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The evolution of East German foreign policy

Johnson, Diane Elizabeth, M.A.

California State University, Fresno, 1993

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300 N. Zeeb Rd.
Ann Arbor, MI 48106

ABSTRACT

THE EVOLUTION OF EAST GERMAN FOREIGN POLICY

The study applies the model of incrementalism, popularized by Charles Lindblom, to the evolution of foreign policy in the German Democratic Republic. According to the incrementalist model, political leaders place more emphasis on comparison than theory in their policy formulation, resulting in a step-by-step approach which is constantly revised.

The paper is divided into two main sections, based on the terms of Walter Ulbricht and Erich Honecker, the first secretaries of the controlling Socialist Unity Party (SED) who dominated foreign policy for most of East Germany's existence.

The evidence indicates that the SED analyzed its foreign policy in incremental steps. This is not to say that the East German leaders acted irrationally, however; they demonstrated a very rational recognition of East Germany's considerable limitations in foreign policymaking. Its inherently weak internal and external position meant that it lacked the margin of safety necessary for radical changes.

Diane Elizabeth Johnson
December 1993

THE EVOLUTION OF EAST GERMAN FOREIGN POLICY

by

Diane Elizabeth Johnson

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APPROVED

For the Department of Political Science:

Alfred Evans (Chairman)	Political Science
Russell Mardon	Political Science
Freeman Wright	Political Science

For the Graduate Committee:

Dean, Division of Graduate Studies

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Chapter 1

INTRODUCTION

Professor John Spanier effectively argues that in order to gain a comprehensive picture of international relations, one must consider the behavior of states at three different "levels" of analysis: As part of an international system with rules which they must respect to survive and be secure; as a reflection of their own internal nature; and as a product of the people involved in making and executing foreign policy decisions.[1] Hence, foreign policy in the former German Democratic Republic (GDR), the subject of this study, must be evaluated within the context of the state's position as a relatively advanced communist nation guided by a small party elite, tied ideologically and economically to the Soviet Union, and culturally and historically to the west--especially the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG). One can best analyze East German foreign policy with the help of a model, or models, of international politics.

According to Spanier, models--or "analytical frameworks"--are perceptions of reality which help organize information, select relevant facts, arrange these facts in

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[1]John Spanier, Games Nations Play: Analyzing International Politics (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1984), 9.

some order, and interpret them.[2] By isolating and emphasizing certain aspects of international politics, models simplify the tangled "reality" of international relations. Despite the fact that models provide only an incomplete picture, they are useful in helping to classify political events and actors, explain political happenings and behaviors, and predict future behavior.[3]

In Explaining Foreign Policy, Lloyd Jensen defines five models commonly used by students of international relations: The strategic or rational model, the decision-making approach, the bureaucratic politics model, the adaptive model and incremental decision making.[4] While each of these models offers some assistance in analyzing policy-making in the GDR between 1949 and 1989, one is clearly the most complete and the most useful.

Probably the most popular model is the rational-actor or strategic model, in which states are unitary actors who make foreign policy choices in four separate steps: They select objectives and values, consider alternative means of achieving them, calculate the likely consequences of each

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[2]Spanier, 6-9.

[3]Spanier, 7-8.

[4]Lloyd Jensen, Explaining Foreign Policy (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, Inc., 1982), 4-9.

alternative, and select the one that is most promising.[5] This model assumes that a state's policy-makers will agree on the values necessary to define goals, and that they will be able to isolate the ends and then find the means with which to obtain them. Critics argue that the strategic model overestimates both the intellectual capacities and sources of information available to policy-makers and the time and money they can allocate to a policy problem.[6] Its usefulness in analyzing East German foreign policy is limited primarily to very simple situations, which have the most clear-cut solutions; and to crisis situations, when decision-makers typically feel a sense of urgency and unity of purpose.[7] Moreover, the USSR's dominant role in the formation of foreign policy in the GDR for the most part precluded this type of rational, theoretical policy-making.[8]

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[5]Spanier, 410.

[6]Charles Lindblom, "The Science of 'Muddling Through,'" Public Administration Review 19 (Spring 1959):80.

[7]Idea is borrowed from Spanier, 419.

[8]Some may argue that the Soviet role in East German foreign policy actually supports the rational actor model, since East German policy-makers made strategic decisions based on their understanding of short- and long-term Soviet goals for eastern Europe. One might also argue that Soviet and East German leaders had identical objectives and values in foreign policy, based on their professed ideological symmetry. A preliminary look at the evidence, however, suggests that the GDR would not have challenged the Soviet leadership even if it had carefully and theoretically arrived at a policy choice which displeased the USSR, knowing the potential repercussions of such a decision. In

A second model is the decision-making approach, which assumes that the personnel responsible for making foreign policy are influenced by how they perceive the international system. In the decision-making approach, "Reality . . . does not exist independent of the policy-makers' definitions of it."[9] This model is somewhat more useful in analyzing the GDR's foreign policy. Certainly, ideological perceptions of the capitalistic west as the "enemy" influenced decisions such as those to support struggling communist efforts throughout the world. Its primary limitation, once again, is the influence extended by the USSR in East German policy. Particularly after the early 1980s, the struggle between the GDR and the USSR over their respective "realities" of foreign policy became apparent.[10]

A third model is the governmental politics model, or "bureaucratic politics" model, which focuses on the executive branch, especially on bureaucracies whose official responsibility is formulating and executing foreign policy. Emphasizing the pluralistic nature of decision making, the governmental politics model includes focus on legislature,

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that sense, the GDR's ability to make a rational policy choice based on the "most promising" course was so restricted that it severely limits the value of this model.

[9]Spanier, 409.

[10]See Hannes Adomeit, "The German Factor in Soviet Westpolitik," Annals of the American Academy of Politics and Social Science 481 (September 1985):15-28.

interest groups, mass media and public opinion. Policy is formulated through conflicts and resolution of conflicts among the many actors with different perceptions, perspectives and interests. Although political scientists such as Spanier have applied this model in a limited fashion to authoritarian governments--notably the Soviet Union--it is obviously most useful when referring to the western democracies, where the decision-making elite is much more heavily influenced by interest groups, mass media and public opinion.[11]

The fourth approach suggested by Jensen is the adaptive model, which focuses on the idea that states face constraints and opportunities because of their international environment. This model "seeks to ascertain those features of the environment that will cause particular outcomes regardless of the action one is talking about."[12] Of the models mentioned so far, the adaptive approach is the most useful in analyzing East German foreign policy, and proves helpful in comparing the GDR's behavior with other nations',

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[11]See Spanier, 423. He points out that in the former Soviet Union, for example, multiple bureaucratic interests lay behind the totalitarian facade: Party, army, policy, industrial and agricultural interests--even though the were unable to mobilize interest groups of legislative and popular support. "Within overall party control and the context of 'shared images,'" he wrote, "bargaining and coalition building presumably [occurred] in the making of foreign policy."

[12]Jensen, 8.

especially those within the Soviet bloc. In its formation of international policy, the ruling Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED) clearly adapted to factors such as the USSR's dominance and Cold War fluctuations. This, however, is only an incomplete picture. East German policy was not simply an adaption to the international reality; it was, at least in part, attributable to the GDR's commitment to Marxist-Leninist ideology. Moreover, East Germany policymakers were not just "adapting" to an existing situation--they actually helped to create it, largely because of the GDR's precarious position between east and west and its need for Soviet support to fight reunification on West German terms.

The most complete analysis of East German foreign policy may be achieved with the use of the incremental decision-making model, which Jensen argues is "perhaps the furthest removed from the rational-actor model."[13] According to Jensen, uncertainty, lack of complete information, and a plethora of public and private actors result in decisions which are a "product of considerable maneuvering and many false starts over long periods."[14] Since policy-makers have neither the time or the resources to go through rational processes, they pick the one most

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[13]Jensen, 9. On the other hand, Spanier incorporates incrementalism as one of the seven characteristics of the governmental politics model. Spanier, 416-23.

[14]Jensen, 9.

likely to be satisfactory based on whether the policy has been successful in the past.[15] Incrementalism, Spanier suggests, resembles a policy machine in low gear, "moving along a well-defined road rather slowly in response to specific short-run stimuli."[16] As such, this approach incorporates the benefits of the previous adaptive model, since the "short-run stimuli" may include the need to adapt to international conditions.

The "father" of incrementalism, Charles E. Lindblom, presents this approach as the preferred alternative in policy analysis, since it does not attempt "superhuman comprehensiveness."[17] Lindblom's important and oft-cited

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[15]Spanier, 419. Using this as part of the governmental politics model, Spanier argues that policy tends to vacillate between incrementalism and crisis, since incrementalism is inadequate to a developing situation or because stalemate prevents policy from moving forward. Crises bring a commonality of purpose among the various participants, which short-circuits consensus-building.

[16]Spanier, 420.

[17]Lindblom, "Science," 88. Lindblom cites several advantages for policy-makers who use the branch method. First, when decisions are closely related to known policies, it is easier for a group to anticipate the moves another might make and to correct injuries already accomplished. Second, the "inevitable" exclusion of factors is "deliberate, systematic and defensible," unlike the root method--which is not supposed to exclude, but invariably will. Third, a succession of incremental changes precludes serious lasting mistakes. Fourth, incrementalism does not rest entirely on theory, which needs a great collection of observations and is "typically insufficiently precise for application to a policy process that moves through small changes" 87.

article on the subject, "The Science of 'Muddling Through,'" draws a contrast between the rational-actor method of policy analysis, or "root" method, and the successive limited comparison method of policy analysis, or "branch" method--which became commonly known as "incrementalism."

In the branch method, policy-makers continually build out from the situation, "step-by-step and in small degrees." In this method, the means and the ends--or the empirical analysis of a needed action and the selection of objectives --are closely intertwined instead of distinct. This is true, for instance, when values conflict with each other, requiring a decision-maker to rank them before determining a specific policy.

With the branch method, leaders place much less emphasis on theory and more emphasis on comparison, realizing that this step-by-step approach will only partially accomplish goals, and that the sequence of decision-making will be repeated endlessly. Policy-makers will look for methods to simplify complex policy problems, usually by limiting policy comparisons to similar policies already in effect, and by "ignoring important possible consequences of possible policies, as well as the values attached to the neglected consequences."[18] The biggest disadvantage of incremental decision-making, as Lindblom

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[18]Lindblom, "Science," 84-85.

admits, is that policy-makers may "overlook excellent policies for no other reason than that they are not suggested by the chain of successive policy steps leading up to the present."[19]

Incremental analysis recognizes that even where the policy goal is fairly specific and decision-makers agree on values and constraints, "there is considerable room for disagreement on sub-objectives."[20] Importantly, however, it is possible in the branch method for policy-makers to agree on a "good" policy, even when they do not agree on the values.[21]

Twenty years after his original article, Lindblom published a second article on the subject, entitled "Still Muddling, Not Yet Through." In this article, he expresses surprise that incrementalism had become so controversial--saying he thought he was simply adding "a touch of articulation and organization to ideas already in wide circulation."[22] He defends the approach against its critics and clarifies three important points from the original

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[19]Lindblom, "Science," 88.

[20]Lindblom, "Science," 81.

[21]Lindblom, "Science," 83.

[22]Charles E. Lindblom, "Still Muddling, Not Yet Through," Public Administration Review 39 (November-December 1979):524.

article.[23] First, he distinguishes between "incremental politics," which is political change by small steps regardless of method or analysis, and "incremental analysis," which refers to the way policy-makers analyze policy. Second, he breaks down three kinds of incrementalism: Simple incremental analysis (analysis of "no more than small or incremental possible departures from the status quo"); disjointed incrementalism (analysis "marked by a mutually supporting set of simplifying and focusing stratagems"); and strategic analysis (analysis used as a norm or ideal, limited to a "thoughtfully chosen set of stratagems to simplify complex policy problems").[24] And third, he distinguishes between political incrementalism and "partisan mutual adjustment," the "politics" of pluralism found in all governments in the form of fragmented political decisions. Lindblom separates the analysis of analytical

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[23]The critics Lindblom felt compelled to refute question whether incrementalism is a preferable approach to decision-making, for example, whether incremental politics make a government incapable of coping effectively with big problems. For the sake of determining whether governments such as the GDR do, in fact, use the incremental approach, a detailed analysis of Lindblom's refutation of these criticisms is unnecessary.

[24]Lindblom, "Still Muddling," 517-20. The three types of incrementalism are interrelated. "Focusing" stratagems of disjointed incrementalism, for instance, include simple incremental analysis, limitation of analysis to a few familiar policy alternatives, intertwining policy goals with the empirical aspects of the problem, and trial and error. Also, the set of stratagems used in strategic analysis include disjointed analysis.

incrementalism from a substitution of politics for analysis.

Preliminary investigation of the evidence suggests that the incremental approach is the most useful model to apply to a study of the evolution of East German foreign policy. Since incrementalism as it was developed by Lindblom applies specifically to domestic policy in the western democracies--namely the U.S.--the biggest question is whether the model can be used in context of foreign policy in a communist nation. Lindblom himself argues that it can. In 1979, he wrote that "it seems clear that authoritarian systems themselves ordinarily move by increments;" in fact, some have effectively suppressed political change of any kind.[25] In the Soviet Union, for example, during most periods the pace of change was no faster than the U.S., and may have been slower.[26]

More often than democratic systems, authoritarian systems are, however, "at least occasionally capable...of such nonincremental change as the abrupt collectivization of agriculture. . . ."[27] This suggests that one may have to modify the incremental model to allow for certain exceptions when the elite decision-making body within a communist

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[25]Lindblom, "Still Muddling," 521.

[26]The primary exception to this was during Mikhail Gorbachev's administration, starting in 1985.

[27]Lindblom, "Still Muddling," 522.

nation is capable of making non-incremental policy choices. Applying this modified incremental model, the subsequent chapters will provide an analysis of the most important factors influencing East German foreign policy.

Foreign policy in the GDR was determined by the Politburo of the SED in collaboration with the Politburo of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU).[28] For most of its forty-year history, two men who presided over the SED as first secretary--Walter Ulbricht and Erich Honecker--played the single most important role within the GDR in shaping foreign policy. In addition to the members of the SED, many other actors also were involved in foreign policy, including the ministry of foreign affairs and the ministry for foreign trade. These ministers, however, were not considered important enough to be in the politburo, although they were "upgraded" to the Central Committee after general recognition of the GDR in the early 1970s.[29] Other actors involved in foreign relations were the foreign affairs committee of the Volkskammer, which hosted visitors from other parliaments; the peace council, which was designed to propagate Soviet-GDR views on threats to peace, especially

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[28]David Childs, The GDR, Moscow's Germany Ally (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1983), 296.

[29]Childs, 296.

by the west; and the Liga fur Volkerfreundschaft and the Solidarity Committee, which promoted the GDR abroad.[30]

The evolution of foreign policy in the GDR was tied closely to the state's historical evolution, as it moved from near diplomatic isolation after World War II to become the "jewel" in the Soviet crown. The six most important factors dictating foreign policy in the GDR were its relations with the USSR, its struggle to be perceived as legitimate--both internally and externally--and gain international diplomatic recognition, its special relationship with West Germany, its desire to establish commercial links outside the Soviet bloc, socialist ideology, and Cold War fluctuations.

By far the most important influence on East German foreign policy was the GDR's close ties to the Soviet Union.[31] Soviet leaders regarded Europe--and Germany in particular--as the most important region in the Cold War struggle. Hannes Adomeit suggests that Germany's importance was tied both to the historic struggle between Germany and Russia/Soviet Union in the twentieth century, and to German economic and military strength; hence, the GDR became the

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[30]Childs, 297. The Volkskammer was the popular assembly of the legislative branch of the government. The Solidarity Committees's specific assignment was to promote the GDR in Third World nations.

[31]Childs, 308.

"principal military-strategic bulwark and mainstay of the Soviet Union's security system," as well as the USSR's foremost trading partner and conduit for western technology and credits.[32] In addition, the ruling SED served as a major opponent of reform and foreign policy autonomy in eastern Europe.[33]

At the same time, the very existence of an East German state depended on the continuing strength of the Soviet Union and its ability to prevent the west from reuniting Germany under West German leadership. According to Article 6 of the East German constitution of 1968--which replaced the original constitution of 1949--the GDR would develop "in accordance with the principles of socialist internationalism, comprehensive cooperation and friendship with the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics and other socialist states." Article 7 established military cooperation among the GDR, USSR and other socialist states. Moreover, in a new constitution in 1974, the GDR amended Article 6 to make the state "forever and irrevocably allied with the Soviet Union."[34] In October 1975, a 25-year friendship treaty bound the two nations even closer, requiring them to inform and consult with each other on all

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[32]Adomeit, 16-17.

[33]Adomeit, 17.

[34]Childs, 308.

important foreign relations issues. According to David Childs, the constitution and friendship treaty represented the economic, military, ideological and class ties binding them to one another.[35] This is not to say that the GDR and the Soviet Union agreed on every issue. From an ideological standpoint, conflicts among communist states should have been impossible, since they professed to be classless societies whose goals were identical. The give-and-take approach used by pluralistic societies, however, represents contamination of pure ideology, presenting a real dilemma for communist nations. As Spanier concluded, "Any relationship between communist states must therefore be hierarchical in nature; it cannot be one of equality."[36] In this case, the Soviet Union dominated eastern Europe between 1949-1989, denying the possibility of a sovereign East German foreign policy.

Its quest for legitimacy and foreign recognition through trade and diplomacy also played a pivotal role in the formation of the GDR's foreign policy, especially during the first few decades. The GDR was in an unusual position because unlike most states, it had to "share" its nationality with the Federal Republic--and the inherent threat of extinction posed problems for the SED leadership

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[35]Childs, 308.

[36]Spanier, 327.

in formulating its foreign policy, encouraging heavy dependence on the Soviet Union. In order to insure its very survival, the GDR's foreign policy during most periods was extraordinarily conservative and oriented toward the protection of the status quo.

In addition, the GDR was diplomatically isolated outside eastern Europe for most of its history. Not until the early 1970s, more than 20 years after its creation, did the GDR begin to enjoy official diplomatic relations with nations outside the Soviet bloc.

One of the most important factors deterring the GDR's quest for foreign recognition was the so-called Hallstein doctrine pronounced by the FRG in 1955, which said that any state except the Soviet Union to recognize East Germany would forfeit its relations with the FRG; hence, the GDR was snubbed by every non-socialist nation. The Hallstein doctrine demonstrated the "intense struggle" between the two Germanys.[37]

That relationship was a third factor which heavily influenced East German foreign policy. The legitimacy of the East German state and the question of possible reunification with its western sibling became known as the "German problem." Both physical and psychological problems resulted from the division of Germany following World War

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[37]Childs, 300.

II, from the question of compensation for property "adopted" by the GDR, to the splitting of German families.

The fourth factor dictating the GDR's foreign policy was the need to establish commercial links outside the Soviet bloc which would further East German political aims, such as the achievement of diplomatic recognition, and help the GDR to modernize its industry.[38]

The fifth factor was socialist ideology. In the GDR, as in other communist nations, policy decisions were shaped by a small group of political elite--despite the communists' claim to be classless societies.[39] The main question is whether the communist elite simply used foreign policy to justify and expand power, or whether that policy was shaped by ideology.

Some theorists believe that ideologies justify what leaders do to preserve and enhance security interests; and since they are used to rationalize what the leaders would have done anyway, the ideology itself is not a "motivating force."[40] Others, such as Spanier and former national security adviser Zbigniew Brzezinski, disagree. Spanier writes that Marxism-Leninism is an analytical framework "in which the domestic system is the principal basis for

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[38]Childs, 313.

[39]Spanier, 315.

[40]Spanier, 315.

explaining and predicting national foreign policy."[41] This suggests that the economy is ultimately the only responsible factor; hence, foreign policy reflects the nature of a nation's economic system and the corresponding class structure. In other words, a capitalist state is compelled to be expansionist, militaristic, interventionist and reactionary because of its economy, while a socialist state --whose economy is not based on search for profit--is not expansionist and only concerned about guarding itself from the capitalist "enemy." Vladimir Lenin argued that the capitalist states had used the "superprofits" earned by imperialism and colonialism to fund certain concessions to the working classes to keep them from revolting; hence, the "national liberation" of the pre-capitalist colonies became an immediate task of communism. Later, Marxist-Leninists argued that European and U.S. imperialists began the Cold War when they tried to drive the USSR out of eastern Europe in order to restore it as part of the larger European market.[42]

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[41]Spanier, 378. While analysts disagree on the extent of ideology's role in determining a nation's foreign policy, most agree that Marxist-Leninist ideology does have an impact on foreign-policy choices in communist countries. See Jensen, 75.

[42]Spanier, 386-89. This, of course, turned Karl Marx's theory upside down, by suggesting that the proletarian revolution would begin in non-proletarian societies.

Brzezinski believes that communist nations' national interest is filtered through their ideology. The official Marxist-Leninist policy thus embraces every sphere of life, determining "reality" for the communist governments, causing them to interpret all actions by capitalist governments as hostile, and making them responsible for helping to bring about the new, postcapitalist order.[43] Despite the temporary "necessity" of detente in the early 1970s, then, communist nations indicated their ultimate objective of world revolution in their continued struggle for "national liberation" in Afghanistan, Angola, Ethiopia and South Yemen during that period.[44]

A more realistic analysis of ideology's role in the GDR's foreign policy-making probably lies somewhere between nationalism and revolutionary idealism. Childs writes that, "In theory at least, Leninism [was] the starting point of the GDR's foreign policy"; therefore, the SED showed sympathy and support for the socialist governments of

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[43]Spanier, 316. Spanier wrote of Soviet foreign policy that "Marxism-Leninism . . . provided the new rulers of Soviet Russia with a comprehensive analytical framework; it presented them with a way of perceiving the world; it defined the principal operational economic and social forces, it helped them to discriminate between friend and foe; it established Soviet long-range purposes; and it provided for continuing commitment to these purposes. Soviet policymakers perceive national security in the context of world revolution. . . ." Spanier, 319.

[44]Spanier, 320.

Vietnam, Nigeria and Angola, among others.[45] In practice, however, it "followed the Soviet interpretation of the anti-imperialist struggle without question, at the same time pursuing wherever possible its own aims of diplomatic recognition and commercial advantage."[46] Ideology did not, for instance, stand in the way of the GDR's diplomatic efforts to gain international recognition from the capitalist west.[47]

Other theorists place further restrictions on the influence of Marxist-Leninist ideology. Lloyd Jensen, for instance, argues that if ideology ever was "a primary determinant of [communist] foreign policy," most analysts agree that its importance declined over the years. With respect to the formation of Soviet foreign policy, for instance, Jensen places equal emphasis on Russia's traditional expansionist goals, its need for security and its historical rivalries.[48]

The sixth important factor influencing East German foreign policy was the fluctuation of the Cold War. The alternate heating and thawing of relations between the U.S. and the USSR affected policy in states such as East Germany

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[45]Childs, 300.

[46]Childs, 300.

[47]See Childs, chapter 12.

[48]Jensen, 77-82.

which were closely tied to one or the other superpower. An example of this was the GDR's 1984 decision to postpone Honecker's proposed visit to Bonn, in light of the Soviet decision to play hardball with the west after the deployment of new U.S. missiles in West Germany.

These six considerations--the GDR's relationship with the USSR, its quest for foreign recognition, its special relationship with West Germany, its desire to build commercial links outside eastern Europe, its socialist ideology and the ups and downs of the Cold War struggle--were the most important factors in determining East German foreign policy. The following two chapters will provide an analysis of that policy with the help of the modified incremental model discussed above: The first during the period of Ulbricht's leadership from 1953 to 1971, and the second during the period of Honecker's leadership from 1971 to 1989.

Chapter 2

THE ULBRICHT ERA, 1953-71

Walter Ulbricht was one of the GDR's founding fathers and the First Secretary of the GDR from 1953-71. Ulbricht--who frequently boasted about his personal acquaintance with Lenin--emerged by the mid-1950s with an enormous amount of influence within the SED and "very much in control of his country's national policy."[1] His power increased in September 1960, when GDR President Wilhelm Pieck died at age 84. Following the USSR's lead, Ulbricht substituted a Council of State for the presidency, with him as chairman. This council provided the major institutional foreign policy input for the state.[2]

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[1]A. James McAdams, Germany Divided: From the Wall to Reunification (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993), 6, 8. Between the founding of the GDR and the time he became first secretary, Ulbricht served as one of the five deputy ministers or "vice presidents" under Minister President Otto Grotewohl.

After the mid-1970s, the title of "first secretary" was changed to "general secretary."

[2]Starting in the late 1960s, the State Council was downgraded and the Council of Ministers was upgraded. For an interesting and reasonably detailed study of the role of institutions and elites in GDR foreign policy, see John M. Starrels and Anita M. Mallinckrodt, "East German Foreign Policy," in The Foreign Policies of Eastern Europe: Domestic and International Determinants, ed. James A. Kuhlmann (Leiden, The Netherlands: A. W. Sijthoff, 1978), 79-107; and Peter H. Merkl, German Foreign Policies, West and East; on the Threshold of a New European Era (Santa Barbara, California: ABC Clio, 1974), 205-8. For studies

A. James McAdams argued, however, that it was harder than commonly assumed for Ulbricht to consolidate his power in the early 1950s because of internal conditions in the GDR, despite his advantages of being present at the formation of the state and the SED, and his close association with Moscow.[3] Members of the SED leadership during the early 1950s, such as Rudolf Herrnstadt and Wilhelm Zaisser, challenged some of Ulbricht's methods to achieve accepted foreign policy goals, including reunification and resolution of the nationality question.

Three events in particular during this period threatened Ulbricht's position as supreme leader in the GDR: First, his regime's economic planning was experiencing massive failures; second, his supporter Stalin died in March 1953; and third, widespread labor strikes broke out in June of that year.[4] The Soviet decision to come to Ulbricht's

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of the elite linkages with policymaking, see also Peter Christian Ludz's The Changing Party Elite in East Germany (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1972). Ludz argued that a new generation of managers and experts--the counterelite--began to push aside the old men in the SED leadership during the 1960s; but concluded that the party apparatus stayed solidly in control throughout the Ulbricht era. Quoted in Merkl, 5.

McAdams noted that with Pieck's death in 1960, the "last symbol of collective rule in the GDR" died with him, and when Ulbricht changed the structure of the presidency, "his aims and the GDR's were literally identical." McAdams, 44, 48.

[3]McAdams, 36-37.

[4]Ronald D. Asmus, "The GDR and the German Nation: Sole Heir or Socialist Sibling," International Affairs 60 (Summer

aid during the worker uprising greatly strengthened his position, and he subsequently purged prominent critics from the SED leadership, including Herrnstadt and Zaisser.[5]

The Ulbricht regime experienced a second period of turbulence starting in 1956, after Nikita Khrushchev denounced Stalin at the Twenty-Second CPSU Congress. For nearly two years, critics within the SED--led by Security Chief Karl Schirdewan--lambasted Ulbricht's dictatorial style, harsh economic measures and inflexibility on the national question. Finally, Ulbricht was able to marshall his forces; and when Khrushchev chose to back him, the turmoil settled down.[6] Anthon noted in 1963 that Ulbricht

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1984):406. By June 17, 1953, 270 localities were on strike, involving about five percent of the GDR's labor force. According to one source, Ulbricht "narrowly escaped" being overthrown, while some of his colleagues did not. The "revolt" ended when Soviet armed forces rather quickly imposed martial law. The SED leadership minimized the importance of the strikes and blamed them on western attempts to overthrow the GDR. David Childs, The GDR, Moscow's German Ally (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1983), 33.

According to Carl Anthon, the support of the USSR during the strikes revitalized Ulbricht--who was further reassured when the west did not intervene in that event, or during the Hungarian revolt of 1956 or the erection of the Berlin Wall in 1961. Carl G. Anthon, "Stalinist Rule in East Germany," Current History 44 (May 1963):267.

Historians disagree about whether the uprising was related to the change in the Soviet regime in 1953 after Stalin's death.

[5]McAdams, 38-39.

[6]McAdams, 42. McAdams also noted that in an attempt to show the world that the GDR was a viable and humane alternative to capitalism, Ulbricht enthusiastically

had insured support for his policies by purging all those who were antagonistic toward reliance on the USSR, including those who opposed him in their support for a slow building-up of socialism in order to decrease international tension and facilitate German reunification.[7]

Foreign policymaking in the GDR was highly centralized. In ruling out the interest group approach to policymaking in the GDR, Eberhard Schulz concluded that although there were "a multitude of driving forces" in forming East German foreign policy, they all led to the Politburo--the power was entirely concentrated in the elite. Naturally, a critical factor in shaping policy--both domestic and foreign--was this group's interest in self-preservation. According to Schulz, the SED leadership immediately determined several functions that were critical to its existence: Avoid conflict of any kind with the Soviet leadership, reduce the GDR's legitimacy gap among the population by "conducting an active and convincing foreign policy," neutralize the political attraction of the FRG, and meet popular economic needs.[8]

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followed Khrushchev's lead in denouncing Stalin's crimes in 1956 (72).

[7]Anthon, 268.

[8]Anthon, 18, 20-21.

In analyzing the GDR's foreign policy during the Ulbricht era, several distinct ideas emerge. First, a close link existed between domestic- and foreign-policymaking processes. Second, Marxist-Leninist ideology factored heavily into the East German propaganda about its foreign policy, if not always in its actual implementation. Third, the related issues of legitimacy, nationality, international recognition and reunification, were keys to most of the foreign policy decisions made independently by the SED leadership. And finally, the GDR's relations with five nations, or groups of nations--the USSR, eastern Europe, the Federal Republic, the western industrialized nations and the Third World--dominated East German foreign policy between 1953-1971.

The Link of Domestic and Foreign Policy in the GDR

In the mid-1960s, Henry Kissinger noted that political analysts had paid scant attention to the connection between domestic factors and foreign policymaking.[9] Starting in the late '60s, policy experts introduced the "linkage theory," which showed the close ties between domestic and foreign policy, and some quickly drew conclusions for the GDR. For example, C. Bradley Scharf wrote that,

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[9]Quoted in Starrels and Mallinckrodt, 79.

> Foreign relations are not a detached realm of activity, but an integral part of any society's endeavor to provide peace and well-being for its people . . . [and] nowhere is the intertwining of foreign and domestic policies more palpable than in the German Democratic Republic . . . [where] the legitimacy of the state and the people's way of life depend upon a precarious balance of somewhat contradictory principles of foreign relations.[10]

The three "somewhat contradictory" priorities that Scharf referred to were the efforts to strengthen the regime's legitimacy, to secure against the threat of destruction in the event of war between the superpowers, and to insure economic growth and popular well-being through expansion of trade. The tie between domestic and foreign policy concerns is obvious. In this case, the foreign policymaking dilemma for the GDR was that the SED's dependence on a close alliance with the USSR undermined the GDR's pursuit of internal and external legitimacy.[11]

Other examples of the linkage theory applied to the GDR include a study by John M. Starrels and Anita M. Mallinckrodt, which stated that economic factors tended "to reinforce the degree to which the GDR's foreign policy

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[10]C. Bradley Scharf, Politics and Change in Eastern Germany: An Evaluation of Socialist Democracy (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1984), 169.

