71.

<sup>123</sup>ND, 15 June 1970, 6.

We must fulfill the deficits in the 1970 plan as soon as possible. This is important because the fulfillment of the 1970 plan is a decisive prerequisite for the 1971-1975 plan.<sup>124</sup>

He seemed to be critical of the present political leadership at the June 1970 Plenum, when he said:

The socialist functionary in East Germany is and acts as the servant of the people. Comfortable feeling must be strange and unacceptable to him. It will never be forgotten that our people also measure the state according to the action of individual functionaries and bureaucrats.<sup>125</sup>

This may well have been aimed at Ulbricht in particular.

It seems odd that Norden was the only influential member of the Politburo, other than Neumann, who did not sign the January 1971 letter to the Soviets, suggesting that Ulbricht be removed from his position.<sup>126</sup> Possibly Norden, while not satisfied with Ulbricht's behavior, was concerned about the type of *Deutschlandpolitik* which might follow Ulbricht. While Ulbricht was creating problems with the Soviets, at least Ulbricht was holding the line on substantive East German foreign policy concessions.

#### **D. Politically Vulnerable Politburo Members**

##### SINDERMANN

Horst Sindermann, SED First Secretary of Halle, was generally considered a staunch Ulbricht supporter. He said virtually nothing on *Deutschlandpolitik*, but he was such a firm opponent of Western trade; one can guess that he would be opposed to a positive *Deutschlandpolitik*.<sup>127</sup> At the October 1968 Plenum he said,

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<sup>124</sup>*Ibid.*, 1.

<sup>125</sup>Naumann and Truempler, *Von Ulbricht*, 25-26.

<sup>126</sup>The other full Politburo members who did not sign were Ebert and Grueneberg, both less influential than Norden (see Appendix I and II).

<sup>127</sup>Sindermann is included in this chapter to show how he changed his position 180% in the Honecker period, covered in Chapter VI.

The belief that top world standards or the international level can be achieved through the purchase of installations in the West has clearly proved to be an illusion, as demonstrated by installations in petroleum chemistry. The combination of our research and development with research and development in the USSR has proved that the only correct course for eliminating backlogs and scoring top results is together with this gigantic economic power of which Comrade Ulbricht spoke.

In case he had not made the point Sindermann added:

Our own experiences in building up large complex industrial installations which we purchased from capitalist concerns, prove that we cannot purchase from them any guarantee for the perfect functioning of such installations. Only if our own scientists and experts delve into these problems so thoroughly that they manage to solve them in a short time can such installations imported from the capitalists, be operated at full speed and capacity.<sup>128</sup>

We now know that Sindermann was very alarmed by Ulbricht's conclusion at the December 1970 Plenum, saying:

Can we reduce every difficult issue to 'new problems?' If Ulbricht's conclusion is published, everyone will be speaking about differences of opinion in the Politburo.<sup>129</sup>

Sindermann was politically weaker than most of the other Politburo members covered in this chapter, so his actions are not surprising. More surprising is the degree to which Sindermann changed his political position and increased his influence under Honecker's leadership.

## SCHUERER

Gerhard Schuerer, SPC Chair, made an important economic policy shift from the June 1970 Plenum to the following December 1970 Plenum. Schuerer's published comments from the June 1970 Plenum included the following positive statement:

The dynamism and effectiveness of our economy have been increased and the scientific organization is key to mastering new

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<sup>128</sup>ND, 26 October 1968, 4.

<sup>129</sup>As cited in Przybylski, *Politburo*, 106.

tasks. Not only the tempo of growth has been raised but in particular the inner quality of the economic structure has improved.<sup>130</sup>

However, we now know Schuerer went on to make more critical comments at this plenum, which were not published, as they represented strong criticism of the SED and Ulbricht:

We must recognize it in time when people hide behind pretty words and low costs, people who have no understanding of technology and are not solidly based in the scientific organization and management . . . I am of the opinion that in this case (building a large electricity plant), the scientific revolution has been placed on its head, and this can not be so if we want to correctly work through these problems.<sup>131</sup>

By the December 1970 Plenum, Schuerer became more critical and these critical comments were published:

[T]oo many highly qualified people are dealing with drafting general documents for the year 2000 and too few on the production and technology of 1971 . . . Too many investments are being implemented over too long a period of time with insufficient preparations and the number of incomplete investment projects is growing . . . We are confronted with great tasks. Determined, prudent, and operative leadership and constant analysis are required in order to implement this plan consistently after its adoption.<sup>132</sup>

Schuerer's increasingly negative comments criticizing the economy were published after similar criticisms had been made by Stoph and Verner. One suspects that Schuerer may not have been so much a part of factionalist tendencies as genuinely opposed the dysfunctional East German economy. He adopted a very similar attitude to Honecker and the malfunctioning East German economy two decades later.<sup>133</sup>

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<sup>130</sup>ND, 15 June 1970, 4.

<sup>131</sup>See Naumann and Truempler, *Von Ulbricht*, 88-89. Apparently Honecker replied to the latter statement, "And that is why we must straighten out these matters, "to which Stoph added, "Especially since no one can run around for very long on their head."

<sup>132</sup>FBIS EE, 21 December 1970, 19-20, 22.

<sup>133</sup>Hertle, "Bankrott der DDR," 127-145.

### III. Conclusion

From 1968 to May 1971, overlapping coalitions of East German Politburo members redefined East Germany's national goals in response to internal and external factors. Politburo members shifted to support both a positive *Deutschlandpolitik* and Ulbricht's removal. Surprisingly, these issue groups had considerable overlap, containing both dogmatic hard-liners and progressive modernizers.

(1) The first group which opposed Ulbricht was concerned with the deteriorating economy and/or lack of consumer goods in early 1970. This group apparently included Stoph, Mittag, Verner, Norden, and Schuerer. The hard-liners Verner and Norden united with so-called modernizers, Stoph, Mittag, and Schuerer, in economic criticism.

(2) A second group was alarmed by Ulbricht's emphasis on Western trade. This group consisted of ideological hard-liners who never advocated Western trade: Honecker, Matern, Sindermann, Verner, Hager, Norden. Many of these hard-liners opposed a positive *Deutschlandpolitik*, however, their desire to remain loyal to the Soviet Union took precedence over any personal sentiments.

(3) A third group was concerned about maintaining good relations with the USSR, especially as Ulbricht became more defiant of the Soviets. This group favored the *Abgrenzung* campaign and strong allegiance to Soviet leadership. It apparently included a mixed membership of hard-liners and modernizers: Honecker, Matern, Stoph, Mittag, Hager, Axen, Verner, and Norden.

Honecker's extreme skill in his opposition to Ulbricht was of utmost importance. Honecker matched those leaders who had concerns about Ulbricht's economic strategy with those leaders who worried about

Ulbricht as a threat to the Soviet alliance. Moreover, Honecker made sure he was continuously supported by the Soviets in his actions.

Another interesting conclusion is that Soviet economic negotiations with West Germany were just as debilitating to Ulbricht as Soviet political negotiations. This external economic pressure, combined with Ulbricht's own domestic economic problems, completely undermined Ulbricht's domestic authority.

By December 1970, at the latest, a majority of East German Politburo members were united against Ulbricht's actions in economic policy. We know this because a majority vote must have prevented the publication of Ulbricht's November 1970 Leipzig speech and parts of his December 1970 Plenum speech. By January 1971, after the West German/Polish treaty had been signed, and more importantly, after the Polish riots, nine out of fifteen full members of the East German Politburo requested Ulbricht's removal as General Secretary.

Ulbricht gradually alienated his own Politburo by trying to push through what became his own personal policy in domestic and foreign policy. It appears that the following factors influenced the decision to replace Ulbricht with Honecker: (1) Soviet and Eastern European accomplishments in foreign policy; (2) East German disasters in the domestic economy; (3) Polish riots, and (4) Ulbricht's continued stubbornness in domestic and foreign policy. While Ulbricht tried to use Eastern Europe and Western Europe in a final attempt to influence the Soviets, he made greatest use of the China card throughout this period. This may have been the final straw for Brezhnev, who was already adamant about Ulbricht's removal in the summer of 1970.

Honecker, having been helped into his new role by Brezhnev, would be personally indebted and instrumental in getting the East German Politburo under control and implementing a more positive foreign policy toward West Germany in the next few years. One can not help wondering, if Honecker had not been so skillful at plotting Ulbricht's downfall, whether the Soviets could have achieved so much in their own *Deutschlandpolitik* by the end of April 1971. After May 1971, Honecker would have to gain the allegiance of these overlapping issue coalitions in domestic and foreign policy, which had joined forces temporarily to oust Ulbricht.

Considering Ulbricht's obstinate approach, including his use of other nations, it is amazing he remained in power so long. In conclusion, it can be noted that Ulbricht had three main techniques for East Germany to avoid Soviet pressure: (1) citing the GDR's economic strength to insist on political demands; (2) stating East German goals as if they were Soviet goals; and (3) claiming the ideological high ground with the help of China and/or parts of Eastern Europe. However, these techniques fell apart when the East German economy weakened and when Soviets began to publicly clarify their differences with Ulbricht. By November and December of 1970, Ulbricht had alienated the Soviets, East Europeans, and his own Politburo.



## CHAPTER FIVE

## BREZHNEV'S POLITBURO: May 1971-December 1973

**I. Introduction**

In this chapter the author explores how Brezhnev's new authority affected the Soviet Politburo's foreign policy choice. In the time period after May 1971, Brezhnev clearly fortified his personal majority in the Politburo. As Larrabee described the situation in the Politburo after the XXIVth Party Congress, "Soviet policy toward the FRG was strongly influenced by and connected with Brezhnev's own consolidation of his power."<sup>1</sup>

Nevertheless, Politburo support for Brezhnev's policy of détente with West Germany ebbed and flowed. In this chapter, the author discusses the domestic and international factors associated with changes in Brezhnev's authority and the effect of this on the Soviet Union's détente policy toward West Germany. While the resignation of Walter Ulbricht set the stage for a number of general foreign policy achievements in May 1971, these achievements were offset by a confluence of international disappointments at the end of 1973.

The point when Brezhnev acquired strong support for his personal role and for the policy of détente has long been the subject of speculation. While Breslauer noted that General Secretary Brezhnev got formal endorsement of his détente policies at the November 1971 Plenum, Parrott pointed out that the plenum approved the work done by

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<sup>1</sup>F. Stephen Larrabee, The Politics of Reconciliation: Soviet Policy Towards West Germany, 1964-1972 (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1978), 374.

the Politburo, not Brezhnev's report to the plenum.<sup>2</sup> It was only in May 1972, on the eve of Nixon's trip to Moscow, that the Central Committee specifically approved Brezhnev's report to the Politburo. Hodnett doubted whether Brezhnev had even accumulated a personal majority in the Politburo by April 1973.<sup>3</sup> Nonetheless, Hodnett wrote:

It is undeniable that Brezhnev has sought--and since 1972, attained--a far more important role personally in the conduct of foreign affairs than he played at the outset of the Brezhnev-Kosygin era or even as late as 1971.<sup>4</sup>

If one measured the General Secretary's political dominance by his ability to remove members from the Politburo, Brezhnev achieved dominance by the April 1973 Plenum. However, this author views authority-building as a more gradual process, suggesting that Brezhnev gradually gained authority beginning in the fall of 1971, and, due to successful international summitry, made more rapid gains in authority-building from May 1972 to April 1973. He began to lose some authority, however, once international crises undermined his détente initiatives at the end of 1973.

In May 1972, Brezhnev had Shelest removed from his position as First Secretary of Ukraine and replaced him with a Brezhnev client, Shcherbitskii. At this point, Brezhnev surely would have preferred to also remove Shelest from the Politburo but he did not have enough political power to do so. However, by the April 1973 Plenum, Brezhnev had the power to remove both Shelest and Voronov from the Politburo. It is

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<sup>2</sup>George W. Breslauer, Khrushchev and Brezhnev as Leaders: Building Authority in Soviet Politics (London: George Allen & Unwin Ltd., 1982), 200-201 and Bruce Parrott, Politics and Technology in the Soviet Union (MIT Press, 1983), 251-255.

<sup>3</sup>Grey Hodnett, "Succession Contingencies in the Soviet Union," *Problems of Communism*, Vol. XXIV, No. 2 (March-April 1975), 8.

<sup>4</sup>Grey Hodnett, "The Pattern of Leadership Politics" in Seweryn Bialer, ed., The Domestic Context of Soviet Foreign Policy, (Boulder: Westview Press, 1981), 102.

noteworthy that these leaders were opposed to détente in general and economic détente in particular.

Furthermore, at the April 1973 Plenum, Brezhnev added three new members to the Politburo, Yuri Andropov, Andrei Grechko, Andrei Gromyko, all of whom worked in the foreign policy/national security sector. This was the sector in which Brezhnev had established his new base of legitimacy.<sup>5</sup> Although Politburo members were always listed alphabetically to emphasize the collective nature of Brezhnev's Politburo, after Andropov joined the Politburo in April 1973, Brezhnev's name was still listed first.<sup>6</sup>

From May 1972 to the summer of 1973, Brezhnev's authority-building *potential* looked unstoppable. A Western diplomat made the following observation:

It seems inconceivable that this is the same man whom we wrote off as a faceless apparatchik, as a compromise candidate after Khrushchev's fall. How much further is he going to go?<sup>7</sup>

As to the gradual nature of Brezhnev's authority-building, Brandt made the following comments:

[August 1970] was clearly the stage at which Brezhnev had resolved and had been empowered to take personal charge of the important aspects of Soviet policy towards the West. At the time, he and Kosygin struck me as the Kremlin's 1a and 1b. One year later Brezhnev's definite and undisputed supremacy could not escape the eye or ear . . . Brezhnev's self-confidence clearly grew from one meeting to the next from August 1970 (Moscow) to September 1971(Crimea) to May 1973 (Bonn).<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>See *Ibid.*, 98.

<sup>6</sup>Stephen White, *Gorbachev and After* (Cambridge University Press, 1992), 2.

<sup>7</sup>Cited in John Dornberg, *Brezhnev: The Masks of Power* (NY: Basic Books, 1974), 272.

<sup>8</sup>Willy Brandt, *People and Politics, The Years 1960 - 1975* (Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 1978), 334-335.

The reader is reminded that parallel developments occurred in US/Soviet and US/West German foreign policy. While Kosygin signed the SALT I communiqué in May 1971, Brezhnev alone signed the final SALT I agreement after the Politburo met five times in May 1972. By June 1973, Brezhnev had the authority to negotiate alone with Nixon.<sup>9</sup>

The memoirs of Henry Kissinger and Richard Nixon further substantiate the nature of Brezhnev's gradually increasing authority between May 1972 and April 1973. Kissinger commented on the May 1972 summit as follows:

Brezhnev usually made the opening statement for the Soviet side, but with a great show of eliciting the agreement of his colleagues and giving them ample opportunity for comments of their own . . . He appeared to need the support of Kosygin and Podgornyi to carry the Politburo with him.<sup>10</sup>

Then, in June 1973, Brezhnev met with Nixon alone, ostensibly speaking for the entire Politburo.<sup>11</sup> One imagines Brezhnev must have said something similar to Brandt during his summit in West Germany the previous month. We also know that beginning in April 1973, almost all Politburo leaders began to argue that détente was irreversible.<sup>12</sup> This had not previously been the case.

Just as it is impossible to determine the exact points at which Brezhnev increased his authority in the Politburo, it is also impossible to determine Brezhnev's real political preferences in this time period. By

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<sup>9</sup>Hodnett, "Leadership Politics," 102 and Raymond L. Garthoff "SALT and the Soviet Military," *Problems of Communism*, Vol. XXIV, No. 1 (January-February 1975), 25.

<sup>10</sup>Henry Kissinger, *The White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown, & Co., 1979), 1213-1214.

<sup>11</sup>Richard Nixon, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (NY: Grosset & Dunlap, 1978), 878. See also Raymond L. Garthoff, *Détente & Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan* (Washington D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1985) 330.

<sup>12</sup>Garthoff, *Détente*, 346.

the fall of 1971, at the latest, he staked his political reputation on the altar of détente and, as a result, he defended détente even as its international fortunes began to falter in 1973. Moreover, he even convinced other Politburo members of the necessity to continue supporting détente with West Germany and the United States in spite of their initial opposition. In the domestic arena, Brezhnev continually increased the material expectations of the population. However, by the end of 1973, he no longer placed the same priority on consumer goods acquisition.

Brezhnev still relied on overlapping issue coalitions, but the political nature of these coalitions shifted from the previous period. Heavy industry and the defense sector received more emphasis while consumer goods received less. Perhaps to maintain personal support and support for his far-reaching détente policies, Brezhnev had to more carefully cultivate his conservative domestic support bases in this period.

#### **A. Leadership Strategy**

From the XXIVth Party Congress onward, Brezhnev repeatedly used foreign policy results as a distraction from domestic economic failure. He also became more optimistic in his belief that foreign trade, resulting from détente, was the long run solution to the Soviet Union's domestic economic troubles.

Up until May 1972, Brezhnev relied on a strategy of "leadership weakness" vis-à-vis the West and appeared to be on the defensive politically. As Kissinger wrote in his memoirs, Brezhnev tried to use the Politburo's conflict over convening a summit meeting in 1972 to gain leverage in US/Soviet negotiations, suggesting the US had to make

concessions if Brezhnev was to maintain Politburo support.<sup>13</sup> Until April 1973, Brezhnev also relied on the strategy of inclusion, distributing Politburo responsibility for a policy as widely as possible.

However, after April 1973, Brezhnev appeared to drop the strategy of leadership weakness and develop an offensive strategy. At his point, he loudly called attention to détente's success and his own personal role in achieving détente.

By the end of 1973 Brezhnev's strategy was to diminish the seriousness of international crises and emphasize how much worse these crises could be without détente. His leadership authority was still based on his foreign policy achievements of détente with the US and West Germany.

Moreover, in this period, Brezhnev became a tactical expert at using the diplomacy of détente to fortify his authority in the Politburo. Larrabee pointed out that the sixteen-hour Crimea meeting with Brandt in September 1971, Brezhnev was unaccompanied by any other Politburo member. He used this meeting to refurbish his image and to portray himself "as a statesman capable of dealing with major world leaders."<sup>14</sup>

Brezhnev continued to make tactical use of international summitry. He employed the May 1972 summit meeting with President Nixon "to dramatize Soviet foreign policy and to parade his [Brezhnev's] authority" among members of his own Politburo.<sup>15</sup> The culmination of Brezhnev's "détente authority" occurred in his 1973 summer summitry, when he represented the Soviet Union first in West Germany and subsequently

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<sup>13</sup>Kissinger, White House, 1212.

<sup>14</sup>Larrabee, Politics of Reconciliation, 328.

<sup>15</sup>Ibid, 249-250.

the US. His visit to West Germany in May 1973 was the first one made by a Soviet leader. His visit to the US in June 1973 yielded successful results, and was particularly impressive when compared to Khrushchev's hostile summitry with John F. Kennedy.

Brezhnev's room for maneuver in US/Soviet negotiations was further increased by the West German ratification of the treaties with Poland and the Soviet Union in May 1972. Brezhnev was aware that his personal authority-building was intimately connected with West German détente so ratification of West German treaties with the Soviet Union and Poland was of great importance. He personally went to extreme lengths to ensure West German ratification. He interfered in both East European affairs and West German domestic affairs to ensure the treaties' successful negotiation and ratification.

In his 1971 Crimea summit with Brandt, he asked about the possibility of ratification, telling Brandt, "This is important for me because if it fails, there would be a setback that could last for decades."<sup>16</sup> He implied that the Soviet Union would experience setbacks if the treaties were not ratified, but certainly Brezhnev personally would have suffered a serious political setback that could have lasted for decades.

As for political pressure on Eastern Europe, in October 1971, Brezhnev personally went to East Berlin, probably to ensure a successful conclusion of the transit talks; agreement was reached in December 1971.<sup>17</sup> In October 1972 State Secretary Bahr went to Moscow, probably to ensure East German cooperation on the Basic Treaty; Foreign Minister

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<sup>16</sup>Brandt, People and Politics, 349.

<sup>17</sup>Michael Sodaro, Moscow, Germany, and the West: From Khrushchev to Gorbachev (Cornell University Press, 1990), 216.

Scheel followed in November 1972. Agreement on the Basic Treaty was reached in December 1972.<sup>18</sup> Scheel visited Moscow again in October 1973; he may well have suggested that Brezhnev pressure the Czechs in their treaty negotiations with the West Germans. Bonn and Prague established diplomatic relations in December 1973, after a great deal of Czech stalling which was probably encouraged by the East Germans.<sup>19</sup>

Surprisingly the Soviets exerted a great deal of influence on domestic West German politics before and after ratification of the Moscow Treaty. First, it is commonly believed that the Soviets convinced the East Germans to grant Easter break passes to West Berliners in February 1972 to indicate increasing good will.<sup>20</sup> In March 1972, Brezhnev made a surprising show of Soviet good will by recognizing the EEC at the Soviet Trade Unions Congress. In March 1972, Brandt announced (1) that the Soviets would accept the Letter on German Unity and (2) that they would provisionally approve the Soviet/West German trade treaty, which was then negotiated from 3 April to 7 April 1972.<sup>21</sup> These were both significant concessions. The Soviets had previously refused to acknowledge the Letter on German Unity, and the trade treaty indirectly acknowledged ties between West Berlin and West Germany.

The West German weekly *Der Spiegel* suggested that both Chancellor Brandt and State Secretary Bahr held secret talks with Soviet Ambassador Falin about the necessary Soviet assistance to ensure

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<sup>18</sup>Karl Birnbaum, East and West Germany: A modus vivendi (Westmead, UK: Saxon House, 1973), 80.

<sup>19</sup>Sodaro, Moscow, Germany, 245 See also Brandt's comments indicating that he believed the Soviets were responsible for successful results, in People and Politics, 416.

<sup>20</sup>Larrabee, Politics of Reconciliation, 338.

<sup>21</sup>Angela Stent, From Embargo to Ostpolitik (Cambridge University Press, 1981), 191-195.



ratification, probably following upon Brandt's discussion of necessary Soviet concessions at the September 1971 Crimea meeting.<sup>22</sup> As Michael Sodaro described the situation:

Falin remained in constant contact with the negotiators in a series of consultations that were probably unprecedented in diplomatic history.<sup>23</sup>

These negotiations most certainly occurred at Brezhnev's behest, possibly with the knowledge of some Politburo members. Recent evidence, revealed in East Germany, further substantiates the extent of Soviet pressure. Allegedly two Bundestag representatives were bribed by the Soviets to vote for Chancellor Brandt in a vote of no confidence, which took place in April 1972.<sup>24</sup> Brandt won the vote by two votes and, therefore, he remained in office.<sup>25</sup>

Soviet pressure on Brandt and support for his regime extended beyond the ratification period. Brandt decided to call for elections on 19 November 1972 gain public affirmation of his Eastern treaties. To help Brandt win this vote Moscow reaffirmed its support of a one billion dollar deal to have West Germany build a steel mill in Kursk.<sup>26</sup> Moreover, East Germany initialled the Basic Treaty on 8 November 1972 after numerous disagreements in the previous months.<sup>27</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>We know that this is likely since Falin even contributed to the Letter on German Unity. See "Unser Verdienst," *Der Spiegel*, 20 March 1972, 24-27. See also Brandt, People and Politics, 349.

<sup>23</sup>Sodaro, Moscow, Germany, 217.

<sup>24</sup>*Saechsische Zeitung*, 9 June 1993, 2. This information came out at the trial of Markus Wolf, former head of the Stasi, Ministry for State Security. Apparently one of the votes was bought for approximately \$30,000.

<sup>25</sup>In Germany, the opposition removes a chancellor by electing a successor in a majority secret ballot. CDU candidate Rainer Barzel lost the vote. See Honoré M. Catudal, The Diplomacy of the Quadripartite Agreement on Berlin: A New Era in East-West Politics (Berlin: Berlin Verlag, 1977).

<sup>26</sup>Sodaro, Moscow, Germany, 218.

<sup>27</sup>Birnbaum, A modus vivendi, 80-82.

After these foreign policy victories, Brezhnev added new Politburo members in April 1973 and increased the priority of his favored sector, foreign policy. Disagreement continues over how many of the new Politburo members were personally supportive of Brezhnev. Undoubtedly indicative of Brezhnev's successful authority-building, by April 1973, even those Politburo members who opposed détente were forced to recognize Brezhnev's personal role in the achievement of détente.

### **B. Internal Factors**

By the fall of 1971, it was clear that Brezhnev had staked his reputation on political and economic détente with West Germany and the US. This was particularly true in the summer of 1972 when two important trade treaties, which could potentially alleviate Soviet economic shortages, were concluded. One trade treaty between West Germany and the USSR was ratified in July 1972. Soviet approval was contingent on West German ratification of the treaty package. The second trade treaty between the United States and Soviet Union was signed in October 1972, but was never ratified.<sup>28</sup>

In general, the USSR benefited a great deal more from trade with West Germany than trade with the US. West Germans also stood to gain more from trade with the USSR: West German trade had a broad political consensus behind it, because it was much more diversified. US trade on the other hand, although high in volume, was not as attractive because it involved only one sector, grain sales.<sup>29</sup> West German trade

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<sup>28</sup>See Garthoff, *Détente*, 453.

<sup>29</sup>The reader should note, however, that the Soviets had a special need in this sector in 1972 because of a disastrous harvest.

with the Soviet Union more than doubled from 1971 to 1973, and between 1970 and 1975, it quadrupled.<sup>30</sup>

The domestic economic statistics show just how important foreign trade was for the Soviet Union by 1972. While GNP growth in 1971 was estimated at four percent, by 1972 it grew by only 1.5%. In 1972, the Soviet Union was plagued by the worst combination of drought and winter kill in the last fifty years, and the economic results were even worse than those of the catastrophic year, 1969. In 1972 agriculture suffered as a result:

A long severe winter with insufficient snow cover destroyed much of the winter wheat; a dry heat wave which swept the central black soil zone and the grain lands north of the Caucasus destroyed much of the spring planting and potato crop.<sup>31</sup>

As a result, twenty eight million tons of grain had to be imported, mostly from the US. The Soviet authorities even had to resort to admonishments in the press, urging people to "save on bread and potatoes" and warning against hoarding.<sup>32</sup> In June and December 1972, riots took place in Ukraine because of the population's dissatisfaction with shortages and living conditions.<sup>33</sup>

Due to these economic problems, the goals for the 1971-1975 plan were reduced. In 1972 there were drastic cut backs in the 1973 annual plan. The consumer goods sector was reduced by the largest amount. Under Brezhnev, this sector never regained the predominance that it enjoyed from 1968 to 1971.

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<sup>30</sup>Stent, From Embargo, 210. See also Jonathan Steel, World Power: Soviet Foreign Policy under Brezhnev and Andropov (London: Michael Joseph, 1983), 72.

<sup>31</sup>Dornberg, Brezhnev, 267 - 268.

<sup>32</sup>Ibid.

<sup>33</sup>Gray Hodnett, "Ukrainian Politics and the Purge of Shelest" (unpublished manuscript prepared for the annual meeting of the Midwest Slavic Conference, 5-7 May 1977), 13.

In contrast, in 1973, the Soviet Union was blessed with a record harvest. GNP growth reached 7.2%, the best statistic from the entire 1968-1972 period. Nonetheless, the wheat harvest of 1973 was still \$10 million short of the planned target, and some basic commodities such as butter and potatoes were still rationed. The windfall of 1973 could not make up for the terrible losses incurred in 1972. In order to encourage more production, Brezhnev toured Central Asia and Ukraine to demand pledges of over fulfillment from July to November 1973.<sup>34</sup>

Although by the end of 1973 and beginning of 1974, Brezhnev retreated from his emphasis on consumer goods,<sup>35</sup> Soviet leaders had other economic reasons to seek détente with West Germany and the US. As mentioned previously, foreign policy success distracted from domestic economic failure. Furthermore, Western high technology was necessary to make Soviet industry competitive; Western agricultural imports were essential to prevent rioting; and, most importantly, arms negotiations were crucial both to allow the Soviet Union to invest more in other sectors and to enhance public opposition to military increases in West Germany and the US.<sup>36</sup> According to Brandt, however, Brezhnev greatly overestimated the potential of West German trade in solving the Soviet Union's domestic economic problems.<sup>37</sup> Many of the Soviet Politburo leaders may well have agreed with Chancellor Brandt.

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<sup>34</sup>Breslauer, Khrushchev and Brezhnev, 218.

<sup>35</sup>Brezhnev changed his emphasis to big projects in agriculture, industry, and defense. See *Ibid.*, 207.

<sup>36</sup>Shevchenko makes the point that détente increased Soviet influence over Western pacifism. See Arkadii N. Shevchenko, Breaking with Moscow (NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 202. Hodnett has estimated that Soviet defense increases were down to less than three percent in 1971 and 1972, but by 1973 had increased to approximately six percent. See Hodnett, "Ukrainian Politics," 8.

<sup>37</sup>Brandt, People and Politics, 360-362.

**C. External Factors:**

By the summer of 1971, Brezhnev managed to oust Ulbricht, introduce a new CMEA program, reach a significant accord on the Berlin Treaty, reach an initial accord on SALT, and announce the Mutual Balance of Force Reduction talks (MBFR). Brezhnev's auspicious foreign policy achievements at the beginning of this period stood in stark contrast to the international crises the Soviet Union faced in 1967, 1968, and 1969.

Soviet détente policy appeared to achieve all its goals by the beginning of 1973, with the exception of improved relations with China. Political relations with Eastern Europe and Western Europe were strengthened. Western Europe moved away from its dependency on the United States. There had been a cease-fire in the Vietnam War. The US had begun to withdraw and the Soviet Union had not lost face. Foreign relations with the United States were extremely successful, aside from the shadow of Watergate and Nixon's subsequent loss of domestic authority. While the political problems in the US might have appeared to give the USSR an advantage, Nixon's inability to guarantee the success of American/Soviet agreements made Brezhnev's promises to his Politburo less tenable.

These achievements, however, suggested a new underlying tension for the Soviet Union. In this period, the USSR was a superpower and a major regional power at the same time.<sup>38</sup> Tensions over these two priorities were reflected among individual members of the Politburo and

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<sup>38</sup>This most certainly was used by the Eastern Europeans to argue for more power in their own region. If the Soviet were preoccupied with superpower matters, East Europeans needed to be more responsible for regional matters.

these conflicts exploded by the end of 1973. Tensions were strongest between Foreign Minister Gromyko, who favored superpower concerns, and party foreign affairs specialist Ponomarev, who favored solidarity with the Eastern European bloc.

These tensions were more problematic by the end of 1973, as international events began to affect détente adversely. However, Brezhnev accumulated enough authority in the Politburo that he could continue to argue for the policy of détente. One suspects that he needed to relent on his preferences in domestic policy in order to maintain conservative Politburo support for his foreign policy. This trend probably began in 1972 when the extent of the agricultural crisis became apparent to the whole country.

Nonetheless, all Soviet leaders had some reasons to be optimistic about the success of their détente policy with West Germany. At the end of 1971 the Berlin quadripartite agreement was finalized. In May 1972, the *Ostvertraege* were ratified by the West German parliament. The Traffic Treaty, the first treaty signed by a sovereign GDR, was negotiated and then ratified after the *Ostvertraege* went into effect. By the end of 1972, the two Germanies had agreed to the Basic Treaty, which established a type of diplomatic relationship between the two Germanies; this treaty was ratified by West Germany in May 1973. By September 1973 both Germanies had been admitted to the UN.

As far as foreign policy toward the United States was concerned, the Soviet leaders had reason to believe they had achieved great victories with détente. Nixon and Brezhnev met at summits in both the summer of 1972 and 1973. The 1972 summit was accompanied by a SALT agreement and Basic Principles Agreement. The 1973 summit was

accompanied by the Prevention of Nuclear War Agreement (PNW), a treaty in which the Soviets had shown great interest. No SALT II treaty was yet available but it was being negotiated and Nixon believed it could be completed by 1974. Most importantly, by the summer of 1973, the Americans had clearly withdrawn from the Vietnam War.<sup>39</sup>

Tension probably intensified with Eastern Europe after the Berlin accords, which were concluded in September 1971. These tensions were further heightened by the summer summitry of 1972 and 1973. In numerous speeches in the latter half of 1973, Brezhnev and other Politburo members sought to reassure the Eastern Europeans that their interests were not being forgotten in superpower agreements such as the 1973 PNW agreement.<sup>40</sup>

However, to the Soviet Politburo's relief, Eastern Europe was more effectively controlled by the Soviet Union from 1971 to 1973. As Robert Hutchings described Soviet efforts:

[The Soviet Union improved] nominal access of East European junior allies to the levers of decision-making while at the same time strengthening Soviet control and supervision through a tighter alliance infrastructure.<sup>41</sup>

The East Europeans adopted the Comprehensive Program in CEMA in July 1971. This was matched by a stronger political role for Eastern Europe in the Warsaw Pact and institutionalized multilateral summits with Brezhnev (Crimea Summits). Hutchings explained, however, that this multilateralism with Eastern Europe could better be described as

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<sup>39</sup>Up until April 1973, the United States still considered bombing North Vietnam, because of problems in obtaining American POWs.

<sup>40</sup>Harry Gelman, The Brezhnev Politburo and the Decline of Détente (Cornell University Press, 1984), 48-49.

<sup>41</sup>Robert L. Hutchings, Soviet-East European Relations: Consolidation & Conflict (University of Wisconsin Press, 1987), 235.

"multiple bilateralism:" the Soviet leadership developed a program of policy inclusion based on stronger economic, political, and military relations with Eastern Europe, which were designed to guarantee more political support from the Eastern Europeans. Such support would be sorely needed in the CSCE talks which were intended to build on the successful results of *Westpolitik*, talks which the Soviets hoped could further guarantee the territorial and political status quo in Eastern Europe.

Good relations with West Germany were central in guaranteeing a Soviet regional role as they reinforced *European wide* power, and could be used as leverage in US/Soviet relations as well as Sino-Soviet relations. As regards the interplay between superpower politics and regional politics, Gromyko reportedly said the following to other Soviet leaders in the summer of 1970,

We've lost our last hope with the Chinese, and we must finalize the [Moscow] treaty with the FRG without delay. Brandt is smart, and I think he'll work with us on this. *It's the lever to draw Europe away from American influence.*<sup>42</sup> (added emphasis)

The Soviets attempted to convince Brandt that they were "not trying to distance Germany from the Western allies." However, Brandt may have been smarter than Gromyko thought. As Brandt mentioned in his memoirs, Kosygin and Brezhnev were so adamant about this point, he did not believe them.<sup>43</sup>

While US/Chinese rapprochement at the beginning of this period forced the Soviets to make negotiation concessions with West Germany and the US, it is less clear if this was true by 1973. As the Soviets

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<sup>42</sup>Shevchenko, *Breaking with Moscow*, 169.

<sup>43</sup>Willy Brandt, *My Life in Politics* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1992), 189.



negotiated with the capitalists from 1968 to April 1971, China retained the ideological high ground. The China card worked as a lever on the Soviets at the end of 1971, when the announcement of Nixon's visit to China helped convince the Soviets to settle on the quadripartite agreement in September 1971. It worked in December 1971, when the Soviet Union probably worried that West Germany would conclude a trade agreement with China first, instead of one with the Soviet Union. As Gelman described this initial relationship:

The April [1971] ping-pong diplomacy may well have influenced the Soviets in their May decision to stop procrastinating over a commitment to negotiate limitation of offensive missiles and an ABM treaty simultaneously . . . It seems quite likely that the China factor played a role in accelerating the Soviet decision to moderate the terms of the Berlin quadripartite agreement in June and July 1971, again after months of stalling. The announcement of the Kissinger visit to China in mid-July 1971 confirmed long standing fears about the magnitude of the Sino-American understanding.<sup>44</sup>

Shevchenko confirmed this observation, reporting that Kissinger's July 1971 visit to China caused Gromyko to walk around with a "black expression" for weeks and that Nixon's China trip in February 1972 caused a heated session in the Politburo.<sup>45</sup> We also know that the Moscow summit of 1972 was announced one week after Kissinger announced his second trip to China in October 1971.

However, by 1973, China was a member of the UN and could not be as legitimately critical of Soviet acceptance of a normalization of relations between the two Germanies. Moreover, by the end of 1972, China was not at all cooperative with the USSR. In December 1972 there was an eruption of new border hostilities. By the end of 1973, it was clear that

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<sup>44</sup>Gelman, Politburo, 120.

<sup>45</sup>Shevchenko, Breaking with Moscow, 200.

the Soviets had not succeeding in winning China as a reliable political partner or reliable lever, but neither had the US or West Germany. The West's ability to influence China surely decreased when Chinese foreign policy was radicalized after the Xth Party Congress in August 1973. The formal end of the Vietnam conflict may have also reduced China's leverage on the US. China's influence must have further diminished as the Soviets became more interested in multilateral European talks and less interested in concluding bilateral negotiations with the United States and West Germany.

US/Soviet superpower negotiations created political pressure on the Soviet Union and sometimes Soviet concessions in its policies vis-à-vis West Germany. Soviet ratification of West German treaties, for example, preceded the SALT agreement by a few days. However, it should be remembered that the Soviets could also use West German negotiations to press for progress in US/Soviet negotiations as, for example, in US/Soviet trade treaty negotiations.

By the end of 1973, Soviet concern shifted to multilateral talks and the MBFR and CSCE began. In fact, it is quite likely that the Soviets pressured East Germany to conclude the Basic Treaty, so it could be another sovereign nation on the Soviet side at these negotiations. MBFR and CSCE served as favorite forums for the Soviet Union, because it could incorporate its role as a superpower and regional power. Nonetheless, international events which occurred after the summer of 1973 served as a drag on both the Soviet bilateral and multilateral détente initiatives. In September 1973, Allende was overthrown in Chile. In October 1973 Syria and Egypt attacked Israel in the Yom Kippur War and this was followed by the oil crisis, which created problems for

Soviet/East European relations. Finally the Jackson-Vanik Amendment, linking Jewish emigration and US/Soviet trade, passed the US House of Representatives and Senate in December 1973.

Meanwhile, any ideological risks which the Soviets might face from Eastern Europe at the CSCE were counterbalanced by the fact that strains had developed in the US/West European relationship. While earlier in the 1970s, French President Pompidou had tried to counterbalance Germany by moving closer to the US, by 1973, even the French seemed to agree that European unity was necessary goal in order to guarantee influence for individual European countries. Although Kissinger declared 1973 the "Year of Europe," West Europeans chafed under this patronizing term and instead considered 1973 the year of European unity, as the Common Market expanded from six to nine countries.

From Willy Brandt's vantage point, policy was not to be determined by two superpowers alone, and the influence of a united Europe had become indispensable. The Yom Kippur War of 1973 exacerbated differences between the Americans and West Europeans, who believed the US showed too much favoritism for Israel and had not taken possible steps to avoid the war.<sup>46</sup>

By the end of 1973, US leverage was decreasing, thus making the Soviets less willing to compromise and take risks in détente with the United States and probably West Germany as well. Certainly, this attitude toward Germany was reinforced in May 1974 when Chancellor

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<sup>46</sup>Garthoff, *Détente*, 400.

Brandt was removed from office due to the discovery of a Soviet spy in the Chancellor's office.<sup>47</sup>

These international events served as fodder for détente detractors, such as Shelepin and Mazurov, in the Politburo and as aggravation for détente supporters, such as Kosygin and Podgornyi. Détente detractors emphasized the need for more unity in the socialist camp and more Soviet support for the Third World, while détente supporters were much more focused on upholding Soviet détente achievements with the US and Western Europe. On the plus side, détente supporters could point to the January 1973 Vietnam peace treaty as a victory for US/Soviet détente. On the negative side, détente detractors could point to events in Chile, in the mid-East and Nixon's weak domestic position after Watergate. Eastern Europeans were especially concerned about the dangers of détente to smaller countries, and they appeared to view the end of 1973 as a good opportunity to raise their voices anew, asserting their own national authority within the Soviet bloc.

Up until mid-1973, Politburo members kept détente with West Germany and the United States on the "front burner," but they were also increasingly concerned with an ideologically loyal Third World in 1972 and 1973. We know at the beginning of 1972, the Soviets increased their arms shipments to North Vietnam, quite possibly to spite the Chinese.<sup>48</sup> We also know the Soviets started arms shipments to Egypt beginning in January 1973. Possibly the Soviets had become so sure of détente, they thought they could get away with a more militant posture in

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<sup>47</sup>Brandt was replaced by Helmut Schmidt who was known to be less interested in Soviet/West German negotiations.

<sup>48</sup>The reader should note, however, that after the Paris Peace Accords, the Soviets refused North Vietnam's requests for more weapons until mid-1974.

the Third World. Possibly the decision to gradually move away from détente gave birth to the decision to create better, more reliable ties to the Third World. At any rate, this interest in Third World relations continued as détente began to look more doubtful in 1974 and 1975.<sup>49</sup>

## **II. Political Competition Model**

In this chapter, the author describes the policy positions of sixteen Politburo officials. By April 1973, the Politburo included sixteen full members. Three new full members were appointed while two previous members were removed. The author discusses speeches from fourteen full members. In addition, speeches from Shelest, a full member who was removed April 1973, and speeches by Ponomarev, who became a candidate member in May 1972, are included. This section does not include Voronov, another Politburo member who was removed in April 1973, as he rarely gave speeches in this time period. Polianskii, who also fell into disfavor in this period, made very few speeches so he has been omitted as well.

Emboldened by his successes, Brezhnev had Voronov demoted from his position of Russian Premier to Chair of the People's Control Commission in July 1971. Voronov was removed from the Politburo in April 1973 along with Shelest, who had been demoted in May 1972 from First Secretary of the Ukraine to Deputy Chair of the USSR Council of Ministers. Subsequent to their removal, Brezhnev could adamantly pursue his preference of Western trade and could more easily establish personal dominance of the Politburo in foreign policy issues. This shift in

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<sup>49</sup>It is interesting to note that the GDR became a major Soviet proxy in the Third World during this period.

Brezhnev's authority is also indicated by other leaders' increasingly positive descriptions of Brezhnev's role in foreign policy

While Kosygin had served as the culprit for economic problems in the previous period and suffered politically as a result, in this period Brezhnev blamed Polianskii for agricultural problems. In February 1973, Polianskii was removed from his position as First Deputy Prime Minister.<sup>50</sup> No doubt Kosygin's political fortunes also suffered from the economic disasters of 1972. Once Polianskii was removed, there were no strong opponents to Brezhnev's economic policies at home or in the West with the exception of Shelepin, who was removed from the Politburo in 1975.

With the addition of three new Politburo members in April 1973, Brezhnev could probably count on the general support of Andrei Gromyko, Yuri Andropov, and the occasional support of Andrei Grechko for Soviet détente with West Germany. In his memoirs, Brandt suggested that Gromyko was generally supportive of détente with West Germany and Brezhnev made Gromyko a Politburo member to "bind him more closely" to Brezhnev's détente policy.<sup>51</sup> Andropov probably followed Gromyko's lead. Defense Minister Grechko, a personal friend of Brezhnev's, appeared to be supportive of détente with West Germany as long as the defense sector continued to be well funded.

By April 1973, Brezhnev probably had the support of Andropov, Gromyko, Kosygin, Podgornyi, Kirilenko, Kulakov, Kunaev, and Shcherbitskii in his policy to West Germany. The reader is reminded that

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<sup>50</sup>Polianskii was demoted from Deputy Chair of the All-Soviet Council of Minister to Minister for Agriculture. He was finally removed from the Politburo in 1976.

<sup>51</sup>Willy Brandt, *My Life*, 184. Shevchenko expressed the same opinion of Gromyko's position on West German détente. See Shevchenko, *Breaking with Moscow*, 168-169.

Brezhnev already had the support of the latter six Politburo members by the XXIVth Party Congress. Kosygin and Podgorny, although generally supportive of détente, suffered from diminished political power in this period: Podgorny in his responsibility for agriculture and Kosygin in his foreign policy role. Andropov and Gromyko were new Politburo members who were somewhat supportive of détente prior to April 1973, and were politically indebted to Brezhnev after that date. In addition, Grechko and Suslov may have been ambivalent supporters as long as ideological and military goals were not threatened too much.

Along with Brezhnev's own vote, Brezhnev would have had the certain support of nine out of sixteen Politburo members by April 1973. Whether he was able to consistently maintain this support by the end of 1973 is doubtful. Most notably, Suslov no longer appeared willing to lend his influential support to détente with West Germany and, by the end of 1973, may have become a détente opponent.

#### **A. The Most Politically Powerful Members**

In this period disagreement lingered between Brezhnev and Kosygin, but it centered mainly on economic philosophy. Gromyko and Brezhnev in tandem took over Kosygin's previous role in foreign policy. This was formally acknowledged when Gromyko became a full Politburo member in 1973, skipping the candidate member stage. However, while Brezhnev focused on possibilities of Western trade to improve the Soviet economy, Kosygin turned to internal production possibilities. Kosygin probably viewed Brezhnev's Western trade expectations as highly unrealistic.

Suslov appeared to become more conservative in his views about *Deutschlandpolitik* in this period, as well. He most certainly did not

praise Brezhnev as lavishly as other Politburo leaders did. He seemed to become more and more alarmed by the combined impact of Soviet ideological concessions in foreign policy and Soviet ideological concessions on the home front to consumer tendencies.

## BREZHNEV

Brezhnev's speeches in 1971 indicated that despite his foreign policy successes, he was on the defensive throughout this year. In speeches before the East German Congress in June 1971 and before the Polish Congress in December 1971, he discouraged opponents of *Deutschlandpolitik*, in those two countries and probably the Soviet Union as well.

It is alleged in some places in the West that with this [Moscow] treaty the FRG is making concessions to the USSR. The question is not one of unilateral concessions--there are none on either side--but of the political meaning and general purport of the treaty.<sup>52</sup>

No matter how refined bourgeois propaganda becomes, *no matter who tries to slander our policy*, the world's people see more and more clearly and understand better and better that the combat solidarity of the socialist countries and their firm and irreconcilable position with respect to imperialist aggression and all forms of international piracy constitute one of the main pillars of peace.<sup>53</sup>  
(added emphasis)

By the time Brezhnev made his speech at the March 1972 Soviet Congress of Trade Unions, his tone was less defensive and he appeared to begin a shift to an offensive leadership strategy. He admitted to some problems with the FRG, he made concessions on the West European Common Market, and then forged a unifying statement to bring together those ideologically opposed to *Deutschlandpolitik* and those supporting it:

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<sup>52</sup>*Pravda*, 17 June, 1971, 1-2.

<sup>53</sup>*Pravda*, 8 December 1971, 1-2.



A rather sharp struggle has developed in the Federal Republic over the question of the treaties' ratification. There are some politicians who oppose the treaties and are even trying to place doubt on the very possibility of a genuine reconciliation and the development of normal relations between the FRG and socialist countries. . .

The Soviet Union by no means ignores the existing situation in Western Europe, including the existence of an economic grouping of capitalist countries as the Common Market. We are carefully observing the activity of the Common Market and its evolution.

The USSR's foreign policy combines a firm rebuff to the aggressive ventures of imperialism with a constructive approach to urgent international problems; it combines implacability in the ideological struggle with a readiness to develop mutually advantageous relations with states of the opposing social system.<sup>54</sup>

However, in the summer of 1972, Brezhnev was still cautious, not claiming too much foreign policy success or personal credit for détente as we see in his cautious comments to Castro directly after the US/Soviet summit. Of course, one has to take into account that these comments were made to a leader who would not be supportive of détente with the West:

We appraise the new situation soberly and realistically. Despite the successes in easing international tension, we are still faced with a difficult struggle against the enemies of the cause of peace and of national and social liberation. Marxist-Leninists entertain no illusions regarding the anti-popular essence of imperialism and its aggressive aspirations. . .

New opportunities are opening up for strengthening peace in Europe since the FRG's treaties with the Soviet Union and Poland went into effect. The confirmation of the principle of the inviolability of borders, the renunciation of the uses of force or the threat force--all this is having a favorable effect on the world wide political climate.<sup>55</sup>

In December 1972 in Hungary, Brezhnev once again stressed the positive nature of Soviet/West German relations. He suggested that the outcome of West German elections could have a very good effect on

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<sup>54</sup>*Pravda*, 21 March 1972, 1-3.

<sup>55</sup>*Pravda*, 28 June 1972, 1-2.

Soviet relations with West Germany. He also emphasized that improved relations were quite positive for Eastern Europe as well:

It seems to us that this [election] makes possible the implementation in the near future of useful new steps to improve the political climate on our continent. I have in mind such steps, for example, as the signing and entry into force of the treaty on the principles of relations between the GDR and FRG.<sup>56</sup>

This was coupled with a stronger Brezhnevian offensive on the economy at the December 1972 Plenum, stressing a critical attitude toward agricultural results, but also a renewed emphasis on growth in both Sector A, heavy industry and defense, and Sector B, light industry and consumer goods:

We often hear that our troubles stem from bad weather conditions which made for a very difficult agriculture year. We have to overcome these troubles. . . [W]ithout sufficient growth in Sector A, we cannot successfully develop Sector B . . . Without powerful industries in Sector B, without its successful development, we will run into growing difficulties in all parts of the economy, including Sector A.<sup>57</sup>

During Brezhnev's May 1973 visit to Germany, he reminded his audience of the importance of his own past accomplishments as well as the growing importance of long-term trade agreements,

Our meeting with Chancellor Brandt in Oreanda in the autumn of 1971 was an important landmark in the successful development of our relations along the path outlined by the Moscow Treaty . . . The course of our conversation with Chancellor Brandt confirms that there are good possibilities for the future, including in the field of economic ties. In addition to the expansion of conventional trade, there are also opportunities for concluding long term deals on a large scale . . . Such deals are not of a short-term, ad hoc nature, they open the road to joint actions in important sectors of the economy, actions to bring both sides a guaranteed benefit over a period of many years.<sup>58</sup>

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<sup>56</sup>*Pravda*, 1 December 1972, 1-2.

<sup>57</sup>L.I. Brezhnev, *Ob osnovnykh voprosakh ekonomicheskoi politiki KPSS na sovremennom etape*, Vol. II (Moscow, 1975), 243, 249.

<sup>58</sup>*Izvestiia*, 23 May 1973, 1-2.

In his subsequent visit with President Richard Nixon in June 1973 he responded quite strongly to those who still attacked his détente policy:

President Nixon and I proceeded from the assumption that in politics those who do not look ahead inevitably find themselves in the rear, among the stragglers . . . The improvement of Soviet/American relations undoubtedly played a role with respect to promoting the end of the war in Vietnam, which lasted for many years.<sup>59</sup>

This latter statement was the beginning of a campaign to reassure Eastern Europe that their ideological interests were not being sold out for superpower interests. Speaking in Kiev in July 1973, Brezhnev made the following remarks:

Attempts in such matters to counterpose 'great' or even 'super great' (an expression used in some quarters) states to medium-sized or small states are completely unwarranted, unnecessary and even harmful.<sup>60</sup>

In an issue of *Pravda* from 7 September 1973, he expressed his thanks for letters *which were often addressed to him personally*. This emphasis on his own person corresponded to increased attention on the part of Politburo members to Brezhnev's personal role in foreign policy.

Following Allende's overthrow a few days later, Brezhnev responded in a speech in Bulgaria to what he labeled Western criticism, but what must have been increasing Eastern European, Chinese, and domestic criticism, of the vulnerable Soviet position in multilateral negotiations:

In the West one sometimes hears voices saying: Since the USSR and other socialist states are expressing great interest in resolving questions of European security and in the development of political and economic cooperation, then why not put pressure on them and bargain for some concessions [as in the CSCE] . . . We are against narrow, selfish calculations.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>59</sup>*Pravda*, 25 June 1973, 1.

<sup>60</sup>*Pravda*, 27 July 1973, 1-3.

<sup>61</sup>*Pravda*, 20 September 1973, 2.

A few days later, speaking in Tashkent, he responded to criticism of unsatisfactory negotiation results and increased tension in international affairs. One can well imagine that other Soviet leaders became more critical of negotiation results once international conflict with the US resumed in Chile. In a speech dedicated mostly to agricultural issues, he inserted the following observation:

True, sometimes one can hear allegations that the concluded treaties are unsatisfactory since they do not completely solve existing problems once and for all so to speak . . . No, the principle of 'all or nothing' is in no way suitable in international politics . . . Peaceful coexistence extends to all states, great and small.<sup>62</sup>

Brezhnev's response to the outbreak of conflict in the Middle East was typical of his caution in attacking the West verbally:

The process of international détente is gathering force. But in certain circles of the world it is being interrupted by new outbreaks of conflict and tension. One example of this is the war that has broken out again in the Near East in the past few days.<sup>63</sup>

Later in October 1973, while speaking to the World Peace Congress, he clearly praised his own role in foreign policy while ignoring or downplaying international crises:

We are deeply convinced that the main tendency in the development of contemporary international relations is the change that now taking place from the 'cold war' to the relaxation of tension, from military confrontation to the consolidation of security and peaceful cooperation . . . In our time, the true role and political influence of a statesman is to a large extent determined by how well he understands the importance of the problems of safeguarding and consolidating peace and by what he does in practical terms to solve this most important problem of our day.<sup>64</sup>

Many other Politburo members praised this speech.

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<sup>62</sup>*Pravda*, 25 September 1973, 1.

<sup>63</sup>*Pravda*, 9 October 1973, 1-2.

<sup>64</sup>*Pravda*, 27 October 1973, 1-3.

Addressing the Indian parliament in November 1973, Brezhnev acknowledged international tension, but used the *limited* nature of these tensions to justify the importance of his détente policy, which he indicated was necessary to prevent the expansion of tension:

Like all significant turns in historical development, this turn in relations between the USSR and US is not taking place easily, is taking place in conditions of a struggle between various forces, with some zig-zags and hitches . . . I think you will agree with me, esteemed members of Parliament, that things would look quite different in the world were it not for this factor of détente which has appeared in the last two or three years. If the current conflict had flared up in an atmosphere of universal tension, the aggravation of relations, let us say, between the US and the USSR, the clash in the Near East might have been far more dangerous, it might have assumed a scope threatening world peace. It can be said for sure that if this had been the case, the joint initiative by the USSR and US would have been impossible.<sup>65</sup>

At the December 1973 Plenum, although the foreign policy portion of Brezhnev's speech was not published, we know from other Politburo members' comments that Brezhnev spoke about domestic policy and foreign policy. He appeared as militant as ever about the necessity of improving the domestic economy. Bruce Parrott paraphrased and quoted Brezhnev's comments as follows:

The measures taken thus far by the Politburo, the CC, and the Council of Ministers to improve economic administration [are] . . . 'insufficient.' 'Whether we desire it or not,' the task of improved economic administration 'is being raised by life itself.'<sup>66</sup>

This statement implies that Brezhnev's interpretation of the domestic economy's progress was still quite negative, thereby making success of détente all the more essential to him personally.

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<sup>65</sup>*Pravda*, 1 December 1973, 1-2.

<sup>66</sup>Parrott, *Politics and Technology*, 258.