[11]Scharf, 173.

concept simultaneously [involved] external and internal concerns"; and a study by Peter Marsh which argued that GDR foreign policy was directed by the interaction of two strategies: close economic and political integration with the USSR and eastern Europe, and the modernization and development of the national economy.[12] Marsh concluded that a conflict between economic rationality and political necessity eventually resulted when the USSR and GDR disagreed on the latter's attempt to "achieve domestic and international legitimacy" in the late '60s and early '70s.

Another example of the linkage theory was established by Stephen R. Bowers, who argued that the "ideological struggle proclaimed by the SED [was] a direct consequence of the foreign policy situation existing between socialism and capitalism."[13] Bowers used three areas of GDR policymaking to illustrate the linkage between domestic and foreign policy. First, in order to create a sense of national identity, the SED utilized confrontation with the west to foster unity, asserted that the two Germanys were changing

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[12]Starrels and Mallinckrodt, 100; and Peter Marsh, "Foreign Policy Making in the German Democratic Republic: The Interplay of Internal Pressures and External Dependence," in Foreign Policymaking in Communist Countries, ed. Hannes Adomeit and Robert Boardman (Farnborough, England: Saxon House, Teakfield, 1979), 82.

[13]For the following discussion, see Stephen R. Bowers, "East German National Consciousness: Domestic and Foreign Policy Considerations," East European Quarterly 13 (Summer 1979):145-83.

in opposite directions, and worked toward increasing the unity of thought, will and action with its eastern allies. Second, in order to create the society that the SED envisioned for the GDR, the SED leadership strove to raise material and cultural standards and establish favorable external conditions for building socialism in the GDR. Third, in order to construct a "socialist Germany," which rested on a collective effort to develop a national consciousness and continued world peace, the SED intensified the ideological struggle. According to Bowers, the SED served as the "linkage group," which clearly recognized the connection between domestic and foreign policy; and the primary link was the GDR's alliance with the USSR, which required both development of society and a foreign policy compatible with its own. A secondary link was the SED's effort to increase internal stability by separating the GDR from the FRG through its Abgrenzung policy of separating East and West.[14] Bowers concluded that the SED needed to keep tension in external affairs--such as that in West Berlin--to compensate for the weakness in internal affairs.

A fifth example is Michael Sodaro's link between Ostpolitik and East Germany's economic growth strategy."[15]

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[14]The Abgrenzung policy, initiated by Ulbricht in the GDR, is discussed in detail in chapter 3.

[15]Michael J. Sodaro, "Ulbricht's Grand Design: Economy, Ideology and the GDR's Response to Detente 1967-

Sodaro noted that the Ulbricht regime "consistently justified its changing economic policies...by the mounting challenges...of Ostpolitik" between 1968 and 1970, and the acceleration in policy appeared to have been launched as responses to an acute foreign policy predicament, rather than pure economic rationality.[16] At the same time, Ulbricht introduced several ideological innovations designed to establish the GDR as a model of advanced socialism in an effort to counter any harmful effects of Ostpolitik.[17]

A final example of the linkage theory is Gareth Winrow, who argued in his study on the GDR in Africa that the SED's "active foreign policy to secure global recognition of the GDR" was one way to achieve legitimacy to justify the regime internally and externally.[18] Furthermore, because Moscow also perceived increased East German legitimacy to be in its own best interest, the USSR granted limited autonomy of foreign policy--specifically on the African continent--in order to assist in the GDR's quest for legitimacy.[19]

71," World Affairs 142 (Winter 1980):149. Other analysts cited previously who also studied linkage theory in the GDR included Starrels, Mallinckrodt, and Scharf.

[16]Sodaro, 149.

[17]Sodaro, 160-63. These ideological innovations are discussed later in this chapter.

[18]Gareth M. Winrow, The Foreign Policy of the GDR in Africa (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 13.

[19]Winrow, 15.

The Role of Ideology in GDR Foreign Policy

According to official East German doctrine, the central issues in East German foreign policy were the development of socialism and struggle for world peace and disarmament. Scharf noted that foreign policy was defined "almost exclusively in terms of [the GDR's] position within the 'socialist state community.'"[20]

The SED claimed that Marxist-Leninism was the scientific foundation of its foreign policy, and that the GDR's greatest international obligation was to help strengthen the socialist system and the communist and worker's parties.[21] According to official ideology, the "class character" of foreign policy dictated that in socialist countries, it serve the interests of the working people--hence, it was an "active factor in the socialist revolution" which contributed to the assurance of society's peaceful progress and security.[22] Harry Ott wrote,

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[20]Scharf, 173.

[21]See Oskar Fischer, "The Role of the German Democratic Republic in the Socialist Comity of States," German Foreign Policy 9 (January-February 1970):22. Starrels and Mallinckrodt wrote that "East Germany's foreign policy role is linked with a variety of institutional obligations which have evolved from its membership in the Soviet bloc" 84.

[22]Eberhard Schulz, "Decisive Factors in GDR Foreign Policy," in GDR Foreign Policy, ed. Eberhard Schulz, et al. (Armonk, New York: M. E. Sharpe Inc., 1982), 9.

> The character, principles, objectives and tasks of the German Democratic Republic's foreign policy are profoundly and inseparably linked with the further construction of the evolved socialist society, with the continuous strengthening of our socialist state. Above all they are determined by the fact that in the GDR the working class, led by its Marxist-Leninist party, is exercising power.[23]

The official GDR doctrine identified three forms of foreign policy in socialist states: The policy of "socialist internationalism" which applied to socialist fraternal countries, the policy toward "young national states" which had the same "fundamental interests" as the GDR, and the policy of "peaceful coexistence" toward capitalistic--and frequently, imperialistic--states.[24] As Schulz pointed out, however, the statements of Marxism-Leninism were "much too vague to provide the GDR adequate concrete guidelines for action."[25]

The official party line argued that only the socialist comity of states was able to safeguard European security, particularly against the aggressive policies of West German militarism and revanchism.[26] The GDR played a special role as the bulwark on the western frontier of the socialist

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[23]Harry Ott, "The Class Character of the German Democratic Republic's Foreign Policy," German Foreign Policy 11 (May-June 1972):191.

[24]Schulz, 10.

[25]Schulz, 12.

[26]See Fischer, 24-25.

community. As future Foreign Affairs Minister Otto Winzer wrote in 1961, "the boundary between socialism and imperialism passes through the heart of Germany."[27]

This obligation was not limited to Europe, however. According to the SED, the GDR was committed to extend cooperation with the other states of the socialist world system, to support the developing countries in their struggle against imperialism and neo-colonialism, and to establish relations with capitalist states on the basis of international law and according to the principles of peaceful coexistence.[28]

An important aspect of Marxist-Leninist ideology as the SED applied it, was its commitment to world peace and international disarmament. Ulbricht wrote that after the USSR formally granted sovereignty to the GDR in 1955 in the State Treaty on Relations between the GDR and USSR,

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[27]Otto Winzer, "Efforts of the GDR for a Peace Treaty," World Marxist Review 4 (October 1961):24.

[28]Printed in Peter Florin, "The International Position and the Peace Policy of the German Democratic Republic," German Foreign Policy 9 (November-December 1970):423-24. By "peaceful coexistence," the SED did not mean a lessening of the gap between imperialism and socialism, which it acknowledged as a permanent contradiction. This term, however, implied the establishment of normal relations on the basis of international law, which continued to be one of the chief objectives of German foreign policy throughout the Ulbricht era.

These objectives were repeated frequently by other SED leaders, as well. See Winzer, quoted in Merkl, 91.

> It then became the historic mission of the sovereign German Democratic Republic to initiate a peace policy and to work for agreement with the other equal German state. The GDR was committed to a new foreign policy of friendship with the USSR and the other socialist countries, the national-democratic states and all countries of good will. . . .[29]

According to official socialist-state ideology, the GDR could not justify aggressive use of military force; the maintenance of an armed forces would only be used to deter the aggressive action of the capitalist imperialist nations.

The GDR claimed to be in a unique position to advance peace in Europe. In 1965, Ulbricht wrote that "in a sense, the road to European peace and accord lies through agreement with the GDR," as an arbiter of detente. He concluded that the GDR's prime duty was to "ensure that never again shall war originate on German soil."[30] SED leaders pointed out that in the eastern part of the country, Germans had learned from the past and extirpated the roots of German militarism.[31] As Ulbricht put it, "The government and the

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[29]Walter Ulbricht, "The October Revolution and the Transition to Socialism in Germany," World Marxist Review 10 (November 1967):7. On Jan. 25, 1955, the USSR unilaterally ended its state of war with Germany. It completed reconciliation with the GDR on Sept. 20 by signing the formal treaty of relations.

[30]Walter Ulbricht, "Vital Contribution to European Peace and Security," World Marxist Review 8 (May 1965):5.

[31]Joachim Kruger, "The Struggle of the GDR for Disarmament," German Foreign Policy 4 (November-December 1965):430. See also Otto Winzer, "On the Foreign Policy of the Socialist State of the German Nation," German Foreign Policy 8 (September-October 1969):323-31.

overwhelming majority of the people of the GDR are guided by the elementary truth that peace is as essential to the German people as the air they breathe." According to him, a tragedy had occurred when the German working classes were unable to establish power throughout the country after World War I, which would have averted a second conflagration.[32] An interesting twist to this "lesson of history" was the SED's position that the East Germans had learned that "the vital interests of the German people require a good and friendly relationship with the socialist Soviet Union."[33]

Writing in 1965, the East German Joachim Kruger pointed out examples of the GDR's commitment to peace in Europe: It had allowed no fascist, militarist or revanchist elements in the staffs or commanders of the National People's Army (NPA); it had committed no aggressive acts against former powers of the anti-Hitler coalition; it demanded no weapons of mass destruction or any other heavy weapons; it had signed the Moscow Test Ban Agreement in 1963; and it had submitted numerous proposals during the 1950s that both Germanys agree to general and complete disarmament.[34] In

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[32]Walter Ulbricht, "The Historical Task of the GDR and the Future of Germany," World Marxist Review 5 (July 1963):5.

[33]See Werner Hanisch, "Problems of the International Position of the GDR," German Foreign Policy 9 (May-June 1970):179.

[34]Kruger, 431.

addition, the GDR signed the Warsaw Treaty in 1955, which stated in article 2 that signatories would work toward general disarmament and banning of "atomic, hydrogen and other weapons of mass destruction." Finally, the GDR had submitted a declaration to an 18-power disarmament committee in Geneva in August 1965, repeating an earlier proposal to renounce production acquisition and use of nuclear weapons in both Germanys.

A frequent theme in the GDR's calls for peace and disarmament was the attack on the "revanchist" West Germans. SED leaders accused the FRG of pursuing a "policy of obstruction against international disarmament" in its alleged efforts to obtain nuclear weaponry, and of trying to further muddy the disarmament issue by claiming that the GDR's real motivation was to gain diplomatic recognition by the signing of disarmament treaties. The GDR denied that charge, pointing out that participation in international treaties is not tantamount to recognition of all the partners.[35] Ulbricht accused the FRG of acting "as an international center for violating the peace, security and harmony among the nations," and wrote that

> The effort for peace in Germany, for peaceful coexistence of the two German states, is intimately linked with the effort for European security and against nuclear arming. The national task of combatting German imperialism . . . is closely

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[35]Kruger, 430, 436.

> associated with [the fraternal parties' struggle against FRG for hegemony in Western Europe][36]

Others contrasted the peaceful history of the socialist GDR with the imperialistic German past and the militarist policies of revanchism and expansionism in the FRG.[37] Whenever possible, the SED characterized the Federal Republic as the chief adversary of peaceful coexistence and detente in Europe.

SED leaders also tried regularly to associate national concerns with European peace and security in general. For example, Oskar Fischer wrote that

> The duty of the socialist countries to prevent every form of aggression against themselves, the agreements on the inviolability of the state frontier of the GDR and the establishment in treaty form of the position of West Berlin are all substantial factors for both the international position of the GDR and for European security. The friendship and assistance treaties with the GDR are . . . an essential factor for peace in Europe as well as a barrier against all attempts to dissociate the GDR from its allies.[38]

The SED leadership as a matter of course advocated international disarmament in its quest for world peace. The GDR submitted numerous proposals between 1945-1955 as part of its reunification program. After the Federal Republic joined NATO in 1955, however, the GDR shifted to a program

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[36]Ulbricht, "Vital Contribution," 4; Ulbricht, "The October Revolution," 9.

[37]See Fischer, for example.

[38]Fischer, 20-21.

which favored disarmament under international control and urged the conclusion of a German peace treaty.[39] A committee designed in the mid-60s to propose a program of collective security for Europeans, recommended the renunciation of nuclear weapons and their proliferation, the establishment of normal relations between western European nations and the GDR, the signing of a Warsaw Treaty Organization (WTO)-North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) non-aggression pact, the prohibition of nuclear weapons, and world disarmament.[40] The SED stressed that the only way to prevent Germany from becoming the source of future wars was to disarm and neutralize both German states.[41]

On the whole, Schulz concluded, ideology must be included in any discussion of the GDR's foreign policy. Despite the fact that ideological statements on practical politics were "relatively vague," and foreign policy actions were subject to interpretation, it served as a kind of restriction to the leadership to pursue foreign policy "in a way which" permitted "its goals, methods, and results to appear reconcilable with the demands of ideology."[42]

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[39]Kruger, 433.

[40]Ulbricht, "Vital Contribution," 4-5.

[41]Walter Ulbricht, "The Banner of Unity Unfurled at the Twenty-third Congress of the CPSU," World Marxist Review 9 (May 1966):5.

[42]Schulz, 14.

The Legitimacy Issue

One of the most pressing problems for the SED leadership was the issue of legitimacy, both internal and external.[43] While this was true in most countries in eastern Europe--where leaders without a strong domestic consensus were placed in power by the Soviets--it was even more evident in the GDR because of the constant comparisons with the Federal Republic. Because of the inherent weakness of the GDR's position, it depended heavily on the support of the USSR to maintain the status quo, which in turn, had important consequences for the formulation of GDR foreign policy.

Ludz attributed the lack of internal legitimacy chiefly to the German people's animosity toward the Soviets: Starting with historical antipathy toward the Russians and exacerbated by occupation policies after World War II which seemed excessive to many East Germans.[44] In his estimation, the regime in the GDR was tolerated but not legitimized or supported by the populace; and SED leaders, who were well

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[43]An interesting study by a western scholar on the subject of the GDR and the legitimacy issue is Thomas A. Baylis, "East Germany: In Quest of Legitimacy," Problems of Communism 21 (March-April 1972):46-55.

[44]Peter Christian Ludz, Two Germanys in One World (Paris: The Atlantic Institute for International Affairs, 1973), 23; Scharf, 171.

aware of this, tried to demonstrate dramatic economic improvements and gain external recognition in order to achieve internal legitimacy.[45]

In 1963, Anthon wrote that the overwhelming majority of the East German population, including members of the SED and communist mass organizations, rejected Ulbricht and his policies because they believed he was a Soviet puppet.[46] This was a popular western viewpoint during the 1950s and early 1960s. Also, Bonn's claim to represent all German interests and the GDR's lack of diplomatic recognition outside the communist bloc, made it difficult for the SED to convince its population that "a socialist German state was deserving of the same respect as West Germany."[47]

Many scholars agreed that by the mid- to late-1960s, however, the SED leadership was enjoying growing internal support. This internal support--as well as the longevity of the Ulbricht regime--undoubtedly contributed to the GDR's belated international recognition and acceptance into NATO and other international organizations in the early 1970s.

One of these cases for increased internal legitimacy was made by Welles Hangen in 1966. Hangen said that East

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[45]Ludz, Two Germanys, 23; Scharf, 172.

[46]Anthon, 272.

[47]A. James McAdams, "Inter-German Detente: A New Balance," Foreign Affairs 65 (Fall 1986):138.

Germans had accepted communist rule, in part because of their increasing alienation from West Germans over disparities in living standards and the perception of the FRG's patronizing attitude toward the GDR and its "hectic materialism and individualism."[48] While this general acceptance was not tantamount to approval of the SED's foreign policy, Hangen noted that their criticism in this area was "restrained."[49]

In 1969, Jean Edward Smith also observed that internal support for--or at least acceptance of--the GDR regime had been demonstrated by the reduction of the SED's "daily propaganda dosage" in the GDR and the East German citizens' request that the west recognize the GDR. He cited several reasons for this.[50] First, communism was not an alien ideology in Germany. Second, the SED had made the effort to adopt the German past, vis-a'-vis Scharnhorst, Bismarck, William II, in an attempt to recognize German nationalism. Third, the SED capitalized on traditional differences

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[48]Welles Hangen, "New Perspectives Behind the Wall," Foreign Affairs 45 (October 1966):138.

[49]Hangen cited, for instance, popular sympathy in the GDR over the assassination of U.S. President John F. Kennedy in 1963 and its shared fear of Chinese expansionism in Asia. He also said that the popular attitude toward the USSR ranged from apathetic to hostile. Hangen, 143.

[50]Information in this section found in Jean Edward Smith "The GDR and the West," Yale Review 58 (Spring 1969):375-84.

between east and west to identify the GDR with the "'real' German past, while the materialists in Bonn...sold out...to things alien." Fourth, the SED had proved that it was not just a Soviet puppet by disagreeing with the USSR on certain issues. Fifth, the longevity of the Ulbricht regime attested to some internal support, in part among elites who owed much to the current regime and in part from resigned East Germans who "settled down to make the best of their situation." Sixth, the recent economic prosperity gave credibility to the SED, while political and social institutions such as extensive social care had taken root. And finally, the Ulbricht regime successfully exploited East Germans' fear of Bonn's territorial demands.

Despite the writings of people like Hangen and Smith, however, many western analysts continued to view the GDR during the Ulbricht era as a state without popular support, "whose continued existence depended on the presence of Soviet bayonets."[51] McAdams noted that most observers equated the Federal Republic with "Germany," because of its secure economic base, higher standard of living and the GDR's direct association with the Soviet Union.

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[51]See Willerd R. Fann, "Germany and Eastern Europe: Problems of Detente," Current History 54 (May 1968):263.

The Nationality Issue

In order to achieve internal and external legitimacy, the Ulbricht regime found itself in the unenviable position of having to create a distinct East German nationalism. The first constitution of the GDR in 1949 laid claim to represent all Germans, as did the Federal Republic's; in this case, arguing that the German bourgeoisie had forfeited its right to national leadership with the two world wars.[52]

The fact that the two Germanys shared a language, history, social and political tradition, and kinship ties, made it difficult for the SED to achieve its designation of two German nations. This in turn made it necessary for the GDR to seek especially close ties with the socialist world system and estrangement from the FRG.[53]

As time went on, the SED became less intent on the reunification issue and placed more emphasis on the concept of an East German state and an East German national consciousness.[54] McAdams agreed, stating that after the mid-1950s, Ulbricht became resistant to negotiating the GDR's national interest on issues such as Berlin and the

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[52]Asmus, "The GDR and the German Nation," 405.

[53]Hartmut Zimmermann, "The GDR in the 1970's," Problems of Communism 28 (March-April 1978):13.

[54]Merkl, 95. Merkl said that the building of the Berlin Wall marked the turning point in Ulbricht's attitude.

GDR's "historical tasks" to represent the Germany as the only "legitimate German state."[55]

In April 1967, the SED introduced a separate East German citizenship which eliminated the legal fiction of an all-German citizenship. At the same time, the GDR made inter-German contacts more difficult. Shortly thereafter, Ulbricht announced that the German nation "consisted essentially of two independent national groups."[56] And although Ulbricht officially remained committed to this proposition of two German national groups, signs of "creeping ambivalence" became evident in SED documents, referring to a single German nation which had been divided into two parts. By 1970, Ulbricht had announced that there were two separate German nations: the socialist German national state within which a socialist nation was proceeding, and the nation which embodied the remnants of the old bourgeois German nation.[57]

Most analysts believed that the SED was unsuccessful in its attempts to convince its citizenry and the rest of the world that one single German nation no longer existed.[58]

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[55]McAdams, Germany Divided, 41.

[56]Asmus, "The GDR and the German Nation," 407.

[57]Asmus, 407-8.

[58]See for example Richard Lowenthal, "The German Question Transformed," Foreign Affairs 63 (Winter 1984-85):307; and Karin L. Johnston, "A Break With the Past? The

The best efforts of the SED notwithstanding, the German population as a whole continued to cling to German traditions. By the late 1960s, members of the SED leadership such as Werner Lamberz and Hermann Axen began tentatively to express doubts about Ulbricht's constant emphasis on the all-German themes. It was a sign of Ulbricht's decisive influence and the "absence of any institutional mechanisms to force a review of past approaches to the west" that despite those pressures, the SED stuck to its old course.[59]

The International Recognition Issue

During its first months of existence, the GDR was recognized by the Soviet Union and most of its associates except Yugoslavia, which chose to recognize Bonn. The SED responded that Yugoslavia was in the grip of "Trotsky-Fascism."[60] Outside the communist bloc, however, recognition remained elusive for most of the Ulbricht period. The Soviet Union's wartime allies, and of course

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Changing Nature of East German Foreign Policy," in Germany Through American Eyes: Foreign Policy and Domestic Issues, ed. Gale A. Mattox and John H. Vaughan Jr. (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1989), 30.

[59]McAdams, Germany Divided, 87.

[60]Childs, The GDR, 299. In October 1957, after relations between the two states improved, Yugoslavia granted recognition to the GDR, and the Federal Republic broke off relations according to the Hallstein Doctrine.

the Federal Republic, consistently refused to grant diplomatic recognition to what they considered a Soviet puppet, and persuaded the other non-communist states to follow suit. Hence, the GDR was "relegated to the status of the 'Soviet occupation zone' or the 'so-called GDR' in most international forums."[61] This situation did not change until the late 1960s with detente and Bonn's implementation of Ostpolitik, initiated by incoming West German Chancellor Willy Brandt and the Social Democrats (SPD) in 1969.[62] In the late '60s, the GDR finally was granted diplomatic recognition by 12 states outside the communist bloc.

In 1955, the GDR experienced a double blow regarding the recognition issue. The first was Moscow's decision to grant recognition to the Federal Republic without either recognition of the GDR or the Oder-Neisse line as Germany's eastern frontier. The second was Bonn's announcement of the Hallstein doctrine, which said that any state except the Soviet Union to recognize East Germany would forfeit its relations with the FRG.[63]

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[61]Scharf, 171.

[62]Bonn's Ostpolitik has been interpreted in various ways, but its immediate goals were improved relations between the Federal Republic and eastern Europe, freer travel between the Federal Republic and the GDR, and intensification of detente. The long-term goal was the reunification of Germany.

[63]In December 1995, FRG Foreign Minister Heinrich von Brentano announced the principle which became known as the

In response, the GDR began to direct its efforts toward states who cared less about Bonn's position, such as antagonistic states in the Mid-East or the newly-emerging nations in Africa and Asia. In addition to diplomatic recognition, the SED leadership hoped to achieve commercial advantages and the advancement of socialism.[64] For example, the GDR regime consistently voiced support for the Vietnamese in their battle against the "imperialism" of both the French and the Americans, as well as for the "anti-imperialist" movements in Guinea, Nigeria, and Angola. The SED also immediately went on record against the aggression in the Suez and the Israeli territorial expansion after the June war of 1967.

Despite its failure to achieve widescale diplomatic recognition, the GDR was able to build extensive trade relations. In the 1950s and 1960s, the SED established trade missions in 34 nations during a "great wave of

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Hallstein doctrine. The USSR was excepted from this policy on the grounds that it was one of the four powers responsible for German reunification. Between 1955 and 1966, West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer adhered to the Hallstein doctrine, although it was invoked only twice, with Yugoslavia in 1957 and Cuba in 1963.

The doctrine also prohibited nations from establishing diplomatic relations with any other WTO states, who all recognized the GDR. It did not, however, preclude all contacts; and nations outside the bloc did form economic ties, cultural ties, sports exchanges, and so on.

[64]Childs, The GDR, 300.

commercial relations."[65] During the same period, the GDR established consular relations with eight states and engaged in official visits and cultural exchanges from all over the world. While this was "hardly a record of stifling isolation," as Merkl put it, there were major gaps, for example, in North America, Australia, Japan, Pakistan, Iran, Kenya, Ethiopia, Argentina and South Africa.[66]

During the 1960s, SED leaders continued to insist that world opinion favored the recognition of the GDR, Bonn's "revanchism" and the west's resistance notwithstanding. In 1970, Deputy Foreign Minister Fischer, noted that the growing movement for recognition, which extended into the "parliaments and the most varied parties of the Western European countries," was evidence that the GDR's policies "correspond[ed] with the yearnings of the people for peace."[67]

Throughout the Ulbricht era, the GDR also fought unsuccessfully to join the United Nations and other international organizations and events, in an effort closely tied to its quest for international recognition. For example, the GDR was not permitted to participate in the

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[65]Merkl, 93.

[66]Merkl, 93-94.

[67]Fischer, 26. See also Hanisch, "International Position of the GDR," 184-86.

Olympic Games until 1956, and then, only as an "affiliate" of the FRG team.[68] U.N. membership was particularly coveted because of the legitimacy it represented to the SED leadership, and members frequently appealed for inclusion in the U.N. Peter Florin, Secretary of State at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, wrote that the "equal participation of the GDR in the work of the world organisation would be useful to the cause of peace, international understanding and cooperation."[69] Especially galling to the SED leadership was the FRG's achievement of observer status in specialized international organizations such as the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), the World Health Organization (WHO), the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the Atomic Energy Agency--which was denied to the GDR.

The Reunification Issue and the Berlin Wall

Throughout the GDR's existence, reunification continued to be an issue both desired and feared by the SED. While analysts disagreed about the GDR's diligence in its commitment to reunification as the separation wore on, the SED continued to officially espouse this goal--within the

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[68]In 1972, after a wave of diplomatic recognition for the GDR, the state was allowed to compete under its own flag.

[69]Florin, 439.

context of a specifically communist form of government. According to the official view, the GDR was "founded as a temporary structure to last only until Germany could be reunited under the banner of socialism," and for the first two decades of its existence, the SED clung passionately to the idea of reunification under socialist leadership.[70]

Ulbricht and others in the SED repeatedly advanced proposals to end the division of Germany.[71] The GDR's effort to initiate formal discussions with the FRG regarding the future of Germany was in keeping with Stalin's attempt to keep Germany neutral. Scholars debate whether Stalin would have "sacrificed" the GDR to prevent rearmament in the Federal Republic, but most historians agree that in June 1953, he committed the USSR to the Ulbricht regime by intervening to quell an uprising of East German workers in cities throughout the GDR. In any case, the GDR certainly

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[70]Asmus, "The GDR and the German Nation," 404. Analysts disagree on the degree to which the GDR's continued its drive for unification. Some, such as Merkl (p. 94), argue that it suddenly lessened as a result of the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961; others, such as Eric G. Frey, say it lessened after the FRG joined NATO and hopes for a unified Germany under socialist control dimmed considerably (Division and Detente: The Germans and Their Alliances [New York: Praeger, 1987], 8).

[71]See for example, Ulbricht "Historical Task," 6 and Kruger, 430. Kruger warned, however, that the FRG insistence on building up its military strength caused the chances of reunification to dwindle proportionately. By 1957, Ulbricht had proposed the construction of a German federation through consultations between the two governments. Bonn rejected this as a symbolic gesture.

considered the possibility of the sacrifice seriously and made every effort to prevent such a move.[72]

One of the SED's repeated proposals during the 1950s and early 1960s was the formation of an all-German confederation, although McAdams insisted that Ulbricht's "constructive" calls for confederation were designed primarily to embellish his image as a spokesman for the GDR, and he made it unrealistic for the FRG to accept the proposal by requiring Bonn to leave NATO and purge "revanchism" and Nazism.[73] The SED's strategy was to insist that the ideological superiority and "historic achievements" of the GDR be preserved in any proposal for reunification, confederation or inter-German cooperation.[74]

The USSR's dominant role in policymaking in eastern Europe made the Soviet position on reunification a critical factor in GDR policymaking, and the CPSU made it clear that it would not allow reunification without assurances that Soviet security interests in central Europe were respected.

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[72]McAdams, Germany Divided, 25.

[73]McAdams, Germany Divided, 41.

[74]Zimmermann, 13. The advantage of this program, according to Zimmermann, was that it permitted an active policy toward the FRG and allowed the SED to focus on its adversary. The disadvantage was that it lowered the SED's credibility when the policy did not materialize and made it even harder to overcome the isolation caused by the Hallstein doctrine, which affected foreign-trade relations and the legitimacy issue.

The potential of German reunification posed a military, political and economic threat to the USSR. The result was that while in theory, the GDR was supposed to provide the basis for a reunified Germany, in practice, the USSR opted for a two-Germany policy.[75]

At the same time, the Soviets did not want West Germany to give up the idea of reunification, depriving Moscow of important political leverage in the west.[76] For example, Stalin proposed a Four-Power conference to work out a peace treaty with a unified, neutral Germany, in an effort to prevent FRG integration into western alliances such as the proposed European Defense Community (EDC). In 1952, Stalin again offered reunification in exchange for neutrality and in 1954, the new Soviet leadership proposed a conference on the German question, using the prospect of reunification in an attempt to prevent West Germany's entry into NATO.[77]

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[75]Fann, 263.

[76]A major question involved the Polish-German border, since a strong, unified Germany would be better positioned to seize land inhabited by ethnic Germans but claimed by the Soviets after World War II. Treaties signed by the Germans early in the 1950s made this situation unlikely, although the USSR continued to use the threat of German "revanchism" to keep the Poles in line.

[77]The "German card," in which Moscow would offer reunification in return for the FRG withdrawal from NATO, remained a concern in both west and east throughout the GDR's 40-year history.

According to the two-state theory adopted by Moscow in mid-1954, the GDR was granted full sovereignty; and the USSR insisted that the reunification issued be resolved by the two Germanys in hopes that the Federal Republic would begin negotiations with the GDR and end the latter's international isolationism.[78] Meanwhile, the GDR continued to advocate its goal of reunification in speeches, party congresses and the new constitution of 1968, even after erecting the Berlin Wall.

The Berlin Wall, built in August 1961, marked a turning point in the GDR. Before the wall was built, approximately three million Germans left the GDR, up to 2,000 per day.[79] And while the west denounced the GDR for its obvious effort to end the hemorrhage of its citizenry, Ulbricht claimed that "the measures taken on August 13 . . . to ensure the security of the GDR frontiers . . . dispersed the fog which had blinded many people to the real state of affairs."[80] Meanwhile, the presence of more than 102.4 miles of concrete

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[78]Asmus, "The GDR and the German Nation," 406.