While it is impossible to pinpoint an exact time when Brezhnev became dominant in the Politburo, his unwillingness to back down in the face of international crises in 1973 indicated that he had become and remained a dominant figure in the Politburo due to his foreign policy achievements. Brezhnev's domestic authority was further strengthened by other Politburo members' defense of détente and their praise for Brezhnev's personal role in détente in this period. In 1973, he did back down somewhat on his domestic ideas for authority-building, such as the priority of the consumer sector.

#### KOSYGIN

As Bruce Parrott pointed out, at the XXIVth Party Congress, Kosygin shifted back to a traditionalist view of the economy--possibly because Brezhnev had successfully appropriated this issue or because the Soviet economy's performance had improved somewhat.<sup>67</sup>

As for foreign policy, in his June 1971 election speech, Kosygin presented a defense of détente. He made the following comments, possibly in reference to both the Berlin *Junktim* and SALT:

The opponents of a relaxation of tensions are unwilling to risk coming out openly against our proposals. They claim that one Soviet proposal or the next is very complex and requires a great deal of time to study and they advance various preliminary conditions in order to avoid a resolution of the problems . . . We shall continue to expose the maneuvers of those who merely talk about peace while moving matters in a completely opposition direction.<sup>68</sup>

As for his advocacy of greater international trade, in October and November 1971, when Kosygin mentioned trade with West Germany, he

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<sup>67</sup>Ibid., 249-250. It is also possible that the Politburo pressured Kosygin into this action as a form of self-criticism. See Breslauer, *Khrushchev and Brezhnev*, 98-99.

<sup>68</sup>*Pravda*, 10 June 1971, 1-2.

mentioned it only in the larger European context. This was in fact the only context in which he mentioned increased German trade in this period, a position which stood in contrast to that of Brezhnev. While at the beginning of 1972 Kosygin still argued that account be taken of both "domestic and worldwide [achievements] in science and technology,"<sup>69</sup> by the end of 1972, he began to focus solely on internal Soviet production:

The most important feature of the economy of a developed socialist society is its powerful economic, scientific, and technical potential, and high level of production. This makes it possible to make fuller use than ever before of the socialist system's latest achievement in modern science and technology to boost the people's living standards and comprehensively satisfy the social and personal requirements of the Soviet people . . . Our people have managed to considerably reduce the gap between the national wealth of the USSR and US.<sup>70</sup>

Possibly this was Kosygin's own reevaluation of the source for economic productivity but it is more likely he was responding to Brezhnev's policy of increasing reliance on trade with West Germany to solve problems of domestic consumer demand. He was probably responding to an increasingly conservative economic trend in the Politburo after the economic disasters of 1972.<sup>71</sup> Possibly this was also a strategy to counteract Brezhnev's increasing authority after the summer of 1972.

As for the evaluation of Soviet détente achievements and their effect on the rest of the world, Kosygin appeared to support Brezhnev's

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<sup>69</sup>*Gosudarstvennyi Piatiletanii Plan Razvitiia Narodnovo Khozaistva SSR, 1971-1975* (Moscow, 1972), 14.

<sup>70</sup>*Kommunist* #17, (1972).

<sup>71</sup>Georgii Arbatov, *The System: An Insider's Life in Soviet Politics* (NY: Random House, 1972), 212. Arbatov mentioned that conservatives compromised reforms at every turn and played on the rivalry between Kosygin and Brezhnev beginning in 1972.

interpretations at the beginning of 1972 through the end of 1973. In 1972, he mentioned that the Soviet attempts to solve international problems also allowed Vietnam to withstand US aggression and allowed Saudi Arabia to attack Israel and retrieve Saudi terrorists.<sup>72</sup> In 1973, after the October War, he argued that without détente, the crisis "would probably have assumed a far more dangerous nature."<sup>73</sup> It is important to note that Brezhnev adopted exactly this same theme.

Kosygin also made positive statements about Brezhnev's personal role. The first signs of Kosygin's praise for Brezhnev's role in détente occurred in July 1973. However, he only vaguely praised Brezhnev, recognizing Brezhnev's diplomatic success in West Germany only within the European and superpower context:

All peace-loving forces approve of the General Secretary's visits to the US, FRG, France, and the results of the negotiation with the leaders of these countries.<sup>74</sup>

This praise occurred while Kosygin was in Vietnam, where he also said, "[Peaceful coexistence] won't forget class principle of interest of revolutionary forces."<sup>75</sup> Possibly he was reminding Brezhnev, just as Suslov was, that Brezhnev too should be more concerned with ideological issues.

Kosygin later sounded more positive about Brezhnev's role in détente-making in a speech to Yugoslavia. This speech occurred after the events in Chile, and possibly this indicated Kosygin's growing realization that Brezhnev's authority would become more necessary during renewed East-West conflict:

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<sup>72</sup>*Pravda*, 15 March 1972.

<sup>73</sup>*Sovetskaia Belorussia*, 15 November 1973, as quoted in Garthoff, *Détente*, 393.

<sup>74</sup>*Pravda*, 14 July 1973, 4.

<sup>75</sup>*ibid.*



Leading steps in peaceful coexistence were taken by General Secretary Brezhnev. The result of his visits to the US, FRG, and France take on great importance in strengthening principle of peaceful coexistence.<sup>76</sup>

However, he again balanced this comment with mention of Chile, "We express deep respect for communist, socialists, and all workers in Chile, fighting for the right cause."<sup>77</sup>

By November 1973, in a speech to the Belorussian Supreme Soviet, Kosygin may have decided to turn against Brezhnev on the domestic economy *and* foreign policy, by emphasizing both internal production and the imperialist West German threat. As for the first subject, he commented, "The plan indicates the necessity of complete utilization of internal production growth reserves." As far as détente was concerned, his comments were strikingly negative:

Aggressive imperialist forces are continuing to carry out a policy which demands constant vigilance from our side. Militarism still exists in Europe, where the activities of revanchists and other reactionary forces oppose the normalization of relations between socialist countries and the FRG, successful results in the CSCE . . . Exactly this policy is evident in the Near East . . . We can not appear indifferent with regard to the intrigues of influential reactionary forces in West Germany.<sup>78</sup>

This statement implies that Kosygin, while not attacking détente with West Germany, was challenging Brezhnev. His comments on both the domestic economy and on détente differed from Brezhnev's. It appears that Kosygin was hedging his bets on foreign policy decisions within the Politburo, generally presenting the pro and con in his speeches.

However, Kosygin did come to the defense of détente after international crises caused its future to be doubtful and Brezhnev

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<sup>76</sup> *Pravda*, 30 September 1973, 4.

<sup>77</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup> A.N. Kosygin, *Izbrannye Rech'i i Stat'i* (Moscow, 1974), 738-740.

adopted Kosygin's language on this issue. Possibly, as Sodaro suggested, Kosygin's reactions were simply in deference to the shifting "dominant consensus" in the Politburo, which began to stress "vigilance."<sup>79</sup> It is also possible that Kosygin had real doubts about the long-term effects of détente and Brezhnev's leadership.

#### SUSLOV

At the beginning of 1971, Suslov clearly remained an opponent of consumerist tendencies and détente, because of their ideological danger. His objections were echoed throughout this period by Brezhnev's clear enemies, Shelest and Shelepin. In 1971, Suslov wrote:

The growth of the people's well-being is a many sided task in content and significance, and it would be a grave mistake to interpret it from a narrow consumer-oriented angle.<sup>80</sup>

Nor did Suslov see any compelling need for an increase in Western trade. As Bruce Parrott stated, Suslov carefully "avoided Brezhnev's association of the scientific-technological revolution with East-West cooperation:"<sup>81</sup>

Our socialist system is convincingly demonstrating its superiority over the capitalist system . . . The differences in the levels of economic development between the USSR and the US continues to narrow relentlessly in our country's favor and, in certain very important indicators, we have already surpassed the US.<sup>82</sup>

Suslov's criticisms of Brezhnev's approach to the domestic economy were mirrored in Suslov's concerns about *Deutschlandpolitik*. Subsequent to West German ratification of its Eastern treaties in May

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<sup>79</sup>Sodaro, *Moscow, Germany*, 230.

<sup>80</sup>*Kommunist*, No. 14 (September 1971), 15-24.

<sup>81</sup>Parrott, *Politics and Technology*, 257.

<sup>82</sup>*Rabochii Klass i Soveremennyi Mir*, No. 4 (1971), 4.

1972, the Supreme Soviet ratified the same package of treaties in June 1972. At that point, Suslov made the following comments:

Forces grouped mainly around the CDU/CSU in defiance of the interests of the overwhelming majority of the West German population, tried in every way to delay and frustrate the ratification of the treaty by the West German parliament. As is known these attempts ended in defeat. Nevertheless, it can be expected that the forces of reaction in the FRG and in some other capitalist countries will continue even after the treaties' ratification to pursue their line and to put spokes in the wheels of those who are sincerely striving for mutual understanding and cooperation. We must by no means lose sight of this circumstance.<sup>83</sup>

Later in June 1972, Suslov reinforced this negative attitude toward *Deutschlandpolitik*, saying:

We do not have illusions with regard to imperialism, its anti-populist nature and policy, its ideology of anti-communism . . . We should never forget the necessity to fight a decisive battle with bourgeois ideology.<sup>84</sup>

Suslov had not changed this general attitude toward *Deutschlandpolitik* by December 1972, when he made the following observations while addressing the French Communist Party:

The aggression of the American imperialists and their satellites still continues in certain parts of the world. On the European continent, influential forces that are trying to retard the process of détente, and to bring back the cold war still exist and are active. The revanchists in West Germany have still not abandoned their delirious plans for the revision of European borders.<sup>85</sup>

As for any personal adulation of Brezhnev, Suslov limited it to the following statement in July 1973. Note that, unlike other Politburo members, he mentioned the Politburo first and Brezhnev second, the FRG first and the US second:

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<sup>83</sup>*Pravda*, 1 June 1972, 1-2.

<sup>84</sup>All-Soviet Meeting of *Znanie* (20 June 1972) quoted in M.A. Suslov, *Izbrannoe Rechi i Stat'i* (Moscow, 1972), 686.

<sup>85</sup>*Pravda*, 15 December 1972, 4.

The April 1973 CC Plenum expressed a high appraisal of the great constructive efforts of the Politburo and the personal contribution of the General Secretary of the CPSU CC, Leonid Brezhnev, in the field of foreign policy and international relations . . . L. Brezhnev's visits to the FRG, the US, and France were another contribution to the cause of peace and security of nations.

Suslov also invoked his standard reminder about ideological vigilance:

Our foreign policy is a class-based socialist policy. It is intended to create advantageous external conditions for the building of communism in our country, to strengthen the fraternal alliance of the countries in the socialist commonwealth.<sup>86</sup>

Suslov appeared to have grave ideological concerns in this period about détente--although he was probably more concerned about détente with the US than with West Germany. Possibly he had grave doubts about the wisdom of a détente policy emphasizing Western trade combined with the rapidly growing authority of Brezhnev. At any rate, he did not follow Brezhnev's or Kosygin's lead by praising specific elements of détente with West Germany or citing détente as a major factor leading to the resolution of Vietnam and the October 1973 War.

#### GROMYKO

In September 1971, Gromyko in his capacity as Foreign Minister, lauded Soviet/West German relations at the UN, but he also noted that many open issues remained. By April 1972, Gromyko sounded more positive, mentioning successful trade negotiations between West Germany and the Soviet Union as well as completed traffic talks between the two Germanies. The reader is reminded, however, he may have been trying to affect the outcome of the May 1972 ratification vote in West Germany.

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<sup>86</sup>*Pravda*, 14 July 1973, 2.

In this April 1972 speech, Gromyko suggested that treaty results benefited not only the FRG and USSR but also other European states. He echoed Brezhnev on the importance of ratification and mentioned the same division between West German realists and reactionaries that Brezhnev mentioned in his March 1972 Trade Unions speech. Gromyko guarded himself from détente opponents, saying, "If it turns out that the FRG does not wish to cooperate with us, we, of course will draw corresponding conclusions."<sup>87</sup>

Gromyko continued with a positive tone in September 1972, when discussing the Basic Treaty and the Czech Treaty. He was always very careful to delineate the political expectations of the Soviet Union in these talks. Gromyko mentioned the treaties signed by the USSR and Poland with FRG and emphasized that these treaties recognized the inviolability of European boundaries. He then said:

The removal from European soil of the legacy of war must be completed through the normalization of relations between the GDR and the FRG and the settlement of relations between the FRG and Czechoslovakia with the basic recognition that the Munich agreement was invalid from the very beginning.<sup>88</sup>

In November 1972, an historical article was published by Gromyko, in which he emphasized Chicherin's achievements as Foreign Minister, in particular Chicherin's foreign policy of rapprochement with the West in the early 1920s. Gromyko specifically mentioned Rapallo, an understanding initiated by the Soviets, which allowed them to develop diplomatic ties with Germany in exchange for economic agreements. Gromyko also cited the agreement between Nixon and Brezhnev as "new

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<sup>87</sup>*Pravda*, 13 April 1972, 2.

<sup>88</sup>TASS, 26 September 1972.

proof of the necessity for cooperation."<sup>89</sup> Possibly he was responding to the economic pressure of agricultural disasters, simply providing historical justification for Brezhnev's approach to the West, or gloating at the outcome of the West German elections.

Gromyko's most positive speech regarding West German détente occurred in the last half of 1973. At the first session of the CSCE in July 1973, he asked the following question, addressed to the Chinese and all other détente detractors:

Who could lose from this? No one--or more precisely, only those, whether near or far from the European continent, who count on maintaining tension and preserving hot beds of military danger and who are trying to prevent a rapprochement between the states of East and West.

Close bilateral relations, which needless to say do not lose their value, would be supplemented and enriched by cooperation on a multilateral basis with the participation of several European states and in certain cases perhaps all of them.<sup>90</sup>

Gromyko, as a new member of the Politburo, may have felt bound to Brezhnev. However, it is noteworthy that all his statements appear to be devoid of personal adulation towards Brezhnev. Perhaps this was simply due to Gromyko's stoic nature or the fact that he was already a subordinate of Brezhnev's as a new Politburo member.

In August 1973, Gromyko again echoed Brezhnev and defended Soviet détente policy in the face of growing Third World doubts:

We believe that every state, whether large or small, can and should make its contribution to the common cause of normalizing the international situation and strengthening universal peace.<sup>91</sup>

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<sup>89</sup>*Pravda*, 24 November 1972, 3.

<sup>90</sup>*Pravda*, 4 July 1973, 5.

<sup>91</sup>*Pravda*, 31 August 1973, 1, 4.

He appeared to adopt the exact same line as Brezhnev in the face of international hostilities in September 1973. Furthermore, Gromyko was extremely positive in his evaluation of the international effects of détente:

A reliable settlement in the Near East is also facilitated by the positive changes toward détente in the world as a whole that have been achieved in many parts of the globe during the past few years. A number of complex international questions, including some that have seemed impossible to approach, have been resolved.<sup>92</sup>

By the end of 1973, Gromyko apparently gave his entire support to Brezhnev on détente, unlike the qualified support which Brezhnev received from Kosygin and the diminished support he received from Suslov. While it is possible that Gromyko enjoyed the limelight provided by US/Soviet diplomacy, the evidence considered here suggests that Gromyko saw improved relations with West Germany as an important part of the détente package. In this latter period it was Brezhnev and Gromyko who were the main actors in foreign policy toward West Germany and the US; Kosygin's role had become minimal. In fact, by the end of 1973, Gromyko's words sounded very much like Brezhnev's own.

### **B. Opponents of Brezhnev and Détente**

As in the previous period, Voronov, Shelest, and Shelepin remained opposed to Brezhnev and his détente program. Unfortunately, for the purposes of this study, Voronov, after his demotion in July 1971, gave virtually no important speeches. Shelepin strengthened his opposition to Brezhnev and détente in 1972, but apparently lessened his opposition somewhat by 1973. Shelest was silenced at an earlier date, not giving any major speeches after his demotion in May 1972. However, Shelest's

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<sup>92</sup>*Pravda*, 22 December 1973, 4.

adamant speeches between May 1971 and May 1972 show just how severely he continued to oppose détente with West Germany and Brezhnev personally. Voronov and Shelest were removed from the Politburo in April 1973, Shelepin in 1975.

#### SHELEPIN

Shelepin, as Chair of the Trade Unions, opposed both Brezhnev's economic ideas and his foreign policy approach. This was very clear in the speech Shelepin delivered to the XVth Congress of Trade Unions, a forum which Brezhnev also addressed and where he made concessions on the West European Common Market. In general, Shelepin objected to economic innovation. He particularly objected to increasing consumerism; his wording on this matter was very similar to that of Suslov's. Furthermore, in forced praise of Brezhnev's foreign policy, he mentioned Brezhnev only in the context of a number of other leaders rather than singling out Brezhnev as other leaders did.<sup>93</sup> Shelepin mentioned treaties with Germany only in conjunction with Egyptian and Indian treaties, thereby creating a context of more ideologically correct countries, utilizing another tactic that even Suslov, the "king" of ideology, did not employ:

The Party rightly points out that it would be a mistake to take a simplified approach to the task of raising popular well-being, for heightening peoples living standard is inseparably connected with the growth of social production, the inverse of labor productivity. The Soviet trade unions are fully aware that our advance toward the communist society and the strengthening of the international positions of our mighty socialist country decisively depend on the successful development of the socialist economy. The economy is the material basis and main source of the well-being of the Soviet people. On it rests the defense might of the Soviet Union . . .

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<sup>93</sup>The reader is reminded that Suslov only mentioned the Politburo first; he did not mention any specific names. See pages 237, 238 of this dissertation.



The most important international actions have been the visits of comrades L.I. Brezhnev, N.V. Podgorny, and A.N. Kosygin to many socialist, developing, and capitalist countries; the conclusion of treaties by the Soviet Union with the FRG, Egypt, and India.<sup>94</sup>

This speech can be contrasted with Shelepin's speech to the Federal Council of Trade Unions in January 1973, concerning both Brezhnev and the "Peace Program," which is much more positive in its tone:

Our world-wide offensive in connection with the peace program is the most important foreign policy action accomplished by the party and the leadership in recent times, and in the first place, last year indissolubly connected with the name of the General Secretary of the Central Committee of the CPSU, comrade L.I. Brezhnev.<sup>95</sup>

It seems that in March 1972, Shelepin still hoped to change Brezhnev's course but after the removal of Shelest and Voronov, this political position was too dangerous. Also Brezhnev's many foreign policy successes in the summer of 1972 may have made continued opposition more difficult.

Shelepin did not revive his clear opposition after the international crises in September and October 1973. At the World Trade Union Congress, which was also addressed by Brezhnev, a very uncharacteristic remark was made by Shelepin:

The détente that has developed is not a temporary phenomenon, a mere episode, but the beginning of a radical restructuring of the international situation on the basis of peaceful coexistence.<sup>96</sup>

These no longer sound like the words of an active détente detractor.

## SHELEST

Shelest's remarks resembled those of Shelepin but Shelest used even more negative rhetoric. The reader is reminded that Shelest was

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<sup>94</sup>Report of the All-Union Central Council of Trade Unions to the XVth Congress of Trade Unions of the USSR (20 March 1972), 13, 15.

<sup>95</sup>*Trud*, 23 January 1973, 2.

<sup>96</sup>*Pravda*, 17 October 1973, 4.

demoted to Deputy Premier of the Soviet Council of Ministers in May 1972. In a speech given in East Germany in October 1971, he said:

No intrigues, no matter where they come from, can break our fraternal ties or divide our unity. Let no one entertain illusions in this respect.<sup>97</sup>

On the domestic front, Shelest's objections to consumer tendencies were very similar to those of both Suslov and Shelepin; he was clearly critical of Brezhnev's approach to this issue:

Frequently some people in oral and even printed propaganda attempt to resolve important problems very superficially, one-sidedly. That which is easier, simpler--we sometimes propagandize. We have a lot to talk and write about in raising the well being of the people. Indeed this is a very important and responsible business.

But one can not accept the fact that in some places it is becoming the style as it were, to speak exclusively about benefits, about some 'horn of plenty' from which goods and blessings pour forth by themselves. These are harmful consumer tendencies. It is well known that without persistent labor there will be nothing.<sup>98</sup>

Shelest delivered a speech to ideological workers in Kiev in November 1971, which has been cited as evidence of a certain forced approval of *Westpolitik*, but one still detects criticism upon careful examination of the wording in a comparative context:

The activity of the Soviet Union has played a decisive role in the positive changes taking place on the European continent . . . I would like to cite the great importance of the treaties concluded between the Soviet Union, the Peoples' Republic of Poland, and the FRG, as well as the four power agreement on West Berlin . . .

Comrades Brezhnev's, Podgorny's, and Kosygin's [visits] to numerous countries of the European, Asian, African, and American continents have an important role in settling urgent international problems.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>97</sup> *FBIS EE*, 6 October 1971.

<sup>98</sup> *Kommunist Ukrainy*, No. 12 (1971) as quoted in Hodnett, "Ukrainian Politics," 60-61.

<sup>99</sup> Transcript of republican conference of ideological workers in Kiev in *FBIS USSR*, 15 November 1971.

The reader should note that Shelest diminished his praise of Brezhnev by including two other important leaders just as Shelepin had in his March 1972 Trade Unions speech. Shelest further downplayed the value of *Deutschlandpolitik* by including it with policies toward the continents of Asia and Africa as well as the United States; the reader is reminded that Shelepin only mentioned Egypt and India. Shelest went on to make the point that Brezhnev's visit to France was especially noteworthy thereby underplaying the importance of policy toward West Germany.

One suspects, however, that Shelest's May Day speech in Kiev in 1972 finalized his unswerving opposition to détente and his removal from the Politburo:

The imperialists are increasing international tension, are kindling new hotbeds of war.

Our party, its Leninist Central Committee and the Soviet government are decisively unmasking the treacherous schemes of the imperialists and other instigators of war, are taking all the necessary measures to relax international tensions, are directing the efforts of the Soviet people toward strengthening the economy and defensive might of the country of Soviets.<sup>100</sup>

When one considers that this speech was made before West Germany ratified the *Ostvertraege*, after concessions were made in SALT, one week before the Traffic Treaty was signed, and shortly before Nixon's visit to Moscow, this was most certainly not an endorsement of Brezhnev's détente policy vis-à-vis either the US or West Germany. This active opposition was no longer tolerated by Brezhnev, who most

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<sup>100</sup>*Pravda Ukrainy*, 2 May 1972, as quoted in Hodnett, "Ukrainian Politics," 53.

certainly was the main proponent of Shelest's removal from the Politburo.<sup>101</sup>

### **C. Brezhnev's Remaining Sectoral Allies**

President Podgornyi's role as a Brezhnev *détente* supporter was more important in this period than the previous period, because Brezhnev's agricultural ally, Polianskii, had become politically weaker. However, Garthoff has suggested that Podgornyi was much more interested in defense cuts through SALT, while Brezhnev and Kosygin focused more on the prospect of increased Western trade. Moreover, in Kissinger's evaluation, Podgornyi was a man who never gave the impression that he was expected to "prevail, dominate, or exercise a decisive influence" and Nixon compared him to a "mid-Western Senator."<sup>102</sup>

#### PODGORNYI

Relative to leaders in the agricultural sector, President Podgornyi retained a strong voice in foreign policy, because occupied an important governmental post, and possibly because his was a voice which supported Brezhnev's *détente*. It is also possible that Podgornyi's interest in cutting defense was useful to Brezhnev in some Politburo bargaining sessions. However, his interest in aiding the consumer goods sector was no longer taken as seriously.

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<sup>101</sup>Apparently when Shelest was demoted in May 1972, Brezhnev comforted him, saying "you'll be a friend of my family." Shelest replied that he did not want to be Brezhnev's "pet dog." Shelest's wish was granted: the reader is reminded Shelest was ultimately removed from the Politburo in April 1973. See John Loewenhardt, James R. Ozinga, Erik van Ree, The Rise and Fall of the Soviet Politburo (NY: St. Martin's Press, 1992), 64.

<sup>102</sup>Kissinger, White House Years, 1216 and Nixon, Memoirs, 619.

As early as 1971, in his election speech, Podgorny showed his support of détente with West Germany, but disdain for a specific *Junktim* between the Eastern treaties and the Berlin Treaty:

Our country believes that all European problems can and must be solved simultaneously, along parallel lines, without lumping them all together. We are actively and consistently working for a reduction in tension, normalization of the situation and consolidation of the existing territorial status quo in Europe. The entry into force of the treaties concluded by the Soviet Union, the People's Republic of Poland, with the FRG would significantly further these goals. We favor the achievement of a mutually acceptable settlement concerning West Berlin by eliminating artificial obstacles and delays.<sup>103</sup>

Podgorny renewed his show of support for détente after the German ratification of the treaties. In clear contrast to Suslov's ambivalent response to ratification, Podgorny stated:

Certain circles in the FRG have by no means given up attempts to resolve European questions from positions of revanchism and pan-German nationalism. Recognition of the current European borders is clearly not to their liking; they do not accept the existence of the sovereign socialist GDR. However, as was correctly said here, the majority of the FRG's population is not behind these people. The will of this majority has also found expression in the West German parliament's decision to ratify the FRG's treaties with the Soviet Union and Poland.<sup>104</sup>

Podgorny's personal support for Brezhnev was made clear in *Pravda's* coverage of a speech he gave in July 1973 in Bulgaria:

[Podgorny noted] the important personal contribution of L.I. Brezhnev, General Secretary of the CPSU CC, in implementing the Soviet State's Leninist foreign policy.<sup>105</sup>

Podgorny did not list Brezhnev in the context of a lot of other leaders as Shelest and Shelepin did. Later in this same speech, Podgorny specifically praised a positive *Deutschlandpolitik* and détente with the

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<sup>103</sup>*Pravda*, 11 June 1971, 1-2.

<sup>104</sup>*Pravda*, 19 May 1972, 1, 3.

<sup>105</sup>*Pravda*, 9 July 1973, 1.

US. He did not, however, come out in strong defense of détente, as Brezhnev, Gromyko, and Kosygin did during the international crises at the end of 1973.

#### **D. Regional Secretaries Allied with Brezhnev**

##### KUNAIEV

In this period, Kunaev was still a Brezhnev supporter but his support took on a less urgent tone. One suspects Kunaev may have been concerned about losing other Politburo leaders' favor in his extreme support of Brezhnev, especially after coming under fire during a time of agricultural shortage. Kunaev seemed to imply in October 1972, the year of the greatest agricultural failure, that Brezhnev's patronage was conditional:

We well understand the advice of Brezhnev [to guarantee grain production] expressed at Alma Alta in his fiftieth anniversary speech to the Kazakhstan CPSU.<sup>106</sup>

However, by the end of 1972, Kunaev once again trumpeted a very broad approval of Brezhnev. Kunaev may have believed he had lost Brezhnev's cooperation after disastrous agricultural results in 1972, but, possibly with reassurance from Brezhnev, he became one of the first Politburo leaders to lavishly praise Brezhnev personally in this period. His praise began in December 1972, while most other officials waited until 1973. Note that Kunaev extended praise not only in foreign policy, but in domestic policy as well:

All the workers of the republic gladly accept Brezhnev's high evaluations of their work on the bread front. In all questions of domestic and foreign policy, the Kazakhstan workers, like all the

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<sup>106</sup>*Pravda*, 14 October, 1972, 1-2.

Soviet people, express their full trust and support for the Communist Party, and . . . General Secretary Brezhnev.<sup>107</sup>

## SHCHERBITSKII

Shcherbitskii, who was appointed to the Politburo in April 1971 and became Shelest's replacement as head of the Ukrainian Communist Party, was supportive of General Secretary Brezhnev and détente with West Germany. He was another of the first Politburo members to praise Brezhnev's role in foreign policy. He made the following comments in July 1972:

Thanks to the active purposeful activities of CC CPSU, of the Politburo, of the General Secretary of the CC CPSU Comrade L.I. Brezhnev, we have successfully realized Lenin's approach to strengthening peace and international security through the Peace Program worked out at the XXIVth Party Congress.<sup>108</sup>

In December 1972, Shcherbitskii appeared to hedge his bets when describing the world situation:

Our foreign policy is clear and understandable . . . This policy corresponds to the essential interests of the Soviet Union, of world socialism, and of all revolutionary progressive forces today . . .

But there are still forces in the world, blinded by evil who show hatred toward communism . . . But all of these forces are in vain.

Shcherbitskii must have later reconsidered the negativity implied by this last statement for he withdrew it in his book of speeches published six years later.<sup>109</sup>

By the summer of 1973, Shcherbitskii was a convinced Brezhnev and détente supporter. With the exception of Kirilenko, no one else was ever quite as effusive in praising Brezhnev:

Soviet people are deeply aware of the enormous, historic importance of the work that Comrade Brezhnev did in in the USA

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<sup>107</sup>*Pravda*, 23 December 1972.

<sup>108</sup>V. V. Shcherbitskii, *Izbrannye Rechi i Stat'i* (Moscow, 1978), 19.

<sup>109</sup>Quoted from *Pravda*, 22 December 1972, 6; this contrasts with Shcherbitskii, *Izbrannye*, 57.

and in Paris, Bonn, and the fraternal socialist countries. In his businesslike efficiency, calm confidence, firmness and devotion to principle, the whole world saw the greatness. . .of our mighty Soviet power.<sup>110</sup>

This support continued through the end of 1973, as indicated by Shcherbitskii's description of the Near East crisis and his defense of Brezhnev in December 1973:

It is absolutely correct to underline that in all of our successes, great services have been rendered by the militant headquarters of our party -- by the CC CPSU, by the Politburo, and by General Secretary L.I. Brezhnev.

At the same moment the Near East crisis has been aggravated . . . , the peaceful, the certain, and the entire internal forces hear the conviction and optimism of Brezhnev's speech [at the World Congress]. There is a deep Marxist-Leninist analysis of the international situation in this speech.<sup>111</sup>

Shcherbitskii, had clearly joined with the other détente defenders by the end of 1973.

#### GRISHIN

While Grishin, First Secretary of Moscow, has generally been described either as politically independent or a détente opponent, by the end of 1973, he appeared to join the ranks of those who approved of Brezhnev's leadership and his détente foreign policy. The reader should note the caution in Grishin's initial speech in 1971, on the anniversary of the Russian revolution, in which he did not mention Brezhnev specifically and advocated upholding the interests of the GDR. His comments seemed remarkably similar to those of Suslov:

The long-range goal of a Soviet foreign policy are a militant, anti-imperialist spirit, a clear cut class orientation and, at the same time, a realistic, constructive approach to international problems that are ripe for solution through negotiation and cooperation. Our

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<sup>110</sup>*Pravda*, 28 July 1973, 2.

<sup>111</sup>Shcherbitskii, *Izbrannye*, 117.



actions in the international arena are based not on temporary, transient, considerations but on a principled strategic course . . .

The exchange of visits, consultations, and talks with statesmen and political leaders of various countries, which are conducted by the Soviet Union on a broad scale, serve the interest of the consistent improvement of the foreign policy situation . . .

[The quadripartite agreement] is based on the consideration of European reality and fully meets the requirements for the respect of the independence, sovereign rights, and interests of the GDR.<sup>112</sup>

In March of 1972, in a speech to the Italian Communist Party, Grishin was not yet a Brezhnev supporter, discussing the continuing struggle against imperialism and the guaranteed well-being of the Soviet people:

Soviet people don't have problems where one could say there was uncertainty whether or not they could be solved satisfactorily. The mood of our people is good.<sup>113</sup>

But by the summer of 1973, Grishin appeared to become a Brezhnev supporter:

Brezhnev's visit in the FRG and his discussions with President Nixon have led to a new step in developing cooperation . . .

As is known the Politburo, the Presidium of the Supreme Soviet and the Council of Ministers have looked at the results of Brezhnev's visit to the USA and completely approved of the political and practical results of this visit which has great meaning and is an event of great importance . . .

The Soviet people highly value the great personal contribution of Comrade Brezhnev and the achievement of common peace and security in the existence of the foreign policy course of our country. We wish him more success.<sup>114</sup>

Possibly Grishin was not sincere in his support for détente or Brezhnev, but his position as a newer member of the Politburo (added at the XXIVth Party Congress in 1971) made him vulnerable to the dominant political tendency, which, by 1973, was to publicly support Brezhnev and détente with both the FRG and US.

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<sup>112</sup>*Pravda*, 7 November 1971, 1-3.

<sup>113</sup>*Pravda*, 15 March, 1972, 3-4.

<sup>114</sup>*Pravda*, 13 July 1973, 1, 4.

## E. The Remaining Politburo Members

### KIRILENKO

An initial speech from Kirilenko in 1971 indicated general support for the Eastern treaties:

We are not just standing up for the end of open acts of aggression and liquidation of armed conflicts, unleashed by imperialism. . . we are for a really serious improvement of international life. [This cause would be served by] ratification of the agreement between the Soviet Union and West Germany and between Poland and West Germany.<sup>115</sup>

At the beginning of 1972, Kirilenko clearly stated his support for détente. He was another of the first Politburo members to praise Brezhnev personally. It is interesting, however, that Kirilenko mentioned Brezhnev's trip to France first and did not mention the upcoming US/Soviet summit:

Here I must by all means speak about the significant progress, which has been achieved on the path to détente and peace in Europe. The role which the CC CPSU and Soviet government has played in this purposeful and bold policy has generally been acknowledged. Such strong actions as the visit of Brezhnev in France, his meeting with Brandt, his trip to Yugoslavia have been possible because of the breath of fresh air in the European political climate.<sup>116</sup>

In a later speech in January 1973, Kirilenko revealed continued support for Brezhnev, saying, "All people and a wide stratum of foreigners highly praise Pompidou's meeting with Brezhnev."<sup>117</sup> In a speech given in Syria on 5 July 1973, Kirilenko praised Brezhnev, saying "his personal contribution" is highly appreciated. He went on to justify

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<sup>115</sup>*Pravda*, 9 June, 1971, 1-2.

<sup>116</sup>*Problems of Peace and Socialism*, No. 4 (1972) as quoted in A.P. Kirilenko, *Politika Sozidaniia i Mira* (Moscow, 1980), 233.

<sup>117</sup>*Pravda*, 25 January 1973, 1-2.

détente not because of its peace-loving nature but because of its concrete results for the Soviet Union:

The reason for [détente] . . . is the fact that the correlation of forces in the international arena has changed in favor of peace and social progress, and no one can fail to take this actual fact into consideration. The policy 'from positions of strength,' with the aid of which the imperialists tried to prevent the growth of socialism and the upsurge of the national liberation movements is clearly bankrupt, a convincing example of this is the victory of the heroic Vietnamese people in the struggle for their freedom and independence. All this is a great success for all progressive and peace loving forces of the world . . .<sup>118</sup>

It is noteworthy that Kirilenko, while at one time probably a personal skeptic about détente, switched to the Brezhnev/Gromyko/Kosygin line by the end of 1973, viewing détente as irreversible. At this time, he was quite adulatory in his description of Brezhnev's contributions to foreign policy and downplayed the nature of the crisis in the Near East. The following are quotes from Kirilenko's speech on the Russian revolution in 1973:

I would like to note that political détente favors the expansion of mutually advantageous economic, scientific, and technical ties between countries with different social systems. These ties are beginning to assume such scope and nature that one can expect they will eventually become an increasingly significant material factor in peaceful relations among states.

All this makes it possible to say that good pre-conditions are being created for the accomplishment of the task set by the April (1973) plenary session -- *to make the favorable changes that are taking place in the world arena irreversible.*

The specific measures that the Soviet Union is taking in this direction were discussed in detail by Comrade L.I. Brezhnev on October 26 in his *brilliant and trenchant speech* to the World Congress of Peace Forces. . .

While realizing the great complexity of the situation in the Near East, at the same time one may note that conditions for a lasting and just settlement of the crisis in this region are now more favorable than ever before.<sup>119</sup> (added emphasis)

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<sup>118</sup>*Pravda*, 5 July 1973, 4.

<sup>119</sup>*Pravda*, 6 November 1973, 1-3.

Kirilenko was converted to the Brezhnev approach to West Germany by 1973. The promise of economic advantages, without a loss to the Soviet Union's international standing may have won him over as a détente supporter. In addition, Brezhnev's increased authority and international stature in 1973 was probably a strong factor in changing Kirilenko's political views.

#### PEL'SHE

Pel'she, First Secretary of Latvia, became a little more supportive of détente with West Germany in this period. However, he did not become an avid détente supporter, nor a Brezhnev supporter.

In a speech in West Germany in 1971, he spoke positively of the Moscow Treaty, but was sure to point out the following:

The Moscow Agreement still has not been ratified. We know that there are quite influential circles in your country who would like to interfere with its ratification and its implementation.<sup>120</sup>

Later in a speech in Finland, he again sounded a negative tone concerning ratification, which was reminiscent of Suslov's tone:

It should not be forgotten that in Europe, there are forces which would very much like to prevent peaceful cooperation of European peoples. It is known that an intense struggle has developed in West Germany concerning the ratification of the West German treaties with the Soviet Union and Poland.<sup>121</sup>

In contrast in December 1972, in a publication for the West German Communist Party, he adopted a more positive tone, especially concerning the economic aspect of détente:

At present there are several significant improvements [in West German/Soviet relations]; a certain foundation has been created

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<sup>120</sup>Speech to the West German KPD at Dusseldorf in November 1971 as quoted in A. Ia. Pel'she, *Izbrannye Rech'i i Stat'i* (Moscow, 1978), 484.

<sup>121</sup>XVI Congress of Finland's Communist Party in April 1972 as quoted in *Ibid.*, 494.

for mutual trust, and economic cooperation between our countries is growing; this carries with it great possibilities for mutual profit.<sup>122</sup>

In a speech held in January 1974, Pel'she evaluated détente and Brezhnev's role in it. He did not allocate a very important role to Brezhnev and described Brezhnev's meeting with West German leaders only after Brezhnev's meetings with socialist leaders:

Our party and the Soviet people have seen the high evaluation of the General Secretary's service, and great approval of the foreign policy course of our party on the side of all peace loving forces . . .

In the past period, a number of important steps were taken to develop the peaceful 'offensive' of the Soviet Union; there were several important international events. Among them were the meeting at the Kremlin of leaders of communist and workers' parties of all fraternal countries, the summit talks with the United States, West Germany, France, Japan, and India, where a number of important agreements were concluded.<sup>123</sup>

This speech is reminiscent of Shelepin's and Shelest's approach as Pel'she mentions West Germany with many other countries. Possibly, after temporarily considering détente with West Germany in a positive light, the international crises in late 1973 convinced the Latvian First Secretary otherwise.

#### MAZUROV

Mazurov, Deputy Premier on the Council of Ministers, continued to be an opponent of détente in this period. His statements show that he never became a strong Brezhnev supporter. He either mentioned Brezhnev with other leaders or only vaguely praised him. Clearly he joined with the conservative reaction at the end of 1973 as he was especially concerned with upholding rights of liberation struggles and the Third World.

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<sup>122</sup> *Unsere Zeit*, December 1972, as quoted in *Ibid.*, 520.

<sup>123</sup> CC meeting of the CP in Moldova, 9 January 1974, as quoted in *Ibid.*, 546, 547.

First, in an October 1971 speech in Vietnam, there was no mention of the Moscow Treaty or Berlin Treaty.<sup>124</sup> In February 1972, Mazurov gave a speech in Syria, mentioning that Brezhnev was in France and also met with the West German Chancellor at the Crimea, but in the same breath mentioned Kosygin's trips to Denmark and Norway.<sup>125</sup> Similarly in a speech before the Supreme Soviet in July 1973, Mazurov said there was a "high evaluation of Brezhnev's report to the Politburo," but he referred to Brezhnev's summitry in the context of diplomatic trips made by Podgorny, Kosygin, and Gromyko.<sup>126</sup> He therefore, used similar tactics to those of Brezhnev's enemies, Shelepin and Shelest.

In Mazurov's November 1972 revolution speech he was sure to emphasize that superpower accords are not to be achieved "at the expense of any other states." He concluded this speech saying:

The Soviet Union's foreign policy has been, is, and will continue to be a socialist, class and internationalist policy. We advocate the easing of international tension. We advocate a lasting peace. It is for this reason that we resolutely oppose acts of aggression, that we oppose all attempts to suppress the peoples' liberation struggle, to interfere in their affairs and to violate their rights.<sup>127</sup>

He expounded on this theme one more time at the end of 1973, showing that his position had not significantly changed throughout this period. His words remind one of Suslov's:

The condition of the relaxation of international tension which has become discernible does not remove from the agenda questions of ideological antagonism of the two systems and of the consistent rebuffing of bourgeois ideology and propaganda. Imperialism has not altered its reactionary essence, it has merely changed its tactics in the struggle against socialism.

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<sup>124</sup>*Pravda*, 6 October 1971, 1, 3.

<sup>125</sup>*Pravda*, 23 February 1972, 4.

<sup>126</sup>*Pravda*, 18 July 1973, 1-2.

<sup>127</sup>*Pravda*, 7 November 1972, 1-2.

Finally in a very vague tribute to Brezhnev, he added:

The visits paid by Comrade Brezhnev to major countries of the capitalist world and the talks with leading figures of the chief countries of the West have played a special part in the assertion of the principle of peaceful coexistence among states with different social systems. The results of these visits and talks have had a favorable, salutary influence on the whole international situation.<sup>128</sup>

This vague praise for Brezhnev was followed by a tirade about Chile. Obviously, Mazurov was not one of the leaders who supported Brezhnev's détente, so he did not defend it in the face of the Middle East crisis.

#### ANDROPOV

Andropov, head of the KGB, tried to "sit on the fence," mentioning both sides of the détente argument, as did Grishin, but by the end of 1973, Andropov showed signs of being a Brezhnev supporter and an even stronger supporter of détente. He still was careful, however, to mention the continuing dangers of imperialism.

In a *Kommunist* article, published at the beginning of 1971, Andropov discussed the problem of right opportunists, who believed in the transformation of capitalism, and left opportunists, who could not see any common interest with capitalists.<sup>129</sup> In June 1972, at an international theoretical conference, he talked at length of the importance of anti-imperialist unity, but also said:

Europe is at a new stage of development. Important achievements are the ratification and implementation of agreements between the Soviet Union, Poland, and the FRG, the four power agreement on Berlin, and the agreement between the FRG and GDR.

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<sup>128</sup>*Sovetskaia Kirgiziia*, 20 December 1973, as quoted in *FBIS USSR*, 7 January 1974, R14, R15.

<sup>129</sup>Andropov, *Izbrannye Rechi & Stat'i* (Moscow, 1979), 413.

In this same speech, he also recognized Nixon's visit to the Soviet Union as a "practical step."<sup>130</sup>

By the end of 1973, while still remaining cautious, Andropov appeared to cast his lot more conspicuously with the Brezhnev détente faction:

Never before has the foreign policy of the Soviet Union been so effective or produced such splendid results within so short a period. As you know a major role in the achievement of these results have been played by Comrade Brezhnev's visits to the socialist countries, the US, West Germany and France.

Noting the positive trends in in the development of international life we by no means close our eyes to the dangerous aggressive action of the aggressive circles of imperialism [in the Near East and Chile].<sup>131</sup>

However, it should be noted that Andropov mentioned Brezhnev's visit to socialist countries first as did Shelepin, and he did not defend détente in the face of the Middle East crisis as Brezhnev, Gromyko, and Kosygin had.

#### GRECHKO

Gelman suggested that a mutually dependent relationship developed in this period between Defense Minister Grechko and Brezhnev:

Brezhnev repeatedly relied upon Grechko to render him tacit political support in his dealings with the party oligarchy; that is, through his association with Brezhnev, Grechko was to imply a military testimonial to the correctness of the party leader's political conduct, choices, evasions, and compromises. This relationship was invoked long before the defense minister entered the Politburo in 1973, but became more important thereafter.<sup>132</sup>

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<sup>130</sup>Ibid., 445-446.

<sup>131</sup>Quoted in Martin Ebon, The Andropov File (NY: McGraw Hill, 1983), 185.

<sup>132</sup>Gelman, Politburo, 94.



Garthoff described a slightly different version of the Grechko/Brezhnev relationship, depicting apparent differences of opinion as shared interests which were represented in different tones,

The differences in emphasis [between Grechko's and Brezhnev's speeches and articles] were significant as indications of the perceived need to balance the requirements for détente and defense with members of the leadership stressing points of particular interest to themselves within the consensus.<sup>133</sup>

This author's findings tend to substantiate both views at different times.

In an initial speech in 1971 Grechko praised Brezhnev's visit to the GDR and socialist cooperation. In May 1972, he called Brezhnev's address to soldiers "a remarkable event."<sup>134</sup> However, later, at an All-Union Army Conference in March 1973, Grechko built on the theme of contradictions between imperialism and socialism. He was reported as saying the following:

Grechko mentioned specific results of our peace offensive on the foreign policy front. However, he emphasized the anti-popular, class nature of imperialism remains unchanged. Imperialism has not abandoned and will not abandon its class aims. Acute crisis situations, at any moment capable of rocking the entire system of world relations, are arising in the world through imperialism's fault as before. Imperialism is not reconciled to the existence of the socialist states and is not about to lay down its arms.<sup>135</sup>

Bruce Parrott paraphrased and quoted from an article in *Kommunist Vooruzhennykh Sil*, where Grechko endorsed Brezhnev's political supremacy and praised the work of the Politburo in defense:

[The Politburo] always kept defense questions at the center of its attention and every significant question of military construction

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<sup>133</sup>Garthoff, *Détente*, 434.

<sup>134</sup>*Pravda*, 9 May 1972, 2.

<sup>135</sup>*Krasnaia Zvezda*, 28 March 1973, 1-2.

was 'handled directly by the Politburo, headed by Comrade L.I. Brezhnev.'<sup>136</sup>

In a speech held at the end of 1973, Grechko defended the fact that large and small states should be treated the same, as Kosygin and Brezhnev had before him, but he also attacked imperialist interests as Suslov had. Moreover, there was no overt praise for Brezhnev in this speech:

The Leninist foreign policy, the Peace Program advanced at the XXIVth CPSU Congress meets the vital interests of all states, large and small, is finding warm support among the Soviet people.

The intrigues of the reactionary, aggressive circles of imperialism, the military operations that broke out through their fault and the unceasing arms race remind the Soviet people once again that it is necessary to continue to exhibit a high degree of vigilance and to strengthen the economic and defensive might of the Soviet Union.<sup>137</sup>

Galia Golan pointed out that on 8 October 1973, in a speech given the same day as a conciliatory speech by Brezhnev, Grechko cited the Middle East was as "proof of the aggressive nature of imperialism."<sup>138</sup> Later on, however, Grechko appeared to reconsider this statement and joined the Brezhnev/Gromyko/Kosygin line, saying "[détente has] prevented the dangerous eruption of the war in the Near East from assuming dimensions threatening general peace."<sup>139</sup> Possibly Grechko just wanted to bolster the Soviet position at the international conference on the Middle East which had convened in December 1973.

It is even more possible that Grechko agreed to be more cooperative on détente in return for Brezhnev's assurance that he would heavily

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<sup>136</sup>*Kommunist Vooruzhennykh Sil*, No. 8, 1973, 11 as cited in Bruce Parrott, "Political Change and Civil-Military Relations" in Timothy J. Colton and Thane Gustafson, ed., *Soldiers and the Soviet State* (Princeton University Press, 1990), 53, 54.

<sup>137</sup>*Pravda*, 7 November 1973, 1-2.

<sup>138</sup>Galia Golan, *Soviet Policies in the Middle East from World War II to Gorbachev* (Cambridge University Press, 1990), 85.

<sup>139</sup>*Komsomolets Tatarii*, 9 January 1974, as cited in Garthoff, *Détente*, 395.

support the military sector, especially if détente's fortunes declined. It is equally possible that Grechko was being hemmed in by political bargaining in the Politburo. Dusko Doder has suggested that Brezhnev was able to use Gromyko and Andropov to limit Grechko's power.<sup>140</sup>

#### PONOMAREV

Gelman suggested that Politburo candidate member Ponomarev, who was concerned with Third World interests, greatly opposed détente with the US and West Germany. While Ponomarev clearly was not supportive of Brezhnev personally, he did have minimal intermittent praise for détente with West Germany. He made the following comments in Bulgaria in June 1972, shortly after joining the Politburo:

The ratification and implementation of the Soviet and Polish agreements with the FRG is a great achievement, as is the four power agreement on West Berlin and the agreements between the FRG and GDR. Peaceful initiatives of the socialist countries and other peace loving forces helped to create the circumstances that allowed considerations of security and cooperation issues on the European continent to be transformed to a concrete practical level.<sup>141</sup>

However, one month later at a theoretical conference, he said the following, citing the cases of Angola and Mozambique:

In our time, as never before, there is a growing revolutionary, anti-imperialist potential of wide masses, national interests and expectations, which find themselves in unparalleled conflict with imperialism.<sup>142</sup>

In this same speech, in a very begrudging fashion, he viewed the FRG somewhat more positively:

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<sup>140</sup>Dusko Doder, *Shadows and Whispers* (NY: Random House, 1986), 221 as cited in Parrot, "Political Change" in Colton and Gustafson, *Soviet State*, 56.

<sup>141</sup>B.N. Ponomarev, *Izbrannoe Rech'i Stati'* (Moscow, 1977), 445.

<sup>142</sup>*ibid.*, 467.

The situation is changing in the FRG, where a few years ago one could observe an extreme reemergence of fascist and revanchist elements. However, one should not forget that this danger has not disappeared.<sup>143</sup>

Possibly Ponomarev believed that now the Soviet Union had ratified the treaty package with West Germany, wholesale opposition to détente with West Germany would make it impossible for him to influence Western European foreign policy.

This author could find no specific praise from Ponomarev concerning Brezhnev in this period. Ponomarev did say the following about Brezhnev on Lenin's Birthday in 1974:

Our foreign policy is deeply principled and persistent. The meetings of the General Secretary of the CC CPSU, the President of the Supreme Soviet, the President of the Council of Ministers, and other Politburo members with leaders and other political officials of the US, France, FRG, Japan, India, from Arab countries and many other countries can be considered the core of positive development in international relations.<sup>144</sup>

Ponomarev used the tactic of citing many names and places just as Shelest and Shelepin had. It is also interesting that France preceded the FRG in Ponomarev's speech, while most other leaders placed West Germany first. Ponomarev belonged to those Politburo members who were not supportive of Brezhnev or his détente policies.

#### **IV. Conclusion**

Brezhnev appeared to experience a "window of opportunity" in his authority-building, based on the foreign policy of détente with West Germany and the US, between the summer of 1972 and 1973. This same window appeared to be closing by the end of 1973. In the US, Nixon lost his domestic authority and American public opinion appeared

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<sup>143</sup>ibid.

<sup>144</sup>ibid., 523.

to turn against détente. Simultaneously, the Soviets hedged their bets by gradually venturing more into the Third World.

By 1972, Brezhnev emphasized Sector A, heavy industry and the defense sector, as well as Sector B, light industry and consumer goods. Brezhnev reconciled these developments by relying on foreign trade to make up for a lack of internal production in Sector B and in agriculture, thereby making détente crucial to his domestic program. In contrast, Kosygin responded by suggesting that the USSR increase its internal productivity, thereby eliminating a dependence on détente.

Brezhnev's domestic and international leadership strategy was based on the following détente coalition by 1973. Brezhnev's personal supporters appeared to have widened from Kirilenko to include Kunaev, Shcherbitskii, Kulakov, and possibly Grishin. The latter four were all added to the Politburo at the end of the XXIVth Party Congress. Détente supporters widened from Brezhnev, Kosygin, and Podgorny to include Gromyko and possibly Andropov. The latter two were added to the Politburo in April 1973. Single issue supporters, with the exception of Podgorny, virtually disappeared: Suslov and Grechko appeared to only give conditional support to détente with West Germany and Polianskii probably ceased to be a supporter after the downturn in his political career. Of the politically vulnerable, only Shelepin remained. Shelest and Voronov were removed from the Politburo.

By the end of 1973, even Shelepin appeared to reduce his opposition to détente with West Germany and some conservatives, such as Grishin, appeared to actually defend détente at the end of 1973. An interesting finding in this period is that Grechko, Ponomarev, and Pel'she, long considered arch opponents to détente with West Germany, occasionally

praised détente with West Germany. Mazurov alone remained a consistent verbal opponent of détente.

Another interesting finding is that Suslov appeared to oppose détente with West Germany in this period. At the very least, he was not as strong a supporter as in the previous period. Kosygin began to show more limited support for détente, no longer strongly emphasizing trade with West Germany in particular. Gromyko, although not praising Brezhnev effusively as other Politburo members did, replaced Kosygin as Brezhnev's main foreign policy ally.

Suslov may well have realized that a strategy overemphasizing détente with West Germany was too much of a political risk. Possibly Kosygin became genuinely concerned with Brezhnev's increasingly extreme reliance on foreign trade to solve domestic economic problems. On the other hand, Gromyko probably realized by 1972 that his political future could benefit from more verbal support for détente with West Germany, whether he actually personally believed in this policy or not.

In spite of growing support for détente, a number of leaders signified their displeasure with the extreme emphasis being placed on Brezhnev's leadership role in détente with West Germany. These leaders either praised Brezhnev's name in conjunction with that of other Politburo leaders and/or mentioned successful negotiations in many countries, not employing the standard refrain of "USA, West Germany, and France." Shelepin, Shelest, Mazurov, and Ponomarev used both of these tactics. Andropov and Suslov were both very careful to demonstratively praise summits in socialist countries as well as with the West, while Pel'she mentioned "important meetings" in a number of countries with no mention of any particular leaders.

In conclusion, it was not Brezhnev's détente opponents who primarily gained influence in this period but Brezhnev himself, particularly from 1972 to 1973. It appears that the main tenet of Brezhnev's leadership strategy, solving domestic economic problems with Western trade, in addition to a favorable international scene allowed Brezhnev to position himself at the head of the Politburo. However, this position faltered somewhat at the end of 1973 when international events first turned the tide against détente.

One wonders if those Politburo members who became more positive about détente after mid-1972 simply took that position to gain more authority within the Politburo. Once it became clear that some form of détente was in the long-term Soviet national interest, Politburo members may have superficially joined on the détente "bandwagon" to maintain policy input.

As the findings here reveal, in spite of Brezhnev's overall policy victory in the Politburo, at least seven out of sixteen Politburo members resisted surrendering to Brezhnev's authority and the policy of détente with the West. Without incredible international opportunities, they were determined to continue their resistance. Fortunately for Brezhnev, his ability to vacillate and compromise allowed him to withstand political resistance in the Politburo with his domestic authority still intact. His foreign policy direction, however, had to change after 1975, because international events in key countries, the US and West Germany in particular, reinforced the beliefs of more conservative Soviet leaders, who had long been sceptical about détente's benefits for the Soviet Union.

## CHAPTER SIX

## HONECKER'S POLITBURO: May 1971-December 1973

**I. Introduction**

In this chapter the author analyzes the nature of General Secretary Erich Honecker's *Deutschlandpolitik* from May 1971 to December 1973. The chapter illustrates how and why Honecker's foreign policy-making and foreign policy choice differed from his predecessor's. Moreover, the approach of Honecker's Politburo to *Deutschlandpolitik* is compared to that of Brezhnev and his Politburo for the same period.