[79]Most sources agree on the three million figure, although the range is from 2.5-3 million.

[80]Ulbricht, "Historical Task," 4. For a fascinating account of the erection of the Berlin Wall, see the chapter entitled "The Thirteenth of August 1961" in Honecker's biography. Considered the chief architect of the project, Honecker concluded that a "wholesome effect for peace and detente emanated from the measures taken" on August 13, 1961. See Erich Honecker, From My Life (New York: Pergamon Press, 1981), 203-213.

blocks and steel fencing around West Berlin became a "visible symbol of the immutability of the East-West divide," and the wall "marked the closing of the last gap between East and West Germany, and . . . the solidification of the physical division of the German nation into separate states."[81]

Smith pointed out that for the SED, the wall fulfilled two conflicting purposes: It showed the "popular bankruptcy" of the GDR, while it "inaugurated one of Europe's most far-reaching economic miracles," and in turn, a "profound shift in popular attitudes."[82] Other analysts agreed that the wall consolidated communist rule in the GDR, gave the SED a means to control western access to GDR society, and helped pave the way for economic growth by stopping massive emigration and allowing the SED leadership to focus on domestic tasks.[83] From a psychological standpoint, the East German population became noticeably more inclined to settle down and make the best of the situation, especially as it realized the west was not going

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[81]McAdams, Germany Divided, 4, 16.

[82]Smith, 374.

[83]For example, see McAdams, "Inter-German Detente," 138; Hangen, 137; Melvin Croan, "The Politics of Division and Detente in East Germany," Current History 84 (November 1985):370; Karl E. Birnbaum, East and West Germany: A Modus Vivendi (Westmead, England: Saxon House and Lexington Books, D. C. Heath, 1973), 54; Frey, 6.

to intervene in the situation; while Bonn was "increasingly . . . identified with territorial revisionism and an unwarranted quest for nuclear hardware."[84] Finally, by securing his western boundary, Ulbricht was able to secure his eastern boundary by stemming the labor vacuum in the GDR.[85] Despite the wall, however, he still regarded the future of the German nation unresolved.[86]

Relations with the USSR

The GDR's links with the USSR in foreign policy existed at four levels: (1) in the relations between the SED and CPSU, (2) in the interaction of the NPA and the WTO, (3) in the coordination of administrative and economic policies through organizations such as the Council for Mutual Economic Aid (CMEA), and (4) through mass organization contacts between trade unions, youth exchanges and friendship societies.[87] SED leaders consistently touted the Soviet leadership in their writings and reaffirmed the GDR's unshakable loyalty to the Soviet Union.[88] Scharf noted that "In all public statements the alliance with the Soviet Union

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[84]Smith, 374.

[85]Smith, 374.

[86]McAdams, Germany Divided, 55.

[87]Merkl, 98.

[88]See for example Fischer, 21.

[was] elevated above all others as 'a great revolutionary achievement,' which [was] 'indestructible for all time.'"[89]

There was little doubt among westerners during the early Ulbricht period that the CPSU virtually dictated East German foreign policy. Writing in 1950, Kurt Grossman noted that "every move which the German Democratic Republic makes in the foreign policy field is initiated, supervised and approved by Moscow."[90] Since the SED elites were forced to coordinate their foreign policy with that of the Soviets, it was "not unusual to find major GDR foreign-policy statements that [consisted] of nothing but quotations from recent Soviet pronouncements."[91]

Because of a combination of military force, Soviet insistence on hegemony in eastern Europe, a genuine similarity of basic interests, and eventually, a kind of lopsided interdependence, Soviet-GDR relations in the area of foreign policy remained close--although certainly not static--throughout most of the Ulbricht regime. Strains developed periodically over foreign policy objectives or emphases, most notably during the late '60s and early '70s,

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[89]Scharf, 173.

[90]Kurt R. Grossman, "Political, Social and Economic Development of Eastern Germany during 1950," Political Science Quarterly 67 (March 1952):109.

[91]Scharf, 174.

when the GDR expressed serious dissatisfaction with improved USSR-FRG relations.

The SED leadership maintained that the close bonds between the USSR and the GDR were based on a common socio-economic system, and identical ideology, class and national interests, and aims.[92] In an excerpt from the SED's program in 1967, Politburo member Hermann Matern wrote that

> The right attitude to the Soviet Union is decisive for success in the fight against revisionism, sectarianism and nationalism, and guarantees the purity of the humanistic revolutionary ideas of Marxism-Leninism of the unity and solidarity of the socialist world system and the international working-class movement[93]

The GDR, however, also had much more practical things to gain from a solid alliance with the USSR. For instance, Ulbricht wrote,

> Cooperation with the USSR in foreign policy . . . has been developing to our mutual benefit. Gradually, it has been brought into conformity with the development requirements of both countries. . . . Cooperation in foreign policy [and other areas] . . . holds out excellent prospects [to advance to world production standards in its chief industries].[94]

From the mid-1950s, the GDR enjoyed economic benefits from its special relationship with the USSR. Throughout the 1960s, the USSR generally sold the GDR important raw

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[92]Hermann Matern, "The Universally Valid Lessons of the October Revolution," World Marxist Review 10 (August 1967):48.

[93]Excerpted from the Program of the SED, found in Matern, 47.

[94]Ulbricht, "The October Revolution," 7.

materials and energy at prices below the world market levels; in addition, the USSR was a large, secure market for GDR products. This contributed greatly to the GDR's economic success and achievement of the highest standard of living within the communist bloc.[95]

The GDR also depended on the Soviet Union for support against the FRG. Despite growing internal legitimacy, the unfavorable comparison with the wealthier FRG persisted. Ulbricht and the rest of the SED leadership claimed that the GDR could only oppose West German "imperialism" successfully in fraternal alliance with the communist parties of the USSR and elsewhere.[96] Naturally, the CPSU's dominance in East Germany meant that USSR-FRG relations affected inter-German relations. As its main western trading partner and the strongest conventional power in Europe discounting the USSR, the Federal Republic weighed increasingly in the formulation of Soviet foreign policy toward the West--and to the frustration of the SED leadership, not always on behalf of its own German client. In 1955, for example, the USSR and FRG established diplomatic relations, without insistence on recognition of the GDR.

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[95]Scharf, 172.

[96]See Ulbricht, "The October Revolution," 8, and Ulbricht "The Banner of Unity," 5; Matern, 50.

Their defeat in World War II and the Soviet occupation between 1946-49 provided the background for SED leaders' definitions of foreign policy alternatives. At the end of the war, the USSR set GDR reparations at $13 billion; and during the late 1940s, the Soviets extracted more from the GDR than the three western powers in their zones collectively. At the same time, the GDR was bereft of the infusion of a Marshall Plan which pumped money into the economies of western Europe in the post-war years. Then, in 1950, Moscow announced it would halve the GDR's reparations, leaving $3.2 billion to be paid between 1950-65, "with goods from current production," or 74% of the East German's annual industrial production level in 1950.[97] The same year, GDR Foreign Minister Georg Dertinger announced that the GDR would sign a peace treaty with the USSR on behalf of all Germany.

Most western scholars agreed that relations between the GDR and the USSR evolved during the 1950s, as the GDR moved from its position as a defeated enemy to a staunch Soviet ally by the early 1960s.[98] The Soviet Union's recognition

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[97]Starrels and Mallinckrodt, 84; Grossman, 115.

[98]See for example, Child's The GDR; Hannes Adomeit's "The German Factor in Soviet Westpolitik," Annals of the American Academy of Politics and Social Science 481 (September 1985):15-28; Anthon.

This change may also have reflected the change in the way western analysts interpreted the relationship of the USSR and its allies starting in the late 1970s, when much of

of the GDR as a sovereign state seemed to indicate the USSR's confidence in Ulbricht's ability and his power to implement Soviet policies.[99] While no one argued that the GDR possessed an autonomous foreign policy, the SED had developed--along with its increasing internal legitimacy--an "evident desire" to cope with special policy problems, especially with the FRG.[100] One policy analyst wrote that the GDR's growing independence in foreign policy during the early 1960s was "probably the most *bona fide* criterion for measuring" the GDR's viability.[101]

By this time, scholars outside the communist bloc finally began to pay the GDR the compliment of "serious scholarly investigation into its politics;" although most

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the data were written. As Marsh noted, many political scientists began a "reconceptualization" of communist studies after invalidating the totalitarian model and the "bloc-concept" model, with the realization that the Soviets' hold over eastern Europe varied in extent and was conditioned by changing domestic and international forces. Marsh, 79-80.

[99]Eric Waldman, "The German Democratic Republic: Moscow's Faithful 'Ally,'" in East Central Europe: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow, ed. Milorad M. Drachkovitch (Stanford: Hoover Institution Press, 1982), 270-71. The irony was that the treaty officially granting the GDR sovereignty in September 1955 was signed one week after the USSR commenced official diplomatic relations with the FRG. Winrow, 17.

[100]Merkl, 90; Waldman, 271.

[101]Lawrence L. Whetten, "The Role of East Germany in West German-Soviet Relations," World Today 25 (December 1969):514.

limited any independent initiative by the SED in this area as a "short-lived... aberration" from the norm of total conformity to Soviet policies.[102] Foreign policy analysts such as Marsh and N. Edwina Moreton disagreed with this mainstream approach because it ignored the changing dynamics of the situation. Marsh wrote,

> The belief that the GDR's relationship with the Soviet Union and East German policy in general has remained static in the face of the growth of the GDR into one of the world's most industrialised societies is at best a gross oversimplification and at worst an excuse for not probing beneath the "satellite" stereotype.[103]

During the 1960s, Ulbricht, "while bowing to Soviet wishes and interests, increasingly laid explicit stress on the GDR's own road toward socialism," and in some respects, a model for other eastern European nations to follow. By then the most important trading nation among the communist countries after the USSR, the fifth- or sixth-largest industrial power in Europe and the state with the highest standard of living in the communist world, the GDR, according to Hangen, was able to conduct "more assertive behavior toward the Soviet Union and its allies," as well as the Federal Republic.[104]

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[102]See Ludz, Two Germanys, 14-15.

[103]Marsh, 79-82. See also N. Edwina Moreton, East Germany and the Warsaw Alliance: The Politics of Detente (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1978).

[104]Hangen, 136-37.

Hangen attributed this assertiveness to the "liberalizing tendencies" in the eastern European bloc in general, a growing confidence among the SED leadership which now felt secure enough to permit some relaxation of control, and a weaker Soviet leadership.[105] For example, Hangen noted that Soviet leaders were no longer received in the GDR with any more fanfare than other communist leaders; and in the fall of 1965, GDR officers had commanded a Soviet division in joint WTO war games for the first time.[106] According to Gareth Winrow, the USSR-GDR relationship became increasingly interdependent after the Stalin period, which the GDR exploited by playing "consciously on the USSR's traditional fear of the particular vulnerability of the GDR as an outpost of the Soviet bloc flanked by the capitalist West German state."[107]

Because the SED required Soviet support to maintain its existence, however, the Soviets found it relatively easy--for the most part--to manage the GDR and its foreign policy; and at the same time, enjoyed the GDR's enthusiastic support for Soviet foreign policy. The exceptions to this were

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[105]Hangen, 142, 145.

[106]Hangen, 144.

[107]Winrow, 3. Winrow notes a distinction between the USSR-GDR relationship and the traditional patron-client situation, since the GDR was not able to exercise bargaining power by threatening change. Instead, he called the GDR an "affiliate" of the USSR.

mainly during economic reforms in the GDR during the early 1960s which Moscow did not consider in the USSR's best interest, and during the GDR's bitterness toward the general warming of east-west relations in the late 1960s.

Moreover, most western scholars agreed that within the scope of superpower relations, the room for maneuver in the international system for small nations such as the GDR remained narrow.[108] This presented several challenges to the SED leadership in its attempt to increase internal and external legitimacy. First, it had to counter anti-Soviet attitudes within the GDR. Second, it had to stress independence "while remaining faithful to the socialist line." Third, it had to recognize the "binding nature" of Marxist-Leninism in its Soviet version whenever ideology played a role, avoiding forms of revisionism such as social democracy. Fourth, it had to stick with the basic

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[108]See for example Schulz, 4. Schulz presented four "theories" concerning the status of the GDR as a state: (1) The GDR was not a state but a territory occupied by the Soviet Union, incapable of carrying out its own foreign policy (the official FRG doctrine); (2) the GDR was a special kind of state whose foreign policy was determined by Marxist-Leninist ideology (the official GDR doctrine); (3) the GDR was a state with "objective interests," largely identical with those of the Soviet Union, which determined its foreign policy; and (4) the GDR could determine its own policies only within very narrow limits. The last theory was the one that Schulz said was "probably dominant" among contemporary political scientists. In Schulz, 5-6. Schulz also noted that because of the GDR's importance to Moscow, it was not surprising that the USSR granted it very limited room to maneuver. Schulz, 24.

guidelines of Soviet policy in the formation of its foreign policy. Fifth, it had to contribute to the socialist effort in the CMEA and in the developing nations, "on behalf of or in coordination with" the USSR. Finally, it must not infringe on crucial Soviet interests, but must "represent vigorously the interests of its own state against those of the Soviet Union."[109]

In 1963, Ulbricht announced a "wide-reaching plan of administrative and economic modernization...following in the footsteps of Soviet developments."[110] According to Starrels and Mallinckrodt, the success of this "New Economic System (NES)"--later called the "developing system of socialism"--helped the GDR move into a partnership status with the USSR, and hence, improved the GDR's international image.[111] With the introduction of the NES, prominent economists in the GDR returned to a more balanced program of economic growth than those of the late 1950s, and addressed the need for greater efficiency in state planning using tools such as "profitability" and "enterprise autonomy."

The NES also advocated more extensive trade with the west--but Soviet preferences as well as those of Ulbricht's more conservative comrades within the SED leadership,

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[109]Schulz, 24-25.

[110]Starrels and Mallinckrodt, 84.

[111]Starrels and Mallinckrodt, 85.

prevented such a redirection of trade.[112] In fact, when the new program resulted in "a falling-off in the GDR's economic commitments" to the USSR, CPSU First Secretary Leonid Brezhnev traveled to East Berlin and signed a new Soviet-GDR trade agreement which essentially gutted the NES. By 1965, responding to the efforts of the traditional party functionaries within the SED--including Honecker--Ulbricht "fell in line by accepting an even greater economic and political subservience for the GDR."[113] In return for closer collaboration with the USSR, the SED hoped to extract support from its allies in its goal of recognition and more influence on the policymaking process within the WTO and CMEA; and Marsh noted that after 1965, Ulbricht became a "very vocal supporter of the need for great political and ideological solidarity" in eastern Europe.[114]

By 1967, however, the issue of economic reform reappeared, this time over two issues which showed conflicting interests between the USSR and GDR: the question of price reform within CMEA and the organization and composition of foreign trade. According to Marsh, when

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[112]Scharf, 172.

[113]Marsh, 84.

[114]Marsh, 85. Marsh did not interpret this to mean the end of any independent GDR foreign policy as some other analysts such as Peter Merkl, however, largely because the impact of economic reform in the GDR continued, though "muted."

the SED decided its strategy of building closer ties with the USSR and the rest of eastern Europe was not moving the GDR closer to international recognition, it became willing to make known its disagreement on these economic issues. For example, Ulbricht implicitly criticized the Soviets at the Seventh SED Congress in 1967 for the difficulties caused by costly raw materials, calling "for foreign trade to be organised on the basis of 'economic criteria.'"[115] Then, following the 1968 Czech invasion, Ulbricht reverted back to his position as the staunch political and ideological ally of the USSR, again toning down the recent reformist approach to foreign economic policy and adhering to the contemporary Soviet interest in cohesion and discipline among bloc members. This time, the trend of faithful support lasted until the USSR changed its western foreign policy after Brandt launched Ostpolitik in 1969, which Ulbricht interpreted as against the best interests of the GDR.

One observer concluded that the GDR-USSR alignment during the 1960s was closest during the periods when the USSR was the toughest against the west. When the USSR backed away from its hard-line western policy, however, the divergences between the two became apparent.[116] In any case,

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[115]In Marsh, 89.

[116]Melvin Croan, East Germany: The Soviet Connection (The Washington Papers. Center for Strategic and

by the late 1960s, a number of scholars began to speculate that Ulbricht appeared to be trying to eliminate some aspects of Soviet hegemony and gain more independence for SED leaders. This assertiveness, in particular with respect to the differences between Soviet and East German policy aims in the Federal Republic, almost certainly led to Ulbricht's eventual replacement in May 1971.[117]

This change in Ulbricht's attitude was tied closely to the advent of a new period in Soviet relations with both Germanys which began with detente and the introduction of Ostpolitik.[118] The Soviets were so anxious to seize the Ostpolitik opportunity that they negotiated and signed a treaty with West Germany in less than a year. The resulting Soviet-West German Treaty of August 1970, or the Moscow Treaty--part of the so-called European or Eastern Treaties--formalized detente between the two countries. Article 1 stated that the parties considered it "an important objective of their policies to maintain international peace

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International Studies, Georgetown University. Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publishers, 1976), 16.

[117]Ulbricht's ouster and the events which preceded that are described in more detail in the section in this chapter on FRG-GDR relations.

[118]For most of the period between 1966 and 1971, Europe experienced a general trend toward east-west detente, which was viewed by the SED with a great deal of concern. This relaxing of tensions was interrupted momentarily by the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, discussed later in this chapter.

and achieve detente," through expanded economic, scientific, technical and cultural cooperation and contacts. While the West Germans recognized the European status quo and accepted eastern Europe as a Soviet sphere of influence, eager Soviets also made some concessions to the West German point of view, namely that the Federal Republic had the right to aspire to reunification. The East Germans were chagrined because there was no recognition of the GDR under international law, and Moreton noted that East German praise for the treaty was "at best lukewarm."[119]

These developments in Soviet foreign policy implied a deepening east-west detente, and led to a "crisis of confidence" between the USSR and the GDR in the period between 1970-71, according to Hannes Adomeit.[120] For most of the first two decades of its existence, the GDR's foreign policy toward the west--and specifically the FRG--had been intertwined with the USSR's, although they sometimes showed different priorities and a different sense of urgency. The SED leadership, however, made it clear to the CPSU that its interests were hurt by the USSR's easing of tensions with the west during Ostpolitik.[121]

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[119]Moreton, 149.

[120]Adomeit, 19.

[121]Croan, The Soviet Connection, 18.

In the end, of course, the Soviets won. In summarizing the Ulbricht period, McAdams concluded that the GDR

> may have occasionally raised annoying barriers to Soviet foreign policy initiatives, as Ulbricht did when he challenged Moscow's efforts to regularize relations with West Germany. But Ulbricht never had much influence in the Kremlin, and was disliked by his East European neighbors and, toward the end of his rule had even lost the support of his own Politburo.[122]

Relations with Eastern Europe

Despite the USSR's efforts to play up the existence of a separate East German state, its overriding goal until the mid-1950s was reunification, and with its semi-permanent status, the GDR initially was granted second-class status among its allies.[123]

After this initial period, however, relations with the eastern European states closely followed the GDR's pattern with the USSR. During the Ulbricht era, the SED deigned to assist the Soviets in exerting political controls and at the same time, to strengthen its position in relation to other WTO nations. Overall, relations between the GDR and its WTO allies were tense and rather complex.[124] As Merkl put it, relations between the GDR and other eastern European nations were "not as friendly as the official pronouncements from

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[122]McAdams, "Inter-German Detente," 149.

[123]McAdams, Germany Divided, 24.

[124]Ludz, Two Germanys, 16-17.

East Berlin would lead one to assume," primarily because of the residual distrust of Germans, rivalry with the GDR's impressive economic position, and the SED's increasingly "aggressive posture" in bloc relations. When the GDR troops participated in the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia, they were labeled "Nazis" by many Czechs.[125] In any case, the tension remained under the surface during most of the Ulbricht era, as the GDR relied instead on the USSR as its main source of security.

Despite any underlying tensions, the GDR officially maintained close ties during most of the Ulbricht period with other bloc members, to whom the GDR represented a safeguard against German militarism and "revanchism." In return, the GDR expected their full support on the "German question."[126] Moreton noted that this caused further friction among bloc members, and ultimately, it did not preclude them from dealing with the Federal Republic; for example, Czechoslovakia established a trade treaty with Bonn in 1967 without full diplomatic relations.[127] Romania was the second Warsaw Treaty member after the USSR to establish relations with Bonn, while keeping cordial relations with

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[125]Merkl, 99.

[126]Childs, The GDR, 310.

[127]Moreton, 115.

the GDR.[128] Yugoslavia fluctuated between the FRG and the GDR, first establishing relations with Bonn, then losing them when it recognized the regime in East Berlin.

Ulbricht also desired a close alliance between socialist countries and communist/workers parties to continue the worldwide transition to socialism and advance European security, which in turn would "assure a peaceful adjustment of relations between the two German states."[129] Politburo member Hermann Matern said that

> In keeping with proletarian internationalism and the spirit of the October Revolution, our Socialist Unity Party sees its duty in strengthening the socialist world system.... Within the socialist community, it is working for the greatest cooperation.[130]

An exception to this rule was the situation with the Peoples Republic of China (PRC). The GDR consistently positioned itself on the USSR's side in the Sino-Soviet dispute, even offering to mediate in order to maintain socialist solidarity and prevent a Beijing-Bonn axis.[131]

In addition to political considerations, GDR foreign policy within the socialist community was influenced by

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[128]When Romania and the FRG established formal relations, the East German press criticized the Rumanian move, saying it was "not in harmony with the interests of European security." Moreton, 57.

[129]Ulbricht, "The October Revolution," 8.

[130]Matern, 47.

[131]Winrow, 19.

socio-economic questions.[132] In September 1950, the GDR was admitted to the CMEA. The SED leaders pointed out how the GDR's economic and scientific capacity strengthened the community of socialist nations, and lauded the subsequent extension of bilateral relations with other CMEA members.[133] By 1950, the GDR had trade agreements with every Soviet bloc country except Albania and North Korea, and GDR producers marketed in China. By 1971, approximately 75% of its trade was with CMEA members.[134] Ludz, however, said that on the whole, the "unwieldy structure" of the CMEA, based largely on bilateral--not multilateral--agreements acted as a restraint on the GDR.[135]

In early 1956, the GDR formally joined the eight-month-old WTO.[136] Throughout its history, the SED leadership tried to use the WTO as a means to pressure the FRG for diplomatic

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[132]Starrels and Mallinckrodt, 88.

[133]Fischer, 21.

[134]Ludz, Two Germanys, 21.

[135]Ludz, Two Germanys, 21.

[136]Unlike the other WTO members, the GDR's military response in the event of armed conflict was to be decided by the organization as a whole. In addition, the GDR did not sign a bilateral defense treaty with the USSR until 1964--and bilateral treaties with other WTO members were not signed until 1967, after Romania established diplomatic relations with Bonn.

In theory, the USSR could always conduct maneuvers in the GDR and declare martial law without the GDR's consent, based on the was the 1957 agreement was worded. Soviet troops remained continuously in the GDR.

recognition and to obstruct dangerous internal experiments among the organization's members--but these efforts only met with limited success, according to most observers.[137]

One of the first foreign policy issues facing the GDR in eastern Europe was with Poland. In June 1950, Vice President Ulbricht and several other ministers made a state visit to Poland, where they concluded broad economic agreements with the Poles and declared that both sides accepted the post-war border at the Oder and Neisse Rivers as permanent. Later the same month, the GDR and Czechoslovakia resolved another important question, as Ulbricht renounced all claims for two million Germans to live in the Sudetenland, which Adolph Hitler had annexed in 1938 prior to World War II.

One of the most important foreign policy issues in eastern Europe during the Ulbricht regime occurred in 1968, with the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia. An article in Neues Deutschland--the official state organ--revealed that the recent invasion of Czechoslovakia was undertaken at the request of unnamed Czechs who wished to end the "rightist" course of Anton Dubcek's government. The SED regime, which had delayed in responding to the Czech incident, made up for

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[137]Marsh was an exception. He felt that excluding Romania's defiance of the policy in recognizing Bonn in 1967, that the policy was "generally successful." Marsh, 87.

it with a "barrage" against the "counterrevolutionary elements in Czechoslovakia," including jamming German-language broadcasts from Prague, banning the Czech German-language weekly and restricting East Germans' travel to Czechoslovakia.[138] Croan concluded that the SED's interpretation of the invasion mirrored its belief that internal reforms during the so-called Prague Spring were "objectionable" both because they might prove contagious and because they "might lead to a major breach in the wall of hostility which the Warsaw Pact had raised against West Germany."[139]

In fact, so watchful was the GDR's leadership that it claimed to have spotted impending trouble in Czechoslovakia as early as May 1963.[140] A few observers speculated that Ulbricht was in fact the "prime mover" behind the Soviet decision to invade Czechoslovakia, but Croan made a convincing case that this would have exaggerated Ulbricht's influence in the USSR, and that Ulbricht's advice was "surely only one among several considerations" which

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[138]Melvin Croan, "Czechoslovakia, Ulbricht, and the German Problem," Problems of Communism 18 (January-February 1969):3.

[139]Croan, 1.

[140]Croan, 2.

determined the Soviet course of action.[141] Croan concluded that after the Czech invasion, unless the Soviet leadership had experienced more "decomposition" than current evidence suggested, Ulbricht would not play a decisive role in central Europe despite his posturing, especially with respect to Germany itself.[142]

In any case, after the invasion Ulbricht repeatedly referred to the August event as a "shining example of Soviet-East German military cooperation," enthusiastically championing close international coordination under Soviet leadership and minimizing the role of other WTO nations. The East German ruler also held up the GDR as a model of political stability and economic efficiency in lecturing the Czechs--and used the occasion to demonstrate how potentially dangerous economic dependence on the west could be.[143] But, as Scharf indicated, the SED had to pay a price for the new solidarity in the east: A more accommodating position on disputed issues in inter-German affairs.[144]

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[141]Croan, 4. Croan points out that at most, the Kremlin was receptive to Ulbricht's counsel, since his position was in basic alignment with the Soviet hierarchy anyway.

[142]Croan, 6. See also Moreton, 69-80. She agreed with Croan, writing that to ascribe a "significant degree of influence" to Ulbricht's urging is to "misrepresent the relationship between cause and effect," and that Ulbricht's actual role was minimal. Moreton, 80.

[143]Croan, 5.

[144]Scharf, 184.

Relations with the FRG

During most of the Ulbricht period, as one scholar put it, the Federal Republic and the GDR "essentially enjoyed a non-relationship."[145] The East Germans' primary foreign policy aims with respect to the FRG were full legal recognition and formal independence for West Berlin. Secondary aims included development of inter-German trade, a nuclear-free zone in all of Germany, the settlement of financial claims against the FRG for postal and transit services and the support of "democratic" reforms in the FRG.[146]

The lack of inter-German diplomatic relations did not preclude all contacts between the two Germanys. For instance, the FRG initiated a program in 1962 to purchase the freedom of political prisoners in the GDR. An estimated 60,000 were "purchased" between 1962 and 1984, at a cost estimated at DM 1 billion.[147]

The Germanys also conducted trade relations. One important part of the "special relationship" between the two

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[145]McAdams, "Inter-German Detente," 137.

[146]Scharf, 183.

[147]Kathryn S. Mack, "Formal Recognition as a Means of Advancing *Deutschlandpolitik*," in Germany through American Eyes: Foreign Policy and Domestic Issues, ed. Gale A. Mattox and John H. Vaughan, Jr. (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1989), 23.

Germanys was trade privileges gained by the GDR because of its association with the Federal Republic. The Interzonal Trade Agreement of 1951, or "Berlin Agreement," established the inter-German trade system and treated West Berlin as part of the FRG.[148] It officially avoided recognizing the GDR by defining the area in terms of two currency areas rather that political entities: the Deutsche Mark West and the Deutsche Mark East.[149]

In 1957, the European Common Market amended its treaty to define inter-German trade as domestic trade, giving West Germany unilateral control over its relations with East Germany. This meant that the GDR was exempt from import tariffs on exports into Common Market nations. In addition, the FRG granted the GDR an interest-free credit called the "Swing."[150] Inter-German trade consistently showed relatively stable growth, except during brief periods of decline in the early '50s and early '60s, and served as a "major component of East Germany's foreign economic relations."[151] During the early 1960s, the SED leadership launched a campaign to reduce economic dependency on the

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[148]This agreement, also known as the Berlin Commercial Treaty, was revised in 1960.

[149]Mack, 25.

[150]In a given year, the "Swing" equalled 10-14% of total inter-German trade. Scharf, 187.

[151]Scharf, 186.

FRG; but subsequently, the goal appeared to recede as the GDR sought an expansion of inter-German trade.[152]

The SED claimed to make repeated attempts to improve inter-German relations; but as McAdams pointed out, it was easy for Ulbricht to "play the role of eager suitor" to Bonn, knowing that Bonn had no effective policy on its relations with the GDR until the mid-60s. When Ulbricht was rebuffed--which was most of the time--he then claimed virtue and blamed Bonn for being uncooperative.[153] As a matter of course, the GDR consistently denounced the FRG for resisting the normalization of relations between the two Germanys, as well as those between the GDR and third states. Bonn's shift to Ostpolitik in the late 1960s complicated this charge--especially since the FRG efforts encountered such a positive response elsewhere in eastern Europe.

Meanwhile, the GDR regime found numerous other bones to pick with the FRG during the Ulbricht years. The SED leadership blamed the East German worker uprising of June 1953 on the "inherently dangerous contact" between East Germans and West Germans.[154] The GDR also actively campaigned for a peace treaty between the two German states, which the FRG refused to grant, since it did not recognize

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[152]Scharf, 187.

[153]McAdams, Germany Divided, 73.

[154]Lowenthal, 307.

the GDR as a state.[155] And in 1963, Ulbricht sounded the alarm when Bonn made modest initiatives toward eastern Europe--warning its allies that West Germany's motive was to isolate the East Germans and annex the GDR. For similar reasons, the SED showed a "clear lack of enthusiasm" about Khrushchev's planned visit to the FRG in 1964.[156] During the mid-60s, as the FRG built up its military forces, Ulbricht accused the FRG of trying to blackmail the USSR into allowing the Federal Republic to annex the GDR by preparing for a "local" nuclear war.[157]

One of the thorniest issues between East and West Germany during the Ulbricht period was the Berlin situation. The major problems involved access to Berlin, contact between East and West Berliners, and West Berlin's relation to West Germany. And while the Berlin Wall stemmed the tide of East Germans leaving the GDR through West Berlin, the Berlin crises continued. Ulbricht announced in October 1958

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[155]The GDR maintained that it sought a peace treaty to curb FRG militarism before it provoked war in Europe. Such a treaty would theoretically have eliminated the western occupation of the Federal Republic, scheduled to remain until the year 2005 by the Paris agreements. It also would have established the post-war German borders, and "helped to normalize relations between the two German states." See Winzer, "Efforts of the GDR."

[156]Croan, The Soviet Connection, 20. As a result of Bonn's overtures, the FRG and Romania eventually established diplomatic relations, in January 1967.

[157]Ulbricht, "Vital Contribution," 4.

that his government no longer would tolerate the existing situation in Berlin. Two weeks later, in November, Khrushchev challenged the west in Berlin, demanding that West Berlin be turned into a "free" city; he did not, however, request that the city be turned over to the GDR.[158]

The GDR steadfastly maintained that West Berlin--which involved the vital interests of the GDR--did not, and would never, belong to the Federal Republic.[159] The SED argued that the "most expedient" thing was to make West Berlin a demilitarized, neutral and free city.[160] And while the SED professed to be reconciled to Moscow's refusal to give it control over Allied access to West Berlin, it continually reminded the Soviets of their obligation to defend the GDR from western attack.[161] Periodically, the GDR interfered

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[158]See McAdams, Germany Divided, 29. Scholars debate how much influence Ulbricht's pronouncement had on Moscow, but the fact that the USSR almost immediately began to soften on the issue of negotiations over Berlin's status by early 1959, may have indicated restraint to the SED leadership. See McAdams, Germany Divided, 44-49. McAdams also suggested that Moscow's "about-face" on the Berlin issue was "exasperating" to Ulbricht. McAdams, Germany Divided, 61.

[159]See Ulbricht, "Vital Contribution," 4.

[160]Winzer, "Efforts of the GDR," 28.

[161]Hangen, 145. At the same time it granted the GDR sovereignty in 1955, the USSR acknowledged the GDR's authority over civilian traffic between West Berlin and West Germany. On the general issue of Berlin, however, the USSR remained the determining factor as one of the Four Powers in post-war Europe. See McAdams, Germany Divided, 27.

with surface routes between the FRG and West Berlin as a means of showing its displeasure with Bonn. In some cases, the SED enlisted Soviet assistance.

Western scholars agreed that during the Ulbricht period, Bonn held the upper hand in inter-German relations. As Karl Birnbaum pointed out, goals of the FRG and GDR were often the same: widening their freedom of maneuver, safeguarding their power at home and obtaining support of their principle allies. Birnbaum noted, however, that the FRG possessed two important advantages. First, it was in a much stronger negotiating position because of the relative diplomatic isolation of the GDR. Second, since the GDR leadership lacked explicit popular legitimacy and had to rely on Moscow's support, its freedom of maneuver in foreign policy was "distinctly circumscribed."[162]

For a brief period following the Cuban Missile Crisis in 1962, the GDR and the FRG were "compelled" to begin some sort of dialogue by their respective superpowers, but a significant and prolonged increase in inter-German relations did not occur until the era of detente emerged in Europe in the late 1960s.[163]

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[162]Birnbaum, 53. Starrels and Mallinckrodt noted that from 1949 through the late 1960s, the GDR countered the West German advantage in the inter-German rivalry "by defining itself as the 'progressive alternative' within all-German history" 83.

[163]Scharf, 183.

As early as the late '50s, West German Chancellor Konrad Adenauer's hard-line policy toward eastern Europe was suffering considerable criticism at home.[164] One group, for instance, advocated the creation of a constituent assembly, elected by both Germanys, to work out a constitution as an "opening move" toward renewed relations.[165] The FRG did not seriously explore new approaches toward the east, however, until Kurt-Georg Kiesinger became chancellor as leader of the "Grand Coalition" of the SPD and the CDU-Christian Social Union (CSU), in September 1966.

Prior to the election, the GDR regime sought out and agreed to a series of public debates between the SED and the SPD--in opposition at the time--which would have been the first such inter-German talks. Western analysts suspected that the SED hoped to split the SPD leadership from its rank-and-file members, and when that did not happen, the SED

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[164]Fann, 264; McAdams, "Inter-German Detente," 138. McAdams stated that well before Brandt's Ostpolitik, some CDU members began to complain that the existing policy toward the GDR restricted its access to the entire eastern bloc.

W. W. Schutz, a West German working for the Council for an Indivisible Germany, admitted in 1959 that the balance of power in Europe was not swinging in West Germany's favor, and warned his government not to deny any political relations to the GDR, although he did not support recognition for a "colonial Soviet possession." W. W. Schutz, "German Foreign Policy Foundations in the West--Aims in the East," International Affairs (London) 35 (July 1959):311.

[165]This was the Council for an Indivisible Germany. Schutz, 315.

cancelled the first debate on a flimsy pretext, sixteen days before it was scheduled to take place. Hangen concluded that although the SED lost prestige by cancelling the debate, it helped persuade the FRG to abandon its hard-line resistance to talks with the GDR.[166] In fact, he argued, the SED's move was an indication that the GDR had emerged as a "power in its own right rather than a mere pawn of Soviet policy."[167]

After the election, Kiesinger repudiated Adenauer's formula toward eastern Europe, stating that henceforth, the FRG policy would be aimed at a relaxation of tension in that area. The new foreign minister, Brandt--who had been the SPD chairman since 1964--favored a "step-by-step" policy of detente between the Federal Republic and eastern Europe. In other words, the FRG offered to relax the Hallstein doctrine, in what Willerd Fann labeled a "significant departure in West German foreign policy."[168]

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[166]Hangen, 135.

[167]Hangen, 135.

[168]Fann, 266. Relations between the FRG and eastern Europe in general improved during detente. For example, the Federal Republic established diplomatic relations with Romania in January 1967. When Ulbricht called the Rumanian action "deplorable," the Rumanians responded that he was interfering with their domestic affairs. Interestingly, the FRG continued during negotiations with Romania to preserve the "shell" of the Hallstein doctrine by saying that since Warsaw Treaty countries had recognized the GDR prior to its implementation in 1955, the Hallstein doctrine did not apply. Fann, 306.

In a 1968 article outlining the FRG new goals in eastern Europe--what became known as Ostpolitik--Brandt wrote that the Federal Republic's policy was to "safeguard peace, reduce tensions, improve relations and contribute to a system of peaceful order in Europe."[169] He said that Germany was divided in a way that was "dangerous, artificial and unjust," preventing a people "from living as a nation according to its own will." At the same time, he recognized that division would not end overnight and pledged the FRG to further detente and a greater effort to find rules to live side by side with the GDR--excluding a lessening of NATO solidarity or U.S. participation in safeguarding European freedom. Brandt wrote of the his government's "particular responsibility" toward the "other part of Germany."[170] He stated that the FRG no longer demanded reunification as a precondition for any "arrangements" with the USSR and central Europe, and denied the GDR's claim that his government sought to isolate the GDR from her eastern allies.

Although the Federal Republic was prepared to restructure its "special relationship" with the GDR, however, Brandt stopped short of diplomatic recognition,

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[169]Willy Brandt, "Germany and Policy toward the East," Foreign Affairs 46 (April 1968):476.

[170]Brandt, 477-78.

stating that East Germany still was an "illegitimate" state.[171] Contrary to the GDR's claims, Brandt concluded, the blame for the troubled inter-German relations lay squarely with the GDR, which he called "inflexible" and "inconsistent with reality."[172] Furthermore, he stated, the GDR had obstructed the FRG's attempts to establish normal diplomatic relations with the rest of eastern Europe by setting unrealistic demands about German recognition, boundary issues and West Berlin.

Not surprisingly, the SED leadership rejected Bonn's new policy, arguing that the FRG's ultimate goal still was to absorb East Germany. The Ulbricht regime rushed to denounce Ostpolitik as just another subtle--and therefore dangerous--form of "revanchism." The advent of the new FRG policy put the SED leaders in a position to choose between two bad alternatives: opposing the trend toward detente and risking alienation among the GDR's allies, or adapting to the trend and exposing itself to western influences which might erode the SED's power basis. The SED decided on a flexible strategy: paying lip-service to the "commonly

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[171]Brandt, 481. A number of scholars argued that despite Bonn's continued refusal to grant de jure recognition, the new "two German states in one nation" policy was de facto recognition. See for example McAdams, "Inter-German Detente," 139.

[172]Brandt, 482.

agreed Eastern positions" while stepping up its demands on Bonn, for example, for full diplomatic recognition.

Part of the GDR's effort to fall in line with the trend toward detente was its December 1969 proposal for a state treaty between the two Germanys as a first step toward normalization. The SED presented the FRG with a draft treaty in December which formally acquiesced to the principle of bilateral contacts with Bonn, but made it clear that normal relations between the two must be established according to the principles of international law. This effort also included a proposal for a meeting between the two governments, which resulted in largely symbolic meetings at Erfurt in East Germany in March 1970 and at Kassel in West Germany in May 1970. At these meetings, Stoph and Brandt reiterated their positions, with the SED leader continued to demand diplomatic recognition from the FRG.[173]

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[173]See Birnbaum, 55-56; and Robin Alison Remington, The Warsaw Pact: Case Studies in Communist Conflict Resolution (Cambridge: The MIT Press, 1971), 136-48. During the meetings between Stoph and Brandt at Erfurt and Kassel, there was some agreement between the two leaders, for example, they agreed to accept the recognition of the GDR by third parties and to both apply for U.N. membership. Both meetings turned into something of an embarrassment for the host countries. At Erfurt, thousands of commoners enthusiastically broke police lines to greet Brandt; and Kassel turned into a "fiasco of disorder." The leaders left the meetings without being any closer to agreement on recognition and after Kassel, agreed to a "thinking pause" on the larger political questions. Meanwhile, they continued to cooperate on some technical problems. See Merkl, 137-39.

Moreton noted that the only thing to emerge from Erfurt was a decision to meet again in Kassel; and at Kassel, for all practical purposes, the outcome was a "complete deadlock."[174]

To strengthen its position in light of Bonn's new policy, the GDR signed friendship treaties with other WTO states, whose loyalty was seen to be endangered because of the lure of western technology in the post-Hallstein period. Ulbricht insisted that GDR allies extract some sort of recognition of the GDR in exchange for diplomatic relations with the FRG.[175] As Robin Alison Remington put it, Ulbricht tried to use the Warsaw Treaty as a brake on bilateral contacts with Bonn.[176]

The SED leadership, concerned about both political and economic issues, also launched a "spirited campaign" in 1968 to convince its allies to "intensify their economic development 'by their own means,'" and avoid economic commitments to the Federal Republic which "involved political concessions in matters of vital interest to the

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[174]Moreton, 123, 131.

[175]No treaty was signed with Romania, which by then had established diplomatic relations with the FRG. Fann, 267. In fact, Croan suggested that the Rumanian move prompted the GDR to conclude the bilateral treaties with Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and Bulgaria. Croan, "Czechoslovakia," 3.

[176]Remington, 134.

GDR.[177] Sodaro made a convincing argument that a series of shifts in its own economic plan toward growth in high technology during the late 1960s and in 1970--partly in response to the Czech crisis of 1968 which confirmed Ulbricht's fears about the danger of economic dependence on the west--seemed to be more in response to this desire to minimize the potential problems of detente than because of any pure economic reasoning.[178] Sodaro stated that the SED leaders explicitly acknowledged this growing relationship between economic planning decisions and foreign policy concerns by pledging in late February 1970 to overtake the FRG in raising labor productivity, a heady goal.[179]

Meanwhile, the Ulbricht regime had devised several significant ideological innovations to establish the GDR as a model of advanced socialism--what Sodaro called Ulbricht's "grand design" to fend off any unwanted consequences of Ostpolitik. These included a recognition of the growing significance of the technocratic elites in WTO countries, the development of the term "developed social system of

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[177]Sodaro, 148, 156. This strategy by the GDR met with little success, as Poland and then the USSR, with a desperate need for western technology, "turned an about-face" in their German policy. Sodaro, 156-57.

[178]Sodaro, 149. For information on the relationship of the Czech crisis to GDR policy changes, see Sodaro, 150-56, 158; Croan, "Czechoslovakia."

[179]Sodaro, 159.

socialism," an acknowledgement that the socialism stage would be much longer than originally imagined--which made socialism a distinct historical phase--and finally, an even stronger emphasis on party primacy.[180] Most analysts agreed that Ulbricht's claim that the GDR was creating its own model of socialist construction challenged Moscow's ideological supremacy.[181]

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[180]Sodaro, 160-63.

[181]See for example Birnbaum, 59; and Sarah Meiklejohn Terry, "Theories of Socialist Development in Soviet-East European Relations," in Soviet Policy in Eastern Europe, ed. Sarah Meiklejohn Terry, 221-53 (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984).

The SED's claim of having embarked on the stage of a developed socialist society in the late 1960s was part of a trend in eastern Europe in the '60s and '70s. According to Terry, the concept of "developed socialism" was introduced by the Czechs in 1960, followed shortly by the Hungarians, East Germans and Bulgarians. These early references contained no hint of a significant departure from the Soviet model; and until 1968, the Kremlin--especially under Khrushchev's leadership--actually "fostered" the growth of reformism by neglecting to provide a specific blueprint for the future and appearing receptive to reforms that "promised improved economic performance and an easing of the drain that Eastern Europe was beginning to impose on the Soviet economy." Reformers seem to have been inspired by Khrushchev's claim at the Twenty-First CPSU Congress in 1959 that for all intents and purposes, the end of the class struggle and elimination of private ownership of the means of production had been achieved; hence, several eastern European governments proclaimed that they had completed "the construction of the foundations of socialism," and were moving toward the next stage, building a fully socialist or developed socialist society. The most important issues were the system of economic planning and management, the nature of class structure and social relations, the proper structure and functioning of political institutions, and Soviet ideological primacy. Actual or proposed reforms during this early period included electoral reform, revitalization of representative institutions, the

Initially, the CPSU rejected Bonn's new policy toward eastern Europe. Speaking at the Seventh SED Congress in May 1967, Brezhnev denounced the Federal Republic's efforts as a ruse designed to split up the Warsaw Treaty and isolate the GDR. By 1969, it was becoming evident that the Soviets were contemplating a major change in their attitude toward FRG-eastern European relations, however, and after the FRG

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broadening trade union rights and the easing of censorship restrictions. Terry said that initially, the eastern European systems were seen as making a creative contribution to the socialist experience.

By the late 1960s, however, Brezhnev determined that the concept of "developed socialism" needed to be redefined in order to eliminate its potentially destabilizing features and to confirm the legitimacy of the existing power structure; and beginning in 1971, made serious attempts to appropriate the concept and "give it a specifically Soviet stamp." An "avalanche" of propaganda followed, ultimately concluding that the USSR--at a higher state of socialist development by definition--would determine the one true scientific model of socialism. By 1975, all the eastern European governments had fallen into line with the redefined orthodoxy. In the GDR, this "laundered version" of developed socialism was formally adopted at the SED Party Congress in 1971, undermining the NES with a return to taut planning, while the SED repented "the sins of the just-deposed Ulbricht." Terry concluded that the "theoretical elaboration of developed socialism" was part of a largely-successful "revamped strategy of alliance management" by the Kremlin, at least in the short term.

In the late 1970s, the debate opened up again, with the publication of a series of articles by leading Soviet economists which indicated a need for greater reliance on economic tools; and the permissive atmosphere generated by discussion of these economic factors led to discussion of methods to resolve growing social and political tensions, initiated by the reformist conception of developed socialism in the 1960s. When Terry wrote her article in 1983, she contended that although the Andropov regime had begun to resemble the "all-too-familiar immobilsme of the later Brezhnev years," the Kremlin's signals regarding systemic reforms were not "wholly negative."

implicitly agreed in 1970 to respect the GDR's territorial integrity, the Kremlin decided to reciprocate Bonn's Ostpolitik. As a result of this shift in Moscow's western policy, the Soviets and West Germans signed the Moscow Treaty in August 1970. Ultimately, this shift also led to the Four-Power Agreement on Berlin and the Treaty on the Basis of Relations between the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic--commonly shortened to the Basic Treaty--which were signed within three years of Ostpolitik's introduction.[182]

This warming of USSR-FRG relations caused "considerable concern and embarrassment in East Berlin."[183] While the GDR had little choice but to accept the changes between Moscow and Bonn, the SED leadership--led by Ulbricht--still tried to undermine the relationship. And despite Soviet pressure to get the SED leaders in line with its detente policy, Ulbricht continued to make clear his resistance to the USSR's shift in policy.[184] He objected to the negotiations for an agreement on Berlin, for instance, because he said it

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[182]The first of these treaties, the Berlin accord, was not signed until September 1971, several months after Ulbricht stepped down as first secretary.

[183]Birnbaum, 56.

[184]Western scholars generally agree that the GDR tried to obstruct detente in the late 1960s, exerting constant pressure on the USSR for full de jure recognition by the FRG of the GDR and its post-war borders. Ultimately, of course, the USSR overrode the SED's objections. Sodaro, 147.

compromised the GDR's "sovereign rights" and threatened its internal security.[185] He also objected on the grounds that the Soviets had undermined the GDR's demand for recognition as part of normalization of relations. The SED leadership, in an effort to minimize a bad situation, deduced from the Moscow Treaty that the FRG and third countries were obligated to recognize the GDR; but Moscow did not back this move.

By the end of October 1970, as the USSR and FRG appeared to be getting ever closer, the East Germans once again changed their strategy toward the Federal Republic, agreeing to initiate talks without the previously-required conditions. In November, the first high-level talks between the two German states began. While this was probably in deference to the Soviets, the SED also hoped it would put the GDR in a better position to influence East-West negotiations, specifically on the ongoing Four-Power talks on Berlin.[186]

The intensification of the Berlin talks presented a serious concern to East Germany, and with the first sign of movement in the negotiations, the GDR reverted to its former hard-line posture toward Bonn. Inter-German talks stagnated, as the East Germans continued, among other

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[185]Croan, "The Politics of Division," 370.

[186]Birnbaum, 58.

things, to claim the right to control civilian traffic on access routes to West Berlin. And in mid-November, Ulbricht "turned to an old tactic of disrupting the transit routes between West Berlin and the FRG."[187] Despite this, a joint communique released by the political consultative committee of Warsaw Treaty leaders after a meeting in East Berlin in early December 1970, expressed hope that a "mutually acceptable agreement would be reached in the Four-Power Talks on Berlin."[188] Meanwhile, Warsaw and Bonn had initiated a treaty normalizing relations in November, without even a "passing reference to the inviolability of the East-West German frontier."[189] Believing that the rest of the GDR's eastern allies were not far behind, the SED

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[187]A. James McAdams, "The New Logic in Soviet-GDR Relations," Problems of Communism 37 (September-October 1988):49.

[188]Birnbaum, 59. McAdams called the results of the gathering a "compromise" for both sides: Ulbricht agreed to lessen pressure on the traffic routes and Moscow temporarily backed off the Berlin issue. McAdams, "The New Logic," 49.

Afterward, Ulbricht gave what Remington called a "remarkable reinterpretation" of the meeting results. According to him, the committee emphasized the socialist states' solidarity with the GDR, stressed the recognition of the GDR and "agreed to resolutely resist all attempts by Bonn to invent any intra-German principles of relations between the GDR and the FRG." Remington, 162-63.

[189]Remington, 159. According to Whetten's interpretation, Poland's action was in direct response to Moscow's "encouragement" to consider the declining West German threat and "the need to re-examine the preconditions for an accommodation with Bonn." Whetten, 509.

feared its nightmare of isolation in eastern Europe finally was coming true.

Prior to Ulbricht's "retirement" in May 1971, he became, as one analyst put it, "increasingly reluctant" to support the Soviet efforts to achieve detente in Germany.[190] For example, in a speech at the nineteenth anniversary of the founding of the GDR in 1968, Ulbricht said in his toast that it was "necessary to be vigilant, to effectively counter and oppose the methods of psychological warfare, of economic warfare, and of anti-social activity" that characterized western policy, particularly with the Federal Republic. As time went on, the East German became even more vocal in his criticism of detente.[191] In fact, McAdams argued, in the eyes of many within both the SED leadership and the USSR, Ulbricht came to actually challenge Soviet hegemony in the alliance.[192]

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[190]Stephen R. Bowers, "Contrast and Continuity: Honecker's Policy Toward the Federal Republic and West Berlin," World Affairs 138 (April 1976):309.

[191]Bowers, "Contrast and Continuity," 309.

[192]McAdams, "The New Logic," 54. By the end of the 1960s, Honecker and others in the SED leadership were growing uneasy about Ulbricht's handling of relations with the USSR, while complaints about his arrogance and air of superiority were found in the highest levels of the CPSU leadership. See McAdams, Germany Divided, 89.

By early fall 1970, Honecker, Stoph, Axen, and Hager had shifted toward "delimitation" of the relations between the FRG and GDR, while Ulbricht remained intent on continuing the competition with West Germany for leadership of the German nation. But their deference to Ulbricht and

By 1970, Ulbricht clearly found the Soviet-FRG relationship unacceptable, even though most other Warsaw Treaty members--who did not have as much to lose by this change--followed Moscow's lead in detente. The GDR leader's dissatisfaction "burst out into the open" on the subject of economic dealings with the west, as articles in Neues Deutschland inferred that Moscow had erred in signing a trade agreement with the Federal Republic on February 1.[193] And in March 1971 at the CPSU Congress, Ulbricht showed his "displeasure" with Moscow's concessions on Berlin by saying that Lenin had recognized that even "Russians" had "things to learn."[194] Meanwhile, his economic acceleration policy was failing miserably, and the USSR made known its objections to what it considered Ulbricht's ideological heresies.[195]

As the SED's foreign policy continued in a different direction than its WTO allies, the GDR became increasingly isolated. According to most analysts, the aging Ulbricht was becoming a liability to the Soviets, threatening the

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the fear of dividing the party was too great, and the First Secretary remained in his position for several more months. McAdams, Germany Divided, 91.

[193]Sodaro, 158.

[194]Cited in McAdams, "The New Logic," 54.

[195]Sodaro, 165.

progress of their own policy in the west.[196] He had begun to stress publicly the GDR's independent achievements and its unique road to socialism, while making proposals independent of the USSR such as the 1968 proposal to the Federal Republic to conclude a treaty on renunciation of force.[197] In addition to this were the ideological "innovations" between 1967 and 1971 which contradicted accepted traditional communist-bloc dogma. Not until late February 1971 did the SED leadership begin to show some signs of adapting to Moscow's position toward the West. By then, apparently, Ulbricht's die had been cast.

In the final analysis, what vitally changed Ulbricht's position despite his longstanding reputation for loyalty to Moscow, was his unwillingness to modify his position on the rapprochement between the Soviet Union and the West, on matters which Ulbricht considered of utmost concern to the

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[196]See for example, Bowers "Contrast and Continuity," 310. Bowers and others suggest that because Ulbricht was older than the Soviet leadership and claimed his personal relationship with Stalin as a sign of status, that he was unwilling or unable to accept the new Soviet policy, which he believed hurt the GDR. Bowers, 311.

Hangen stated that the "aging autocrat" was probably unable or unwilling to "shed all the mental habits of a Stalinist apparatchik . . . [and] moreover . . . subject to strong pressures from dogmatists and hardliners in the party," including heir-apparent Honecker. Hangen, 140.

[197]Bowers, "Contrast and Continuity," 324. Ludz estimated that Ulbricht's emphasis on the importance of independent German achievements actually occurred as early as 1963. Peter Christian Ludz, "Continuity and Change Since Ulbricht," Problems of Communism 21 (March-April 1972):57.

GDR. He apparently believed that his position in the GDR was strong enough to survive this breach of conformity to the USSR. As late as three months before his "resignation," Ulbricht still was reiterating his demand for the FRG recognition of the GDR as a precondition to inter-German relations.[198]

Ultimately, Ulbricht's attempts to obstruct detente through modified economic planning, intensified contacts with other Warsaw Treaty members, and shifts in ideological emphasis, including his presumption in calling the GDR a "model" socialist society, resulted in the Kremlin's decision to "engineer" his downfall.[199] He apparently overstepped the bounds of his freedom to maneuver. On May 3, 1971, at age 77, Ulbricht officially tendered his resignation as First Secretary of the Central Committee of the SED at the Sixteenth SED conference, for age and health considerations. One West German professor put it this way:

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[198]Ludz, "Continuity and Change," 58.

[199]See Croan, "The Politics of Division," 370. Virtually every western analyst agreed that the USSR forced Ulbricht to "retire" his position as first party secretary in May 1971. For examples, see Sodaro, 148, 150; Waldman, 272.

Still, Ulbricht's resignation came as a surprise to many observers, according to Ludz, who noted that Ulbricht was seemingly at the peak of his prestige in the GDR and in the communist world. Despite his reputation as a servant of Moscow, this strongly suggested to Ludz, the "resignation" was "less than voluntary." Ludz, "Continuity and Change," 56.

"Ulbricht seems to have tried to mobilize some of his personal friends in the Soviet leadership against the policy pursued by . . . Brezhnev. He failed--and was pensioned off in the summer."[200] With this move, the USSR made clear that the GDR regime must work within certain economic and ideological parameters.

Relations with the West

Relations with nations outside the communist bloc during the Ulbricht era varied, primarily according to the influence of the Federal Republic. The GDR had little success in the west, thanks to the Hallstein doctrine; and consequently, the GDR did not gain diplomatic recognition in western Europe, the U.S., or Japan until the early 1970s. The GDR did have commercial relations with western industrialized nations, however, as did other bloc countries.

Relations with Britain, for instance, experienced freezes and thaws depending on Britain's relations with the Federal Republic and other western states, as well as the GDR's internal stability. In Britain, some called for recognition of the GDR, especially in the late '50s and

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[200]Lowenthal, 307.

again after 1962.[201] Relations were affected negatively by the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961 and the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968.[202] In 1959, the Chamber of Foreign Trade was allowed to set up an office, without diplomatic status. In 1971, former British diplomat Geoffrey McDermott set up the British committee for the recognition of the GDR.[203]

Finland was the first non-communist European government to sign a formal trade agreement with the GDR, but did not grant diplomatic recognition until after NATO countries did so. The GDR looked to Finland and other neutral European nations such as Austria to supplement its trade and circumvent diplomatic isolation, starting in the mid-1950s.[204] Relations with Austria were strained in the early period over the issue of compensation for foreign property and Austria's close relations with Bonn. Trade with Austria developed slowly. Austria, Switzerland and Sweden were the first western nations to establish diplomatic relations with

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[201]See for example an article written by the British Gordon Schaffer, published in an East German journal in 1972. Schaffer called the non-recognition of the GDR "absurd." Gordon Schaffer, "European Security and Diplomatic Recognition of the GDR," German Foreign Policy 11 (May-June 1972):218-21.

[202]Childs, The GDR, 313.

[203]Childs, The GDR, 314.

[204]Scharf, 189. See also Florin, 433.

the GDR, however, the same day the Basic Treaty with the FRG was signed in 1973.

Ludz pointed out that Ulbricht was willing, "and even eager" for a number of years before his resignation, for improved relations with the west, with the aim of "strengthening the GDR's position and enhancing its legitimacy"; although, for the most part, the west continued to rebuff his efforts.[205]

Relations with the Developing Countries

While the GDR's foreign policy priorities remained focused on Europe during the Ulbricht era in an attempt to boost its legitimacy--especially relations with the USSR and FRG--the developing countries became an "important field of activity."[206] After the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968, the GDR replaced Czechoslovakia as the major WTO player in the Third World, next to the USSR.[207] Overall, the GDR's efforts in the developing countries experienced ups and downs during the Ulbricht era.

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[205]Ludz, "Continuity and Change," 58.

[206]Winrow, 4.

[207]Jiri Valenta and Shannon Butler, "East German Security Policies in Africa," in Eastern Europe and the Third World, East vs. South, ed. Michael Radu (Studies of the Institute on East Central Europe, Columbia University, New York: Praeger, 1981), 146.

Analysts disagree about whether GDR foreign policy in the developing countries mirrored Soviet initiatives. Sodaro credited the SED with more independent objectives, noting that the GDR "first appeared on the Third World scene as a supplicant," whose "primary objective was to secure international acceptance of its claim to constitute a sovereign, independent German state worthy of full-fledged diplomatic recognition."[208] Recently, another student of GDR foreign policy, Winrow, contended that the GDR developed an Africa policy which was not simply an appendage of Soviet activities there.[209]

Ulbricht stated in an article in 1967, that since the developing countries' interests were in accord with the socialist world system and the "national interests of the socialist countries," socialists should aid these countries.[210] Another Politburo member Matern, noted that

> In the interest of joint struggle against imperialism and neo-colonialism, [the GDR] has lined up with all peoples fighting for national and social freedom. It

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[208]Michael J. Sodaro, "The GDR and the Third World: Supplicant and Surrogate," in Eastern Europe and the Third World, East vs. South, ed. Michael Radu (Studies of the Institute on East Central Europe, Columbia University. New York: Praeger, 1981), 106.

[209]More of Winrow's argument will appear in the following chapter, when the GDR's Afrikapolitik became more active.

[210]Ulbricht, "The October Revolution," 9.

> supports the peoples of Vietnam and of the Arab East, the victims of imperialist aggression.[211]

Like the USSR, however, the GDR realized the "extraordinary variety of Third World regimes," and admitted that few of these nations were "real" socialist systems.[212]

In general, the SED applied the principle of proletarian internationalism to guide GDR relations with the developing countries, supporting those countries which made demands against advanced capitalist countries.[213] Narrowed down, this principle applied to countries which "pursed a consistent anti-imperialist policy, especially those which...opted for a socialist development path," such as Mozambique, Angola, Ethiopia and the Peoples' Republic of Yemen.[214]

Unfortunately for the GDR, it was not able to share in Moscow's success with the Nonalignment Movement in the 1950s and 1960s, since the leaders of those countries discriminated against the GDR, often because of the

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[211]Matern, 47.

[212]Sodaro, "The GDR and the Third World," 109.

[213]In contrast, relations with the governments of the advanced capitalist countries were based on the principle of peaceful coexistence--while relations with the working classes inside those countries theoretically were also based on proletarian internationalism. Brigitte H. Schulz, "The Politics of East-South Relations: The GDR and Southern Africa," in East Germany in Comparative Perspective, ed. David Childs (London: Routledge, 1989), 211.

[214]Brigitte Schulz, 213.

principle of nonalignment itself. Others refused because they did not want to surrender substantial trade benefits with Bonn.[215] In 1965, Ulbricht made a much-heralded state visit to Egypt; however, he did not achieve the desired goal of formal recognition.

Although the SED was unable to start gaining formal recognition from the developing countries until 1969, it began in the early 1950s to develop trade relations. Initially, its chief trading partners were Brazil, India, Egypt and Iraq. Scharf argued that the expense involved in maintaining foreign economic relations caused the GDR to concentrate its efforts on those nations which offered the "greatest potential for trade growth in the medium term," included those noted above.[216] Economic relations with the developing countries, however, never took up a large portion of the GDR's annual budget. According to the English journalist Childs, after its tries at using trade for

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[215]Sodaro, "The GDR and the Third World," 108. Merkl suggested that Bonn eventually realized the potential for the Hallstein doctrine to backfire, as recognition in areas of the Third World used recognition as a tool for leverage. Some developing countries became a contest for the two Germanys to achieve preference. Merkl, 92.