The first issue to be addressed is Honecker's replacement of Ulbricht as General Secretary. One has to wonder why Honecker was chosen when, from 1968 to at least the end of 1970, Honecker's attitude toward East Germany's *Deutschlandpolitik* appeared to be more negative than that of Ulbricht's.<sup>1</sup>

Two factors made Honecker an obvious choice as Ulbricht's successor. First, he had been groomed by Ulbricht as an heir apparent because of his loyalty to Ulbricht personally (or so Ulbricht thought) and the East German Communist Party. Secondly, he appeared to be unfailingly loyal to the Soviet Communist Party.

The latter factor was the most significant difference between Ulbricht and Honecker in the field of foreign policy. While Honecker, like Ulbricht, made victories out of concessions to Soviet foreign policy interests, he was much more willing to bow to Soviet pressure. In this period,

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<sup>1</sup>Heinz Lippmann, a former colleague of Honecker's, has long maintained that Honecker opposed Ulbricht's decision to shift to a more flexible position on *Deutschlandpolitik* in July 1970. Moreover, Honecker did not want Ulbricht's Rostock speech to be published but did not yet have majority Politburo support to back him up. See Heinz Lippman, Honecker and the New Politics of Europe (NY: MacMillan Co., 1972), 214.



Honecker never made a sustained attempt to obstruct Soviet *Deutschlandpolitik*, as Ulbricht had.

In addition to Soviet support, Honecker needed to cultivate political collectivity to avoid any domestic challenge to his authority. There were many outward signs of a new collectivity under Honecker: plenums met more frequently than under Ulbricht; speakers were more varied; and Honecker did not speak at every plenum as Ulbricht had.

As General Secretary of the East German Communist Party for several decades and a party member who knew Lenin personally, Ulbricht had not been concerned with collectivity. He was in a position of great authority. While Michael Sodaro described the leadership under Ulbricht as a "directive regime," he described the leadership under Honecker as a "coalition regime," the latter being characterized by a lesser degree of power and authority.<sup>2</sup>

No matter how much Honecker's domestic authority differed from Ulbricht's, there was very little difference in their overall foreign policy goals. As James McAdams described the situation, East German leaders still wanted to:

present an image of the GDR that underscored the state's fixity, permanence, and its imperviousness to external challenge. But this meant concretely that as the country's environs changed, the Party leadership was increasingly forced to reconstruct its old strategies to guarantee this image, stressing values, institutions, and incentives that had not been preeminent during the previous decade.<sup>3</sup>

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<sup>2</sup>Michael J. Sodaro, *Moscow, Germany, and the West: From Khrushchev to Gorbachev* (Cornell University Press, 1991), 22. It should be noted, however, that after November 1970, Ulbricht's regime bore more resemblance to a coalition regime.

<sup>3</sup>A. James McAdams, *East Germany & Détente: Building Authority After the Wall* (Cambridge University Press, 1985), 117.

The means to achieve these foreign policy goals, not the nature of the goals themselves, changed under Honecker's leadership. Cooperation and collaboration with the Soviet Union was stressed. Soviet foreign policy was not seriously obstructed. It would, however, be a mistake to see these efforts at cooperation as simple subservience, especially after the East Germans achieved a number of their own foreign policy goals by the summer of 1973. It would also be a mistake to believe that East German leaders would not occasionally show obstinacy in foreign policy again.

### **A. Leadership Strategy**

By late 1971 and early 1972, Honecker had adopted the leadership strategy of a compromiser, attempting to appease both his hard-line and more pragmatic colleagues. In fact, Honecker's domestic authority-building greatly resembled that of Brezhnev in the 1968 to 1971 period. He needed to unite the disparate issue groups which had agreed to oust Ulbricht. Logically, the potential for leadership disagreement was greater under a new, weak leader. Honecker's admonitions present evidence that this was indeed the case.<sup>4</sup>

Ulbricht, on the other hand, had never seemed too concerned about the differences among his colleagues and, by the end of his rule, did not attempt to compromise with the Soviet Union. To the contrary, he frequently provoked differences with the Soviet Union.

Michael Sodaro described why the East German leadership appeared unified in 1971 and 1972 in spite of leadership differences:

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<sup>4</sup>For example, at the VIIIth Plenum in December 1972, Honecker said, "It is important to develop concrete demands and to think in more than one direction. Many didn't understand this right away, because everything seemed clear to them at first glance or they thought everything was just a temporary development or a new formulation of old practice." See *ND*, 8 December 1972, 3.

Little variety was in evidence within Honecker's regime in 1971 and 1972. Quite possibly this relative absence of debate was due to the overriding necessity of acceding to Moscow's wishes in foreign policy and to the equally compelling need to rectify the disproportions engendered by Ulbricht in the domestic economy.<sup>5</sup>

However, by 1973, Honecker's role contrasted greatly with his first two years in office. While Honecker was originally viewed as a transitional and weak leader, who would always depend greatly on the Soviet Union for political support, this author believes that, as was the case with Brezhnev, the growth in Honecker's international authority by the end of 1973 greatly increased his domestic authority.<sup>6</sup>

In Honecker's case, increasing domestic and international authority resulted from four factors: (1) achievement of international goals, such as East German recognition and UN membership; (2) achievement of domestic economic goals, such as increases in housing and consumer goods; (3) Ulbricht's death in August 1973; and (4) growing dissatisfaction in the Soviet Union with the results of Brezhnev's *détente*.

By October 1973 at the Xth Plenum, Honecker displayed new authority, making substantive personnel changes. He added five candidate members to the Politburo, four of whom were close to him personally. He displaced both Politburo members Mittag and Stoph, who were economic experts and probably represented the greatest threats to his authority. He added Defense Minister Hoffman to the Politburo, a man whose views were an excellent counterweight to pragmatists, such as Stoph.<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>5</sup>Sodaro, Moscow, Germany, 226.

<sup>6</sup>This was especially true after 1975 when Honecker became a dominant foreign policy actor. Due to his international diplomacy in the CSCE process, Honecker's authority as a leader clearly increased.

<sup>7</sup>Mittag was removed from his position as CC Secretary for the Economy and became First Deputy to the new Prime Minister, Horst Sindermann. Stoph was removed from his

In spite of Honecker's weak leadership position up until the end of 1973, he and other Politburo members used strong rhetoric vis-à-vis West Germany in two cases, both subsequent to the completion of treaty negotiations or ratifications. The first instance occurred after the completion of the Berlin Treaty in August 1971, when East German negotiators stalled first on questions of translation and then on the nature of subsequent negotiations.

Similar East German rhetoric was heard sporadically after the Basic Treaty went into effect in June 1973. From October to December 1973, there was increased criticism of West German cold warriors. In an interview in *Neues Deutschland* at the beginning of November, Honecker argued for the suppression of all West German presence in West Berlin, a point which had already been conceded in the Basic Treaty.<sup>8</sup>

In December 1973, Foreign Minister Winzer and CC Secretary Verner, who was responsible for security matters, agreed with Honecker's negative *Deutschlandpolitik*. They emphasized that ambassadors were required by the Basic Treaty, not permanent representatives. During this same period, the East Germans made

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position as Prime Minister and became Chair of the Council of State (President), replacing Walter Ulbricht who died in August 1973. See Heinz Lippmann, "*Die personellen Veraenderungen in den Machtzentren der SED als Ausdruck kollektiver Fuehrung*," *DA*, Vol. VI , No. 12 (December 1973), 1266-1272. The reader should note that after removing Stoph and Mittag from positions of economic influence in 1973, Honecker brought them back to powerful economic positions in 1976. It has been surmised that this was an admission that Honecker and his group could not cope successfully with East Germany's economic challenges at the time. See Martin McCauley, *The German Democratic Republic Since 1945* (NY: St. Martin's Press, 1983), 151.

<sup>8</sup>*ND*, 1 November 1973, 3.

numerous attempts to undermine West German/Czechoslovak negotiations on a Mutual Renunciation of Force treaty.<sup>9</sup>

However, the most unusual aspect of Honecker's foreign policy throughout this period was the low priority it received. This is not surprising given Honecker's competence and experience in domestic rather than foreign policy. Nonetheless, given the nature of the international tasks which his regime faced, one would have assumed he would focus primarily on foreign policy.

Honecker's emphasis on domestic economic policy was intended to improve his domestic authority. The audience Honecker tried to reach were the Party members concerned about working class interests, while Ulbricht had reached out to Party members who favored intellectuals and the scientific-technological elite. Without Ulbricht's established authority, Honecker simply could not afford to thumb his nose at West Germany, the Soviet Union, other Politburo members, or his own people's needs as Ulbricht had before him.

As Honecker built his domestic authority through economic improvement, a strong economic ideology, and a stronger party, he gained more leeway in domestic and foreign policy. This was especially true after the summer of 1973, as East Germany's international role began to be assured and, at the same time, the international environment for détente worsened.

## **B. Internal Factors**

Compared to Ulbricht's experiences with the East German economy from August 1968 to May 1971, Honecker achieved relatively successful

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<sup>9</sup>East German interference in these negotiations will be discussed in more detail in this chapter's section on external factors.

economic results from May 1971 to December 1973. This was partially due to good luck: the winters and summers were relatively mild in 1971, 1972, and 1973.

But Honecker's fortunes also resulted from better planning: his economic policy was much more realistic than Ulbricht's had been and the five-year plan goals were much more cautious. His economic strategy could be characterized as one of "renewed centralization of decision-making and strengthened administrative regulations."<sup>10</sup> Michael Sodaro described it in the following manner:

Honecker's strategy on the economic front was primarily aimed at restoring the economy to a state of balanced development and continued growth within reasonably attainable targets. To accomplish this objective, a certain amount of recentralization of plan goals was considered necessary. It was not Honecker's design to turn back the clock and restore the East German economic system to the status quo ante that prevailed before the introduction of economic reforms in 1963.<sup>11</sup>

To achieve these goals, Honecker placed increased emphasis on *Kombinate*, large number of firms merged to increase production, and on their directors to guide recentralization. This paralleled a similiar Soviet development begun previously under Brezhnev. According to Honecker, by mid-1971, *Kombinate* were the producers of one-third of the output of major DDR enterprises, and this figure was to be increased. Of course, recentralization had negative aspects as well. Although Honecker introduced popular measures to regain public confidence, he did not introduce economic flexibility or long-term structural change.

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<sup>10</sup>Gert Leptin, "The East German Economy Under Ulbricht and Honecker: Different Conditions for Development--Similar Problems," *East Central Europe*, Vol. VI, Part 2 (1979), 209.

<sup>11</sup>Michael J. Sodaro, *East Germany and the Dilemmas of Detente: The Linkage of Foreign Policy, Economics, and Ideology in the GDR 1966-1971* (Ph.D. dissertation, Columbia University, 1978), 729.

Honecker was also the leader who would be identified with providing for East Germans' material needs, at least in the early 1970s. Ulbricht had in fact begun to take similar measures: in response to the Polish riots in December 1970, some salaries were raised and prices for some textiles and household goods were lowered.<sup>12</sup> However, Honecker's preference for the consumer was so notable that Melvin Croan termed his government "consumeristic authoritarianism."<sup>13</sup>

At the VIIIth Party Congress in June 1971, housing goals became a symbol of the government's ability to provide for the material welfare of its people. In the five-year plan (1971-1975), a goal of 500,000 apartments was established. This looked especially good in comparison with Ulbricht's program. While Western commentators were doubtful that these goals could be achieved, Honecker, unlike Ulbricht, delivered on his promises.<sup>14</sup>

There were numerous indicators of Honecker's economic success, especially in areas of consumer concern. Already in October 1971, a Western newspaper noted that there was a noticeable improvement in the East German standard of living, although the quality of consumer goods continued to be a problem.<sup>15</sup> By the summer of 1972, more positive results were noted in the elimination of Ulbricht's economic

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<sup>12</sup>"Ulbricht's Lehre von Stettin," *Die Zeit*, 19 February 1971. See also Kurt Erdmann, "Preisveraenderungen bei Konsumguetern," *DA*, Vol III, No. 4 (April 1971), 409-411.

<sup>13</sup>This is a play on words on Ludz, who developed the concept of consultative authoritarianism. See Melvin Croan, "Regime Society, and Nation: The GDR after thirty years," *East Central Europe*, Vol. VI, Part 2 (1979), 137-151.

<sup>14</sup>In Honecker's plan, 383,500 new apartments would be built and 116,500 older apartments modernized. For a comparative referent, 400,000 apartments had been promised in the previous plan: 364,000 were actually provided and, of those, 67,000 were modernized. Therefore, Honecker increased the number of new apartments by almost 25% and almost doubled the modernization of old apartments. See Manfred Melzer, "Wohnungsbau and Wohnungsversorgung in der DDR bis 1975. Ziele des Fuenfjahrplans zu hoch gesteckt?" *DA*, Vol. V, No. 9 (September 1972), 951-957.

<sup>15</sup>*Neue Zuercher Zeitung*, 28 January 1972.

disproportions, and exports increased. Most importantly, the production of the supply industry caught up with that of the end product.

Honecker's program was not limited to increased production of housing and consumer goods. In July 1972, Honecker introduced an overall rent reduction and, in September 1972, he introduced higher pensions. Wages were raised and workers' hours were decreased.<sup>16</sup> Unfortunately for the GDR, Honecker borrowed large amounts of money from West Germany and the rest of Western Europe to pay for these programs, placing the long-term future of East Germany in jeopardy.

Initially, however, the East German public believed Honecker's reforms would result in an economic upswing. At the very least, Honecker's take-charge actions were expected to be an improvement over the "wishful thinking" of Ulbricht's economic program. There were, however, some ideological similarities between Honecker's and Ulbricht's approach to the economy.

Beginning in 1972, Honecker introduced a nationalization campaign which greatly resembled Ulbricht's economic campaigns in 1968, 1969, and 1970. The nationalization campaign was not introduced for its economic rationality, but in order to build ideological similarity within CEMA and an ideological border between East and West Germany.

Beginning in February 1972, the East German leadership suggested that private and semi-private firms should become nationalized. In 1971, there were 6,479 semi-private firms and 3,166 private firms. In 1972, the state took over 5,658 semi-private enterprises and 2,976 private

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<sup>16</sup>Production of the supply industry increased by 6.5% and that of the end product by 4.5% in June/July 1972. Exports to non-socialist countries increased by 10% and imports from these countries increased by 20% in the first half of 1972. See "*Die Lage der DDR Wirtschaft im Sommer 1972*," *DA*, Vol. V, No. 10 (October 1972), 1067 and 1071.



enterprises employing a total of 415,000 people. CC Secretary for Agriculture Gerhard Grueneberg announced at the Vth Plenum in April 1972 that 94% of the semi-private firms and 74% of the private firms had already claimed themselves ready for nationalization.<sup>17</sup> At the Vth Plenum it was also announced that these measures were implemented to "further develop socialist production and to eliminate certain appearances of recapitalization."<sup>18</sup>

Nationalization represented victory for the conservatives who had ideological objections to private firms. Ulbricht initially ignored these conservatives but made concessions to them in 1971. Nationalization was introduced because it fit into Honecker's and Hager's ideological campaign to remove all remnants of capitalism which were associated with Ulbricht's economic policy of scientific-technological revolution.<sup>19</sup>

The timing of the nationalization campaign was clearly linked with foreign policy. The nationalization proposal was introduced in December 1971, when the Transit Treaty was initialled. Pronouncements for nationalization became strongest when the Traffic Treaty was initialled in April 1972 and right before the Eastern treaties were ratified in May 1972.

Moreover, from February to April 1972, the Soviets appeared to pressure Honecker to make political and economic concessions toward West Germany and to encourage ratification of the Eastern treaties. Meanwhile, East Germany was also confronted with the FRG's change

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<sup>17</sup>Leptin, "East German Economy," in *East Central Europe*, 208.

<sup>18</sup>ND, 28 April 1972, 4.

<sup>19</sup>In analyses concerning the GDR's worst economic mistakes, the nationalization campaign is frequently mentioned. In the 1990s even CC Secretary for Ideology Hager recognized this as an important mistake. Author's personal sources.

from a policy of partial economic confrontation with the GDR to one of economic cooperation.<sup>20</sup> The nationalization campaign, similar to the previous *Abgrenzung* campaign, served as a means to ideologically prepare East Germans for the inevitability of closer political and economic cooperation with West Germany.

Because 1971 and 1972 had been devoted to eliminating the majority of disproportions created under Ulbricht, and appeasing the population with consumer goods, 1973 was a particularly decisive year in economic planning. Honecker's popular reforms were followed by an increase of productive capacity at the end of 1973.<sup>21</sup> Some Politburo members advocated higher prices or shift work to increase productive capacity, while others advocated higher work norms.

The increasing focus on productive capacity was partially in response to the external problem of rising oil prices, which resulted in inflated prices for Western products, but it was also in response to the achievement of international goals. From Honecker's viewpoint, international accomplishments had created sufficient domestic authority, allowing him to take more risks in the domestic economy. He may also have been following Brezhnev's lead. The reader is reminded that Brezhnev was taking similar economic steps in the Soviet Union, placing more focus on consumer goods production, centralizing economic production, and re-emphasizing ideological correctness in economic structures whenever possible.

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<sup>20</sup>See Leptin, "East German Economy," *East Central Europe*, 201.

<sup>21</sup>In 1973, for the first time since 1962, East Germany lowered the amount of consumer goods it exported to West Germany and reduced the amount of consumer goods it imported from West Germany. Of course, the East German population preferred the Western goods but Honecker wanted to build the GDR's productive capacity for consumer goods. See Hans Dieter Schulz, "*Mehr Realismus im Handel*," *DA*, Vol. VII, No. 4 (April 1974), 343.

### **C. External Factors: Risks and Opportunities**

It is fair to assume that a weak East German General Secretary meant increased influence for the Soviet leadership. The increasing number of variations in the views of the East German Politburo also increased the potential for Soviet influence. It is still important to understand when Soviet influence was more or less effective as well as the means through which East Germany resisted Soviet influence.

When the Berlin Treaty was concluded in September 1971, Soviet authority was at an all-time high. When Brezhnev and Brandt met in the Crimea, after the Berlin Treaty was completed, this was a signal to the East Germans to be more forthcoming in their negotiations with the West Germans.<sup>22</sup> However, East Germany also achieved certain national goals with the Berlin Treaty. This treaty accorded the GDR the same treatment as the FRG, and, by the end of 1971, East Germany gained more international authority by virtue of its improved diplomatic standing.

Moreover, Brezhnev had to personally intervene to insure that the transit talks began, and he quickly eliminated East German resistance. Arriving in Berlin in October 1971, Brezhnev stated that he hoped for "the quickest possible solution of the transit negotiations."<sup>23</sup> He extended his visit by one day, suggesting that he encountered some opposition among East German leaders. Honecker appeared to be the crucial voice solving this issue. He announced in response to Brezhnev's comments that East Germans were ready to bring the transit talks to a "positive conclusion"<sup>24</sup>

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<sup>22</sup>Birnbaum, *A modus vivendi*, 43-44.

<sup>23</sup>*ND*, 2 November 1971, 3.

<sup>24</sup>*ibid.*

as rapidly as possible. The transit talks were concluded at the beginning of December 1971.

By February 1972, at the latest, the Soviet desire for improved relations with West Germany met with growing receptivity in East Germany, at least on the part of Erich Honecker. In February 1972, it was announced that travel arrangements in the Berlin Treaty, a treaty which had not yet been ratified, would be temporarily enacted during Easter as a goodwill gesture from East Germany.

Another shift in the East German position could be noted in speeches by Honecker on 10 March 1972 and 18 April 1972, where he addressed West Germany in much more positive terms. In the first speech at the spring fair in Leipzig, he suggested that there could be "peaceful living together" (*friedliches Nebeneinander*). In the second speech in Sofia he suggested that "togetherness" (*Miteinander*) was in the interest of both states.<sup>25</sup> This represented the first positive overtures from the East Germans, indicating willingness to start negotiations on the Basic Treaty. To balance this opening to the West, the nationalization campaign was introduced, making East Germany more compatible with other CEMA members.

These actions were due in large part to Soviet pressure. For example, the clause concerning Berlin, which was ultimately adopted in the Traffic Treaty, was taken directly from the West German/Soviet trade treaty which had already been initialled in April 1972. Moreover, the timing of Honecker's statements was meant to create support for the West

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<sup>25</sup>Birnbaum, *A modus vivendi*, 63.

German ratification of the Moscow and Warsaw treaties, for which the Soviets were actively lobbying.

The Soviets exerted more pressure when State Secretary Egon Bahr went to Moscow in October 1972. Previously, in August 1972, the East Germans insisted the Basic Treaty required normal relations with West Germany under international law, which would entail an exchange of ambassadors. Shortly after Bahr's trip to Moscow, however, the stumbling blocks in the East/West German negotiations on the Basic Treaty began to disappear and the negotiations proceeded rapidly to their conclusion on 8 November 1972, just prior to the West German elections on 19 November 1972.<sup>26</sup>

It should be noted that Soviet influence over East Germany had diminished somewhat at the end of 1973 for three main reasons: (1) the GDR was accepted into the UN on 18 September 1973; (2) the Soviets became more interested in multilateral initiatives, such as the CSCE, which lessened their intense focus on the GDR/FRG relationship; and (3) international events at the end of 1973, such as the Yom Kippur War, did not bode well for Soviet goals in its *détente* with West Germany and the US. It appears that East German Politburo officials who were unhappy with concessions made toward West Germany took full advantage of all three factors, raising their voices anew at the end of 1973.

East German foreign policy goals under Honecker's leadership centered on participation in CSCE, gaining membership in the UN, and diplomatic recognition by as many nations as possible. All of these goals were achieved by the end of 1973. In July 1973, East Germany

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<sup>26</sup>The Soviet leaders made it clear they wanted to aid the SPD/FDP coalition in these election as early as the Crimea meeting in July 1972. See *Ibid.*, 75.

participated in the first CSCE meetings, and in September 1973, East Germany joined the UN. In 1973 alone, sixty-eight states extended full diplomatic relations to East Germany. These were not Third World countries, but important capitalist powers such as Great Britain, France, and Italy.<sup>27</sup>

East German foreign policy goals also included increased consultation with the Soviet Union, including the inauguration of annual Crimea meetings, through increased integration in CEMA and an annual conference of CC secretaries for ideological affairs. This new type of collectivity also gave Eastern Europeans, and East Germans, a chance to apply more pressure on the Soviet Union. For example, in 1974, the Crimea meeting was "unceremoniously cancelled" when it was clear that there was a lack of consensus among the Eastern European leaders.<sup>28</sup>

East Germany conducted a diplomatic and economic offensive with Eastern and Western Europe in this time period. Honecker's approach to Eastern Europe appeared to differ from that of Ulbricht as we see in the case of Hungary. He appeared to believe he could learn from other East European economic examples and he appeared to desire political cooperation. Hungary's priority became clear at the IIIrd Plenum in November 1971, when it was allotted the most attention of any East European country. One author has suggested that this interest in Hungary was related to the country's success in the consumer goods sector.<sup>29</sup> Honecker visited Hungary in February 1972 and indicated that East Germany had more interest in reliable economic ties.<sup>30</sup> Another

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<sup>27</sup>McAdams, East Germany, 138-139.

<sup>28</sup>Ibid., 101.

<sup>29</sup>Hans Lindemann, "*Lernt Honecker bei Kadar?*" *DA*, Vol. V, No. 3 (March 1972), 295.

<sup>30</sup>McAdams, East Germany, 130.

example of Honecker's diplomatic efforts was the announcement of visa-free transit with Poland and Czechoslovakia in December 1971. However, as we clearly see by the end of 1973, he, like Ulbricht, was certainly willing to apply pressure to other Eastern European countries as well. East German interference in Czechoslovak affairs is discussed at the end of this section.

East Germans used Western Europeans as pawns to diminish Soviet and West German pressure. Under Honecker, there was a strong attempt to woo Western European countries, other than West Germany, especially in the sector of foreign trade. This was particularly true of economic and diplomatic relations with France, which East Germany began to pursue as early as October 1972. After diplomatic relations were established with France in February 1973, diplomatic relations were also established with Austria, Italy, and Great Britain. Ironically, the success of Soviet *Westpolitik* allowed Honecker to gain influence in Western Europe, a type of influence about which Ulbricht could only have dreamed.

In fact, while increases in East/West German trade dropped to as low as two percent and five percent in 1972 and 1973, respectively, after having increased an average of 20% from 1969 through 1971, great strides were made in trade with other Western European countries. Trade with these countries, excluding West Germany, increased by 188% from 1968 to 1973, while trade with CEMA increased by 93% and trade with West Germany increased by 96%. Most of the increase in trade with

Western Europe, excluding West Germany, occurred in 1973, when trade with this region grew by 36%.<sup>31</sup>

The biggest external challenge to East German leaders after Soviet pressure was probably improved relations between the US and China in 1971, and the subsequent attempt at rapprochement between the Soviet Union and China. Good superpower relations between all three countries could place a new limit on East Germany's room for maneuver. Honecker managed, however, to gain influence in Eastern Europe, Western Europe, and, most importantly, the Third World which helped mitigate the weight of the superpowers.

China's improving relations with West Germany encouraged the East Germans to be more forthcoming in negotiations with West Germany--at least until 1973. In January 1972, in response to improved US/Chinese relations, Bonn normalized relations with China and in February 1972, Nixon made his first trip to China. In March 1972, the Soviets announced their intention to establish relations with China, and East Germany followed this example. The Soviets appear to have been particularly worried that intensified West German/Chinese relations in the summer of 1972 could lead to fewer and less generous economic deals between the Soviet Union and West Germany, and East Germans may well have had similar worries.<sup>32</sup> In March 1973, East Germany signed a trade agreement with China and China was invited once again to the Leipzig trade fair.<sup>33</sup>

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<sup>31</sup>Schulz, "*Mehr Realismus*," 340-341.

<sup>32</sup>Stent, *From Embargo*, 189.

<sup>33</sup>The return to Leipzig was interesting as China had been ostentatiously banned from the fair in 1966 due to its distribution of anti-Soviet material. See Peter Dittmar, "*Normalisierung oder Formalisierung? Zum Verhaeltnis der DDR zu China*," *DA*, Vol. XIII, No. 4 (April 1980), 367-370.



Although East Germany's economic and political relations with China began to improve in 1972 and 1973, this improvement was limited to formal relations of the two countries. China continued to write anti-Soviet treatises and East Germany continued to criticize these works.

In this period, however, East German criticisms of China could also serve as indirect criticism of the USSR. Take for example, the following comment from *Horizont* in November 1972:

Peking welcomes the imperialist economic bloc of Western Europe, the EEC, and its expansion as an outstanding international development. Unprincipled, and guided *exclusively by their own big power ambitions*, the Chinese leaders have made rapprochement with the imperialist states an essential part of their international politics.<sup>34</sup> (added emphasis)

The same East German Politburo members conducted an anti-China campaign under Honecker as they did under Ulbricht. With the brief exception of the IXth Plenum in May 1973, Honecker, along with Hager, Stoph, and Axen, was still very anti-China. The only anti-China voice which had not been heard in 1968 to 1971 was Albert Norden who spoke up at the Xth Plenum in October 1973.<sup>35</sup> Norden's speech was another indication of the increasingly hard-line attitude toward foreign policy antagonists by the end of 1973.

The most important factor in understanding East Germany's increasingly negative *Deutschlandpolitik* in 1973 is the fact that Soviet pressure on East Germany appeared to lessen after Brezhnev's summit trip to Bonn and after ratification of the Basic Treaty in May 1973. The multilateral phase of East German foreign policy began at this time. The CSCE began in July 1973, and the East Germans were awarded UN

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<sup>34</sup>*Horizont*, No. 47 (November 1972), 10.