[216]Scharf, 192-93. In a similar vein, Schulz said that the GDR applied the principle of "mutual advantage," meaning that "both partners must benefit from the bilateral relations between them in order to assure their long-term success;" hence, the GDR sought relations which would be politically and/or economically advantageous. In Brigitte Schulz, 213.

recognition proved basically unsuccessful, the GDR became less enthusiastic about trade with the developing countries because of their unreliability, abrupt regime changes, and corrupt governments. A few, notably Egypt, Brazil, Iraq, and India, became "traditional" trading partners, but never comprised a large proportion of the GDR's foreign trade.[217]

In addition to its pursuit of diplomatic ties and trade relations, the GDR was active in the developing nations in forming party-to-party contacts, providing training and advice in economic planning, constructing state-controlled educational and media systems and building mass organizations. As in the USSR, a number of organizations, campaigns and festivities in the GDR "advertised" the GDR's interest in the Third World.[218]

Initially, the SED's biggest successes were in the Arab nations, largely because of the Federal Republic's alliance with Arab adversaries. For instance, when the FRG established full diplomatic relations with Israel and blocked further loans to Egypt in the mid-1960s, 10 Arab states broke off relations with Bonn. From the early '50s, the GDR supported the Arabs in their struggle against the Israelis, becoming an early supporter of Yasser Arafat and

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[217]Childs, The GDR, 303; Sodaro, "The GDR and the Third World," 113.

[218]Sodaro, "The GDR and the Third World," 114-15.

the Palestinian Liberation Organization. In the spring of 1969, Iraq, Syria, the Peoples' Republic of Yemen (South) and Egypt granted the GDR diplomatic recognition.[219] In 1970, seven more states began diplomatic relations with the GDR.

The SED leadership officially termed Zionism a "reactionary, bourgeois, nationalistic, militant anti-communist ideology with racist tendencies."[220] And because the GDR regarded Israel as an aggressive state, it refused to discuss reparations for losses of Israeli citizens in Nazi Germany.[221] The GDR officially supported the Communist Party of Israel (RAKAH), which emerged in 1967--a largely Arab group which demanded Israeli withdrawal from territories occupied in 1967, self-determination of Palestinians to form an independent state on the West Bank of the Jordan River, the Gaza Strip and the Arab part of Jerusalem.[222]

The GDR had less success in achieving its primary goal of diplomatic relations with the African nations during the Ulbricht era. When the GDR became involved in Africa in the

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[219]Two days after Cambodia became the first non-Communist state to formally recognize the GDR, East Germany was recognized by Iraq.

[220]Quoted in Childs, The GDR, 305.

[221]Childs, The GDR, 306.

[222]Childs, The GDR, 306.

late 1950s and the 1960s, it was primarily through cultural and economic ties, although Winrow maintained that the SED had targeted the continent in an attempt to secure international recognition as early as the 1950s.[223] In 1953, the GDR signed a trade agreement with Egypt and in 1958, with Guinea. Between 1958 and 1968, the GDR set up commercial pacts, cultural centers and friendship organizations with 13 African states; although the continuation of the Cold War and the Hallstein doctrine prevented these nations from recognizing the GDR.[224] Later, the relaxation of tensions during detente and Ostpolitik extended to Africa. But it was only in the late 1960s that the first African nations established diplomatic relations with the GDR--and then, it was the Arab nations of Sudan, Algeria and Egypt. The GDR extended aid to these states and

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[223]Valenta and Butler, 142.

Winrow wrote that the GDR's original attraction to Africa was in part because of the recent decolonization trend, which offered the GDR a chance to fulfill ideological goals, exploit African hostility to western colonial powers (i.e., the FRG), and earn the SED a measure of freedom of maneuver from the USSR by stressing its alliance commitments. Winrow, 5, 9. A controversy continued among analysts, however, about whether the decision to become more involved in Africa was as Moscow's surrogate or proxy, or whether the GDR volunteered its services in the commonality of USSR-GDR foreign policies. Winrow--who defended the latter theory--qualified it by noting that any during clash on an issue of significance to both the GDR and the USSR, the Soviet will would prevail. Winrow, 10.

[224]George A. Glass, "East Germany in Black Africa: A Special New Role?" World Today 36 (August 1980):305; Valenta and Butler, 144.

cooperation in such areas as agriculture, education, medicine, technology, security and defense.[225]

The GDR's official goals in Asia, mirroring Soviet aims, were to curb the power of the PRC, eliminate American influence and expand trade. The GDR established good ties with the Peoples' Republic of Mongolia in 1959 and 1968 treaties, and strongly supported the Vietnamese against U.S. "imperialism." The first non-communist Asian states to recognize the GDR were Cambodia, the Maldive Islands in the Indian Ocean, and Sri Lanka a few weeks later.

The GDR also became involved in Latin America. In 1972, East German Dieter Kulitzka wrote that

> The progressing relations between the German Democratic Republic and the Latin American countries are part and parcel of the process of development of the GDR and its socialist peace policy.[226]

In this article, Kulitzka cited numerous ties with Latin America in the '60s and early '70s, including commercial, cultural and educational contacts. He also stressed the "further stimulus" of recognition for the GDR.[227] In Latin America, the GDR established long-standing unofficial relations with Uruguay, Brazil, Columbia and Chile during

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[225]Glass, 305.

[226]Dieter Kulitzka, "The Relations Between the GDR and the Latin American Countries," German Foreign Policy 11 (January-February 1972):19.

[227]Kulitzka, 23-25.

the 1950s, and later, in 1967 with Mexico. The only significant economic relations, however, were with Brazil.[228]

The first Latin American state to recognize the GDR was Cuba, in 1963, four years after Fidel Castro came to power.[229] According to Childs, initial GDR-Cuban relations were not particularly warm because of their political differences and the lack of trade incentives for the GDR; although Kulitzka maintained that the GDR had always stood firmly with the fraternal people of Cuba, and offered many examples of the "stable and comprehensive relations" developed between the two.[230] Both the GDR and the USSR, in any case, offered credits to Cuba during the U.S. blockade.[231] The second Latin American state to extend recognition to the GDR was Chile, during the Allende regime, in March 1971.[232]

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[228]Childs, The GDR, 310. Kulitzka stated that between 1960-1970, the trade volume between the GDR and Latin American countries rose by "some 300 percent" (23).

[229]Like with Yugoslavia in the late 1950s, the FRG retaliated against Cuba by severing diplomatic relations, based on the Hallstein doctrine.

[230]Kulitzka, 20-21.

[231]Childs, The GDR, 311.

[232]Sodaro noted that the GDR's interest in the problems of Latin America grew significantly after the inauguration of the Allende government in 1970. Sodaro, "The GDR and the Third World," 132.

Chapter 3

THE HONECKER ERA, 1971-89

In 1971, the USSR perceived the 59-year-old Erich Honecker to be more flexible, unconditionally loyal to the USSR, and modest about the GDR's role in the socialist community; and hence, preferable to Ulbricht as the leader of the GDR.[1] Certainly, the untroubled takeover in May 1971 underscored the Party's strength and stability in the GDR.[2]

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[1]Stephen R. Bowers, "Contrast and Continuity: Honecker's Policy toward the Federal Republic and West Berlin," World Affairs 138 (April 1976):310-11. Honecker had been involved with communist organizations since the age of 10. He was elected to the Central Committee of the SED at its founding and became a candidate member of the Politburo in 1950, graduating to full membership in 1958. He had a reputation for hard-line loyalty to the CPSU, and reportedly had executed the risky Berlin Wall erection in 1961.

As the former Central Committee secretary for security questions and cadre policies, Honecker had a strong base in the SED power structure. Hartmut Zimmermann, "The GDR in the 1970's," Problems of Communism 28 (March-April 1978):15.

[2]One reason for the smooth transition may have been the large SED membership. In 1971, party membership was an estimated two million, nearly 12% of the population. One source noted that "nowhere among communist countries--except perhaps in the Soviet Union--[did] the party play so prominent a role. Robert Gerald Livingston, "East Germany Between Moscow and Bonn," Foreign Affairs 50 (January 1972):303.

Klaus Sorgenicht, a member of the influential Council of State, detailed the close cooperation among the SED and the Democratic Bloc and the National Front of the GDR, the "friendly" parties--such as the Democratic Peasant Party and the Christian Democratic Union--which boasted an additional 370,000 members. Although Sorgenicht claimed this "permanent

Although analysts generally conceded that Honecker did not possess Ulbricht's degree of authority or prestige in East Germany, he appeared safe from any real political challenge within the SED, and the Politburo's composition did not change significantly during the change, reinforcing the impression of continuity. But although many observers noted elements of this continuity between the Ulbricht and Honecker eras, it was confined primarily to domestic trends; while most analysts agreed that GDR foreign policy underwent a "considerable change in emphasis."[3]

A number of observers predicted important foreign policy adjustments in the GDR in the Honecker regime as a

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and durable alliance" shared similar fundamental views on foreign policy and played an active role in framing it, he denied the viability of pluralism in the GDR. See Klaus Sorgenicht, "Cooperation Between the Socialist Unity Party of German and Friendly Parties," World Marxist Review 21 (October 1978):40-47.

[3]See Bowers, "Contrast and Continuity," 324; Eric Waldman, "The German Democratic Republic: Moscow's Faithful Ally," in East Central Europe: Yesterday, Today, Tomorrow, ed. Milorad M. Drachkovitch (Stanford, California: Hoover Institution Press, 1982), 272; Peter Christian Ludz, "Continuity and Change Since Ulbricht," Problems of Communism 21 (March-April 1972):58.

Angela Stent suggested that in light of the normalization of USSR-FRG relations in the early 1970s, for instance, the SED expanded its role outside the WTO in part to reassert its importance to Moscow. Angela Stent, "Soviet Policy toward the German Democratic Republic," in Soviet Policy in Eastern Europe, ed. Sarah Meiklejohn Terry (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1984), 41.

result of Moscow's new detente policy.[4] The SED, however, also found that improved relations with the west held a number of advantages, and the new regime quickly completed negotiations with the FRG on transit and tourism, and accommodated itself to the Basic Treaty in the early 1970s. In place of Ulbricht's utopian hopes of reunification under socialism, Honecker advised that the two Germanys accept each other as independent, self-sustaining entities, who would have to live "with each other" in the interest of European peace.[5] Birnbaum suggested that as early as 1972, the SED was "preparing the ground for an era of gradually evolving East-West collaboration," seeking a "controlled opening" to the west.[6]

Most analysts agreed that the Honecker government identified much more strongly with the Kremlin than the Ulbricht regime, and placed even more importance on ideology, although Honecker's socio-economic policies were

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[4]See Waldman, 272. Michael J. Sodaro suggested that even had he wished to impede detente, Honecker would have been less able than Ulbricht to do so. Michael J. Sodaro, "Ulbricht's Grand Design: Economy, Ideology and the GDR's Response to Detente 1967-71," World Affairs 142 (Winter 1980):148.

[5]A. James McAdams, Germany Divided: From the Wall to Reunification (Princeton, New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1993), 92-93.

[6]Karl E. Birnbaum, East and West Germany: A Modus Vivendi (Westmead, England: Saxon House and Lexington Books, D. C. Heath, 1973), 66.

"considerably more pragmatic" than Ulbricht's. And by reasserting orthodoxy in GDR foreign and domestic policy, Honecker repaired the "damage" to GDR-Soviet relations done by Ulbricht's independent policies in 1970-71.[7] Waldman, for example, noted that the GDR consistently took positions identical to Moscow's on all international issues.[8] From a practical standpoint, of course, Honecker also realized that support for the USSR--for instance on detente--might earn him a voice in the settlement of major European security issues. And by the mid-1980s, most analysts agreed that Honecker had begun to show signs of limited autonomy in foreign affairs, especially in inter-German relations.[9]

Honecker set the tone for the new regime at the Eighth Party Congress in June 1971, one month after he was named First Secretary. The principal foreign policy tasks, as determined by the Congress, were to create advantageous external conditions for the construction of socialism, vis-a'-vis the USSR and the socialist community of nations; and

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[7]Peter Marsh in "Foreign Policy Making in the German Democratic Republic: The Interplay of Internal Pressures and External Dependence," in Foreign Policymaking in Communist Countries, ed. Hannes Adomeit and Robert Boardman (Farnborough, England: Saxon House, Teakfield, 1979), 98; Ludz, "Continuity and Change," 59.

[8]Waldman, 275, 280.

[9]See for example F. Stephen Larrabee, "Eastern Europe: A Generational Change," Foreign Policy 70 (Spring 1988):57; Stent, 41.

to "firmly integrate the German Democratic Republic in the socialist community of states."[10] Honecker repudiated some of Ulbricht's tendencies, toning down the GDR's accomplishments, announcing the need for centralized management, and reasserting "ideological correctness" over "technocratic opinion."[11] According to Marsh, Honecker's goal was to "consolidate the GDR's position as a modern industrial state firmly anchored to the Soviet Union and the other communist states."[12] Party functionaries subsequently claimed the success of this policy, arguing that the SED's adoption of Soviet detente strategy was responsible for the international recognition and U.N. admission in the early 1970s.[13] The SED leadership also claimed that its renewed

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[10]See Otto Winzer, "The German Democratic Republic Within the Community of Socialist States," German Foreign Policy 10 (November-December 1971):454; Werner Hanisch and Hartwig Busse, "Peaceful Coexistence: Principle of GDR Foreign Policy," German Foreign Policy 13 (January-February 1974):14-16.

[11]Sodaro noted, for example, that Honecker discarded Ulbricht's "developed social system of socialism," returning to the USSR's "developed socialist society." In the ensuing months, the SED launched a full-blown attack on Ulbricht's theories. See Sodaro, 163-64.

[12]Marsh, 98, 100.

[13]The Party technocrats countered that these achievements resulted from the legitimacy gained through economic successes related to the NES in the 1960s. In the 1970s, a conflict over whether foreign economic policy should be dictated by political necessity or economic rationality occurred between these two groups. Honecker backed the Party functionaries, reimposing central control and ideological orthodoxy in the SED, and officially

closeness with the USSR helped the GDR fulfill its central task of developing and completing a socialist society in the face of a scientific and technological revolution, which could occur only "in close collaboration" with other socialist nations.[14]

Several policy issues continued from the Ulbricht era, such as the goal of international recognition. Honecker appeared willing to take a less strident approach toward the West in order to achieve his chief objective of international recognition outside the socialist bloc.[15] Primarily because of warmer East-West relations, the SED achieved its ambition by the mid-1970s, establishing diplomatic relations with all but a few nations. In an effort to further the GDR's bilateral relations, Honecker traveled extensively during most of his tenure, visiting countries such as Japan, Cuba, the Philippines, China, Austria, Finland, Italy, Sweden, West Germany and the Netherlands, as well as many African states. Childs attributed this wanderlust to Honecker's need to win internal favor and external recognition, since he was a non-

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reinterpreting the "scientific-technological revolution" as a "long-term, complex, and even self-contradictory process." Marsh, 100-04; Zimmermann, 7-8.

[14]Birnbaum, 64.

[15]Richard Lowenthal, "The German Question Transformed," Foreign Affairs 63 (Winter 1984-85):307.

elected leader who was "dependent on a mighty patron," the USSR.[16]

The problem of national identity remained at the core of the SED's societal concerns.[17] In the early 1970s, the SED retreated from its position of the existence of a distinctive East German nationality by calling its citizenship "GDR" and its nationality "German." Honecker distinguished between the socialist nation GDR and the bourgeois nation FRG.[18] Then, in an amendment to the constitution in 1974, the SED abandoned the concept of German nationhood, with the GDR redefined as a "socialist state of workers and farmers."[19]

Although ideology was not well suited as a concrete guideline for foreign policy, as Schulz noted, it served as a basis for organizing information in communist countries; and the language of ideology was indispensable as a means of communication and propaganda, and--especially in the GDR--an

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[16]David Childs, "East Germany: 'Glasnost' and Globetrotting," World Today 43 (October 1987):177. For an interesting account of his travels, see Erich Honecker, "Between Manila and Havana," in From My Life (New York: Pergamon Press, 1981), 413-24.

[17]Melvin Croan, "The Politics of Division and Detente in East Germany," Current History 84 (November 1985):389.

[18]Birnbaum, 65.

[19]Reprinted in J. K. A. Thomaneck and James Mellis, eds., Politics, Society and Government in the GDR: Basic Documents (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1989), p. 264.

instrument of legitimation.[20] Hence, according to the SED leadership, East German foreign policy was guided by the fact that the GDR's and USSR's vital interests coincided, and that the GDR could only accomplish historic tasks in cooperation with the USSR and fraternal socialist countries.[21]

The SED remained committed to the concept of socialist internationalism, and continued to stress the GDR's objectives of achieving "mutual understanding and cooperation among states and nations," playing "an active part in the struggle for peace and disarmament," and taking a "consistent stand of internationalist solidarity with the people and movements fighting for national liberation and

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[20]Eberhard Schulz, "Decisive Factors in GDR Foreign Policy," in GDR Foreign Policy, ed. Eberhard Schulz et al. (Armonk, New York: M. E. Sharpe Inc., 1982), 12-13.

[21]In Thomaneck and Mellis, 284, 290-91. Honecker stated that in the socialist GDR, the "striving for peace, security and disarmament has always been the basic principle of . . . foreign policy." In From My Life, 396.

Hans-Adolf Jacobsen wrote an interesting article about the GDR's cultural policy, which, according to the SED leadership, was part of both the overall social and state policy, and the general foreign policy, since "culture and art must be planned and steered like any other social process." See Hans-Adolf Jacobsen, "Cultural Elements in GDR Foreign Policy," in GDR Foreign Policy, ed. Eberhard Schulz et al. (Armonk, New York: M. E. Sharpe Inc., 1982).

social emancipation."[22] In 1972, Deputy Foreign Minister Ewald Moldt wrote that,

> As everyone knows, the struggle for disarmament and arms limitation is one of the main issues in the foreign-political activities of the Soviet Union and the other members of the community of socialist states.

Moldt noted the GDR's "tremendous contribution" to detente--which he claimed was initiated by the USSR--and stated that East Germany had always seen "the maintenance of world peace as a fundamental task of its foreign policy."[23]

The GDR also claimed a role in the formation of important bilateral and multilateral European agreements such as the Quadripartite Agreement on Berlin in 1971, the Basic Treaty with the FRG in 1972, and the Helsinki Final Act in 1975. In his memoirs, Honecker said that "without being presumptuous we can claim that the GDR contributed actively and constructively to bringing about the Helsinki

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[22]Hermann Axen, "German Democratic Republic in the Struggle for Peace and Socialism," International Affairs (Moscow) (November 1979):5.

[23]Ewald Moldt, "Topical Issues of GDR Foreign Policy and the Tasks of UNO in the Struggle for Peace and International Security," German Foreign Policy 11 (November-December 1972):451. To that end, the GDR actively supported the second Strategic Arms Limitations Treaty (SALT II) during the late 1970s.

Moldt specifically bragged about the GDR's "comprehensive activities" to aid the struggle for national liberation in Africa, citing for instance, the Committee for the Observation of the International Year for the Struggle Against Racism and Racial Discrimination, a rather laborious title. Moldt, 452.

conference and made considerable advance contributions toward it."[24]

Analysts noted that a strong linkage between GDR domestic and foreign policy continued through the Honecker era. Sodaro, for example, wrote that one could "explain a great deal about the SED's ability to maintain a relatively stable system of authority inside the GDR by referring to the GDR's ties with the outside world."[25] He contended that many external political influences on the GDR--such as the Polish crisis of 1980-81 and improved inter-German relations--helped build popular support in the GDR; while other external economic influences--such as trade dependency--obstructed that process. This resulted in a paradox for the SED, according to Sodaro: As the FRG became the GDR's primary source of stabilizing economic influences, the USSR became a source of destabilizing impulses because of its economically-debilitating energy policies. Sodaro concluded that the dramatic shift in external sources described later in this chapter threatened the GDR's stability.

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[24]In Honecker, From My Life, 390.

[25]For this section see Michael J. Sodaro's "External Influences on Regime Stability in the GDR: A Linkage Analysis," in Foreign and Domestic Policy in Eastern Europe in the 1980s, ed. Michael J. Sodaro and Sharon L. Wolchik, 81-108 (London: Macmillan, 1983).

During the Honecker period, the GDR's foreign activities fell into four main categories: The intensification of bilateral political and economic relations, the utilization of international conferences to gain legitimacy and endorsement for its foreign policy goals, participation in the U.N. and its agencies to emphasize its identity as the "socialist German nation," and the pursuit of a strict policy of ideological-political delineation from the FRG.[26]

Within these four categories, according to Waldman, were tasks the GDR was "directed to perform within the framework of the Soviet Union's global policies," such as helping the CPSU gain recognition as the undisputed leader of world communism, maintaining close relations with Third World groups struggling for "national liberation," and providing military and technological aid to selected Third World countries as the "progressive, socialist and democratic" Germany--versus the "reactionary, imperialist" Germany.[27] Westerners stressed that the overriding foreign policy goal during the Honecker period remained to achieve political parity with the FRG and full recognition of GDR

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[26]Waldman, 278-79. The fourth main category is usually referred to as the Abgrenzung policy, discussed later in this chapter.

[27]Waldman, 279-80.

citizenship, and to replace the "permanent representatives" in Bonn and East Berlin with ambassadors.[28]

For the purposes of this analysis, the Honecker period is broken down into three key areas: The ongoing struggle for legitimacy and international recognition, the SED's most important bilateral and multilateral relations--with the USSR, the socialist nations, the FRG, the West and Japan and the developing countries--and the ultimate decision for German reunification.

The Legitimacy Issue

Its quest for internal and external legitimacy continued to drive the SED leadership during the Honecker regime, one reason that it so consistently and enthusiastically back the USSR's policies.[29] In an important policy shift in the early 1970s, however, the SED seemingly dropped its pan-German aspirations as a response to Ostpolitik and began presenting the "historic reality" that the GDR was the "inevitable and the logical culmination of the German historical process." The SED insisted that

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[28]Arthur M. Hanhardt, Jr., "Germanys and the Superpowers: A Return to Cold War?" Current History 80 (April 1981):146.

[29]Gareth M. Winrow, The Foreign Policy of the GDR in Africa (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1990), 10. By associating itself so closely with the eastern bloc, the SED hoped to defuse the GDR's comparisons with the "other Germany."

the substance of the German nation was incorporated in the German working class and its representatives.

This attempt to "foster a sense of separate state and national identity" led to a revision of German history.[30] For example, in 1970, Willi Stoph said that Ludwig von Beethoven had finally found his "true homestead" in the GDR, because his music radiated "power impulses for the people who were striving to throw off the shackles of feudalist-absolutist oppression."[31] And Ronald D. Asmus noted with irony that in the GDR, Martin Luther suddenly became a philosophical trailblazer of Karl Marx.[32] The SED also claimed Johann von Goethe, Johann Sebastian Bach, George Frederick Handel and astonishingly, the state of Prussia--which led the most militaristic period in German history--with Prussian leaders such as Frederick the Great, Karl von Clausewitz, Karl August von Hardenberg, and even Otto von Bismarck.[33] In 1979, Bowers pointed out the GDR's recent

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[30]Ronald D. Asmus, "The GDR and the German Nation: Sole Heir or Socialist Sibling," International Affairs 60 (Summer 1984):404.

[31]Quoted in Stephen R. Bowers, "East German National Consciousness: Domestic and Foreign Policy Considerations," East German Quarterly 13 (Summer 1979):171.

[32]Asmus, "The GDR and the German Nation," 410-14.

[33]See Asmus, "The GDR and the German Nation," 410-14; Walther Leisler Kiep, "The New Deutschlandpolitik," Foreign Affairs 63 (1984-85):321; Lowenthal, 308; Otto Pick, "Eastern Europe: A Divergence of Conflicting Interests," World Today 41 (August-September 1985):142.

concern over the "proper study of history." For example, on the anniversary of the medieval German Peasants' War, Honecker tried to demonstrate the continuity between "significant events in German history" and the GDR by saying that the revolutionary demands expressed in war were the ideological foundations of the GDR."[34]

Pick contended this revisionism was an attempt to "raise the level of [the regime's] legitimacy by sharing the German destiny with such revered Germans," while Asmus said the SED sought to stabilize the separate consciousness of East Germans, prove that the GDR was not just a historical accident and offer an "ideological booster" at a time of "economic austerity and international tension."[35] Although all eastern European nations used this prescriptive writing of history, Asmus noted the GDR was unique for two reasons. First, it had to share and compete with the FRG--whose very existence threatened the SED's legitimacy--for its historical legacy. Second, the course of German history, particularly in the twentieth century, often demanded an apology.[36]

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[34]Quoted in Bowers, "East German National Consciousness," 153.

[35]Pick, 142; Asmus, "The GDR and the German Nation," 415.

[36]Asmus, "The GDR and the German Nation," 415.

The International Recognition Issue and Admission to the U.N.

By the end of Honecker's first decade in power, the GDR established full diplomatic relations with all but a few of the world's states, such as Israel and Chile. Asmus suggested that SED's achievement of international recognition helped to "reduce some of the regime's deeply felt insecurities over sovereignty and its doubts about its viability as an actor on the international scene."[37] In fact, after general recognition the SED leadership upgraded ministers with foreign affairs responsibilities to the Central Committee, and the "old-style functionary" gave way to the "younger professionally-trained diplomat," who was trained at the Institute for International Relations of the Academy of State and Legal Sciences at Babelsberg, near Berlin.[38]

Western scholars claimed the GDR owed its recognition primarily to Ostpolitik and detente, and the accompanying relaxation of the Hallstein doctrine in the early '70s.[39] SED leaders, on the other hand, said recognition was achieved through the solidarity of the USSR and other

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[37]Ronald D. Asmus, "The Dialectics of Detente and Discord: The Moscow-East Berlin-Bonn Triangle," Orbis 28 (Winter 1985):772.

[38]David Childs, The GDR, Moscow's German Ally (London: George Allen and Unwin, 1983), 298-99.

[39]Childs, The GDR, 147.

socialist states--as well as Third World states which first recognized the GDR--despite the FRG and the West's best efforts between 1949-71.[40] In 1979, on the thirtieth anniversary of the GDR, Politburo member Axen boasted that the GDR was "recognized across the world as a sovereign socialist state," with diplomatic relations with 128 states and membership in the U.N. and its specialized agencies.[41]

Kuhns wrote that it was "difficult to overestimate the importance attached to the achievement of international acceptance by the leaders" of the GDR.[42] As SED official Hanisch noted, the quest for recognition had played a "significant part in the development of relations between socialist and capitalist countries, particularly in Europe," and provided the turning point between cold war and relaxation.[43] In addition, recognition strengthened the SED's domestic position and provided opportunities to play a more active role in international affairs and trade.

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[40]Werner Hanisch, "The GDR and Its International Relations," German Foreign Policy 12 (December 1973):633; and "World-Wide Recognition of the GDR--Result of Hard Class Struggle," German Foreign Policy 13 (November-December 1974):645.

[41]Quoted in Woodrow J. Kuhns, "The GDR in Africa," East European Quarterly 19 (June 1985):226.

[42]Kuhns, 226.

[43]Hanisch, "The GDR and Its International Relations," 632, 637.

Until the GDR and the FRG gained U.N. membership in September 1973, SED officials continued to lobby for admittance.[44] They contended that both Germanys should be admitted to the organization because it would allow the U.N. to "more successfully cope with its responsibility for consolidating international security and world peace" and allow every country to make its contribution to world security.[45] Moldt also argued that "practically all" existing U.N. members--even NATO members such as France, Italy, Denmark, Luxembourg and Canada--agreed with membership for the FRG and GDR. Moldt was careful to state that the GDR had never viewed admission as a tactical issue, but as a vehicle to participate actively in the defense of peace and the achievement of "great humanist goals."[46] Having denounced "some" NATO countries for pressuring the

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[44]See Moldt; Hans Schumann, "The German Democratic Republic and the United Nations," German Foreign Policy 11 (September-October 1972):372-75; Winzer, "Community of Socialist States," 460.

[45]Moldt, 453-54; Hanisch, "The GDR and Its International Relations," 646-47.

[46]Of course, after the GDR's admission, Hanisch contended that its involvement in the U.N. special agencies and international conferences such as CSCE showed that the GDR had a "firm international position as a sovereign and completely equal socialist state." In Hanisch, "The GDR and Its International Position," 636.

U.N. not to admit the Germanys, Moldt commended the FRG for finally seeking admission.[47]

In 1979, the GDR was elected to a two-year non-permanent seat on the U.N. Security Council, where it consistently supported the USSR's proposals and used its veto to prevent the adoption of resolutions calling for the withdrawal of foreign troops from Afghanistan. Childs noted that the GDR's early role in the U.N. proved the gap between SED ideological propaganda and the reality of GDR-Third World relations; although the GDR supported the developing nations more often than the FRG in general, its votes on several resolutions actually demonstrated the distance between the non-aligned and socialist states, for instance, when it abstained from a vote declaring the Indian Ocean a zone of peace.[48] Critics also chided the GDR to put its money where its mouth was, since it refused to support the upkeep of U.N. peacekeeping forces in southern Lebanon or the relief of Palestinian refugees, and gave relatively small contributions to the U.N.'s Development Program and

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[47]A point of bitterness for the SED was that the FRG was the only non-member to be admitted to the U.N. specialized agencies, which the GDR did not achieve until after the Basic Treaty was signed in 1972. The FRG had not previously sought U.N. membership for international and internal policy reasons. Peter Christian Ludz, Two Germanys in One World (Paris: The Atlantic Institute for International Affairs, 1973), 57.

[48]Childs, The GDR, 298-99, 306-7.

its International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF). In fact, the GDR participated in only 9 of 16 U.N. agencies.

Relations with the USSR

The USSR continued to be the main determinant of GDR foreign policy. On the thirtieth anniversary of the GDR, Axen thanked the Soviets, the GDR's "best friends and allies" for their belief that Lenin's cause would triumph in the country of Marx and Engels "in accordance with the laws of history." He referred to the "deepening" of the GDR's fraternal ties to the USSR and the other states of the socialist community.[49] Shortly after that, Honecker wrote that the GDR's vital interests were "identical with the interests of the USSR and those of the whole socialist community."[50]

Where Ulbricht had focused mainly on bilateral ties with the USSR, Honecker concentrated on increased bloc integration, but their objective was similar: To maximize the USSR's commitment to the GDR and provide the GDR with the greatest possible leverage over the West.[51] To that

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[49]Axen, "German Democratic Republic," 10, 13.

[50]Erich Honecker, "USSR: The Chief Force of Our Community," World Marxist Review 23 (December 1980):7.

[51]Melvin Croan, East Germany: The Soviet Connection The Washington Papers. Center for Strategic and International Studies, Georgetown University (Beverly Hills, California: Sage Publishers, 1976), 45.

end, SED officials loudly asserted their allegiance to Soviet-centered "socialist internationalism," and strove to make the GDR indispensable to the Soviets from both an economic and political standpoint--supporting the Kremlin against "polycentric" tendencies within the communist movement, reinforcing alliance cohesion and at the same time, pushing for a "tighter bilateral relationship" between the GDR and USSR.[52]

Although it was almost impossible to prove, most observers agreed that the GDR became increasingly important to Moscow during the Honecker era, for several reasons: Its geographic position between the capitalist West and socialist East, its emergence as the USSR's leading trade partner and one of the 10 leading industrial nations of the world, its possession of the highest standard of living in any communist country, and its evolution into the USSR's closest and most devoted ally" and junior partner.[53] After

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[52]Livingston, 306.

[53]See for example Hanhardt, "Germanys and the Superpowers," 145; Livingston, 306; Croan, The Soviet Connection, 10; Winrow, 10; A. James McAdams, "The New Logic in Soviet-GDR Relations," Problems of Communism 37 (September-October 1988):49; Ludz, Two Germanys, 16. Marsh, however, thought the "junior partner" status a bit overstated, writing in the late 1970s. Marsh, 105.

By the late 1980s, McAdams called Honecker a senior statesman within the WTO and the "leader of the USSR's most important ideological, economic and strategic ally;" and Waldman even credited the GDR with playing an "active role

its second-class status in bloc affairs for so many years, McAdams reasonably concluded that the SED was "inclined to relish the chance to act as Moscow's loyal agent."[54] Also, of course, the USSR maintained 19-20 military divisions in the GDR; and the NPA was the most modern and best equipped and trained WTO military outside the USSR.[55]

Still, a vast asymmetry in sheer power existed between the USSR and GDR, and the USSR remained much more important to the GDR than vice-versa. The GDR continued to depend on the USSR for political legitimacy--to insure that Europe remain divided--and for economic reasons, for example, its nearly complete dependence on the USSR for crucial raw materials such as petroleum and natural gas. And despite its relatively high standard of living, the GDR public

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within the global strategy of" the USSR. A. James McAdams, "Inter-German Detente: A New Balance," Foreign Affairs 65 (Fall 1986):148-49; Waldman, 283.

[54]McAdams, "The New Logic," 49.

[55]The USSR considered the NPA an important asset. After the GDR achieved international recognition in the early 1970s, its foreign policy activities increased, as it supported Soviet expansion in the Third World. Stent, 48.

Hanhardt estimated in the mid-'80s that with the NPA's 170,000 troops and the USSR's 380,000 troops stationed in the GDR, it had one of the highest military densities in the world. Arthur M. Hanhardt, Jr., "The Prospects for German-German Detente," Current History 83 (November 1984):381. Schulz seemed to contradict this, however, when he estimated in 1982 that the NPA's size was only larger than Bulgaria's and Hungary's within the WTO--although he noted that during the previous decade, the SED had built up its forces more aggressively than any other eastern European nation. Schulz, 31.

continued to generally compare itself with the FRG, not Poland or Czechoslovakia.[56] At the same time, the USSR always stressed its primacy in the formation of critical eastern European foreign policy; and no sources believed that the USSR would have tolerated a break from the SED in an area considered vital to Soviet interests or its hegemony within the bloc.[57] In other words, while most observers acknowledged the GDR's greater room for maneuver during the Honecker era--especially during the 1980s--the SED remained unable to deter the USSR when "broader policy considerations" were at stake.[58]

The USSR's warming toward the west, especially during 1970-71, had strained the GDR-USSR relationship. This was temporarily resolved by the appointment of Honecker and the Abgrenzung policy, or "delimitation," initiated to counter

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[56]Hanhardt, "Germanys and the Superpowers," 146.

[57]John M. Rothgeb, Jr., wrote an interesting study comparing bloc structures and suggesting how "tight" structures such as WTO, and "loose" structures such as NATO differed in their approach to guiding foreign relations. Rothgeb concluded that in the former case, ideology played an important role in justifying bloc control and extending influence in the world; and it would tolerate little freedom of action. See John M. Rothgeb, Jr., "Loose vs. Tight: The Effect of the Bloc Structure Upon Foreign Interactions," Journal of Politics 43 (May 1981):493-511.

[58]Livingston, 306. Livingston used the Quadripartite Agreement on Berlin and the Basic Treaty as examples; the GDR did not like either of these agreements, or the warmer FRG-USSR relations (307). See also McAdams, "Inter-German Detente," 149-50.

any undesirable results of Ostpolitik, and the SED continued throughout most of the 1970s to blast the FRG for its "bellicose revanchist foreign policy," despite the GDR's good will and push for peaceful coexistence.[59] As the USSR continued to urge detente between the GDR and the West, however, it faced the dilemma that a more stable and secure GDR would encourage Honecker's independence and lessen his malleability. The CPSU leadership probably was reassured by Honecker's commitment to close relations with Moscow and "absolute devotion to the guidance of" the USSR, and his indication that the GDR-USSR alliance--based on common

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[59]Hannes Adomeit, "The German Factor in Soviet Westpolitik" Annals of the American Academy of Politics and Social Science 481 (September 1985):19; and Axen, "German Democratic Republic," 7. The Abgrenzung policy is described in more detail later in this chapter.

The concept of peaceful coexistence remained at the forefront of espoused GDR foreign policy aims during the Honecker era. Honecker called it the "only correct, realistic and essentially socialist [foreign] policy," and Willi Stoph wrote in the late 1970s that peaceful coexistence was the only way that the socialist community could create "favorable external conditions" for building socialism and communism. See Erich Honecker, "Sixty Years of Struggle for the Peace and Happiness of Mankind," World Marxist Review 20 (July 1977):4; Willi Stoph, "The Socialist State and Society's Economic Development," World Marxist Review 21 (January 1978):49. Axen noted, however, that the progress of peaceful coexistence--as well as general detente--would necessarily be accompanied by a sharpening of class struggle. Hermann Axen, "For Peace, Security, Cooperation and Social Progress," World Marxist Review 20 (August 1977):17.

ideology, social system and goals--was unique and unshakable.[60]

This loyalty to Moscow also was indicated by foreign policy experts within the GDR such as Axen, who wrote in 1979 of the "indissoluble fraternal alliance" between the GDR and USSR. Quoting Brezhnev, Axen stated that the "revolutionary ties" of Marx, Engels and Lenin were the core of the "indestructible friendship between our peoples;" and this connection to the Soviet Union dated back to the foundation of the Communist Party of Germany (KPD) in 1918. Because of the revolutionary bond, the KPD was able to use a "historic opportunity" to "effect a radical turn in the relations between the Soviet and GDR peoples."[61] SED leaders regularly gushed in their praise of the heroic Soviets, who defeated Hitler's fascism and made possible the formation of the GDR. The cooperation between the GDR and USSR extended from commercial activity, to ideological matters, to science and technology, to coordination of foreign and defense policies. Meanwhile, a 25-year friendship treaty signed in 1975 between the USSR and GDR replaced the two previous GDR-USSR treaties of 1955 and 1964. In addition to requiring the two to inform and consult each other on all important foreign relations

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[60]Bowers, "Contrast and Continuity," 324, 330-31.

[61]Axen, "German Democratic Republic," 7.

issues, it also stipulated the intensification of economic contacts and trade between the two nations.

For several years after the 1973 CSCE conference in Helsinki, Soviet policy in the West seemed more or less settled, as the West acknowledged the status quo in Europe and the USSR accepted West Germany as a NATO member and trade partner. While "postponing" any idea of German reunification, the Soviets admitted the legitimacy of the FRG's ties to the GDR and eastern Europe in general. In the late '70s and early '80s, however, the USSR withdrew its support for East-West detente after its invasion of Afghanistan in December 1979, the imposition of martial law in Poland in December 1980, and the ongoing controversy over NATO's 1979 decision to deploy U.S. Pershing II and cruise missiles in western Europe.[62] Although Moscow also stood to gain from certain aspects of improved inter-German ties, the CPSU apparently expected the SED to follow its lead in the cooling of East-West relations. Croan suggested that the Soviets also feared that the GDR was tying its economic

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[62]Eric G. Frey contended that East-West detente had actually already lost the momentum of the early 1970s before the Afghanistan invasion. Eric G. Frey, Division and Detente: The Germans and Their Alliances (New York: Praeger, 1987), 75.

In December 1979, NATO voted to deploy the missiles by the end of 1983, but to simultaneously pursue arms control negotiations with the West.

development too closely to the FRG.[63] In any case, Moscow was eminently capable of enforcing GDR compliance.

And although the GDR officially defended the USSR's position on each of these occasions, events in Poland seemed to mark a turning point in USSR-GDR relations, as Poland drifted into chaos and the GDR remained relatively strong and confident, mainly because of its domestic stability, economic progress, and growing international acceptance.[64] By the early 1980s, the GDR had adopted a much more positive attitude toward Bonn, indicating a shift in its foreign policy priorities and departing visibly from the new and harder Soviet policy toward the west in general.[65]

According to Adomeit, Honecker's "natural inclination" in the early 1980s was to strengthen the GDR by building internal stability and helping the GDR's international standing through improved German relations--despite the erosion of detente--for which he would need more room for

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[63]Croan, "The Politics of Division," 389.

[64]Adomeit, 20. Stent noted that although the GDR officially supported the Soviets during the Afghanistan invasion, SED leaders privately expressed discontent because the Soviets did not consult or inform it prior to the invasion; and because they feared the results for inter-German relations. Stent, 56.

[65]This development is explained in greater detail in the following section on inter-German relations.

maneuver vis-a'-vis the USSR. The Soviets decided instead to reassert their control over the GDR's foreign policy.[66]

Two isolated incidents clearly demonstrated that decision. In April 1983, Honecker agreed to cancel a trip to the FRG, almost certainly at Soviet insistence.[67] Then in October, shortly after Bonn's vote for the deployment of the intermediate-range nuclear forces (INF) missiles in the FRG, Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko attended the thirty-fifth anniversary celebration of the GDR. In a move obviously designed to demonstrate bloc unity, Gromyko marked the occasion by unveiling a joint GDR-Soviet program for cooperation in science, technology and production, and a joint communique calling for "more effective foreign policy 'coordination' between the two states."[68] Immediately, SED spokespersons began using harsher language toward the FRG, although traces of the "disalignment" between the GDR and USSR over the deterioration of East-West relations persisted.[69] In November 1983, for example, Honecker

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[66]Adomeit, 25-27.

[67]The ostensible reason for this cancellation was the criticisms of the GDR made by leading FRG leaders such as CDU Parliamentary Floor Leader Alfred Dregger, who noted that the FRG's future did not depend on Honecker's visit.

[68]Croan, "The Politics of Division," 371.

[69]An example of this "disalignment" was support printed in Neues Deutschland for "yet another Hungarian statement in defense of the sovereignty of the smaller socialist countries and their right to pursue their own special

lamented in Neues Deutschland the "unavoidable" decision to counter-deploy Soviet missiles in the GDR and Czechoslovakia, saying that it "did not evoke jubilation in our country."[70] In fact, he later called the counter-missiles the "Devil's tool."[71] This showed a position that was "clearly at odds with the Soviet hard-line position."[72]

Analysts interpreted the effect of this divergence of paths differently. Adomeit felt that Honecker's actions in 1984 showed a "willingness to cooperate" and follow the USSR's leadership, not a simple yielding to Soviet pressure to cut its links with the FRG.[73] In defense of Adomeit's position, the GDR certainly continued overt acts of "symbolic fraternal solidarity" throughout 1984, including diplomatic visits by high-ranking leaders and support for the Olympic boycott.[74]

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foreign policy interests." Croan, "The Politics of Division," 371-72.

[70]There were also public protests in both the GDR and Czechoslovakia regarding the Soviet countermissiles. Pick, 142.

[71]McAdams, "The New Logic," 50.

[72]Karin L. Johnston, "A Break With the Past? The Changing Nature of East German Foreign Policy," in Germany through American Eyes: Foreign Policy and Domestic Issues, ed. Gale A. Mattox and John H. Vaughan, Jr. (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1989), 38.

[73]See Adomeit, 26.

[74]Asmus, "Dialectics of Detente," 749.

On the other hand, Croan wrote that Moscow had, predictably, forced the GDR into compliance over the INF issue after Honecker's decision to venture "out on his own." According to Croan, Honecker had been encouraged in his actions by his "uncontested personal control of the GDR domestic power structure" and growing personal popularity in the GDR, his belief that he had important backing in CPSU, and the removal of the hard-line Soviet Ambassador to the GDR, Piotr Abrasimov, in June 1983, which increased the SED's autonomy in foreign relations.[75]

Kiep felt that Moscow had granted the GDR some freedom of movement in inter-German relations because it wanted to preserve domestic stability in the GDR. But he pointed to Moscow's series of sharp attacks in response to an FRG loan to the GDR, and the postponement of Honecker's visit to Bonn, as signs that the USSR would not accept inter-German relations independent of the Soviet Union. Despite this, however, Kiep felt that the two Germanys had formed a type of "security partnership" within the existing bloc

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[75]Croan, "The Politics of Division," 372. Croan concluded that although the USSR certainly possessed the power to oust Honecker over his departure from Soviet policy, it determined that the potential cost of "unhinging the entire East German system" was too great, under the circumstances.

Abrasimov was a major actor in the links between the CPSU and SED. he served as ambassador to the GDR from 1962-1971 and again from 1975-1983. In this position, he supervised the day-to-day operations of Soviet control over the GDR. Stent, 43.

structures, indicated by Helmut Kohl and Honecker's agreement during a meeting in Moscow to attend Andropov's funeral that future inter-German relations were critical to safeguarding peace. Meanwhile, the SED attempted to distance itself from the radical elements within the FRG which might cause a strain between the two Germanys. Kiep concluded that East Germany was trying to pursue an independent foreign policy and present itself as a "bulwark of peace and socialism" in Europe, and still remain Moscow's "reliable ally."[76]

According to Karin L. Johnston, Honecker's response to the new Soviet policy reflected the "recent changes in foreign policy activities and style of the GDR" which started in the early 1970s but were most evident in the 1980s. She noted a new self-confidence in the SED and a willingness to express its national interest in international relations, in part due to the new CPSU General Secretary, Yuri Andropov, who allowed Honecker more flexibility in policy formation.[77] Overall, Johnston felt that the missile dispute in 1983-84 "reflected the readiness

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[76]Kiep, 323-25.

[77]Honecker and Andropov, who succeeded Brezhnev in 1982, apparently enjoyed a friendly relationship. According to Johnston, Andropov gave Honecker more latitude in the GDR because he sought to alleviate pressure on the USSR and because he felt that a more confident and autonomous GDR posed no risk to Soviet security. Johnston, 38.

of the SED leadership to stand up to a Soviet policy decision they judged detrimental to the GDR's national interests." And despite the postponement of his visit to Bonn, Honecker salvaged some of the room for maneuver, although his limitations were "illustrated by a number of unsuccessful attempts to broaden its policy position." Johnston also conceded that the USSR would have been much more insistent if the issue at stake involved the existence of the WTO or the USSR's hegemony within the bloc.[78]

Taking a slightly different approach, McAdams agreed that the change in Soviet governments in the early 1980s affected the SED's policymaking. McAdams felt that Konstantin Chernenko, who followed Andropov, was less sympathetic to the GDR, and quickly showed his displeasure about the SED's role--indicating that bloc unity meant "unquestioned uniformity" on all basic points. Unlike Ulbricht during the conflict between 1970-71, however, Honecker had little trouble retaining his position in the GDR. If anything, it became stronger--and Honecker's position on detente also was preserved. Significantly, Honecker openly received a visiting FRG delegation for an exchange of views the day after he postponed his trip to Bonn. The difference, according to McAdams, was that Honecker did not challenge the USSR's hegemony in the bloc,

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[78]Johnston, 29-38.

just its position that agreement among socialist states was mandatory. He also noted Honecker's "appreciation" for the tacit rules of appropriate alliance conduct, officially treating the inter-German dialogue simply as a necessary complement to superpower politics and a tool to restrain "revanchism," and trying to demonstrate that his new trip to the FRG, planned for September 1984, would be positive for the socialist bloc.[79]

Asmus wrote that the split in 1984 indicated the most serious strains in Soviet-GDR ties in more than a decade, and showed the decline of Soviet authority within the bloc. According to Asmus, the two central issues were the "right of a fraternal communist party to develop its own views and national interests based on its historical experience"--which the USSR flatly rejected by April 1984--and the "appropriate path" of WTO foreign policy after INF deployment in western Europe. In general, the SED leadership worked to balance its strong interest in political dialogue with the West with the prerequisites of bloc solidarity. But the theoretical debate continued when

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[79]McAdams' views in this paragraph are found in "The New Logic," 50-52. McAdams makes an interesting comparison between Ulbricht's rift in 1970-71 and Honecker's in 1983-84. McAdams said the difference in the outcome resulted because of changes in Soviet leadership, the SED's ability in the 1980s to present more internal unity and rally eastern Europe and many Social Democrats in Europe and elsewhere to its position, and the growing mutual dependence between the GDR and the USSR.

an article published in the June 1984 Journal of the Institute for International Politics and Economics--the GDR's leading international affairs institute--concluded that the GDR's "peace policy" during the INF situation was more important than ever, differentiating between "imperialists" such as the U.S. and FRG, and stressing the positive effects of detente. This was a much different conclusion than Moscow had reached, and in July and August, a series of articles in Pravda attacked the rapidly-improving inter-German relations, dredging up old Honecker demands such as the recognition of GDR citizenship, which had lately been dropped or downplayed by the SED. This was followed by other "expressions of Soviet displeasure" regarding inter-German relations in the spring and summer of 1984, such as conducting East German military maneuvers without including the NPA.[80] The SED leadership reacted with relative defiance, refusing to publish the full texts of the Soviet message in either Neues Deutschland or the provincial GDR press, and reprinting articles from sympathetic Hungarian publications which supported Honecker. In August, Honecker "addressed Soviet sensitivities by openly talking about" the FRG's "revanchist" tendencies, but he "avoided directly accusing the Bonn government of

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[80]Hanhardt, "Prospects for Detente," 382.

revanchism."[81] Then at the fortieth anniversary of the Rumanian national holiday, where he was the only top-ranking WTO leader in attendance--interesting in light of the SED's past criticism of Romania's unorthodox foreign policy--Honecker repeated his call for dialogue with the FRG and a "coalition of reason," which some interpreted as an affront to Moscow.[82] Shortly after that, Honecker postponed his visit to the FRG for the third time. Finally in September, Honecker initiated a tactical retreat, and "fraternal harmony" seemed to reappear between the USSR and the GDR during the celebration of the GDR's thirty-fifth anniversary in October. Asmus concluded that Honecker's objective had been to achieve "Spielraum," or "room for maneuver" and to transform the GDR into a partner in a "broader process of European detente where East Berlin could further reestablish its own profile, maintaining, of course, that such a policy tended Soviet interests as well."[83]

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[81]Asmus, "The Dialectics of Detente," 762.

[82]According to Axen, the "coalition of reason" entailed a worldwide coalition of opponents of war, including communists, social democrats, pacifists and business representatives of the capitalist west. This policy was spelled out in the documents of the Ninth Plenary Meeting of the SED Central Committee. Axen, "German Democratic Republic," 18.

[83]Asmus, "The Dialectics of Detente," 743-45, 756-58, 761-63, 769. Asmus noted that "Spielraum" had first appeared in official GDR vocabulary in May 1982 (769-70).

While analysts such as Croan and Asmus never doubted the GDR's close political, economic and military bonds, or expected that Honecker would become, as Asmus said, "another [Josip Broz] Tito," they practically marvelled that Honecker came out of this challenge virtually unscathed.[84] In any case, by October 1984, the GDR and USSR had agreed upon a two-track policy toward the West: To continue to repel the western enemies of European security but reaffirm their readiness to conduct serious dialogue with those interested in a "healthy international situation."[85]

According to Frey, news of Chernenko's death in January 1985 was "received with relief all over eastern Europe," and most eastern leaders expected a reinvigorated leadership in the Kremlin to facilitate East-West detente.[86] The same day Chernenko died, Honecker praised Kohl's State of the Nation

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[84]Croan, "The Politics of Division," 372; Asmus, "The Dialectics of Detente," 764.

Asmus felt the discord between the USSR and GDR resulted in part from the disagreements among Soviet leaders and its weakened ability to manage the bloc. He also indicated the GDR's growing leverage in the bloc during the early 1980s, as Moscow's key economic partner in eastern Europe and its "increasingly vital political ally." According to Asmus, these two factors, plus his belief that he had some support in the CPSU--especially after the Polish leader and traditional Soviet ally Gierek fell--gave Honecker the confidence to act relatively independently during 1983 and 1984. Asmus, "The Dialectics of Detente," 768.

[85]McAdams, "The New Logic," 52.

[86]Frey, 140.

address--which Moscow had recently criticized--and made a joint statement with Kohl while in Moscow for the funeral, declaring hope for a new era in East-West relations and "normal and good relations" between the two Germanys.[87] Meanwhile, SED officials continued to stress the unity and cohesion of socialist community states, and on this fortieth anniversary of the Soviets' glorious victory over fascism and German "liberation," took the opportunity to praise the fraternal alliance with the CPSU and Soviet Union as the "foundation for strengthening socialism and peace."[88]

When Gorbachev came to power in the USSR as General Secretary of the CPSU in March, Honecker perhaps hoped for a more relaxed approach to East-West relations, but Gorbachev's position seemed at first to resemble that of his immediate predecessors. In May, the GDR and USSR issued a joint statement resolutely rejecting the German Question and castigating the FRG, an apparent contradiction of the communique issued two months earlier by Honecker and Kohl, indicating that Moscow "would determine the rules of the game."[89] According to Kusin, Gorbachev apparently decided that close inter-German relations would conflict with his

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[87]Vladimir V. Kusin, "Gorbachev and Eastern Europe," Problems of Communism (January-February 1986):47.

[88]See Axen, "German Democratic Republic," 15-16.

[89]Axen, "German Democratic Republic," 15-16.

own hard line on U.S. President Ronald Reagan's Strategic Defense Initiative (SDI) and his desire that the FRG appear "revanchist" during the anniversary of World War II; or perhaps he wanted the SED to steer clear of excessively close relations with the ruling CSU-CDU-Free Democratic Party (FDP) coalition in Bonn because it anticipated a SPD victory in the upcoming relations. Gorbachev offered Honecker instead an "alternative strategy" of redirecting the GDR's western policy toward countries other than the FRG and downplaying inter-German relations, while meanwhile cultivating the SPD--and Honecker appeared "to have accepted this scenario without demur." Shortly after that, another joint GDR-USSR communique stressed the similar objectives of the socialist community and the GDR's pledge to honor WTO obligations in the future.[90]

In May 1985, the SED tested the Soviets again, when Neues Deutschland began to refer to Soviet troops for the first time as the Group of Soviet forces in the "GDR," instead of the traditional "Germany." The commander in chief of the armed forces in the USSR demanded a retraction.[91]

The following month, two articles in Pravda argued that socialist countries must always subject their national

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[90]Axen, "German Democratic Republic," 47-48.

[91]Johnston, 40.

interests to Marxism-Leninism and proletarian internationalism, since foreign policy was identical on all basic international issues, reviving an ongoing debate on this issue.[92] Then, in an about-face, an article in the CPSU journal Kommunist in July stated that national interests among socialist countries did not need to be identical, and that more harm than good would come from ignoring those interests. Other articles argued that while specific national interests would not disappear overnight, their "fundamental" interests were still identical; and that small- and medium-sized states could play a balancing role in international affairs.

Late in the summer, the GDR began a series of leaks that essentially said that Honecker was just waiting for Moscow's approval for a Bonn visit; and more importantly, the GDR joined with Hungary to postulate three tenets of demeanor in the bloc and of the policy toward the West. First, both nations apparently asked Gorbachev for flexibility and readiness to compromise with the U.S. Second, they induced Moscow to accept the idea that small- and medium-sized states on both sides had a role to play in influencing the superpowers' behavior. Third, they argued for an "undogmatic interpretation of internationalism that

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[92]Kusin, 43.

would allow for the acceptance of national peculiarities and interests."[93]

The SED continued its balancing act through most of the rest of 1985, with varying degrees of success. One example of this was the SED's decision to block a bridge between West Berlin and Potsdam after West Berlin refused to pay for certain necessary repairs to the bridge. The Soviet government, which earlier had agreed to help arbitrate the conflict, now wasted no time in "quashing action impacting on its political-military status in the GDR and in Germany as a whole."[94]

Then, in speeches in late 1985 after the November summit in Geneva between Reagan and Gorbachev, the Soviet leader indicated a new flexibility. He highlighted the cooperative spirit among WTO members, while the GDR--along with Hungary and even Czechoslovakia--also pressed for damage limitation and the resumption of detente. In another sign that things were changing, the SED's Central Committee convened to hear SED Politburo member Werner Jarowinsky defend inter-German efforts to use the GDR's weight in the bloc system to help consolidate the Geneva agreements. Also at the meeting, the Central Committee removed Politburo member Konrad Naumann, a "hard-liner known for his

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[93]Kusin, 48.

[94]Johnston, 41.

reservations concerning inter-German rapprochement." Meanwhile, the GDR and Czechoslovakia signed a communique indicating their willingness to "keep identifying new forms of cooperation with the countries of Western Europe," based on equality and mutual advantage, as stipulated in the Helsinki Final Act [in 1975]."[95]

Kusin concluded that Gorbachev was combining firmness with understanding, affirming

> Soviet primacy in coordinating the East-West relationship, but conceding that national peculiarities and interests do not have to be trampled underfoot but could be amicably dovetailed in order to produce internationalist ideological satisfaction.

Kusin believed this "understanding" applied specifically to the GDR: On one hand, the GDR was allowed more room than in the past because of its maturity and economic importance to the USSR; on the other hand, Gorbachev was not likely to "surrender suzerainty where it [mattered] most." The Soviet chastisements for the GDR's past foreign policy transgressions, however, were likely to be balanced with good marks for its useful domestic policies. Meanwhile, the GDR appeared to Kusin to be "openly hopeful" that Gorbachev would end the confusion that "overshadowed" USSR-GDR relations during 1984.[96]

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[95]Kusin, 45.

[96]Kusin, 49, 53.

By the late 1980s, many analysts had noted that Gorbachev was allowing Honecker more room to pursue relations with Bonn.[97] Gradually, Gorbachev's reforms produced renewed detente after the struggles of the late '70s and early '80s. Winrow credited Honecker with helping to convince Gorbachev that inter-German contacts furthered the GDR's and USSR's interests; and also argued that the GDR had acquired "considerable leeway" in both external and internal policy in the 1980s.[98] While McAdams agreed in 1986 that relations between the USSR and GDR had "changed appreciably" from the days when the GDR was Moscow's "most subservient ally," he cautioned observers about interpreting Honecker's self-confidence about the GDR's achievements as "an implicit challenge" to Gorbachev.[99]

While Honecker enthusiastically supported Gorbachev's efforts toward detente, he "went out of his way," as one source put it, to stress that the GDR would not support glasnost or economic reform.[100] In fact, as Gorbachev became more relaxed in eastern Europe, the SED became more assertive--making it clear that it would not adopt changes involving the weakening of central planning and dismissing

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[97]See Larrabee, 58.

[98]Winrow, 31.

[99]McAdams, "Inter-German Detente," 148-49.

[100]Larrabee, 50.

calls for greater democracy in trade unions or parliamentary bodies. When Gorbachev attended the Eleventh SED Congress in April 1986, Honecker claimed satisfaction with socialist progress in the GDR--saying it had already achieved the economic "intensification" sought by the Soviets--and even offered to help the Soviets improve their economy.

Speculation about the SED's obeisance continued when in May 1986, the GDR decided to initiate new pass requirements for diplomats traveling between East and West Berlin, which was really a Four-Power dispute. The USSR never publicly defended the GDR's position and the episode ended with a loss of face for the GDR. Observers wondered whether the SED initiated the plan independently or acted on Moscow's directive, although Johnston concluded it was unlikely that the GDR acted without the USSR's prior knowledge because of the Soviets' position in the Four-Power arrangement in Berlin.[101]

Between 1987-89, the disputes between Moscow and East Berlin over Moscow's policy shift grew steadily, although McAdams pointed out it was not a case of being "simply for" or "simply against" the reforms, since the SED praised Gorbachev for certain things--such as regularly consulting his allies on crucial bloc matters and his calls for honesty.[102] In fact, sections of the SED apparently

[101]Johnston, 42.

supported Gorbachev, but the SED's debate on the issue of his reforms was not public, and his supporters were not numerous enough or high enough to comprise an influential minority.[103]

In any case, the first public criticism of Gorbachev's reforms came in early April 1987, when Kurt Hager asked rhetorically in an interview in the FRG's Stern that, "If your neighbor re-wallpapered his apartment, would you feel obliged to do the same?"[104] Despite reservations on either side, however, Childs wrote in 1987 that GDR-USSR relations were formally good, and the SED continued to support Soviet foreign and defense policy enthusiastically--perhaps hoping Gorbachev would leave the GDR alone as long as it remained useful to the USSR in its external relations, fulfilled its economic obligations and did not embarrass the Soviets in their relations with the FRG.[105] This was probably a fair gamble, since Gorbachev's concern for GDR stability would in

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[102]McAdams, "The New Logic," 59.

[103]Ernest D. Plock, East German-West German Relations and the Fall of the GDR (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press), 137. Reformers within the SED leadership included Hans Modrow, who eventually became the last communist leader of the GDR, and Markus Wolf. Honecker was able to block the former from becoming a Politburo member in the late 1980s, and forced the latter to "retire" after an espionage scandal in 1987. Plock, 142.

[104]Quoted in Plock, 147.

[105]Childs, "'Glasnost' and Globetrotting," 178.

all likelihood prevent him from exerting a lot of pressure on the SED to embrace economic and political reform.[106]

Meanwhile, it became clear that the Kremlin had seriously modified its thinking on the German Question, to the SED leadership's frustration. For example, Nicolae Portugalov, a CPSU Central Committee expert on Germany, commented in Moscow News that despite the existence of two German states, "the people of the GDR are still German and belong to the same nation [as the citizens of the Federal Republic]."[107] Not long after that, another Soviet expert on Germany, Vyacheslav Dashichev, noted that the GDR had been outpaced by the FRG and that the German Question--a "relic of the Cold War"--was becoming more complicated and urgent. The SED leadership angrily banned Dashichev from traveling to the GDR.

The next blow to Honecker came in June 1988, when Kohl visited Moscow to promote cooperation and "good neighborly relations." The result was a positive impression that the USSR and FRG could cooperate; and evidence showed that the Soviets' interest in dialogue with West Germany remained strong, despite INF deployment and despite Soviet propaganda

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[106]See Winrow, 32.