<sup>35</sup>Fred Oldenburg, "Ost-Berlin wieder auf härterem Kurs. Zur 10. Tagung des ZK der SED," *DA*, Vol. VI, No. 11 (November 1973), 1126.

membership in September 1973. While the Soviets changed their focus, the East Germans appeared to use their new international role to become obstructionists in other West German treaty negotiations--this time between West Germany and Czechoslovakia.

While Willy Brandt reported in his memoirs that the Soviets initially favored negotiations with Prague, he also noted,

East Berlin supported those in Czechoslovakia who wanted to avoid a treaty. Probably they wanted to show the Russians that East Germans still had a say.<sup>36</sup>

West Germany began negotiating with Czechoslovakia on a renunciation of force treaty in May 1973 but talks became bogged down in August 1973. At the same time, West German talks with Hungary and Poland on the establishment of diplomatic relations stalled. Obviously, the East Germans were threatened by rapidly improving West German/East European relations, reminiscent of their response in the 1960s when the West Germans discarded the Hallstein Doctrine, so they found an old issue to start a new controversy--the status of West Berlin. While Foreign Minister Scheel was in Moscow at the end of October 1973, trying to work out operational problems associated with diplomatic recognition, Honecker reintroduced the old notion that there should be no West German representation in West Berlin. While a compromise was reached in the West German/Czechoslovak negotiations on November 8--West Berlin courts could deal directly with East European courts--this compromise was suddenly withdrawn on 28 November 1973. East German interference in the Bonn/Prague negotiations coincided with a unilateral East German step to limit West German influence on East

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<sup>36</sup>Willy Brandt, People and Politics (Boston: Little Brown & Co., 1978), 543.

Germany: the required currency exchange was doubled on 5 November 1973.

East German interference in Bonn/Prague negotiations ended, however, with Honecker's trip to Moscow in December 1973, where he recanted his position on Soviet television.<sup>37</sup> The West German/Czechoslovak treaty was initialled two days later.

Why did East Germany resort to these negative measures? Edwina Moreton suggested that this East German hard-line position was possibly caused by the July 1973 ruling of the Federal German Constitutional Court upholding the unity of the German nation and Berlin as a member of that federation.<sup>38</sup> Alternatively, Brezhnev's visit to West Germany in May 1973, and his obvious attempt to increase trade at any cost may have so alarmed East German leaders that they were prepared to begin a new offensive against *Deutschlandpolitik*.

However, one still wonders why did East German obstructionism increase so rapidly after November 1973. This author finds Fred Oldenburg's explanation, that these events were connected to the October 1973 Arab-Israeli War, compelling.<sup>39</sup> As early as June 1973, Brezhnev repeatedly warned the US that such a war was imminent. The war lasted from 6 to 23 October, and we know that throughout this time period, the Soviets lost face. The tide toward détente in the Soviet Politburo was quite possibly ebbing. East German leaders who opposed détente may well have recognized one of their last "windows of

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<sup>37</sup>Spittmann, "11. ZK Plenum," 3-5.

<sup>38</sup>Moreton, *Warsaw Alliance*, 223.

<sup>39</sup>Oldenburg, "10. Tagung," 1126-1128. See also Raymond L. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation: Soviet-American Relations from Nixon to Reagan* (Washington DC: Brookings Institution, 1985), 364.

opportunity." East Germany's dramatic response to this changing international situation suggests that the opposition to détente in the East German leadership had never been entirely quelled.

East Germany made great strides in its international standing and economic strength in this period. By improving economic relations with West Germany and other Western European nations, East Germany, while temporarily very loyal to the Soviet Union, had the potential to ultimately be less reliant on the Soviet Union politically and economically.

The Soviets took these developments quite seriously: as improved economic and political ties with the West could potentially compete with CEMA integration and East German willingness to supply the Soviet Union, Soviet leaders eventually insisted on prior discussion and approval before large scale East/West German projects could be launched.<sup>40</sup> While the achievement of East German international goals (diplomatic recognition, participation in CSCE, UN membership, etc.) did eventually result in strong disalignment from Soviet foreign policy by the 1980s, the disalignment from Soviet foreign policy in this period was minimal.

## **II. Political Competition Model**

In this section the author examines the Politburo members outlined in Chapter IV, plus the new East German foreign policy establishment, and all new full members of the Politburo. While the Politburo under Ulbricht consisted of fifteen full members and six candidate members, Honecker's Politburo increased to sixteen full members and seven candidate

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<sup>40</sup>This occurred in 1979. See Fred Oldenburg and Gerhard Wettig, "The Special Status of the GDR in East-West Relations," *East Central Europe*, Vol. VI, Part 2 (1979), 184-185.

members in June 1971. Of the eleven leaders covered in the previous chapter, nine are discussed in this chapter. The two leaders not included in this chapter are Walter Ulbricht and Hermann Matern. Ulbricht never spoke at a plenum in this time period, and his role became entirely ceremonial. Matern died in 1971. Therefore, the leadership sample in this chapter increases from eleven leaders to seventeen, two of whom were not Politburo members.

The new full members of the Politburo, added at the VIIIth Party Congress in October 1971, covered in this section are: Werner Krolkowski, First Secretary for Dresden, and Werner Lamberz, CC Secretary for Agitation. Because of Defense Minister Heinz Hoffmann's increasingly strong opinions on foreign policy, and his addition to the Politburo in October 1973, the author also analyses his comments. Speeches of new foreign policy leaders, but non-Politburo members, Foreign Minister Otto Winzer and Deputy Foreign Minister Oskar Fischer are also analyzed.

This section also includes speeches made by Politburo members who were generally silent at plenums under Ulbricht but spoke more frequently at plenums under Honecker: Vice President of the Council of State Friedrich Ebert,<sup>41</sup> CC Secretary for Agriculture Gerhard Grueneberg, and Trade Union Chair Herbert Warnke.

The reader should note that Honecker tried to get his initial problem of leadership disagreement under control immediately, by carefully balancing personnel and organizational changes. Honecker appointed

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<sup>41</sup>He served in this position after November 1971; he previously served as President of the *Volkskammer* (People's Chamber), the legislative branch of the East German government.

himself as head of the Defense Council in May 1971; Paul Verner was promoted to Honecker's former position as CC Secretary for Security and also assigned Chair of the Peoples' Chamber Committee for National Defense. Verner's promotion and dominance in security matters was balanced, however, by the appointment of Erich Mielke, Minister for State Security, as candidate member to the Politburo. Horst Sindermann became Vice Prime Minister on the Council of Ministers, and in this position, he could serve as a "watchdog" on Prime Minister Willi Stoph, who was a potential threat to Honecker.

Prior to Ulbricht's death, Honecker, who was quite concerned about Ulbricht's personal and institutional power, weakened the Council of State and made Ulbricht's role entirely ceremonial. And, while Ulbricht was hardly ever criticized personally, Honecker, as well as other Politburo members, built authority by criticizing his failed policies, especially his failure in domestic economic policy.<sup>42</sup> Therefore, when Stoph replaced Ulbricht as head of the Council of State in 1973, he became the chair of a relatively weak political organization.

Because a positive *Deutschlandpolitik* was an established fact by the time Honecker became General Secretary, the nature of the leadership debate changed in these years. Differences were much more nuanced, and no longer as strongly black and white. For example, some leaders preferred to focus on East Germany's new diplomatic strength and while some focused on West German intransigence or, in a few cases, extreme

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<sup>42</sup>Ulbricht was painfully aware of this. See a copy of Ulbricht's letter to Brezhnev from 12 December 1972, in which Ulbricht wrote, "I want the campaign that has been going on since the XIVth Plenum (December 1970), 'Ulbricht is responsible for all problems' to be stopped. I want to be able to continue my work as President of the Council of State." See *Der Spiegel*, 1 April 1991, 61 and Przybylski, *Tatort Politburo: Die Akte Honecker* (Berlin: Rowohlt, 1991), 311-319.

vilification of West Germans. Western trade became a politically acceptable topic, but differences emerged over the manipulation of the issue. Some leaders advocated western trade, while others tried to use it as leverage ("We will only trade if . . ."). Some spoke exclusively about trade with France. Others, especially those who worked in ideological areas, tried to argue that increases in domestic productivity should always take precedence over western trade as a source of economic surplus.

A new consensus emerged on economic improvement and increased consumer goods. However, there were still differences concerning the steps necessary to ensure economic productivity and the nature of the priority which consumer goods should have in the country's long-term economic productivity. It is to this new tapestry of political disagreements that we now turn our attention.

### **A. The Most Politically Powerful**

#### HONECKER

In this time period, General Secretary Erich Honecker's stance on *Deutschlandpolitik* became more flexible than that of most Politburo members. His position changed virtually 180 degrees from his stance in the previous period. He immediately made two concessions at the XVth Plenum, which began on 3 May 1971. He agreed to let international recognition of East Germany come at the end of a process of détente rather than at the beginning. He addressed Berlin as a "city with a special political status," rather than employing Ulbricht's words, an

"independent political entity," which had stressed East Germany's sovereign control over Berlin.<sup>43</sup>

However, the most striking shift in Honecker's policy positions was his new concern with the economy and consumer goods. By the VIIIth Party Congress in June 1971, Honecker announced the aim of the new five-year plan: "[The Plan should] further increase the material and cultural standard of living of the people."<sup>44</sup> This broke away from Ulbricht's strategy of economic modernization, no matter what the cost to the people.

The reader is reminded that from 1968 through April 1971, Honecker had never commented on consumer goods and had endorsed the economy. While Honecker was not immediately directly critical of economic developments under Ulbricht, he became more critical as he apparently realized he could build his domestic authority on the basis of past economic failures.

At the IIInd Plenum, Honecker said:

The situation shows that it was a correct and urgent step, when, as early as the XIVth meeting of the Central Committee (December 1970), we ushered in a development in which the economic targets again fully tallied with the actual possibilities of the GDR . . . Solutions must be sought jointly with the people, which of course must not primarily amount to special shifts and over time.

And eliminating the pressure on his own regime, he said, "Questions of the national economy cannot be solved overnight or within weeks or months."<sup>45</sup>

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<sup>43</sup>Sodaro, *Moscow, Germany*, 212-213.

<sup>44</sup>As quoted in *Ibid.*, 211.

<sup>45</sup>*FBIS EE*, 24 September 1971, E13, E15.



By the IVth Plenum in December 1971, Honecker provided more leeway for his own regime, saying, "At the VIIIth Party Congress, we discussed certain disproportions, some of which can only be overcome in a matter of years."<sup>46</sup> In the field of consumer goods, Honecker repeatedly made the point that better conditions existed under his leadership than Ulbricht's:

Irrespective of some still existing problems it must be said that particularly in the second half of 1971 an improvement of the consumer goods supply as compared with last year has been achieved. The measures, and results as well, reflect or consistent line of implementing the main task adopted at the VIIIth Party Congress *in line with our possibilities*.<sup>47</sup> (added emphasis)

One year later, at the VIIIth Plenum in December 1972, his evaluation of Ulbricht's regime had become much more critical:

We have tried to . . . improve proportionality and continuity in the economy. Much inventive spirit which was connected with the development of unrealistic concepts, which were never enacted, became available for streamlining . . . It has been possible to create a real plan where no postponed increases are allowed . . . Rose colored glasses have caused a lack of attention to deficits and thus delayed the possibility of overcoming these problems.<sup>48</sup>

At the IXth Plenum in May 1973, Honecker reiterated the progress made under his leadership to eliminate past economic problems:

In view of the disproportions that arose in the economy prior to the VIIIth Congress, we have set out at the same time those forms and methods of management of the economy that will enable us to consolidate our economy and to inaugurate a fresh upswing.<sup>49</sup>

In this period, Honecker not only became a supporter of more consumer goods, but also a supporter of trade with West Germany. Beginning in March 1972, he and Prime Minister Willi Stoph began

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<sup>46</sup>FBIS EE, 29 December 1971, E3.

<sup>47</sup>Ibid., E5

<sup>48</sup>ND, 8 December 1972, 3.

<sup>49</sup>ND, 29 May 1973, 4.

regularly attending the Leipzig trade fairs which occurred annually in March and September. They demonstratively visited western trade booths, including West German exhibits. While Honecker only became a lukewarm supporter of western trade, especially in comparison with Stoph, it represented a shift from his previous position. In March 1972, with reference to the Moscow and Warsaw treaties, Honecker said the following about Western trade:

Ratification would in fact be able to initiate a new stage in the relations between the GDR and FRG. An increased exchange of goods and stepped up mutually advantageous economic relations are part of this.<sup>50</sup>

In September 1972, Honecker said:

The more realistically West Germany views things, the better it will be for the development of trade and other relations. We are interested in it [in economic relations with West Germany].<sup>51</sup>

Honecker also made positive statements about détente and treaties with West Germany, beginning in 1972. In June 1972, negotiations on the Basic Treaty began; this treaty would define a *modus vivendi* for the two Germanies on a myriad of practical issues. Honecker's initial positive statements made in March and April 1972, may well have been a tactical maneuver to affect the vote of no confidence on Chancellor Brandt in April and the ratification vote in May 1972. At the Leipzig trade fair in March 1972, Honecker said:

[R]elations of peaceful coexistence are the only possibility to create normal relations between the two Germanies and to get rid of violent, war-like conflict.<sup>52</sup>

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<sup>50</sup>*FBIS EE*, 14 March 1972, E10.

<sup>51</sup>*FBIS EE*, 5 September 1972, E5.

<sup>52</sup>*ND*, 11 March 1972, 4.

In a speech in Bulgaria one month later, Honecker asserted East German support for a Basic Treaty:

The GDR is prepared, after the ratification of the Eastern Treaties to enter into an exchange of opinions on the creation of normal relations between the GDR and FRG, and to come up with the necessary agreements. A development could be started--I would like to clearly repeat--that could lead to peaceful living together between the GDR and FRG, to normal good neighborly relations.<sup>53</sup>

On 16 November 1972, prior to final agreement on the Basic Treaty, he strongly defended this treaty, saying:

Comrades, such transparent talk about a better treaty is of no help at all. There is no such thing as a better Basic Treaty. This treaty which was negotiated through a harsh and difficult exchange of views, takes into account both the interest of the socialist GDR and those of the FRG and its citizens--otherwise it would never have been brought about.<sup>54</sup>

At the VIIIth Plenum in December 1972, subsequent to agreement on the Basic Treaty, Honecker defended the results:

Of course in these negotiations there have been compromises. If negotiations are to lead to results, compromises are inevitable unless the two sides' interests are the same or the conqueror dictates the results to the vanquished. It was clear from the start that in our case neither condition existed. The only important thing is that the result leads in the direction of the goal.<sup>55</sup>

However, by 1973, Honecker adopted a more ambiguous position on capitalist trade and by the end of 1973, he also made negative statements about treaties with West Germany. As for trade, in March 1973 at Leipzig, he did not mention West German exhibitors, but only referred to the Italian and French exhibitions. He also threatened West Germans with the following admonition in May 1973:

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<sup>53</sup>ND, 19 April 1972, 4.

<sup>54</sup>Cited in McAdams, East Germany, 125.

<sup>55</sup>ND, 8 December 1972, 5.

They (West Germans) beckon to us with economic advantages, although every one ought to know that any attempt to curtail GDR sovereignty only militates against the expansion of our economic relations with the capitalist countries.<sup>56</sup>

He concluded by admitting:

Ultimately our intentions are aimed at a better structure and higher profitability of our foreign trade with capitalist countries.<sup>57</sup>

Obviously he was referring to trade under East German conditions.

In September 1973, neither Honecker, nor Stoph attended the Leipzig fair. While Honecker was in the Soviet Union at the time, the fact that he did not choose an important official to substitute for him suggests that Honecker's position on western trade had hardened, although this may have just been a tactical ploy.

In November 1973, during a speech concerning party elections, which was held after the October War in the Middle East, Honecker justified a tougher political position in the following manner:

As long as imperialism exists we cannot exclude sudden turns, setbacks, and even a temporary exacerbation of relations between states with different social systems. Hence we must not for a moment relax our vigilance against imperialism.<sup>58</sup>

Honecker also said the Berlin Treaty stipulated that the presence of West Germany in West Berlin must be diminished and only very limited connections would be allowed between the two entities.<sup>59</sup> This statement went against the spirit of the Berlin Treaty. Four days later, on 5 November, the currency exchange for entrance to East Germany was doubled, indicating Honecker's intention to further insulate East Germany from Westerners.

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<sup>56</sup>ND, 29 May 1973, 6.

<sup>57</sup>Ibid.

<sup>58</sup>ND, 1 November 1973, 3.

<sup>59</sup>ND, 1 November 1973. See also Ilse Spittmann, "Zum 11. ZK Plenum" DA, Vol. VII, No. 1 (January 1974), 3-5.

One month later, during a visit to the Soviet Union, Honecker had to recant his obstructionist position on the Berlin Treaty, saying:

[In the Berlin Treaty], there are limits on the presence of West Germany in West Berlin. The treaty, however, also guarantees that certain connections between West Germany and West Berlin may be developed further.<sup>60</sup>

While Honecker outwardly changed his position on relations with West Germany to one of a compromiser during 1972 and the first half of 1973, it is quite probable that he maintained some of his conservative opinions on this issue. Because of Soviet pressure and domestic priorities, he kept these tendencies in check, but, by the end of 1973, the pressure to keep them in check lessened. All important treaties between East and West Germany had been concluded and ratified, and the October War upset international conditions, which had been propitious for détente.

Honecker's decision to be less supportive of *Deutschlandpolitik*, as well as less supportive of trade with West Germany, may also have been an attempt to gain more concessions from the West Germans both in further practical agreements, such as those concerning telephone and postal communication, and in the negotiation of trade treaties and credit agreements. It is also possible that Honecker's changing position was strengthened by a shift in East German Politburo opinion after the October War. Just as Ulbricht tried to use the December riots in Poland to encourage splits in the Soviet leadership, Honecker may have hoped to use the October War to create more leverage for conservatives in *both* the East German and Soviet Politburos.

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<sup>60</sup>This interview is cited in *ND*, 10 December 1973. The reader should note that the following day, the West German/Czechoslovak Treaty was signed.

## STOPH

Under Honecker's leadership, most of Prime Minister Willi Stoph's speeches were either presentations of the national economic plan at the People's Chamber, which generally occurred simultaneous to a plenum, or speeches at the Leipzig trade fair. Stoph no longer spoke at plenums and we have virtually no comments from him concerning *Deutschlandpolitik* in this period. It is fair to assume that if he had still been opposed *Deutschlandpolitik*, as he appeared to be under Ulbricht, or had become a strong advocate of positive policies, he would have managed to express this viewpoint under Honecker.

Stoph continued to be a strong advocate of consumer goods as he had been in the past, and he appeared to be convinced that the economy was improving. At the end of 1971 he said, "We will produce in nine months as much as in the whole year of 1970."<sup>61</sup> On the issue of consumer goods he differed with leaders such as Mittag, who wanted to raise prices of consumer goods rather than rely on western trade, as well as those leaders, such as Hager, who insisted that consumer goods were not an important part of a socialist society. The following statements clarify Stoph's position at the end of 1971:

We wish to stress again that nobody is allowed to increase prices for consumer goods.

The happiness of the people includes the fulfillment of many material desires. However, we do not forget that we have to hold our own in the class struggle, that solidarity with the still oppressed peoples . . . is to us a heartfelt concern, and that the safeguarding of peace is the foremost consideration.

The better life we are striving for has nothing in common with a capitalist consumer society which makes consumption its fetish.<sup>62</sup>

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<sup>61</sup> *FBIS EE*, 21 December 1971, E18.

<sup>62</sup> *FBIS EE*, 30 December 1971, E11, E13, E18.

Stoph was more supportive of western trade than Honecker. Already, in December 1971, he said:

Our economic relations with capitalist countries are dominated by the principles of peaceful coexistence between states of different social structures. There are plentiful possibilities for the development of trade on the basis of equality and mutual profit.<sup>63</sup>

His support for Western trade was most clear in his optimistic speeches at Leipzig trade fairs. He indicated that East Germany was specifically interested in trade with West Germany, while other leaders preferred to emphasize trade with France. For example, in March 1972, Stoph said:

We emphasize our intention to develop our relations with young national states. In the years to come, we will expand trade with the capitalist industrial countries, including the FRG, which--like ourselves--are interested in such expansion.<sup>64</sup>

In July 1972, Stoph also made the point that CEMA integration would have positive results on trade with other countries.<sup>65</sup> He did not view CEMA trade as excluding western trade. Brezhnev had implied a similar view in his March 1972 Trade Unions speech. Stoph did not view trade with the West as an alternative to increasing domestic productivity, but saw the two approaches as compatible. In this sense, his views contrasted with those of other leaders, who, at this point, still believed that trade with the West was too risky and increased domestic productivity was preferable.

Stoph was one of the clearest advocates of increasing Western trade and consumer goods, and disagreed with several other Politburo members on these issues, but his political influence also diminished

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<sup>63</sup>FBIS EE, 21 December 1971, E18.

<sup>64</sup>FBIS EE, 15 March 1972, E13.

<sup>65</sup>FBIS EE, 13 July 1972, E3.

throughout this period.<sup>66</sup> In October 1973, Stoph was removed from his position of Prime Minister and replaced by Horst Sindermann. Stoph then became President of the Council of State, an institution that was not as powerful as the Council of Ministers under Honecker.

Significantly, in the foreign policy sector, Stoph's role was usurped by General Secretary Honecker, CC Secretary for International Affairs Axen, and Foreign Minister Winzer, just as Prime Minister Kosygin's role had been usurped by General Secretary Brezhnev and Foreign Minister Gromyko. Stoph, therefore, was essentially silenced on the subject of *Deutschlandpolitik* in this period.

#### MITTAG

Guenter Mittag, CC Secretary for the Economy, seldom commented on *Deutschlandpolitik*, but the perfunctory tone of the few comments he did make illustrated his continued negative position. The following statement was made after the conclusion of the Basic Treaty and the reader should note the contrast with Honecker's optimistic statements:

The Basic Treaty serves the fundamental outline of our foreign policy, to create more favorable external conditions for the continuation of our socialist construction.<sup>67</sup>

Mittag apparently developed a different attitude toward France than toward West Germany. In October 1972, he and CC Secretary for Ideology, Kurt Hager, made a trip to France in an effort to secure economic and political relations. The coincidence of timing with the conclusion of the Basic Treaty indicate this may have been an attempt to distract attention from improving West German relations.

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<sup>66</sup>Author Przybylski suggests that Stoph did not have the courage to challenge Honecker, but he may simply have lacked the necessary political influence. See Przybylski, *Politbüro*, 124.

<sup>67</sup>FBIS EE, 21 November 1972, E1.



When Mittag mentioned Western trade he referred to France, but this was an oblique reference to West Germany as well. In October 1972, Mittag expressly underlined the GDR's willingness "to expand economic relations methodically and over the long term with such a highly industrialized country as France,"<sup>68</sup> as long as this trade was on the basis of normal political relations. It is quite likely that his position on this issue was related to a desire to gain leverage in any political or economic negotiations with West Germany.

Mittag was a supporter of increased consumer goods as were Honecker, Stoph, and Schuerer in this period. However to afford this luxury, Mittag insisted that productivity should be increased, not imports. Mittag made his preferences very clear when he stated, "The stable solution to provide the people with consumer goods is not to import these goods but to increase productivity." In contrast, Honecker and Stoph both believed trade was an important means to procure consumer goods, and Mittag became a proponent of Western trade in later years.

In contrast to Honecker, Mittag believed that shift work was a way to keep up economic productivity and provide the population with consumer goods:

The 1972 plan has been fulfilled and overfulfilled. Streamlined use of socialist production capacities should be intensively expanded . . . In order to streamline our socialist work, we must free up some jobs, make more use of shifts, and better use of work time in realization of the main task.<sup>69</sup>

In this period, Mittag appeared to continue his basic opposition to both *Deutschlandpolitik* and Western trade, with the exception of advocating trade with France. He became an advocate for consumer

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<sup>68</sup>*Die Wirtschaft*, 20 November 1972.

<sup>69</sup>*ND*, 7 December 1972, 3-5.

goods and for increased productivity in the East German economy to produce these goods. Ironically, on the issue of intensive economic production, however, Mittag still advocated elements of Ulbricht's position.

#### HAGER

As CC Secretary for Ideology, Kurt Hager, was ideologically opposed to the implications of *Deutschlandpolitik*. In this period, Honecker appeared to view Hager as the ideological "watchdog" for the regime. Hager spoke more frequently and his ideological pronouncements were taken more seriously under Honecker.

It is not surprising that Hager, like Mittag, became an advocate of improved relations, both economic and political, with France. He led the SED delegation which went to France in October 1972. His statements indicated that improved relations with France could serve as a lever on West German relations:

More and more states are normalizing their relations with the GDR. A big country like France must not lag behind this development . . . By taking such a realistic and justified step, France would give a new impulse to the positive trends in Europe. It would encourage realistic elements in the FRG.<sup>70</sup>

Most importantly, Hager led the attack on Ulbricht's ideological approach to the economy. Hager rarely commented on actual economic performance under Ulbricht or Honecker. However, at the II<sup>nd</sup> Plenum in September 1971, he attacked Ulbricht's ideology:

There were exaggerations of the formalization of economic processes under the slogan of a matter-of-fact approach. This trend of placing the form above the content, and thereby sacrificing

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<sup>70</sup>ND, 31 October 1972, 2.

political tasks to chase after models which are alien to life, has had negative effects on ideopolitical work and scientific life.<sup>71</sup>

Hager delivered a scathing speech, at a conference on social science in October 1971, in which he was clearly referring to Ulbricht: "Positions of obstinacy, subjectivism, and arrogance have obstructed scientific discussion."<sup>72</sup>

Hager repeatedly made his opposition on consumer goods known, but he expressed his sentiments most succinctly at the social science conference in October 1971:

Our society can not be assessed exclusively from the position of a consumer. We must always be aware that the advantages of the socialist society cannot be restricted to the indexes of production increases or other economic criteria.<sup>73</sup>

Because of this ideological position, Hager supported the nationalization campaign of 1972 and consistently opposed assigning high priority to consumer goods. He justified his support of the nationalization campaign in the following manner:

There are contradictions between the rapidly growing needs of the working people and our material possibilities, between the demands of society and the wishes and desires of the individual, between progressive innovations in the economy, in science and technology and the resistance of routine and conservatism, between the knowledge, abilities, and experience massed in the past and the constantly increasing and constantly changing requirements, and between the individualist and egoistic views that are still widespread and the new standards of socialist relations in the community.<sup>74</sup>

It would appear that Hager's critical views of Ulbricht coincided with Honecker's, while his views on consumer goods did not. Several commentators have suggested that Hager was not personally close to

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<sup>71</sup>FBIS EE, 24 September 1971, E25.

<sup>72</sup>FBIS EE, 15 October 1971, E8. For more details on this conference, see Fred Oldenburg, "Die DDR ein Jahr unter Honecker," DA, Vol. VI, No. 5 (May 1972), 481-489.

<sup>73</sup>FBIS EE, 15 October 1971, E6.

<sup>74</sup>FBIS EE, 11 August 1972, E5.

Honecker, so he probably acquired his political importance by virtue of his office, and possibly by virtue of his connections with the Soviet Union.<sup>75</sup> However, it is also possible that Honecker was playing a "good cop/bad cop" routine with Hager and Mittag playing the bad cops. Hager could be the main ideological "watchdog" while Mittag was the main economic "watchdog."