[107]Jeffrey Gedmin, The Hidden Hand: Gorbachev and the Collapse of East Germany (Washington D.C.: American Enterprise Institute Press, 1992), 45. The following information in this section is taken from Gedmin's detailed account of the final months of the Honecker regime (45-105).

about German "revanchism." While Kohl was in Moscow, Gorbachev expressly referred to "Germans" in the GDR and FRG, not the standard "GDR- and FRG-citizens."

Stalwart government officials in the GDR in late 1988 and 1989 continued to express open dismay about Gorbachev's reforms and to emphasize the importance of Marxist-Leninist ideology. Honecker stated that the Berlin Wall would still be in place in "50 or 100 years." Late in 1988, the GDR for the first time banned outright a Soviet publication, Sputnik, for its "historically false analysis," and withdrew five Soviet films from East German theaters. In November, Honecker staged a summit with another Gorbachev nemesis, Ceausescu, in East Berlin. And on Worker's Day on May 1, 1989, Neues Deutschland published 49 political slogans without even mentioning the USSR. Meanwhile, anti-government marches and demonstrations among GDR citizens became a regular activity.

Interestingly, however, the SED's frustration with Gorbachev in 1988-89 did not prevent Party leaders from maintaining the SED's historical allegiance to the USSR. In an article by Honecker published in February 1989, he reiterated the "common views" shared by the USSR and GDR on the basic questions of foreign policy and stated that the rumored wedge between the two nations was an "illusion," and the "chatter of raving Philistines." He commended the

Soviets for emerging mightier during previous trials, and praised the process of restructuring in the Soviet Union as "a great moment in strengthening world socialism and securing peace." He was careful to distinguish, however, between "diverse" ways of building the socialist state and emphasized the importance of "comradely exchanges of opinion and experience." Perhaps in an effort to defuse the need for Soviet-like reforms in the GDR and demonstrate the GDR's independence from Moscow, Honecker wrote that "We have never regarded imitation as a substitute for our own highly necessary theoretical thinking and practical action."[108]

In the summer of 1989, Hungary created an escape route for East German citizens by opening its borders, resulting in an attempted exodus from the GDR. In June, the same month that SED member Egon Krenz gave unqualified support of the Beijing regime following the massacre at Tienanmen Square, Gorbachev travelled to the FRG, where he was greeted enthusiastically as a reformer. In Bonn, Gorbachev revealed his program for a "Common European Home," which would reduce the USSR's eastern burdens and risks while increasing its access to western capital and technology, and pave the way for his "perestroika," or restructuring. During the visit, the Soviet leader signed the USSR's first friendship treaty

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[108]See Erich Honecker, "Unity and Diversity," World Marxist Review 32 (February 1989):3-8.

with a western nation, and further strengthened ties by including provisions to increase and protect German economic investment in the USSR. But although Gorbachev allegedly promised that Honecker would start to "move" soon, the leaders continued to sidestep the issue of German reunification; moreover, according to the evidence, Gorbachev did not openly demand reform from the SED.

The GDR regime continued to hold its course throughout the summer, by then alienated from most of its allies. When the seven WTO members met in Bucharest in July, the only delegates to receive the East Germans warmly were the Rumanians.[109] The SED blithely celebrated the twenty-eighth anniversary of the Berlin Wall on August 13, honoring its contribution to peaceful coexistence.

Gedmin wrote that in spite of everything, Gorbachev never gave up on his German socialist ally; for example, Portugalov continued to stress the reality of two German states--even in December 1989, after the Honecker government had fallen. In October 1989, Gorbachev showed support for Honecker's government by attending the nation's fortieth anniversary celebration, but he continued to preach reform, and made it clear that he would not order Soviet troops to rescue Honecker's increasingly shaky regime. Meanwhile,

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[109]This was according to Krenz's memoirs. The 77-year-old Honecker had to leave the meeting early because of gallstones. He had surgery on August 18.

large demonstrations continued in East German cities, as citizens pressed to leave through Hungary, despite the SED's frantic insistence that Hungary honor its WTO obligations and stop GDR citizens from leaving. By this time, the resistant Honecker also was struggling with reform-minded officials within the party leadership for control of the government.

On October 11, the SED Politburo belatedly acknowledged the need for dialogue with the population; and within one week, Honecker resigned. Both the Soviets and East Germans denied that Moscow played an "explicit role" in Honecker's resignation.[110] His successor, Egon Krenz, reluctantly promised discussion with the opposition, but the popular demonstrations gained momentum. On November 9, the government lifted all travel restrictions to the West and the following day, began to dismantle the Berlin Wall, 38 years after its creation.

Relations with the Socialist Nations

Under the new regime, the GDR focused less on the "self-assertion" of the late Ulbricht period, and more on political, economic and social cooperation among bloc members, including the coordination of WTO foreign policies, as a means to preserve its integrity in light of the

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[110]Gedmin, 105.

continuing German Question.[111] To that end, the GDR signed a series of treaties of friendship, cooperation, and mutual assistance in 1977, which officially governed its relations with Bulgaria, Hungary, Czechoslovakia, and Poland. Each contained an article upholding the inviolability of post-war European frontiers--including the inter-German border--as well as a mutual commitment to military assistance in event of an attack and an article defining the position of West Berlin.

By the end of Honecker's first decade, Bowers concluded that the GDR was binding itself ever closer to the WTO countries, by "placing its concept of nation under the rubric of proletarian internationalism."[112] The SED in the 1970s promoted bloc integration through military and economic interdependence and the encouragement of tourism. The advantage for the SED was that it widened the gulf between the FRG and GDR; the disadvantage was that it limited the SED's freedom of movement and its independence in foreign affairs, since domestic compatibility with the socialist states would likely be accompanied by common foreign policy.[113]

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[111]Bowers, "Contrast and Continuity," 325-27; Croan, The Soviet Connection, 13.

[112]Bowers, "East German National Consciousness," 178.

[113]Bowers, "East German National Consciousness," 178.

But despite this attention to bloc unity, relations with the GDR's eastern allies seemed to remain tense during the Honecker period, as the SED tried to strengthen its own position in relation to the other socialist nations.[114] The strain was exacerbated by the GDR's relatively greater economic achievements and the SED's concentration on the "deviations of its socialist brethren."

In the summer of 1980, widespread strikes broke out in neighboring Poland, starting a crisis which resulted in the establishment of martial law and the resignation of Polish party chief Edward Gierek, followed by revelations from the west about corruption in his regime. The uprising caused concern among SED leaders, who felt that there could be "no middle road between socialism and capitalism in Poland or any other socialist state."[115]

Interestingly, however, the GDR media totally ignored strike activities for nearly two months. The SED faced several serious concerns. First, it would have to combat information coming from the western media that would be

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[114]Ludz, Two Germanys, 16-17.

[115]Waldman, 281.

sympathetic to the Polish strikers. Second, according to its own orthodox ideology, there was no such thing as a strike action in a Marxist-Leninist country. Third, the SED worried about possible East German military intervention to quell the disturbance, especially considering the residual resentments against the Germans in Poland after World War II. Nonetheless, Honecker was apparently the first leader of a WTO nation to threaten intervention, even raising the possibility of a general European war. In the ensuing months, however, his tone mellowed and he began to reflect more closely the Soviet line.[116]

The first analysis in the GDR media was reprinted from the Soviet news agency Tass on August 27, accusing foreign interventionists of stirring up trouble in Poland. The SED called the striking Polish workers' demands for independent unions "anti-socialist" and "counter-revolutionary." The NPA participated along with Soviet and Czech troops in military maneuvers around Poland in September 1980 and again in March and April 1981.

While the SED worried about the situation in Poland, however, most observers felt that the situation would not spread to the GDR, mainly because of the inherent differences between the two states. Waldman, for example, said that the SED leadership was much better equipped to

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[116]Waldman, 282.

protect its vested interests and perpetuate its system.[117] Hanhardt noted that the GDR did not have the potential for an institutional challenge comparable to that of the Catholic Church in Poland; plus, feelings of cultural superiority and the relatively high standard of living in the GDR "immunized" its citizens from the "Polish disease." Moreover, according to Hanhardt, the Polish events "provided the GDR leadership with an opportunity to reassert their position in the Soviet bloc at the side of the Soviet Union," and at the same time, the SED used the crisis to tighten internal control.[118] In addition to the church's relative lack of influence, Childs noted a better economic situation in the GDR, ethnic and national differences between Poland and the GDR, a strong and centralized East German secret police, and the loss of many potential opposition cadres through the FRG.[119]

Meanwhile, the evolution in the GDR's attitude toward inter-German detente during the late '70s and early '80s evoked mixed reactions in the bloc. Some members expressed

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[117]Waldman, 283-84. See also Sodaro, "External Influences," 99.

[118]Hanhardt, "Germanys and the Superpowers," 179.

[119]David Childs, ed., East Germany in Comparative Perspective (London: Routledge, 1989), 11. Stent made an interesting comparison of Honecker's role in supporting the Soviet line toward Poland in 1980-81 with Ulbricht's support during the 1968 Czech invasion. See Stent, 56.

opposition to the GDR's independent national interests and its effect on foreign policy, especially during the Soviet-GDR rift over the INF deployment.[120] Prague and Warsaw in particular tried to develop a "counter diplomacy" to meet the FRG's Ostpolitik and prevent inter-German relations from becoming "excessive," according to Ludz.[121]

In fact, McAdams noted that the Soviet-GDR dispute, "for want of any other public forum," was "carried out in a curious exchange between . . . Czechoslovakia and Hungary."[122] The Czech communist party newspaper Rude Pravo, for example, attacked "some brother parties" for their separatist tendencies in trying to gain unilateral financial advantages in the west and demonstrate an "independent foreign policy course that diverges from the line agreed upon in the community."[123] The Polish media also stepped up their campaign against the FRG's revanchism and criticized the closeness of inter-German relations.[124] On the other hand, the Hungarian Central Committee Secretary Matyas Szuros said in an interview with Neues Deutschland that the

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[120]Kiep, 323.

[121]Ludz, Two Germanys, 17-18.

[122]McAdams, Germany Divided, 161. Plock referred to it as the "newspaper skirmish" (146).

[123]Kiep, 323.

[124]Pick, 142.

inter-German relations showed how historical ties could benefit both the common aims of socialist countries and national interests.[125] Meanwhile, Bulgaria--in the past considered one of Moscow's staunchest supporters--seemed ambivalent.[126] Finally, in late April 1984, WTO foreign ministers met in Budapest, and officially compromised between the more confrontational Soviet position and its critics, decrying the perilous conditions created in the west but confirming the need for renewed detente.[127]

In the aftermath of the break with Moscow in 1984, the GDR began to refer to the formerly dangerous bourgeois concept of pluralism within the bloc. According to Asmus, this underlined "the incremental changes that [had] taken place in the perceptions of the East German elite as a result of its experience with detente."[128] Asmus also noted that 1984 was the first year that WTO differences over security were publicly aired and prominently displayed; and despite the postponement of Honecker's and Zhikov's visit to Bonn in 1984, observers saw a possible shift in Moscow's relations with the GDR and other bloc members.

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[125]Kiep, 323.

[126]Asmus, "Dialectics of Detente," 761.

[127]McAdams, "The New Logic," 51.

[128]Asmus, "Dialectics of Detente," 773.

Bender suggested that while eastern Europeans' attempts to get out from under Moscow's direct and indirect hegemony through revolution had failed, all six non-Soviet members had continued since the late 1950s to move toward more and more autonomy; and that it was no longer conceivable by the mid-'80s that the "satellite states" be incorporated into the USSR as westerners had predicted in the 1940s.[129]

Pick attributed the quest for more autonomy in the 1980s by some WTO members--including Romania, Hungary, and the GDR--to the indecisive and uncertain Soviet leadership, with the "ailing Andropov and mortally sick Chernenko." This was complicated by worsening superpower relations, the failure of the Soviet political, social, and economic models, internal dissent and nationalism. Pick stated in 1985 that Czechoslovakia was the only eastern European country which had "given no indication of independent thinking about foreign policy issues." Pick also noted that Gorbachev in 1985 was trying to get a handle on eastern Europe and exert a "more rigid system and more centralised ideological control."[130] For example, a Pravda article on June 21 said that there was no truth to the idea that small (socialist) nations could help mediate between superpowers,

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[129]Peter Bender, "The Superpower Squeeze," Foreign Policy 65 (Winter 1986-87):104.

[130]Pick, 143.

since their foreign policy interests were identical to the that of the Soviets.

Outside the bloc, GDR relations tended to follow more closely with Moscow's. In a trend continuing from the Ulbricht era, political relations with China were dominated by the difficult Sino-Soviet relationship; and the GDR enthusiastically condemned the PRC and Maoism in sympathy with the Soviet position. For example, Hanisch and Busse compared the PRC's resistance to peaceful coexistence with that of the "reactionary imperialists," and Axen wrote that the GDR supported the USSR's efforts to normalize relations with the PRC, while rejecting the Chinese leaders' hegemonistic great-power policy "which posed a direct threat to world peace."[131]

Trade between the GDR and the Chinese rose steadily during the 1970s, however, indicating that the SED did not "necessarily let bitter political controversy stand in the way of trade."[132] At the Fifth Meeting of the Central Committee of the SED in December 1987, a Politburo report extended numerous contacts to the Chinese, including an

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[131]Hanisch and Busse, 27; Axen, "German Democratic Republic," 12.

[132]Childs, The GDR, 303.

exchange of delegations and experiences and a consultation mechanism on foreign policy issues.[133]

Also in December 1987, the GDR finally agreed to exchange ambassadors with Albania and to "reevaluate" diplomatic relations with that nation.[134]

Relations with the FRG

The improvement in inter-German relations during the Honecker period was, according to one source, one of the "few abiding examples" of detente in the late 1970s and early 1980s.[135] Detente, according to this interpretation, was an attempt to preserve the remainder of national togetherness which neither Germany could dispel, "by means of a policy of respect for given political realities."[136]

Certainly it complicated inter-German relations. According to Bowers, the inter-German detente initially made the GDR's position uncomfortable, since confrontation with

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[133]Thomaneck and Mellis, 292.

[134]Thomaneck and Mellis, 296.

[135]A. James McAdams, "Surviving the Missiles: The GDR and the Future of Inter-German Relations," Orbis (Summer 1983):343. The FRG maintained the principles of Ostpolitik in the 1970s and '80s, although the name was changed to Deutschlandpolitik in the early 1980s with the new CDU-CSU-FDP coalition, to distinguish it from the SPD-FDP coalition's program.

[136]Kurt Sontheimer and Wilhelm Bleek, The Government and Politics of East Germany, translated to English by Ursula Price (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1975), 184, 188-90.

the west had always served a unifying purpose and helped to stabilize the regime.[137] Because of detente's inherent treat to the SED, the Honecker government predictably began to look for ways to "survive" the change, such as opting for tighter integration with the Soviet Union.[138] And although Honecker placed less rhetorical emphasis than Ulbricht on the FRG and West Berlin as an "enemy," he continued to criticize the West German policy. Despite "subsequent positive developments," some analysts suggested that initially, Honecker's similarities with his predecessor on the FRG issue outnumbered the differences.[139] In the early 1970s, the official SED position was that the FRG "was continuing to adhere to the sole representation doctrine and

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[137]Bowers, "Contrast and Continuity," 328-29.

[138]Peter Ludz pointed out in the early 1970s that the tighter bonds with the USSR in light of detente gave the GDR less room for maneuver in foreign policy. Quoted in Croan, The Soviet Connection, 38.

[139]See Bowers, "Contrast and Continuity." Bowers felt that overall, the GDR record was one of "positive achievement" in inter-German relations, and Honecker continued to insist on the feasibility of complete normalization of relations between West Berlin and the GDR. Bowers, 322.

In 1971, Winzer wrote an article denying the very possibility of "inter-German" relations, since the two social systems were incompatible--and stressed that relations between the FRG and GDR were not moving toward rapprochement, but a "logical process of dissociation." Otto Winzer, "Strengthen International Position of the GDR--A Goal in Battle for Peace and Socialism," World Marxist Review 14 (August 1971):102-3.

engaging in an ideological crusade" against the GDR.[140] Furthermore, the GDR retained its emphasis on the military threat posed by FRG and NATO, using it as a justification for military preparedness in the east.[141]

In a development that probably surprised the SED leadership, however, the warmer inter-German relations ultimately increased the GDR's internal stabilization by underscoring its permanence and viability as a sovereign international actor, providing economic benefits from transit fees and increased tourism, and enabling the SED to adopt a comparatively aggressive role toward the FRG. As time progressed, the GDR turned into a frequent advocate of detente, sometimes arguing that inter-German interests "should be separated from Great Power squabbles."[142] In a 1972 speech, Honecker said that despite the FRG's aggressive character, he "was also taking into account, especially from the point of view of foreign policy . . . the positive aspect of the Brandt government;" and in 1973, Honecker said

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[140]Bowers, "Contrast and Continuity," 312.

[141]See for example, Erich Honecker "A Period of Great Achievement," World Marxist Review 22 (October 1979):7. Honecker maintained that a third world war was still conceivable unless the arms race--waged by the imperialist nations--was curtailed; hence, the WTO must maintain defense capabilities on a necessary level.

[142]McAdams, "Surviving the Missiles," 347-50; McAdams, "The New Logic," 49.

he saw a transition in the direction of detente.[143] By the time his memoirs were published in the early 1980s, Honecker claimed that he had "always endeavored to keep things moving in a forward direction" in the development of inter-German relations.[144]

The best evidence of this change in the GDR's attitude may have been the many proposals and negotiations in which both the SED and CPSU agreed that the SED had played a "constructive role," such as the 1971 Quadripartite Agreement on Berlin and two accompanying agreements on transit traffic to West Berlin.[145] Honecker worked around the FRG's withholding of diplomatic recognition--deemed as a pre-condition for such agreements during the Ulbricht era--by arguing that the FRG had granted de facto recognition by signing agreements with the GDR. Even western observers such as Livingston interpreted the Quadripartite agreement--which referred to the GDR under its formal name--as a demonstration of the GDR's permanency, and said that despite

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[143]In Bowers, "Contrast and Continuity," 313; Birnbaum, 62-63.

[144]Honecker, From My Life, 404-5.

[145]Bowers, "Contrast and Continuity," 313. And according to Ludz, the evidence indicated that the USSR had sought and obtained the SED's compliance on the Quadripartite Agreement, since the GDR technically controlled the rights over access routes to Berlin. Ludz, "Continuity and Change," 60.

the GDR's continued vulnerability, it had become a "full-fledged actor in the politics of European security."[146]

On June 21, 1973, the Basic Treaty between the FRG and GDR became effective. The treaty was followed by a flurry of inter-German exchanges, including talks on a public health agreement, the establishment of permanent missions in East Berlin and Bonn in May 1974, territorial exchanges in 1972 and 1974, the establishment of a boundary commission in 1973 to regulate problems connected with the border, the GDR-FRG Frontier Agreements of September 1973, and a variety of agreements on postal services, telecommunications, cultural exchanges, judicial assistance and West Berlin. In addition, Honecker agreed to meet with the chairmen of the SPD and FDP in 1973, and in 1974 agreed to allow the FRG to help restore churches in the GDR. Meanwhile, the prospect for better economic relations also improved in the early 1970s, as the GDR increased its contacts with the FRG and

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[146]Livingston, 297. The governing Basic Act of the FRG included West Berlin as a FRG Land, unlike the other three western allies. In the Quadripartite Agreement, West Berlin was an "independent political unit" but the USSR acknowledged the reality of the legal, administrative, economic and financial links between West Berlin and the FRG. By the mid-'70s, the GDR had more or less adopted the Soviet view. Ludz, Two Germanys, 40. Despite the relative stability of the Berlin situation after the agreement, however, conflicts remained throughout the Honecker era between West Berlin, the FRG and the GDR.

West Berlin--although the SED tempered this with warnings about interdependence with "imperialist states."[147]

Most analysts agreed that the Basic Treaty was a compromise.[148] Ernest D. Plock contented that it fell short of providing a blueprint for inter-German relations and was applied only selectively, but did result in a "talking partnership" between the GDR and FRG and the achievement of agreements in areas not regulated before, such as environmental protection and the exchange of journalists.[149] McAdams noted that both the Basic Treaty and the earlier Quadripartite Agreement primarily benefited the FRG (which did not have to establish a full-fledged embassy), denied the GDR's claims to full sovereignty in Berlin and its

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[147]The GDR interpreted the Basic Treaty as the FRG's recognition of two Germanys, although Bonn continued its policy of two German states in one German nation and Brezhnev would not commit to the SED's interpretation. Marsh, 100; Hanisch, "The GDR and Its International Relations," 635, 645; Birnbaum, 61. Also, the GDR frequently made public references to the director of its permanent mission as "ambassador," despite the agreed-upon wording otherwise. Plock, 20.

For an interesting account of the activity between the FRG and GDR in the aftermath of the Basic Treaty, see Plock's chapter "Implementing the Basic Treaty," in The Basic Treaty and the Evolution of East-West German Relations (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1986), 89-165.

[148]See for example Siegreid Kupper, "Political Relations with the FRG," in GDR Foreign Policy, ed. Eberhard Schulz, 261-321 (Armonk, New York: M. E. Sharpe Inc., 1982); N. Edwina Moreton, East German and the Warsaw Alliance: The Politics of Detente (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1978), 210.

[149]Plock, The Basic Treaty, 146.

"ability to interfere with transit routes into West Berlin" (a favorite tactic of Ulbricht's), and expanded the FRG's contracts with the GDR. The real advantage for the GDR, on the other hand, was that the treaties broke the "logjam" preventing formal recognition outside the communist world and provided "countless" economic benefits; hence, on balance, the SED appeared to view the agreements as a "mixed blessing," according to McAdams.[150] Other observers such as Winrow inferred that the GDR only accepted the treaties because it had no other choice.[151]

Despite the increase in inter-German relations in the early '70s, however, confrontation continued over issues such as the FRG's alleged abuse of transit routes to West Berlin, currency violations by western visitors (e.g., the illegal exchange of GDR currency in the FRG and West Berlin), the question of consular representation for Germans abroad, the FRG's alleged intention to treat West Berlin as one of its Lander, and the problem of waste water disposal.[152] And while the SED leadership worked to

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[150]McAdams, "Inter-German Detente," 141; McAdams, "Surviving the Missiles," 345. As time went on and the fruits of detente became apparent, the SED regularly claimed credit for these important agreements which were, with the CPSU, a result of GDR initiatives and unswerving effort. See for example "World-Wide Recognition," 648; Erich Honecker, The German Democratic Republic: Pillar of Peace and Socialism (New York: International Publishers, 1979), 76.

[151]Winrow, 22.

capitalize on the benefits of inter-German detente, it also tried to guard itself against any undesirable consequences by keeping a wedge between East and West Germany. For example, in November 1973 the SED doubled the minimum amount of money that visitors must exchange in the GDR, from 10 marks per day to 20 marks per day for overnight stays, and from 5 marks per day to 10 marks per day for one-day visits to East Berlin. Since the Soviets made no attempt to back the GDR on this policy, the SED responded to western pressure in October 1984 by lowering the minimum to a compromise position of 13 marks and 6.5 marks for overnight stays and one-day visits, respectively. According to Bowers, this was done because of Soviet pressure to prove the GDR's goodwill toward the west after the exposure of its espionage activities in the FRG during the Gunter Guillaume affair.[153]

The best-known attempt to fend off unwanted western influence, however, was the SED's Abgrenzung--or "delimitation"--policy to differentiate the two Germanys and to "insulate the East German population from the potentially

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[152]Bowers, "Contrast and Continuity," 318-22.

[153]Bowers, "Contrast and Continuity," 329. Brandt's political career was mortally wounded after it was discovered that Guillaume, his close personal aide, was an East German spy.

destabilizing effects of detente with West Germany."[154] Honecker announced the Abgrenzung policy in his first major speech at the Eighth SED Party Congress in June 1971, saying that socioeconomic differences and contradictions in the GDR and FRG had led to an "inevitable process of 'delimitation.'"[155] This was followed by a massive propaganda campaign to show the irreconcilable differences between the FRG and GDR. Supported by the USSR, this policy was featured in the 1974 amendments to the GDR constitution, the Soviet-GDR Friendship Treaty of 1975 and the new SED Party Program adopted in 1976.[156] In the latter document, the SED stated that it was in favor of developing relations with the FRG based on the principle of peaceful coexistence and the rules of international law, but claimed that only

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[154]Stent, 50.

[155]Asmus, "The GDR and the German Nation," 408. The concept of Abgrenzung had been implicit in writings on national class struggle since the early 1960s, but while Ulbricht espoused the term as an ideological concept, he did not draw relevant policy conclusions, so the political implications were only pursued after May 1971. Moreton, 213. Some FRG newspapers critically referred to it as the "de-Germanizing" of the GDR. Moreton, 409-10.

According to Bowers, there were three parts to Abgrenzung: creating a radically different society and socialist national culture in the GDR than the FRG; waging an intense ideological struggle based on the idea that the west was heightening its ideological attack on the east through means such as western music; and securing the GDR frontier with West German and West Berlin. Bowers, "East German National Consciousness," 152-54.

[156]Croan, "The Politics of Division," 370.

mutual recognition would be conducive to the further normalization of relations.[157] At the same time, Honecker strove to raise the standard of living in the GDR in order to defuse some of the attraction of the FRG for East German citizens; but ironically, as Croan pointed out, this goal depended on "a modicum of good relations" with the FRG, which was becoming an "increasingly indispensable source of economic support" for the GDR.[158]

The SED leadership's position on detente as it developed during the 1970s was particularly interesting in light of changes in the USSR. Stent noted that by 1983, the Soviet policy in Germany had come full circle--and after its aggressive pursuit of relations with the FRG following Ulbricht's ouster, the Polish events in 1980-1981 reasserted the USSR's need to maintain stability in the GDR.[159] As the Soviet policy toward the west cooled off measurably after the December 1979 invasion of Afghanistan and the subsequent crises in Poland, the SED fought to preserve the improved inter-German relations. Although Honecker predictably defended the Soviet position in Afghanistan and took a tough

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[157]Reprinted in Thomaneck and Mellis, 284. The 1976 Party Program also emphasized the USSR's leadership position and emphasized foreign policy and international activities which reflected "the specific assignments given the GDR by Moscow." Waldman, 275.

[158]Croan, "The Politics of Division," 370.

[159]Stent, 60.

line toward Poland, experts suggested that the SED was very much concerned about the potential for the demise of detente.[160] In a similar vein, McAdams noted that the SED responded to the decline in East-West detente after Afghanistan with anxiety about inter-German relations, reassuring the FRG it would retain the lines of communication as soon as bloc tensions abated over the Polish crisis.[161]

Ironically, the growing international tensions put the SED leadership in a perfect position to reject the detente which it had "regarded so ambivalently" in the early '70s. According to McAdams, however, several things during the 1970s had changed the SED's calculations of its best interests; and because of that, the GDR tried--for the most part--to separate inter-German relations from the escalation of superpower tensions. First, since the GDR had survived detente in the 1970s with its "social order relatively unscathed," the SED determined that the GDR could reap the benefits of limited detente and manage the disadvantages. Second, the GDR selectively began to rehabilitate historical German figures, because the SED had gained the confidence

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[160]See Croan, "The Politics of Division," 371; Gerhard Wettig, "Relations Between the Two German States," in Policymaking in the German Democratic Republic, ed. Klaus von Beyme and Hartmut Zimmermann (Aldershot, England: Gower, 1984), 292.

[161]McAdams, "Surviving the Missiles," 357-59.

necessary to address German national issues. Third, the SED realized that detente had strengthened its bargaining position vis-a'-vis the FRG. Finally, detente had proved a "liberating experience" for the GDR, which was given new opportunities to cultivate its international image and make foreign contacts.[162] As another source put it, the GDR was transformed by the early '80s to a "committed convert to detente."[163]

Despite all this, however, McAdams concluded that the SED would not have allowed the GDR-FRG relations to threaten its vital domestic concerns, and recognized that improved inter-German relations "must also be viewed in the context of their respective alliances."[164] He stated that if Moscow had ordered the GDR to break off its ties with the FRG, the GDR would hardly have had another choice. Moreover, this did not necessarily indicate a divergence of interests between Moscow and the GDR. In fact, it may have allowed the GDR to fulfill an important function for the USSR by keeping the channels of communication to Bonn open.[165] And

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[162]McAdams, "Surviving the Missiles," 349.

[163]Gedmin, 40.

[164]McAdams, "Surviving the Missiles," 369.

[165]McAdams, "Surviving the Missiles," 352.

overall, the resumption of cold war did not hinder either Germany from pursuing improved relations.[166]

That did not preclude minor setbacks in FRG-GDR relations, however, such as the cessation of negotiations on two lucrative joint projects. And its fears about declining detente notwithstanding, the SED leadership temporarily took a more aggressive position toward the west in 1980, as the international situation intensified. In a much-quoted hard-line speech at Gera in October 1980, Honecker accused the FRG of trying to undermine the status quo in East-West relations and recited a list of complaints about the FRG, including its refusal to recognize the GDR's nationality or to establish official embassies in East Berlin and Bonn, its issuance of FRG passports to GDR defectors, its aid to East Germans escaping from the GDR through the "misuse" of transit routes between Berlin and the FRG, its imperialist policies, and its attempt--along with the rest of the west--to portray the USSR as the culprit in the increased Cold War tensions.[167] In this speech, Honecker espoused a "policy of

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[166]McAdams, "Surviving the Missiles," 352.

[167]In Childs, The GDR, 315. According to Sandra E. Peterson, the Gera speech was a forceful outline of the GDR's requirements for the continuation of inter-German detente. Sandra E. Peterson, "Inter-German Relations: Has the Cost Risen for the West?" in Germany through American Eyes: Foreign Policy and Domestic Issues, ed. Gale A. Mattox and John H. Vaughan Jr. (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1989), 53.

reason" and dedicated the GDR to the pursuit of "peaceful coexistence" toward the FRG, accusing Bonn of preventing solutions to the normalization of relations between the two Germanys.

Concurrently, in a rejuvenation of the Abgrenzung policy, SED party members were forbidden from meeting with FRG visitors and other western contacts, and the SED implemented a crack-down on GDR dissidents. In addition, the GDR announced in October that the minimum exchange rate was increased to 25 marks per day per person, hoping to halve the number of western visitors and hold hard currency income constant. Visits to the GDR plummeted, with no significant reprisals from the FRG.[168]

Despite these setbacks, discussions between the two Germanys continued. In May 1980, FRG Chancellor Helmut Schmidt and Honecker had met face to face at Tito's funeral, for the first time since Helsinki. More than a year later, in December 1981, they met again at a summit meeting at the Werbellinsee, just north of Berlin, where they discussed common issues in what one observer called a "favorable

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[168]Hanhardt, "Germanys and the Superpowers," 147. Hanhardt noted that the SED held the increase until after the FRG federal election to stave off any "unnecessary chill" until after Helmut Schmidt was reelected on Oct. 5. Although Honecker was not crazy about Schmidt, he was certainly preferable to the alternative Franz Joseph Strauss. Hanhardt, "Germanys and the Superpowers," 148.

atmosphere."[169] After the summit, negotiations on a number of issues continued until June 1982, when an agreement was reached. Meanwhile, in February 1982, the GDR announced a series of measures designed to maintain amicable relations with Bonn, such as increased travel opportunities; but continued to refuse to back down on the minimum exchange requirements.