#### AXEN

In this period Hermann Axen, CC Secretary for International Affairs and a newly appointed member of the Politburo, became much more active in foreign policy. His leadership strategy was similar to Honecker's: he acted as a compromiser in the Politburo, or, if one wanted to be less charitable, as an opportunist who shifted his opinion with the prevailing winds. Axen was cautious in his statements on *Deutschlandpolitik* at the Vth Plenum in April 1972, which took place after Brandt was reaffirmed as Chancellor and prior to West German ratification of the Eastern treaties:

The positive trends in developments in Europe do not lead us to underestimate the aggressive nature of imperialism. On the one hand, realistically-thinking circles within the bourgeoisie are coming to the fore with the change in the international balance of forces in favor of socialism and with the deepening of the general crisis of capitalism. On the other hand, however, there is a simultaneous strengthening of trends favorable to reaction, fascism, adventurism, and sudden political turns which continuously endanger international peace.

At the same plenum, Axen tried to support both moderate and hard-line stances in the Soviet Politburo, repeating two quite contrary quotes from Brezhnev. First Axen repeated a positive quote:

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<sup>75</sup>See, for example, Lippmann, Honecker, 225.

Europe is standing at the threshold, so to speak, of a new stage. The ideas of peace, security, and the development of comprehensive cooperation encounter the recognition and support of more and more states.

Then Axen mentioned that Comrade Brezhnev had also directed words to "the forces in the FRG which want to prevent the treaties of Moscow and Warsaw from going into effect."<sup>76</sup>

While Axen followed Honecker's example by commenting positively on the economy, he said nothing about consumer goods. Possibly the emphasis on consumer goods went too far for Axen's more conservative ideological sentiments. However, Axen saw the link between improvement in the domestic economy and foreign policy:

The better we succeed in fulfilling and overfulfilling the 1972 economic plan and in accurately implementing the measures for solving the main task of the five-year plan laid down by the Central Committee, the better we can expand our international positions.<sup>77</sup>

At the II<sup>nd</sup> Plenum in September 1971, Axen commented that the Leipzig trade fair was "dominated by the deepening of scientific-technological and economic cooperation of the GDR with the USSR and other CEMA countries,"<sup>78</sup> and when Axen spoke at the IX<sup>th</sup> Plenum in May 1973, he still was not an advocate of Western trade:

We are now witnessing how the enormous economic power of the Soviet Union has a more and more perceptible effect on world trade, thus positively influencing the development of business-like, peaceful relations between the socialist and capitalist states. A real race for extensive long-term orders from Moscow has begun between the leading imperialist powers and large capitalist companies. Imperialist propaganda is trying to turn attention away from the increasing critical economic phenomena in the capitalist states and from their intensified efforts for advantageous relations with the Soviet Union and other socialist countries. They are

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<sup>76</sup>*ND*, 29 April 1972, 4-5.

<sup>77</sup>*Ibid.*

<sup>78</sup>*FBIS EE*, 17 September 1971, E4.

trying to do this with the awkward assertion that the socialist countries need the "economic assistance" of capitalism.<sup>79</sup>

According to Axen, it was West Germany and the US that were anxious to trade with the Soviet Union and not the USSR that required trade.

At best, Axen's conservative ideological nature made him ambivalent about *Deutschlandpolitik* in this period, but his desire to maintain political favor with Honecker and Soviet leaders brought about positive statements. He appeared to agree with Hager and Norden that consumer goods, to which he never referred, was not an important issue. He was probably alarmed at rapid increases in Soviet trade with West Germany and the US, as well as a strong emphasis on consumer goods. However, in the field of foreign policy, he was prepared to follow Honecker's program, whatever that program might be.

## **B. Ideological Opponents of Détente**

### VERNER

Paul Verner was CC Secretary for Security under Honecker and his opposition to *Deutschlandpolitik* was well known. He did not speak at any plenum until the end of this period. As Sodaro described his attitude:

Verner tended to accentuate negative themes [in West German foreign policy] such as Bonn's violations of the spirit of détente.<sup>80</sup>

His appearance at the end of 1973, and the nature of his comments, provides further evidence that a Politburo group, which opposed *Deutschlandpolitik*, gained influence by the end of 1973. At the XIth Plenum in December 1973, Verner made the following negative comments on West Germany, after the Basic Treaty had been ratified:

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<sup>79</sup>ND, 30 May 1973, 5.

<sup>80</sup>Sodaro, Moscow, Germany, 260.

The negotiations on the exchange of permanent representatives have not yet been concluded. But this is not by any means our fault . . . Influential circles in the FRG are making massive attempts to give the agreements a one-sided interpretation and application, one which is in conflict with their letter and spirit.<sup>81</sup>

Verner no longer greatly emphasized the need for consumer goods, a sector which he had promoted when Ulbricht had ignored it. Verner appeared to share Mittag's opinion on increased domestic productivity as prerequisite to the production of more consumer goods. At the XIth Plenum, he commented:

The key to our economic success has been the extreme increase in worker productivity . . . There has been a noticeable improvement in the offer of goods for sale which is due to increased performance in the production of consumer goods and an increase in work productivity.<sup>82</sup>

Verner appeared to support Mittag's and Hager's position, favoring trade with France. At the XIth Plenum, he announced:

A long-term agreement about economic, industrial, and trade possibilities was signed with France and will be enacted after diplomatic relations are established.<sup>83</sup>

Verner relented somewhat on his opposition to western trade, at least western trade with France. Still, his pronouncements indicate that he preferred increases in domestic productivity over western trade as a means to increase consumer goods. Verner remained an opponent of *Deutschlandpolitik*, although possibly he maintained a hard-line approach simply to force as many concessions from the West Germans as possible.

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<sup>81</sup>ND, 15 December 1973, 5.

<sup>82</sup>Ibid., 3.

<sup>83</sup>Ibid., 5.

## NORDEN

Albert Norden, who served as CC Secretary for Propaganda, opposed *Deutschlandpolitik* as Verner did. If anything, Norden was more negative. Norden only spoke at the Xth Plenum, which was held in the beginning of October 1973. He made the following pronouncements:

Unfortunately, there are attempts in the FRG which can not be ignored, attempts to give the Basic Treaty an interpretation which most profoundly contradicts its meaning and purpose. This is evidenced in particular by the verdict of the FRG Federal Constitutional Court that contradicts international law. The people who pronounced this verdict obviously are still living in the Middle Ages . . .

There are still influential forces in the capitalist countries which want to destroy the new atmosphere developing in international relations by exacerbating the arms race, reactivating the imperialist war pacts, and organizing new slander campaigns and subversive acts against the socialist countries.<sup>84</sup>

After the outbreak of the October War several weeks later, Norden added:

Practical implementation of peaceful coexistence is a hard struggle. Indeed we are reminded of this daily as the opponent makes repeated new attempts to break out of its historical defensive.<sup>85</sup>

At the same plenum, Norden adopted the Mittag/Hager/Verner line on trade, mentioning countries other than West Germany as acceptable trading partners. He also argued that trade could be used as a lever, as a type of reward for political recognition, saying:

After the establishment of diplomatic relations between the GDR and the majority of capitalist states, the development of mutually advantageous cooperation has now acquired great importance. In the past few months, it has already been possible to conclude important government agreements such as those on economic,

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<sup>84</sup>FBIS EE, 3 October 1973, 12, 13.

<sup>85</sup>ND, 24 October 1973, 4.



industrial, and technical cooperation with France, Italy, Finland, and Austria.<sup>86</sup>

Norden, like Verner, appeared to differ with Stoph on the compatibility of CEMA and Western trade. In a peace rally after the Xth Plenum he said:

There is a glaring contrast between the steady economic and social growth of the socialist community and its unity, on the one hand, and the economic, financial, social degradation, moral disintegration and differences in large parts of the world capitalist area, on the other.

Norden appeared to believe that the economy was successful. He advised the East German population to be less selfish in their demand for consumer goods, so there would be plenty to go around:

[The high increase in goods] is not yet reflected in a constant supply of retail trade with certain goods, because the demand for those goods has gone up even more quickly.<sup>87</sup>

According to Norden, *Deutschlandpolitik* could not be successful, because one simply could not negotiate with unreliable West Germans. If increased trade with western countries, other than West Germany, and was associated with political concessions on Western Europeans part, it was acceptable. Norden adopted an extraordinarily iconoclastic view of consumer goods, suggesting that consumers were the problem, not the quantity or quality of consumer goods. In this matter, he was probably closest to Kurt Hager. Norden's views on *Deutschlandpolitik* evolved in a manner similar to Paul Verner's.

#### HOFFMANN

Defense Minister Heinz Hoffmann became a Politburo member in October 1973, skipping the candidate member stage. His addition was

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<sup>86</sup>FBIS EE, 3 October 1973, 12.

<sup>87</sup>ibid., 3.

another sign of a new conservative trend on the Politburo. His attitude toward West Germany represented one of the most hard-line, vigilant approaches on the Politburo. He only spoke at the IXth Plenum in May 1973; his speech was entitled, "Peace and Detente Require Secure Protection." Regarding *Deutschlandpolitik*, he said:

The complaint of the Bavarian provincial government to the Constitutional Court, among other things, shows that in all leading imperialist states there are still enough strong and influential reactionary forces which even today are not prepared to abandon the trenches of the cold war and which would like to reverse the positive changes brought about in Europe. The sooner this reversal takes place the better.

While he did not mention western trade, nor the East German economy or consumer goods, in particular, his general comments on imperialist economies indicate that he was an ideological opponent of western trade:

The laws of the imperialist economy are still in force, giving birth to violence and producing the means for violence--every day and every hour.<sup>88</sup>

Under Hoffmann's guidance, political and ideological training for all members of the armed forces was intensified in 1973. Although Hoffmann was generally concerned about increased West German influence, he was especially concerned about the ideological contamination of the East German Army, due to the increasing number of visitors from West Germany and West Berlin after the implementation of the Berlin Treaty and Transit Treaty.

#### EBERT

Friedrich Ebert, President of the Peoples' Chamber and then Vice-President of the Council of State, delivered the Politburo Report to the

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<sup>88</sup>ND, 30 May 1973, 3.

IIIrd Plenum in November 1971. He explained why the GDR was not to blame for any lack of initiative in negotiations, especially in the Transit Treaty negotiations. This statement was made when East Germany still hoped for some political concessions:

We have repeatedly stressed that we are also ready to display an accommodating attitude in the current matter-of-fact negotiations between the delegations of the two governments, in the interest of peace and European security. However, the Federal Government and the West Berlin *Senat* must equally show their willingness to display realism about the talks if they are to be successful. The other side cannot hope for success when it continues to enforce demands vis-à-vis the GDR which could not be achieved in the quadripartite agreement on West Berlin.<sup>89</sup>

Ebert made no particular comments on western trade. He seemed, however, to be as concerned as Honecker about the production of consumer goods:

We do not overlook . . . that despite the progress which was achieved it has still not been possible to solve all the multifarious supply problems to the satisfaction of the population. It is our goal to ensure an equally continuous and stable supply of consumer goods and services. This cannot be effected overnight and it can be done only in line within the scope of our possibilities.<sup>90</sup>

Ebert thus distinguished himself somewhat from Ulbricht's past policies and tried to use the past to excuse any lack of results on the part of the Honecker. This resembled Honecker's own strategy. Ebert fit into the conservative wing of the Politburo but did not seem as hard-line as Verner and Norden in this period on the issue of consumer goods.

#### SINDERMANN

Horst Sindermann, who served as Vice Prime Minister of the Council of Ministers until October 1973 when he replaced Stoph as Prime

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<sup>89</sup>*ND*, 20 November 1971, 5.

<sup>90</sup>*ibid.*, 3.

Minister, held views similar to those of Norden and Verner, continuously blaming West Germany for problems in negotiations:

It is now up to the other side to make it possible to arrive, rapidly and lucidly, at treaties regulating the questions of traffic and transit through the GDR . . . FRG representatives, however, have not put a single constructive proposal on the table.<sup>91</sup>

Sindermann was outwardly optimistic about the economy, but apparently paid little attention to consumer goods. His attitude on this issue was similar to Axen:

We are thus perfectly entitled to speak about an additional economic upsurge in our socialist state, an upsurge which has been prompted by the decisions of the VIIIth Party Congress.<sup>92</sup>

Sindermann appeared to have developed a more open attitude toward Western trade than he did under Ulbricht. Possibly this was due to his new position as Vice Prime Minister, or to Stoph's influence. At the IIInd Plenum, he said:

Just a short time ago, at the Leipzig autumn fair, acting in the spirit of our party congress, we again characterized our international trade policy as being open toward the whole world, and we noted that it has brought about satisfactory progress in trade as well as in the mutual relations with some capitalist states.<sup>93</sup>

When speaking about the plan at the XIth Plenum in December 1973, as Prime Minister, he said:

Now that the diplomatic blockade has been broken and our socialist state has achieved world-wide recognition, we believe that more favorable opportunities exist for active trade based on equal rights and mutual advantage. The long-term agreements signed with non-socialist states are evidence of this . . . Of course, such trade does not always develop smoothly, mainly because of inflationary developments in these countries. We cannot enter into contracts which might spread inflation to the GDR. But if the law of mutual advantage is observed, there is no obstacle on our side to

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<sup>91</sup>ND, 23 September 1971, E6.

<sup>92</sup>FBIS EE, 20 December 1973, E2.

<sup>93</sup>ND, 23 September 1971, E6.

increase foreign trade with the capitalist countries year after year.<sup>94</sup>

Sindermann was one of the only leaders, other than Honecker, who at first opposed Western trade under Ulbricht and subsequently became an avid supporter. It is especially interesting that Sindermann remained a supporter of western trade in 1973, when even Honecker and Stoph became less supportive, and many Politburo members became critical of West Germany's political possibilities. Possibly Sindermann's inside information caused him to be less sanguine about East Germany's ability to "go it alone" in economic issues. Despite this economic turnaround, he continued to view diplomacy with West Germany negatively.

### **C. The Politically Vulnerable Members of the Politburo**

#### LAMBERZ

Werner Lamberz, the CC Secretary for Agitation added to the Politburo in June 1971, delivered the Politburo report at the VIth Plenum in October 1972. His position on *Deutschlandpolitik* fit in with that of Verner and Norden, who argued that it was not the GDR's fault if talks did not go smoothly. Speaking about the Basic Treaty, he said:

As is known, the GDR is ready to place the relations with the FRG on a solid and durable basis, to conclude a treaty on the fundamentals of these relations. It has submitted constructive proposals for this purpose . . . However the course of events does not depend on the GDR only.

As for the issue of western trade, he appeared to share the opinion that it should be used as a lever:

Then--after the conclusion of the treaty (the Basic Treaty)--it will be possible to develop cooperation between the GDR and the FRG in the spheres of economy, . . . and in many other spheres.<sup>95</sup>

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<sup>94</sup>FBIS EE, 20 December 1973, E3.

<sup>95</sup>ND, 13 October 1972, 5.

His comments also suggested he was a strong advocate of consumer goods production:

The 1973 plan must also become a plan of energetic progress in consumer goods production. It must actually implement a change in the attitude toward this production and initiate a development that will give considerably more weight to the production of consumer goods in the structure of the economy of our republic. We must also make more funds available for rationalization measures in the consumer goods industry.<sup>96</sup>

Lamberz appeared to be a close collaborator of Honecker's, especially in his strong emphasis on consumer goods. He may have disagreed with Honecker, however, on the means to achieve high consumer goods production, favoring increased domestic productivity as Verner and Mittag did. Similar to Verner, Lamberz also tended to emphasize how Bonn violated the spirit of détente.

#### GRUENEBERG

The CC Secretary for Agriculture Gerhard Grueneberg delivered the keynote address at the Vth Plenum in April 1972. He appeared to hold a conservative view on *Deutschlandpolitik*, saying:

Our consistent policy of giving the GDR the profile of a socialist state is the best prerequisite for an active and successful policy of peaceful coexistence between states with different social systems . . . In our time, the fact cannot be overlooked that the process of détente is accompanied by an intensification of the ideological struggle.<sup>97</sup>

Grueneberg also took a cautious approach to the question of western trade, saying that East Germany was ready to trade with capitalist states, and then citing trade with Finland as a good example of such trade. This was the same ideologically correct approach that Mittag and Hager used when emphasizing trade with France.

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<sup>96</sup>ibid., 3.

<sup>97</sup>ND, 28 April 1972, 7.

Grueneberg apparently made no comments on consumer goods. One suspects that Grueneberg's overall cautious approach resulted from his lack of political power in the Politburo.

#### KROLIKOWSKI

Werner Krolikowski, First Secretary in Dresden, was added to the Politburo in June 1971. He was so worried about the East German economy that he, along with other Politburo members, backed a plan to increase worker norms. We now know Krolikowski complained to Honecker about dependence on Western credits as early as November 1973.<sup>98</sup> According to Krolikowski, his political relations with Honecker were not very good after this point.

Krolikowski appeared to share Stoph's belief that trade with the West could be combined with CEMA integration. Speaking at the XIth Plenum in December 1973, he said:

The further development of the social political program demands a higher tempo to increase the national income. Our economy is based on the principle of worker performance and this will be more important than ever in the completion of the VIIIth Party Congress's main task. This is also the result of an increase in socialist integration as well as trade with non-socialist countries.<sup>99</sup>

Krolikowski's wanted higher worker productivity, but also believed that CEMA integration and capitalist trade were compatible. This mixture of views suggests that there were not only many factions concerning *Deutschlandpolitik*, but various related economic issues as well.

#### WARNKE

At the XIth Plenum, Herbert Warnke, President of the Trade Unions, asked the following question and answered it:

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<sup>98</sup>Przybylkski cites Krolikowski's memoirs in *Politburo*, 323-324.

<sup>99</sup>FBIS EE, 20 December 1973, E4.

What can we do in 1974 to better enforce higher worker performance? Comrade Schuerer has answered this question in his reference to unions. In our conception of competition, we count on scientific work organization and work norms as the most important component of this . . . Therefore in 1974, scientific work organization and work norms must be employed much more systemically than in the past . . . Too often we rely on over time instead of making consistent good use of regular working hours. Of course, some over time will be necessary in 1974.<sup>100</sup>

Warnke was hard-line on the issue of increasing domestic productivity; he appeared to be looking for a middle ground between Honecker, who had said no shifts or overtime were necessary, and Mittag who said both shifts and overtime were necessary. He probably was ambivalent about *Deutschlandpolitik*.

#### SCHUERER

SPC Chair Gerhard Schuerer became a candidate member of the East German Politburo in October 1973. He only spoke at the XIth Plenum in December 1973 and his comments were never published. His speech however was referred to positively by Herbert Warnke, whose comments indicated that both he and Schuerer, along with Krolikowski were supporting an immediate increase in work norms. Given Schuerer's previous concern with production of consumer goods, it is quite likely that he would have advocated both greater domestic production and more western trade. He was probably ambivalent on *Deutschlandpolitik*.

#### **D. New Leaders in Foreign Policy**

#### WINZER

One can judge Foreign Minister Otto Winzer's sentiments about *Deutschlandpolitik* and western trade from the comments he made at the

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<sup>100</sup>ND, 16 December 1973, 3.



IXth Plenum. He cited Soviet Foreign Minister Chicherin's policies, which could signify a positive attitude toward relations with West Germany, but he emphasized that improved diplomatic relations would not alter the sociopolitical character of the GDR:

When the Soviet Union experienced the wave of international recognition in 1924-1925, the CPSU leadership and the Soviet government expressly emphasized that the establishment of diplomatic relations between the Soviet Union and capitalist countries was no mechanical act on the part of the Soviet government . . . People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs Comrade Chicherin pointed out at that time--thereby anticipating the reply to some doubters of today--that relations with states with different socioeconomic systems would in no way alter the sociopolitical character of the Soviet Union nor, of course, that of the partner concerned. Today this principle is still valid for the GDR.<sup>101</sup>

To Winzer, western trade was probably also acceptable as long as it did not alter the sociopolitical character of East Germany.

He appeared to take a hard-line position on *Deutschlandpolitik* by the end of 1973. When referring to the issue of exchanging permanent representatives instead of ambassadors, addressed in the Basic Treaty, Winzer said:

The inconsistency created out of nationalist motives consists of the very fact that the FRG government does not want to exchange with the GDR the same representation as with the other states of the Warsaw Pact, but instead, wants to exchange "intra-German" representation headed not by an ambassador but by a state secretary in the Federal chancellery with its personnel consisting not of diplomats but "intra-German" civil servants. Even among NATO states there is no longer sufficient understanding for this chauvinist concept.<sup>102</sup>

It is possible that Winzer was simply arguing this one point, or that he was acting out of the bureaucratic interests of the Foreign Ministry, but it

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<sup>101</sup>ND, 30 May 1973, 6.

<sup>102</sup>FBIS EE, 27 December 1973, E5.

is significant that he adopted this negative tone at the same time as Honecker and a number of other Politburo members.

#### FISCHER

Deputy Foreign Minister Oskar Fischer, who became the GDR's Foreign Minister in January 1975, spoke in more consistently hard-line terms than his superior, Otto Winzer. At the Vth Plenum in April 1972, he said:

We know imperialism has not renounced its plan to undermine the position of the workers class, that is socialism . . . The inveterate opponents of the security conference do not even hesitate, to use domestic political events, elections for instance, as a pretext for preventing convocation of the conference.<sup>103</sup>

It is interesting that he made this harsh statement at a time when ratification was underway and the Soviets were supportive of the SPD/FDP coalition in the elections, and clearly applying pressure on the East Germans to be more cooperative. The fact that Fischer was rewarded with the post of Foreign Minister suggests that his approach was either condoned by Honecker or that Fischer could play the "bad cop" in foreign policy.

### III. Conclusion

Under General Secretary Honecker, there was neither consensus on economic policy nor foreign policy, although this lack of consensus was less debilitating and less obvious than it had been at the end of Ulbricht's rein. Honecker made a complete reversal regarding his views on economic policy and *Deutschlandpolitik*. For Honecker, his new leadership role as a compromiser and a popular leader required a shift in both foreign policy and economic policy choice.

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<sup>103</sup>FBIS EE, 5 May 1972, E6.

The Politburo was split between those members who still strongly opposed foreign policy concessions to West Germany and those who could more easily accept those concessions. There were also many other nuanced disagreements.

Undoubtedly, one of the smallest Politburo groups consisted of those leaders who were most supportive a positive policy toward West Germany. This group probably consisted of the three leaders, Honecker, Stoph, and Axen, who could gain more authority through East Germany's new international standing.

While only a minority of Politburo members spoke positively about improving relations with West Germany, a number of other members appeared rather ambivalent. As long as East Germany was prospering domestically and could remain insulated from imperialist tendencies, these leaders could accept a positive *Deutschlandpolitik*. This second group probably included Hager, Mittag, Sindermann, and possibly others. Honecker probably manipulated these individuals with rewards as well as penalties to insure their increasing support for détente.

The strongest opposition to a positive *Deutschlandpolitik* apparently occurred among those leaders who were part of the foreign policy/defense establishment. This group included Foreign Minister Winzer and Deputy Foreign Minister Fischer, both of whom were not Politburo members, as well as Defense Minister Hoffman.

This group was backed up by another set of leaders, those who would be directly penalized if *Deutschlandpolitik* were successful--these were the leaders responsible for propaganda and security. This group included CC Secretary for Propaganda Norden, CC Secretary for Security Verner, and CC Secretary for Agitation Lamberz.

Other leaders, such as Vice-President Ebert, CC Secretary for Dresden Krolkowski, Head of the Trade Unions Warnke, SPC Chair Schuerer, and CC Secretary for Agriculture Grueneberg, seemed much more concerned with very specific economic challenges and less concerned with the overall implications of *Deutschlandpolitik*. They could probably be won over to support Honecker's policies for economic policy trade-offs or if enough political pressure was applied.

In fact, the evidence suggests that the largest divisions in the Politburo concerned economic issues. There was even disagreement over the amount of economic progress which had been made in 1973. While Honecker said national income grew by six percent in 1973, Sindermann stated a figure of 5.5%. Moreover, while Sindermann said the economic results of 1973 were not as good as 1972, Krolkowski said 1973 had seen the highest economic growth since 1959.<sup>104</sup>

Multifaceted economic disagreements prevailed among Politburo members. Honecker, Stoph, and Sindermann were generally advocates of Western trade, indicating that West Germany was a desirable partner. Norden, Verner, and Krolkowski appeared to acknowledge the importance of Western trade, but always mentioned capitalist countries other than West Germany as appropriate trade partners. Hager and Mittag appeared to only gradually accept the importance of Western trade.

Under Honecker, most leaders supported an increase in consumer goods, but there was disagreement between those who supported both increased imports and increased domestic production and those who

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<sup>104</sup>Hans Dieter Schulz, "Etwas Weniger Wachstum," *DA*, Vol. VII, No. 1 (January 1974), 6.

insisted that increased labor productivity at home was the only possible solution. Furthermore, the leadership was divided about the correct amount of emphasis on consumer goods in a communist society. While Hager argued that a focus on consumer goods was dangerous to a socialist society, Stoph and Lamberz became avid defenders of the East German consumer concept.

Honecker was the only leader to drastically change his position in all three domestic economic issues (consumer goods production, labor policy, and Western trade) as well as in foreign policy. Under Ulbricht, Honecker had been a non-participant, but from May 1971 through December 1973, he supported increased consumer goods provided by labor productivity and trade, eliminating shift work and overtime, and he became more supportive of a positive *Deutschlandpolitik*. He also became the compromiser between the Norden/Verner hard-line group and those who agreed with Stoph's more liberal approach to the economy. He took on a role of foreign policy compromiser between the the more conservative Norden/Verner/Hoffman line and the more moderate Axen/Stoph line.

Soviet pressure on this mixed Politburo was most successful at the beginning of treaty negotiations (the beginning of the Transit Treaty negotiations in September 1971; the Traffic Treaty negotiations in January 1972; and the Basic Treaty negotiations in June 1972) and prior to ratification or completion of treaties (from February to April 1972, prior to the ratification of the Eastern treaties in May 1972; in October 1972 prior to the initialling of the Basic Treaty in November 1972; and in December 1973, prior to the initialling of the West German/Czechoslovak treaty in December 1973). Soviet pressure on East Germany may well

have grown with the pressure it incurred from improved US/Chinese relations, especially when Nixon made his first trip to China in February 1972.

East Germany, however, was quite adept at manipulating relations with Western and Eastern Europe. We see this in East German influence on the Bonn/Prague treaty, and East Germany's skillful use of new diplomatic relations with France to substitute for relations with West Germany. Western and Eastern Europe as a whole appeared to have little influence on East German relations with West Germany.

Honecker's leadership strategy, which relied on compromises and Soviet loyalty in this period, helps explain why he temporarily considered a more negative and defiant approach to West Germany in November 1973. There was still strong sentiment in the Soviet Politburo, not to mention the East German Politburo, against a positive *Deutschlandpolitik*. There was, in fact, no straightforward majority for any one economic or foreign policy in East Germany. When East Germany became a member of the UN as of September 1973, the *pièce de résistance* in international diplomacy for many of the more conservative Politburo members, Germany could afford to be more direct in achieving foreign policy goals. Honecker's temporary shift to a negative *Deutschlandpolitik* was, therefore, related to a renewal of conservative sentiments in the Soviet and East German Politburos after international events began to undermine the chances for a successful *détente* and after East Germany and Honecker had achieved a new level of international authority.

CHAPTER SEVEN  
CONCLUSION

**I. General Implications of the Study**

This dissertation began with the following question. When and how do international factors, domestic factors, and shifting authority within the Politburo affect foreign policy choice? If a leader centers his domestic authority-building around domestic policy, as Ulbricht did, then domestic policy will probably play a larger role in foreign policy choice. If a leader centers his domestic authority-building around foreign policy with a less prominent focus on domestic policy, as both Brezhnev and Honecker did by 1973, then domestic policy has a somewhat smaller role to play. However, if a leader is relatively new to his position, as was the case with Brezhnev in 1969 and Honecker in 1971, then domestic and foreign policies may be more closely linked and may both change greatly so the leader can more rapidly gain authority. This is especially true if new "policy windows" are opened through new international opportunities.

Moreover, once a leader develops a successful foreign policy, as both Brezhnev and Honecker did in their *détente* policies toward West Germany by 1973, that leader can better minimize the effect of an unsuccessful domestic policy. A foreign policy will probably have more longevity if it can be used to solve domestic problems as is indicated by the long-term success of a positive *Deutschlandpolitik* in East Germany. However, a certain foreign policy can not provide an everlasting solution for regimes as is indicated by cases with the reverse results: the ultimate failure of foreign policy to prevent domestic crises in Honecker's regime in 1989 and Gorbachev's regime in 1991.

In all of the above cases, however, it is important to consider the political dynamic of the Politburo as well as domestic and international variables to explain leaders' foreign policy choices. Without considering Brezhnev's rivalry with Kosygin, as well as the impact of domestic and international crises in 1967, 1968, and 1969, it is harder to understand why Brezhnev was motivated to change *both* his domestic and foreign policy course by the summer of 1970. In the summer of 1971, the shifting consensus in the East German Politburo, the dwindling support for opposition to Soviet *Deutschlandpolitik*, and Honecker's rivalry with Ulbricht, as well as Soviet pressure, explain why Honecker reversed Ulbricht's anti-détente foreign policy and internally-based economic modernization policy.

The impact of international crises, as seen through the lense of leadership, also explains why Brezhnev briefly relented in his drive toward détente with West Germany after the Polish crisis in December 1970 and strenuously defended his détente program after the Middle East War in October 1973. While the years 1974 and 1975 are not covered in this dissertation, it can be speculated that the end of Soviet détente was brought about, at least in part, because of a lack of Politburo support in the face of diminished cooperation of external actors, West Germany and the United States.<sup>1</sup>

As for East German leaders, Ulbricht falsely concluded that the Czechoslovak crisis in August 1968 would lend his foreign policy course of resistance more credence throughout the communist bloc. He

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<sup>1</sup>The reader is reminded that President Nixon resigned in August 1974 and was replaced by Ford, who was a weak political leader. Chancellor Brandt resigned in May 1974, and was replaced by Helmut Schmidt, who was not as personally supportive of détente with the Soviet Union.



appeared to believe the Polish crisis could reinvigorate resistance to détente in December 1970. To make matters worse, in the latter case, he failed to note the dwindling support for his foreign policy within his own Politburo.

This study shows that international tension may provide support for a leader's foreign policy dominance or may provide opponents of a dominant foreign policy trend with an opportunity to voice their dissenting opinions more openly. We see more of the former in Brezhnev's case in December 1970. We see more of the latter in Honecker's regime after September 1973. An increase in East Germany's international standing, the Yom Kippur War, and divisions in the East German and Soviet leadership, help explain why Honecker and other important East German leaders temporarily rejected a détenteist policy toward West Germany at the end of 1973.

Domestic variables, especially long and short-term economic problems, in addition to shifting authority in the Politburo, were crucial in both Honecker's and Brezhnev's decision to rely on a positive détente policy and increased Western trade. Ulbricht was less affected by this domestic economic pressure, because it ran counter to his authority-building strategy, based on the internal modernization of the East German economy, and because of his widespread political support. However, domestic economic pressure combined with the East German Politburo's shift on foreign policy ultimately led to Ulbricht's removal as a leader. The same factors were crucial in Honecker's downfall in 1989.

Another issue addressed in this dissertation is the problematic nature of the rational actor model and the bureaucratic actor model as explanatory vehicles for communist foreign policy choice. Although there

were meaningful, long-lasting oppositional groups within both Soviet and East German Politburos, the most extreme type of bureaucratic model, Peter Ludz's counter-elite model, has been disproven in this study. Although Ludz posited that a group which supported Western trade would automatically support a positive *Deutschlandpolitik*, we know both East German and Soviet Politburo members changed their position on these issues over time and many members who supported one issue did not support the other. Political leaders ultimately altered their opinions due to a variety of factors: (1) changing consensus in the Politburo, (2) changing professional responsibilities, (3) changing domestic and international events, and (4) possibly a genuine philosophical change in opinion as well.

While the rational actor model is most useful in understanding continuity in foreign policy choice, this study provided very few examples of simple continuity. To understand the variation in and the process of foreign policy choice, some application of some domestic factors, generally included in the bureaucratic model, is necessary. In this study, for example, one needs to explain why some leaders, such as Brezhnev initially supported détente with the US but not with West Germany, although they later supported détente with both countries. Then, some leaders, such as Suslov, reversed their support for détente with West Germany. These changes were linked to domestic policy changes: an increasing focus on Western trade and consumerism. However the rational actor model helps us explain why, at a time of great hostility toward China, the USSR adopted a détente policy toward both the US and West Germany, while, at a time of lesser hostility toward China,

Khrushchev could not convince his Politburo to adopt a positive *Deutschlandpolitik*.

In contrast to the two above models, this study underlines the importance of the political competition model, as an explanation of foreign policy which incorporates both continuity and change in foreign policy choice. By considering domestic and international factors, in conjunction with the first level of analysis, individual leaders, a much more complete explanation of foreign policy choice can be achieved.

Ultimately, Franklyn Griffiths' description of communist decision-making appears to be very accurate:

Activity of the regime reflects a moving consensus as the relative influence of specific tendencies rises and falls in response to changing domestic and external circumstances.<sup>2</sup>

This phenomenon occurred in both Soviet and East German foreign policy-making. The Soviet leaders gradually moved to a positive foreign policy toward West Germany from 1968 to 1970, with Brezhnev acting as a focal point for and advocate of this policy and domestic economic "reform." While the East German leaders initially resisted a positive foreign policy toward West Germany under Ulbricht, at the end of 1970, under Soviet pressure, Honecker and most of the East German Politburo gradually relented on their negative foreign policy toward West Germany and dropped Ulbricht's program of internal economic modernization as well.

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<sup>2</sup>Franklyn Griffiths, "A Tendency Analysis of Soviet Policy-Making," in H. Gordon Skilling and Franklyn Griffiths, eds., Interest Groups in Soviet Politics (Princeton University Press, 1971), 362-362.

## **II. The Application of the Political Competition Model**

### **A. The Soviet Case, 1968-1973**

In the Soviet case, Brezhnev's Politburo broke into rather clear groups. Nonetheless, there were no clear lines of organizational affiliation. Initially, there were a few leaders, namely Kosygin and Podgornyi, who appeared to genuinely support détente with West Germany and other countries. There were Brezhnev's personal supporters, such as Kirilenko and the new Politburo members added in 1971: Kunaev, Shcherbitskii, and Kulakov. There were leaders, such as Suslov and Polianskii, who supported détente with West Germany, as a policy trade-off. Finally, there was a group of politically vulnerable leaders, including Voronov, Shelest, and Shelepin.

It seems Brezhnev was able to implement détente with West Germany because those who most strongly opposed this policy were politically vulnerable and those who were more politically powerful, such as Suslov, were willing to bargain. By June 1970, Politburo leaders' rhetoric concerning West German détente generally became more positive. This was probably due to Brezhnev's victory in the agricultural sector combined with substantive results in the Bahr/Gromyko talks in May 1970. While there was some renewed opposition at the end of 1970 and beginning of 1971, it was short-lived. One assumes this resurgence of resistance was connected to Ulbricht's and Shelest's combined emphasis on the de-stabilizing potential of riots in Poland.

By the XXIVth Party Congress, Brezhnev could undoubtedly claim victory in his foreign policy and he used this to strengthen his political position in the Politburo. By the summer of 1971, Brezhnev had ousted Ulbricht, introduced a new CMEA program, reached an important accord

on the Berlin Treaty, reached an initial accord on SALT, and announced the MBFR talks. His leadership strategy of unity at the XXIVth Party Congress was followed up with very successful summit diplomacy from 1971 to 1973, particularly in 1972 and 1973. By the end of 1973, when multilateral talks for MBFR and CSCE began, Brezhnev greatly emphasized his own personal role in détente, and virtually all other Politburo leaders acknowledged this role.

Brezhnev's growing authority between the summer of 1972 and the summer of 1973 was probably due to two main factors. First, he had achieved many results on the international front with countries which were previously major enemies. Most importantly, on the domestic front, he removed most of his political opposition from the Politburo and added new, supportive members by April 1973.<sup>3</sup>

Ultimately, however, there were limits to Brezhnev's domestic authority-building on the basis of détente. Suslov, the next most authoritative Politburo member, began to give only conditional support to détente with West Germany in the latter part of 1971. Quite possibly, Suslov was alarmed at the ideological implications of the emphasis given to Soviet consumers' desires and Western trade. While Brezhnev increasingly supported *Deutschlandpolitik* and western trade, Kosygin gradually shifted away from an emphasis on *Deutschlandpolitik* and western trade. The fact that Brezhnev relied on Gromyko in foreign policy after 1972, probably indicates Brezhnev's growing disapproval and/or distrust of Kosygin. At the end of 1973, Kosygin asserted the value of

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<sup>3</sup>By 1973 Brezhnev widened his détente supporters from Kosygin and Podgorny to include two of the new Politburo members, Gromyko and Andropov. More importantly, he got rid of the strongest détente opponents, Shelest and Voronov.

détente in the face of the Yom Kippur War, but one suspects this was an immediate response to a tense crisis situation rather than an overall reaffirmation of political support.

Moreover, while most Soviet Politburo leaders praised Brezhnev's role in détente, Shelepin, Shelest, Mazurov, and Ponomarev limited their praise. Andropov and Suslov were careful to favorably mention socialist summits as well as Western summits. While Brezhnev clearly held a great deal of authority in the Politburo, other members were not without means to counteract his authority. One example of Brezhnev's limited authority is Shelepin's membership on the Politburo until 1975.

Although Brezhnev was able to successfully use a positive *Deutschlandpolitik* to achieve domestic economic success and long-lasting domestic authority, his détenteist foreign policy began to falter in 1973 and 1974; by 1975, it was more clearly failing. Ironically, Brezhnev had gained enough authority by that point that he could no longer be seriously challenged within the Politburo.

#### B. The East German Case, 1968-1973

Ulbricht faced a more difficult situation than Brezhnev in trying to sell détente with West Germany to his Politburo. In 1968, such a policy was clearly not in the interest of East Germany and it even threatened East German sovereignty.

Although Ulbricht, unlike Brezhnev, started out this period with a number of personal supporters in the East German Politburo (they were probably more numerous than Brezhnev's supporters in the Soviet Politburo), Ulbricht did not favor the policy of détente with West Germany or of internal economic reform.

Détente had serious implications for Ulbricht personally. It implied the end of Ulbricht's domestic authority base, a modernized efficient East German economy; détente put too much political emphasis on West German trade; détente portrayed West Germany overall in a favorable light and eroded East German sovereignty. To make matters worse, there was not one single East German Politburo member who appeared to actively support détente. Not even Stoph, who was commonly perceived as a détente supporter, appeared to genuinely favor better political relations with West Germany from 1968 to 1971.<sup>4</sup>

If the Politburo agreed with Ulbricht's negative policy toward West Germany, then why did the Politburo leadership vote for his ouster in January 1971? Apparently the growing number of political divisions within the East German Politburo made successful coalition-building virtually impossible for Ulbricht. In the end, Ulbricht's closest personal supporters, those who apparently did not support his removal, were Albert Norden, the Secretary for Propaganda, and Alfred Neumann, the First Deputy Chair of the Council of Ministers. These men were clearly dogmatically opposed to *Deutschlandpolitik* and Western trade, so their continued political support would have been impossible if Ulbricht had implemented a détentist policy with West Germany.

Those who voted against Ulbricht belonged to both the group Ludz has labeled as "modernizers," including Mittag, and "pragmatists," including Stoph, Sindermann, and Hager. By the end of 1970, Ulbricht lost the support of his previous overlapping issue coalitions: (1) leaders who may have opposed *Deutschlandpolitik* ("dogmatists") but who

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<sup>4</sup>Stoph's interest was limited to increasing Western trade to solve consumer goods shortages in East Germany.

supported Ulbricht; (2) leaders who wanted East Germany to modernize its own economy ("modernizers") but who held no major objection to Western trade; and (3) other leaders tolerating some increase in Western trade ("pragmatists") as long as foreign policy remained steady. Ulbricht may have well lost his political support because of his intermittently defiant and concessionary stance on Soviet *Deutschlandpolitik* combined with stubborn support for his own economic program, which was clearly failing at home.

Ultimately, Ulbricht was plagued by political miscalculation, based on incorrect assumptions of his authority vis-à-vis other East German Politburo leaders and vis-à-vis Soviet leaders. His victories over Soviet leaders in the past, the fact that he outlasted Beria and Khrushchev in their attempts to conduct a positive *Deutschlandpolitik*, caused Ulbricht to overestimate his ability to oppose to Soviet foreign policy. However, Ulbricht was not entirely wrong about the extent of his authority because it took Brezhnev one full year to lobby a majority of the East German Politburo to support Ulbricht's removal.

After Ulbricht, Honecker was expected to handle quite a diverse set of interests. Unlike Ulbricht, Honecker commanded Politburo loyalty because he had Brezhnev's complete support, and because he promised to solve increasing domestic economic problems, taking immediate action. Almost overnight, he turned into a consumer advocate. Most notably, Honecker was also able to use the international successes he incurred through *détente* to convince the people--and, more importantly, the Politburo--that he was a leader worthy of allegiance. The fact that 55 states recognized East Germany in 1972 compared to 100 states by the end of 1973, and that East Germany



became a member of the United Nations in September 1973 was proof of Honecker's successful strategy.

It was to Honecker's advantage that the various groups within the East German Politburo were unable to unite around one new view of the East German national goals in economic or foreign policy, as they were unable to agree on a challenge to Honecker's version. Moreover, Honecker used a close relationship with the Soviets to gain economic and diplomatic results, thereby achieving lasting domestic and international authority. Ideologues, such as Hoffmann, Norden, and Verner, combined with foreign policy experts, such as Winzer and Fisher, to criticize certain concessions in *Deutschlandpolitik*, such as substituting permanent representatives for ambassadors, but they did not criticize the policy as a whole.

As a loyal ally of the Soviet Union, East Germany gained a higher degree of international recognition, improving the domestic economy due to the benefits of Western trade, at a minimal ideological cost. While individual leaders such as Hager and Norden took issue with Honecker on ideology, there was not sufficient coherence between various issue groups to threaten Honecker's authority.

Apparently, Honecker's tactical flexibility as a new leader, his political position as a "conservative centrist," plus his backing by the Soviets allowed him to successfully conduct a positive *Deutschlandpolitik*,<sup>5</sup> while maintaining compromises in his own Politburo and increasing his access to Soviet officials. Ulbricht who had served as the head of a "directive

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<sup>5</sup>The reader should not see the ironic similarity with the negotiation ability of Western leaders during this same period. In the US, only conservative leaders such as Nixon could gather the political backing to conduct significant negotiations with the USSR.

regime" had also developed tactics of flexibility, but he had an ineffective leadership strategy, which could not guarantee the support of shifting coalitions in the East German and Soviet Politburos.

### **III. Future Implications**

While the world has greatly changed since the years analyzed in this dissertation, the models applied in this study help to clarify our understanding of leaders' future strategies of foreign policy choice in authoritarian countries. The extent to which the political competition model applies to post-communist governments depends on the degree to which these governments maintain authoritarian elements. This model is most applicable to countries where power is controlled by a small group. Therefore, this model, while no longer easily applied in the former East Germany, may still be applicable to Yeltsin's Russian government in 1994.

In the recently failed leaderships of both Honecker and Gorbachev, we can see how foreign policy choice vis-à-vis West Germany was determined by domestic and international variables filtered through the lense of leadership strategy, a leadership strategy dominated by one individual. The pattern may well continue in Russia's future foreign policy choice.

As for Gorbachev's leadership strategy, he chose to conduct an extremely détenteist foreign policy with West Germany in 1989 and 1990, even approving of the dissolution of East Germany, because of his need for foreign policy success--Western trade and Western leaders' support--to solve pressing domestic economic and political problems. This foreign policy tendency was characterized by extreme dependence on American and West European support. Gorbachev's reliance on Western leaders

played at least a partial role in the coup against him in August 1991, resulting in his ultimate replacement by Yeltsin in December 1991. Gorbachev's foreign policy can be considered a failure in the sense that he could not solve his domestic problems with foreign support nor could he use foreign policy to gain support within his own Politburo. It is still an open question how Yeltsin can solve similar problems.

As for Honecker's leadership strategy, his domestic authority-building, which had previously focused on more or less loyal adherence to the Soviet foreign policy position vis-à-vis West Germany, began to evaporate during the INF crisis and was ultimately destroyed by Gorbachev's foreign policy, which emphasized the "Common European House." Honecker viewed this approach to Europe as an obvious threat to East German sovereignty. While Honecker generally approved of Gorbachev's foreign policy of disarmament, Gorbachev's combined emphasis on the Common European House and rapid domestic reform was too extreme for Honecker.<sup>6</sup> As a result, in 1987, Honecker developed a new domestic authority-building strategy, based more on East German economic and political achievements. Due to his opposition to Gorbachev's program, he was forced to rely on positive summity with the FRG, such as an official visit to West Germany in 1987, as well as on West German credits to keep the East German economy afloat.

Rhetorically, Honecker tried to create greater distance from West Germany, a kind of renewed *Abgrenzung* campaign. Unfortunately for

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<sup>6</sup>This occurred by 1986 at the latest. See Daniel Kuechenmeister, "Wann begann das Zerwuerfnis zwischen Honecker und Gorbatschow?," *DA*, Vol. XXV, No. 1 (January 1993), 30-39. The reader is reminded of Hager's statement in 1987 that one does not have to "rewallpaper" one's own apartment just because a neighbor does.

Honecker, this was combined with an *Abgrenzung* campaign against the USSR *and* a failing East German economy. Ironically, Honecker's situation and strategy was reminiscent of Ulbricht's. Honecker ultimately lost Soviet support and the support of his own Politburo due to insoluble economic and foreign policy problems. As Ulbricht before him, he simultaneously opposed the majority of the Soviet Politburo, opposed domestic reform, and ignored the growing opposition within his own Politburo.

One disturbing implication of the political competition model is the difficulty, which powerful leaders such as President Yeltsin might face, in relinquishing control of a more predictable political structure consisting of a small number of powerful leaders, which can be dominated by one individual. While the names of the organizational bodies have changed, this same elitist type of government exists in Russia today. Similar issues concerning rivalries, allegiances, and coalition-building occur in more open, democratic systems, but these problems are less subject to manipulation by a powerful, small elite. Leaders, such as President Yeltsin, still have powerful cognitive and political reference points from the past, which may well affect their approach to domestic and foreign policy choice in Russia's future.

This study offers a partial answer to the question of future leadership options in authoritarian governments. If leaders can legitimate their authority through a new, successful foreign policy, they can minimize the effects of failing domestic policies--at least temporarily. More importantly, if leaders can use new, innovative foreign policies to solve domestic problems, as both Brezhnev and Honecker did between 1971 and 1973, leaders' domestic authority will be more long-lasting. If a leader has built

up sufficient domestic authority as Brezhnev had by the mid-1970s, the leader can withstand the impact of adverse international events on his foreign policy. However if a leader's domestic authority is declining, adverse domestic and international events can spell the end for that leader and his policies. This was ultimately the case for Gorbachev as well as for Ulbricht and Honecker.

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**APPENDIX I**

**Soviet and East German Politburo Membership:  
1968-1973.**

**I. East German Politburo**

**Fifteen Full Members of East German Politburo, 1968**

Walter Ulbricht (General Secretary)  
Friedrich Ebert  
Paul Froehlich  
Gerhard Gruneberg  
Kurt Hager  
Erich Honecker  
Hermann Matern  
Guenter Mittag  
Erich Mueckenberger  
Alfred Neumann  
Albert Norden  
Horst Sindermann  
Willi Stoph  
Paul Verner  
Herbert Warnke

**1969**

NO CHANGES

**1970**

Paul Froehlich died in September 1970.  
Hermann Axen joined as full member in December 1970.

**Sixteen Full Members of East German Politburo, 1971**

Erich Honecker (General Secretary)  
Hermann Axen  
Friedrich Ebert  
Gerhard Grueneberg  
Kurt Hager  
Guenter Mittag  
Erich Mueckenberger  
Alfred Neumann  
Albert Norden  
Horst Sindermann

Willi Stoph  
Walter Ulbricht  
Paul Verner  
Herbert Warnke  
Werner Krolikowski  
Werner Lamberz

**1972**

NO CHANGES

**Sixteen Full Members of East German Politburo, 1973<sup>1</sup>**

Erich Honecker (General Secretary)  
Hermann Axen  
Friedrich Ebert  
Gerhard Grueneberg  
Kurt Hager  
Werner Krolikowski  
Werner Lamberz  
Guenter Mittag  
Erich Mueckenberger  
Alfred Neumann  
Albert Norden  
Horst Sindermann  
Willi Stoph  
Paul Verner  
Herbert Warnke  
Heinz Hoffmann

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<sup>1</sup>These Politburo changes date from the Xth Plenum in October 1973.

**II. Soviet Politburo****Eleven Full Members of Soviet Politburo, 1968**

Leonid I. Brezhnev (General Secretary)  
Andrei P. Kirilenko  
Aleksei N. Kosygin  
Kirill T. Mazurov  
Arvids Ia. Pel'she  
Nikolai Podgornyi  
Dmitri S. Polianskii  
Aleksandr N. Shelepin  
Piotr Shelest  
Mikhail A. Suslov  
Gennadii I. Voronov

**1969**

NO CHANGE

**1970**

NO CHANGE

**Fifteen Full Members of Soviet Politburo, 1971**

Leonid I. Brezhnev (General Secretary)  
Andrei P. Kirilenko  
Aleksei N. Kosygin  
Kirill T. Mazurov  
Arvids Ia. Pel'she  
Nikolai V. Podgornyi  
Dmitrii S. Polianskii  
Aleksandr N. Shelepin  
Piotr Shelest  
Mikhail A. Suslov  
Gennadii I. Voronov  
Viktor V. Grishin  
Dinmukhamed A. Kunaev  
Vladimir V. Shcherbitskii  
Fedor D. Kulakov

**1972**

NO CHANGE

**Sixteen Full Members of Soviet Politburo, 1973<sup>2</sup>**

Leonid I. Brezhnev (General Secretary)  
Andrei P. Kirilenko  
Aleksei N. Kosygin  
Kirill T. Mazurov  
Arvid Ia. Pel'she  
Nikolai V. Podgornyi  
Dmitri S. Polianskii  
Aleksandr N. Shelepin  
Mikhail A. Suslov  
Viktor V. Grishin  
Dinmukhamed A. Kunaev  
Vladimir V. Shcherbitskii  
Fedor D. Kulakov  
Yuri V. Andropov  
Andrei A. Grechko  
Andrei A. Gromyko

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<sup>2</sup>These Politburo changes date from the April 1973 Plenum.

**APPENDIX II****East German Politburo Members who Signed January 1971  
Letter, Suggesting Ulbricht's Removal as General Secretary<sup>3</sup>**

H. Axen  
G. Grueneberg  
K. Hager  
E. Honecker  
G. Mittag  
H. Sindermann  
W. Stoph  
P. Verner  
E. Muckenberger  
H. Warnke  
W. Jarowinsky, candidate member of Politburo  
W. Lamberz, candidate member of Politburo  
G. Kleiber, candidate member of Politburo

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<sup>3</sup>Peter Przybylski, *Tatort Politburo: Die Akte Honecker* (Berlin: Rowohlt, 1991), 302-303.



**APPENDIX III****Major German and Soviet International Treaties in  
Chronological Order, 1968-1973**

**The Mutual Renunciation of Force Agreements with the Soviet Union and Poland (the Moscow Treaty; the Warsaw Treaty)** are known together as the Eastern treaties. They both recognized the status quo in Europe.

The Moscow Treaty was negotiated between the Soviet Union and West Germany from December 1969 to June 1970. Substantial agreement was reached in the Bahr/Gromyko paper in May 1970. The treaty was signed by Chancellor Brandt and General Secretary Brezhnev on 12 August 1970.

The Warsaw Treaty was negotiated between Poland and West Germany. Negotiations began on February 1970 and ended with the signing of the treaty on 7 December 1970.

The ratification of both treaties was dependent on the completion of the Berlin agreement and subsequent inter-German negotiations. Both treaties were ratified by the West German parliament on 17 May 1972 and in June 1972 by the Soviet Parliament.

**SALT I**, an arms control treaty between the US and Soviet Union, was announced in June 1968, but negotiations did not actually begin until November 1969. A breakthrough occurred in May 1971 and the final agreement was signed by President Nixon and General Secretary Brezhnev at the Moscow Summit in May 1972.

**The Quadripartite Agreement on Berlin (Four Power Agreement or Berlin Treaty)** was officially suggested by the US in August 1969. Negotiations were between the Soviet Union, US, France, and Great Britain with the goal of improving the situation in and around Berlin. The talks began in March 1970. A serious breakthrough occurred in May 1971 and a final agreement was signed on 3 September 1971. The agreement came into effect only after East and West Germans worked out the technical details for its implementation. The final protocol was signed on 3 June 1972.

**The Transit Treaty** had two components: regulations concerning transit between the FRG and West Berlin and regulations concerning communication between the two Berlins. It was negotiated in two different sets of talks from September to December 1971 and went into effect as part of the quadripartite agreement.

**The Traffic Treaty** was the first official state treaty negotiated between East and West Germany. It covered all types of traffic between the two Germanies with the exception of air traffic, which fell under the auspices of the four powers. It was negotiated from January to April 1972. It did not go into effect until the Eastern treaties were ratified in the summer of 1972.

**Treaty on the basis of relations between the FRG and the GDR (the Basic Treaty)** established a modus vivendi between the two German states. It acknowledged the validity of the four power "roof." A great number of substantive matters had already been discussed between West German representative Egon Bahr and East German representative Michael Kohl in previous negotiations. Formal negotiations began in June 1972 after the final protocol of the

quadripartite agreement was signed. The Basic Treaty was initialled on 8 November 1972. It was formally ratified by the West German parliament in May 1973 after three months of debate. The Soviets ratified it in June 1973.

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**Curriculum Vitae  
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***EDUCATION***

- 1985-93 Ph.D. Candidate in Russian and East European Area Studies, Johns Hopkins School of Advanced International Studies (SAIS). Ph.D. awarded 1994.
- 1977-82 Boston University (overseas campus), M.A. International Relations, 1983.
- 1976-81 Free University (West Berlin), *Diplom* Political Science, 1981.
- 1972-76 Stanford University, B. A. Political Science, 1976.

***FELLOWSHIPS AND AWARDS***

I am currently a visiting scholar at Stanford University's Center for European Studies.

- 1994 NISOD (National Institute for Staff and Organizational Development) Excellence in Teaching Award
- 1988-89 Research Fellowship at Stanford University's Center for International Security and Arms Control
- 1980-81 German Educational Exchange Service Award

***PUBLICATIONS***

"The Unification of East and West German Parties," *Report on Eastern Europe*, Vol. 1, No. 29 (July 20, 1990).

"Unemployment in East Germany," *Report on Eastern Europe*, Vol. 1, No. 32 (August 10, 1990).

## *EMPLOYMENT*

- 1991-94 Professor at Foothill College. Courses taught include American Government and Foreign Policy, Comparative Politics (with a focus on Germany and Eastern Europe), and International Relations.
- 1990 Summer Internship at Radio Free Europe. Worked as the East German analyst.
- 1988 Research Consultant at RAND. Worked with Rose Gottemueller.
- 1984-85 Customer Service Representative in U.S. for German wine exporter. Responsibilities included public relations, administrative, and management tasks.
- 1983 Instructor, Education Section, U.S. Department of Defense, West Berlin. Taught German language, culture, and history to U.S. service personnel.