In October 1982, Helmut Kohl became chancellor as leader of the CDU-CSU-FDP coalition after a no-confidence vote toppled Schmidt and the SPD-FDP coalition. The CDU and CSU had been critical of Schmidt's Deutschlandpolitik, and Kohl specifically promised to stiffen foreign policy toward the GDR. Not surprisingly, the SED had strong reservations about dealing with the new government, and Honecker warned Kohl not to follow through on his campaign promise to deploy new NATO missiles, but at the same time, announced that the two Germanys should work toward cooperation in those areas where possible. Meanwhile, however, a change in CDU attitudes probably resulting from the political realities and limited options, led to a foreign policy similar to the previous one; and inter-German relations actually improved

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[169]McAdams, "Surviving the Missiles," 365. On the last day of the meeting Poland declared martial law, which neither leader apparently knew of beforehand, resulting in a strained situation. McAdams, Germany Divided, 147.

in the period from 1982-1984, despite a general decline in East-West relations.

During the summer and fall of 1983, several leading FRG politicians visited the GDR, and the SED sent back a series of suggestions for improving cooperation between the two German states, especially economic cooperation. For two reasons, however, uncertainty continued to plague inter-German relations: First, western Europe faced the imminent prospect of INF deployment; and second, Bonn clearly expected compensation for its role in arranging a June 1983 credit deal.[170]

The INF crisis went back to 1979, when the USSR deployed SS-20 intermediate-range ballistic missiles in eastern Europe. NATO, supported by West Germany, responded by threatening the deployment of cruise and Pershing II missiles in the FRG, which the Soviets claimed breached the 1970 Moscow Treaty and undermined the basis of Ostpolitik. For the time being, the SED obligingly followed Moscow's new harder line. Between 1982 and 1984, the SED repeatedly linked future inter-German developments to the FRG's

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[170]Ronald D. Asmus, "East and West Germany: Continuity and Change," World Today 40 (April 1984):144. In December 1979, NATO decided to deploy missiles in western Europe, in response to the USSR's placement of SS-20s stationed in eastern Europe. Two weeks later, the USSR invaded Afghanistan.

The June 1983 credit deal is discussed later in this section.

position on the INF situation, as Honecker warned the FRG that the presence of the missiles would destabilize peace, and referred to a possible "ice age" in inter-German relations.[171] But while the SED harshly criticized the FRG vote in favor of deployment in November 1983, Honecker almost immediately adopted a "surprisingly moderate tone" diametrically opposed to Moscow's, emphasizing the need to limit the damage and leaving open the possibility for a return to detente.[172] Meanwhile, Childs and others cited evidence to show that inter-German relations actually improved during this period, as the GDR and FRG held negotiations on a variety of concerns "outside the superpower confrontation," including urban rail, a postal treaty and the environmental cleanup of the Roeden River.[173] In addition, a number of FRG leaders visited the GDR in 1983 and early 1984, and the improvements in relations seemed to enhance the SED's status in East Germany.[174]

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[171]Asmus, "Continuity and Change," 144. Meanwhile, an unofficial peace movement within the GDR tried to discourage the FRG from allowing deployment. The movement, called "Swords into Ploughshares" was primarily made up of youth close to the Protestant Church. It was eventually suppressed and destroyed by the SED. Hanhardt, "Prospects for Detente," 381.

[172]Asmus, "Continuity and Change," 147.

[173]See Childs, The GDR, 315; Hanhardt, "Prospects for Detente," 382.

[174]Hanhardt, "Prospects for Detente," 382.

This less strident attitude toward the FRG during the ongoing INF debate also showed in the SED's response to the Soviet decision to station additional Soviet SS-22 missiles in the GDR to respond to the NATO deployment.[175] The Kremlin reacted by pressuring the GDR to support its hard-line policy toward the FRG, and on April 28, 1983--one day after Honecker visited Soviet Ambassador Abrasimov--the SED leader postponed his scheduled visit to the FRG for the second time in two years.[176]

Probably as a result of superpower pressure, inter-German relations seemed cool during the late spring of 1983, as Neues Deutschland reported that the FRG was returning to its earlier Cold War rhetoric and Kohl pledged his government to the unity of the German nation. Hanhardt noted, however, that the SED's tone was generally low key, and predicted that inter-German relations would return to the status quo in the near future.[177] Other signs also indicated that inter-German talks would soon resume. In

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[175]Croan commented that the Soviet installation of counter-missiles in the GDR caused "barely disguised official dismay" among SED leaders. Croan, "The Politics of Division," 371.

[176]The pretext for the cancellation was the FRG's "anti-GDR" campaign in response to the death of two West Germans in the GDR, apparently of natural causes. The FRG media immediately inferred that East German border guards were responsible.

[177]Hanhardt, "Prospects for Detente," 382.

June, Andropov recalled Abrasimov, apparently at Honecker's request. The CPSU replaced him with Vyachislav Kotchemassov, a German expert believed to have a better understanding of the GDR. Some observers, probably including Honecker, took this as a signal that the USSR wished to maintain friendly ties with the GDR and would grant Honecker more discretion in future inter-German relations.[178] Also, the FRG announced a DM 1 billion loan to the GDR later that month, with no public concessions from the GDR.

In the aftermath of the INF deployment, Honecker continued to make what one expert called a "remarkable effort" to keep relations open.[179] In a frequently-cited interview in the French weekly Revolution in January 1984, Honecker struck an "optimistic note" on the Euromissile issue, emphasizing the need for arms control negotiations and urging the two Germanys to continue to develop relations within a European framework of treaties; and in mid-February, he underlined the "special responsibility" of both Germanys for peace. Other SED officials adopted a similar tone.[180] Also in February, Honecker and Kohl spoke for more than two hours while in Moscow to attend Andropov's funeral.

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[178]Hanhardt, "Prospects for Detente," 382; Frey, 102.

[179]Larrabee, 58.

[180]Asmus, "Continuity and Change," 148.

At that meeting, Kohl reconfirmed the invitation to Honecker to visit the FRG. The GDR also showed a willingness to continue to improve inter-German relations by allowing two groups of GDR citizens seeking political asylum in the U.S. embassy and the FRG diplomatic mission to leave the country. The SED's decision in 1984 to allow 40,000 East Germans to leave the FRG marked the first such mass emigration since the erection of the Berlin Wall.[181]

In mid-1984, the FRG made a second, $330 million loan to the GDR; but this time, the GDR agreed "in its own sovereignty" to a list of 12 items, including reductions in the mandatory currency exchange for certain categories of visitors and extending the time that West Germans and West Berliners could spend annually in the GDR from 30 to 45 days.[182] The same day the second loan was announced, Pravda launched its broadside against FRG "revanchism," accusing Bonn of trying to lure the GDR out of the eastern bloc and reminding Honecker of his earlier statement that the FRG and GDR went together like "fire and water."

On September 4, 1984, Honecker's long-planned visit was postponed for a third time, since Gromyko apparently felt

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[181]See Croan, "The Politics of Division," 371. Childs noted that between 1984-87, the 78,000 East Germans were allowed to leave the GDR. In "'Glasnost' and Globetrotting," 179.

[182]Hanhardt, "Prospects for Detente," 383.

that a Honecker visit so soon after missile deployment could be interpreted as acceptance of the new NATO-WTO status quo.[183] This proved, according to Hanhardt, that the "leaders of both Germanies had been forced to recognize . . . that there [was] no special 'German path' to detente, and furthermore, that the road from Bonn to East Berlin [ran] through Moscow."[184] In 1985, CDU Presidium member Kiep wrote that ultimately, the German Question was not a German question or even a European question, but a question between the superpowers.[185]

The spirit of inter-German debate survived the revitalized Cold War period that ended during Gorbachev's tenure, however, and in September 1987, Honecker finally visited the FRG. The SED carefully referred to the Honecker visit as a historic step in the detente policy it had pursued throughout the 1980s, not as mimicry of the USSR's new pro-detente position. Honecker said, "In times of speechlessness...we never broke off the dialogue."[186]

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[183]The visit was postponed on the pretext that the style of the FRG's public debate about the visit was "undignified and harmful." But Bulgarian leader Todor Zhikov's visit, scheduled just before Honecker's scheduled visit, was also postponed--leading western analysts to believe that the postponements were a result of Soviet pressure. Asmus, "Dialectics of Detente," 764.

[184]Hanhardt, "Prospects for Detente," 388.

[185]Kiep, 321.

[186]Quoted in McAdams, "The New Logic," 47, 57.

According to Johnston, although Honecker's visit did not radically alter inter-German relations, it "brought the GDR one step closer to its goal of building its own separate identity," and paved the way for diplomatic initiatives in London, Paris and Washington.[187] And even though Bonn officially referred to the trip as a "working visit," not a "state visit," Honecker was received by FRG President Richard von Weizsacker, in the West German capital.[188]

During Honecker's time in Bonn, he and Kohl issued a joint communique outlining the agreements and accords signed during Honecker's visit, including those on environmental protection, radiation protection and cooperation in the fields of science and technology. They agreed on the significance of the CSCE process and the need for arms control and disarmament, and stated that "never again must war emanate from German soil, only peace." The two German leaders reaffirmed their commitment to the Basic Treaty and their intention to develop normal and good neighborly relations on the basis of equality in accordance with the Treaty. They also discussed other issues relevant to both Germanys, such as questions regarding travel and visits,

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[187]Johnston, 32. Winrow and others also noted that the visit to Bonn and other western European capitals in the late 1980s enhanced the SED's international credibility and internal legitimacy. See Winrow, 30.

[188]McAdams, Germany Divided, 173.

transit routes to Berlin, postal services, tourism, telecommunications, electric power, judicial questions, trade relations, and humanitarian issues. The communique ended with a reciprocal invitation to Kohl to visit the GDR.[189]

Hence, by the mid-'80s, the GDR was "transformed from a front-line state of the Eastern bloc to a central European country," even becoming "partners" with the FRG who detected "common interests and the advantages of common endeavors."[190] Analysts have debated vigorously the reasons behind the evolution of the GDR's policy toward the FRG starting in the late 1970s. Theories range from the development of a new historical perspective related to the German national question, to the SED's failure to create a separate East German nation, to economic considerations, to a belief it would increase the SED's internal legitimacy, to a more confident and aggressive attitude toward the West Germans.

Kiep cited evidence that the shift in attitudes toward inter-German issues included the GDR's newfound appreciation for German history and its claim to Prussian heritage. Kiep's fellow West German Lowenthal also commented on the GDR's revision of its official view of history, which showed

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[189]Reprinted in Thomaneck and Mellis, 277-84.

[190]Bender, 112.

all western rulers as reactionaries.[191] Lowenthal determined that this new approach made the GDR more conscious of a common German past and a common contribution to detente and peace.[192] Kiep also claimed that the SED was motivated to improve inter-German relations because of its failure to win "general acceptance of its claim to legitimacy in the German context," its need for trade relations in light of the economic crisis in the eastern bloc, its desire for peace and arms control to stem military costs, and its international stability and relative strength within the eastern bloc as a result of its improved relations with western countries.[193]

According to Asmus, the determining factor for the GDR in its improved inter-German relations was economic.[194] For example, despite progress in reducing its western debt--nearly half of which was owed directly or indirectly to FRG financial institutions--the GDR still was interested in additional credits. The GDR received more than DM 1 billion annually from the FRG and West Berlin state budgets, as "compensation for various services."[195] The GDR also

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[191]Lowenthal, 308.

[192]Lowenthal, 309.

[193]Kiep, 321.

[194]See Asmus, "Continuity and Change," 149.

[195]Asmus, "Continuity and Change," 149.

continued to enjoy tariff-free benefits to FRG markets, which had become crucial for the highly industrialized but resource-poor GDR. During the 1980s, the "Swing" agreement annually provided up to DM 850 million in interest-free credits for the GDR.[196] Another help to the GDR were the tax incentives in the FRG which permitted FRG importers to deduct 11% of the value of GDR imports from turnover taxes.

All in all, Asmus estimated that the total annual GDR intake from the FRG, including private contributions and visa fees, was about DM 2.5 billion. According to him, these economic benefits resulted in a "certain detachment of East-West German relations from the broader east-west context." He concluded that this proved the "extent to which two states with clearly divergent long-term political objectives can occasionally merge shorter-term interests in an attempt to develop a mutually acceptable *modus vivendi*."[197]

Another motivating factor for the SED, according to Childs, was that Honecker came to believe by the mid-'80s that friendly relations with the FRG were essential to win the respect of GDR citizens. The number of contacts between East and West Germans had risen dramatically by that time through increased visits, telephone calls and commercial

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[196]Waldman, 279.

[197]Asmus, "Continuity and Change," 149-51.

trade.[198] Croan seemed to agree with Childs when he said that detente had become a "cornerstone" of the GDR's internal political stability and at the heart of the SED's "continuing quest for legitimacy." Croan suggested that given the GDR's historical position on the German Question and the SED's ideological orthodoxy, the GDR's support for detente in the mid-'80s was remarkable, showing the rift between the SED and Moscow.[199]

Still other analysts, such as McAdams and Sandra E. Peterson, felt that the evolution in the GDR regarding inter-German relations occurred as the SED leadership gained confidence and internal legitimacy. By the 1980s, Peterson determined that the FRG had lost its overwhelming advantage

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[198]During the 1980s, Childs estimated more than 5,000 annual visits by FRG and West Berlin citizens to East Berlin or the GDR, which was down from the high reached in the 1970s, probably resulting from the 1980 increase in the minimum exchange rate. Childs also noted more than 25,000 annual telephone calls between the two Germanys. At the same time, the number of GDR citizens who applied to leave the country rose dramatically. In 1986, there were 573,000 such applications. The SED tried to limit the damage by restricting the number of its citizens allowed to leave the country for visits, especially among the younger people. Childs, "'Glasnost' and Globetrotting," 178-79.

[199]Croan, "The Politics of Division," 369. Croan suggested that the SED's adjustment to the USSR's detente policy after Honecker came to power had scored the GDR a "decisive breakthrough" in its quest for legitimacy, leading to diplomatic recognition and U.N. membership. In return, it had to accept a "special relationship" between the two Germanys, which was short of previous GDR demands (Croan 370).

in inter-German negotiations because of the GDR's stability, political legitimacy--aided by Honecker's attempts to distance the GDR from the Soviet line--and prosperity. And although the GDR still relied on the FRG's economic assistance, it had curtailed its economic dependence by consolidating its debt, diversifying its international economic relations--especially in the Third World--and by keeping inter-German trade in balance, not even using the full "Swing" credit as it had done in the past.[200] Peterson contended that this change in the GDR's approach gave it more room for maneuver with Bonn, as the SED began to extract increasingly higher prices for its concessions to the FRG in the realization of the FRG's commitment to Deutschlandpolitik.

Similarly, McAdams concluded that the old inter-German balance was reversing, as the "Future progress between the Germanies seems to be more and more contingent upon the interests and goodwill of policymakers in East Berlin." McAdams, like Peterson, believed that the GDR was stronger

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[200]Peterson, 47-48, 51. In the mid-'80s, the World Bank ranked the GDR the twelfth industrialized nation in the world.

According to C. Bradley Scharf, the GDR narrowly averted a financial catastrophe in 1981-82 because of rapidly rising interest charges on large debts, by abruptly reducing western imports, which resulted in a decline in the GDR standard of living. C. Bradley Scharf, Politics and Change in Eastern Germany: An Evaluation of Socialist Democracy (Boulder, Colorado: Westview Press, 1984), 180.

and more confident in its bargaining relationship with the FRG, which for the first time had become more "symmetrical." This was illustrated when the GDR increased the minimum currency exchange in 1980 despite Bonn's indignation. When Bonn hinted it might grant future trade credits if things were different, the SED was in a position to feign lack of interest, having taken steps to lessen its economic dependence on Bonn and reduce the FRG's ability to apply such economic pressure.[201]

A number of observers concluded that ultimately, Honecker strove for the "maximum gain at the minimum price in his pursuit of detente."[202] In other words, he hoped to extract as much from the west as possible--in terms of trade, hard currency loans, technology and recognition--while conceding as little as possible in established East German policy goals. And although the GDR never realized its principal objective of full recognition and its sole claim to represent the sovereign interests of East Germany, it certainly gained from the improved inter-German relationship in a number of other areas. As long as the FRG seemed to take the GDR seriously, the GDR had "every reason to favor further contacts" with the FRG. If for no other

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[201]McAdams, "Inter-German Detente," 137, 144, 153.

[202]Croan, "The Politics of Division," 390. See also Hanhardt, "The Politics of Division," 148.

reason, the SED leadership wanted to keep communication with Bonn open because it recognized that only Bonn could abrogate its special interests in 17 million East German citizens.[203]

The Struggle for Reunification

During the Honecker era, the GDR's official position reflected a permanent division of Germany into two sovereign states, and any talk of reunification was typically labeled "mischievous nonsense" or "revanchism." While the SED leadership disavowed any interest in reunification outside the remote possibility of unity under a communist government, however, Kohl and his predecessors in the FRG insisted that the German Question remained open. According to Larrabee, the FRG's revival of the German Question occurred mainly because of the "dynamic rapprochement" between the two Germanys.[204] Meanwhile, the USSR continued to use the possibility of reunification as a propaganda tool to warn against a unified German "revanchism" in eastern Europe.

In an interview given to the French communist weekly Revolution in January 1984, Honecker "brusquely dismissed

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[203]McAdams, "Surviving the Missiles," 350.

[204]Larrabee, 58.

discussion of a possible German reunification." He said instead that

> Two independent states with different social systems have arisen on German soil, the socialist GDR and the capitalist FRG, [states] that belong to different alliance systems. One can unite them just as little as one can unite fire and water.[205]

The reformulation of Soviet security interests under Gorbachev and his decision not to use force in Germany cleared the path for German reunification, and the SED's collapse made it almost inevitable. In the turbulent autumn of 1989, even before the fall of Honecker's government, the FRG stepped up its efforts for reunification.

Late in November, Kohl announced plans to create a confederation between East and West Germany, which met with a negative response from Gorbachev. Meanwhile, East German elections in March 1990 reflected a strong desire for rapid reunification and helped Kohl's agenda.

Relations with the West and Japan

Honecker's policy in the West remained fairly constant with Ulbricht's. According to Childs, the policy goal

> aimed at securing recognition of the GDR, weakening NATO by such recognition and by discrediting "revanchist" West Germany, and establishing commercial links which would bring these political aims nearer and help the GDR to modernize its industry.[206]

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[205]Quoted in Asmus, "The GDR and the German Nation," 403.

[206]Childs, The GDR, 313.

The emphasis on recognition changed in the early 1970s, of course, after the GDR gained its long-coveted diplomatic relations; and after recognition, the GDR made efforts to expand its trade with the West and resolve the remaining conflicts over GDR citizenship. Overall, the SED's results in Europe were mixed--they were largely positive from an economic standpoint, but the West continued to place preconditions on improved relations.[207] After the SED diverged from Moscow's foreign policy in 1984, it also seemed to expand its tie to other western nations besides the FRG.[208] This policy was stepped up during Gorbachev's tenure, as an alternative to inter-German relations which threatened Moscow's interest. In 1987, Honecker visited the Netherlands and Belgium, and in January 1988, visited France.

Switzerland was the first western European state to recognize the GDR, in December 1972, followed by Sweden, Austria, Australia and Belgium in the same month. Belgium was the first NATO country to extend diplomatic ties to the GDR. These recognitions were followed by the Netherlands, Luxembourg, Finland, Spain, Iceland, Denmark, Norway, and Italy, in January 1973; Britain and France in February 1973; the U.S. in September 1974; and Canada in August 1975.

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[207]Scharf, 191.

[208]Asmus, "The Dialectics of Detente," 772.

The GDR's ongoing effort to establish warm relations with the four neutral countries also had mixed success. Despite the ongoing problem of compensation for wartime losses, for example, relations with Austria by the late 1970s appeared to be very good. In April 1978, Austrian Chancellor Bruno Kreisky visited the GDR, becoming the first western leader other than Brandt to visit the GDR. In November 1980, Honecker reciprocated the visit, marking the first official GDR visit to a western European state since the Helsinki Conference; and in return for this honor, the GDR presented Austria with the biggest GDR contract ever to go to a western firm.[209] The SED also achieved modest gains with Finland; but relations with Sweden and Switzerland remained rather distant, despite a gradual expansion of trade.[210]

In 1974, the U.S. finally formally recognized the GDR.[211] Throughout the 1970s, U.S.-GDR relations did not move perceptibly, but according to Johnston, the early 1980s saw an upsurge in activity demonstrated by the GDR's "efforts to build bilateral ties with non-bloc countries."

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[209]Childs, The GDR, 315. Childs interpreted this as an effort to show the SED's commitment to detente and offer a lure to Bonn.

[210]Scharf, 190.

[211]For text of recognition, see "U.S. and GDR Establish Diplomatic Relations," Department of State Bulletin 71 (23 September 1974):423.

Johnston contended that the GDR's new confidence in foreign policy dispelled the U.S.'s notion of the GDR as part of the orthodox eastern European monolith bound to the USSR, and encouraged further U.S.-GDR contacts. She also noted a shift in U.S. policy toward eastern Europe in the mid-1980s based on the concept of "differentiation," which led the U.S. to support individual states "in their attempts to gain a measure of independence from the Soviet Union." By the mid-1980s, the U.S. had formed a two-pronged policy toward Germany which supported inter-German relations and strove to improve U.S.-GDR relations, through means such as diplomatic visits and better trade relations. This resulted in certain benefits for the GDR by improving both its political and economic relations, for instance, by making western technology more available. Meanwhile, the GDR softened its previous hard-line rhetoric toward the U.S. on the diplomatic level.[212] The SED continued, however, to denounce the U.S. policy of "armed escalation" and the SDI initiative, with Moscow's approval.[213] And relations remained strained over U.S. demands for indemnity payments for Jewish-Americans who fled fascism from East Germany,

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[212]Johnston, 32-34.

[213]McAdams, "Inter-German Detente," 151.

compensation for seized U.S. property, and emigration rights for East Germans.[214]

The GDR's policy toward Japan was geared toward checking both Chinese and U.S. influence in Asia, and the GDR presented itself to Japan as a fellow victim of U.S. aerial attacks who was desperate to avoid another world war.[215] It also sought increased trade relations with Japan, which turned out to be more receptive to GDR overtures than most of western Europe, the U.S. or Canada.[216] During a visit to Japan in May 1981, Honecker met the emperor and was received with full pomp and ceremony, and Tokyo granted the GDR the coveted most-favored-nation trade status. Childs wrote that while Honecker hoped to use the visit to gain help in modernizing the GDR's industry, the Japanese used it as a "staging post" to better economic and political relations with the USSR.[217]

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[214]Scharf, 191. Honecker gave the East German perspective on many of these problems in an interview granted to Associated Press correspondent Herbert J. Erb in 1974. For example, he cited that the main obstacle in the way of GDR-U.S. trade was American discrimination against the GDR, and said that the lost property was not an obstacle, since GDR property in the U.S. was also being withheld. In Honecker, Pillar of Peace and Socialism, 73-84.

[215]Childs, The GDR, 310.

[216]Scharf, 191.

[217]Childs, "'Glasnost' and Globetrotting," 177.

Relations with the Developing Countries

During the Honecker era, the GDR expanded its activities in the Third World, where it continued to focus on the differences between the socialist and capitalist systems. In other words, according to Stent, the detente that characterized East-West relations in Europe during the 1970s did not apply to the developing nations.[218] But although the SED leadership directed its primary political, military and economic assistance to socialist countries, socialist-oriented countries and national liberation movements, one western observer noted in 1989 that the GDR was well respected in both the socialist and non-socialist Asian and African states.[219]

The Honecker regime expressed a foreign policy position on numerous developments in the Third World. It showed concern about the escalating conflict between Iran and Iraq, urged the withdrawal of Israelis occupying the Arab territories since 1967, reaffirmed its positive attitude toward the PLO and the need for a Middle East peace conference, welcomed national reconciliation with Afghanistan, denounced apartheid in South Africa, expressed support for Latin Americans attempting to achieve independence and democracy--notably Daniel Ortega of

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[218]Stent, 35.

[219]Thomaneck and Mellis, 266.

Nicaragua--and expressed support for the socialist and socialist-oriented countries of Africa and national liberation movements there, as well as the non-aligned peoples for peace and neutral Kampuchea.[220]

According to the official handbook printed in 1986, The German Democratic Republic, the GDR had always supported peoples fighting for national and social liberation and would continue in that effort in Asia, Africa and Latin America.[221] In a Politburo Report to the Fifth Meeting of the Central Committee of the SED in December 1987, the GDR called for negotiations to defuse sources of conflict and tension in the developing nations and reaffirmed its close ties with those which opted for socialism. The SED was very pragmatic, however, about the lack of political gains for the world socialist movement in independent states such as Argentina, Peru, Columbia and Mexico--identifying elements of their "progressive" social policy and ignoring heavy dependence on capitalist nations and internal economic exploitation.[222]

Limited resources also constrained the GDR's foreign policy objectives in the developing countries, leading

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[220]Taken from a Politburo Report to the Fifth Meeting of the Central Committee of the SED, in December 1987. Reprinted in Thomaneck and Mellis, 293-94.

[221]Excerpt reprinted in Thomaneck and Mellis, 294-95.

[222]Scharf, 193.

Brigitte H. Schulz to suggest that the SED was more reactive than initiating; and by the 1980s, decolonization had practically negated one of the cornerstones of the GDR's foreign policy--liberation from colonial rule.[223]

Of course, most analysts concluded that GDR policy in the Third World involved more than just the ideological fervor indicated above. Certainly, the SED sought the advancement of its own interests vis-a'-vis the USSR. For instance, Hanhardt wrote that in the Third World, where "East German propaganda for Soviet positions" was loud, the GDR's enthusiasm for Soviet policies was "conditioned" by the fact that stress between the east and west furthered its Abgrenzung policy.[224] By and large, the GDR followed Moscow's lead; in fact, Scharf concluded that the GDR's biggest achievement in the Third World under Honecker was to support Soviet foreign policy.[225] But while the GDR had to incur the cost of participating in the Soviets' far-flung areas of interest--which offered little economic or diplomatic advantages and put constraints on GDR foreign policy--there were a number of advantages.

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[223]Brigitte Schulz, "The Politics of East-South Relations: The GDR and Southern Africa," in East Germany in Comparative Perspective, ed. David Childs (London: Routledge, 1989), 222-25.

[224]Hanhardt, "Germanys and the Superpowers," 148.

[225]Scharf, 194.

Thomas P. M. Barnett published an interesting study in 1992 which argued that despite the similarity of Soviet and eastern European foreign policy goals in Europe, their goals in the Third World were distinctly different. He showed that of all the Soviet bloc states, the GDR and Romania were the most actively involved, committing major portions of their foreign policy resources to the south, with their effort peaking in the 1970s. According to Barnett, these two nations were both in a "highly asymmetrical" leverage relationship with Moscow and both tried to "reduce their leverage deficit" to create or bolster internal legitimacy. Specifically, Honecker hoped to do this by becoming Moscow's "most trusted and important partner in Third World expansionism." Ultimately, Barnett contended that the GDR's Third World strategy during the Honecker period became "an increasingly complex interplay of economic benefits" and ideological concerns.[226]

After recognition, Barnett and others demonstrated that the SED's goals changed, as it began focusing more in the 1970s on Third World nations leaning toward socialism and less on those who would be willing to brave Bonn's retribution.[227] Barnett also assumed that in an era of

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[226]Thomas P. M. Barnett, Rumanian and East German Policies in the Third World: Comparing the Strategies of Ceausescu and Honecker (London: Praeger, 1992), xviii, 15, 21, 97.

detente, the GDR sought to maintain the East-West rivalry and counter its declining status as the bloc's top supplier of high technology in light of the availability of more western products. Then, as detente faded in the 1980s, the SED again revised its strategy and renewed its interest in protecting its ties with the FRG from Moscow's interference, and "recalculated" the benefits of its Third World commitments in light of other economic concerns.[228]

Both Stent and Sodaro contended that GDR activity served several purposes: It reinforced the GDR's value to Moscow, enhanced the SED's international legitimacy, provided raw material imports and export markets, and enabled the GDR to compete with the FRG in a non-European arena, especially in light of East-West detente.[229] A number of analysts also suggested that the GDR often acted in lieu

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[227]Barnett, 34; Jiri Valenta and Shannon Butler, "East German Security Policies in Africa," in Eastern Europe and the Third World, East vs. South, ed. Michael Radu (Studies of the Institute on East Central Europe, Columbia University [New York: Praeger, 1981]), 144-45.

[228]Barnett, 95-97, 125.

[229]Stent, 48; Michael J. Sodaro "The GDR and the Third World: Supplicant and Surrogate," in Eastern Europe and the Third World, East vs. South, ed. Michael Radu (Studies of the Institute on East Central Europe, Columbia University. [New York: Praeger, 1981]), 135.

of the USSR, where increased Soviet presence might be sensitive or unwelcome.[230]

Jiri Valenta and Shannon Butler cited further advantages for the SED's Third World foreign policy: It offered an opportunity to shore up a morale problem in the NPA owing to the GDR's subordinate position in the WTO, provided new sources of oil and potential markets for GDR products, allowed the GDR to contribute to the alliance budget, rewarded the Soviets for their continued support, reinforced Abgrenzung, enhanced the regimes' prestige and legitimacy, and gave propagandists the opportunity to attack neocolonialism.[231]

By late 1979, Sodaro estimated that the GDR had commercial or other economic relations with 52 Third World countries, although it concentrated its trade with developing nations in a handful of states, namely Brazil, India, Egypt and Iraq. As during the Ulbricht regime, however, economic relations with the Third World did not appear "to take up a large portion of the GDR's annual budget."[232]

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[230]See Michael Getler, "East Berlin's Influence Ranked Third Among Communist Powers," Washington Post 21 August 1977, A19; Stent, 48; John M. Starrels, "GDR Foreign Policy," Problems of Communism 29 (March-April 1980):75.

[231]Valenta and Butler, 148-51.

[232]Sodaro, "The GDR and the Third World," 111, 113.

In the Middle East, the GDR--like the USSR--continued to support Arab groups against the Israelis. For example, the SED leadership condemned the Camp David accords between Menachim Begin and Anwar Sadat in the late 1970s as inimical to the proposals of RAKAH, and supported the PLO with "noncivilian equipment," financial assistance, and propaganda.[233] In 1972, Iran and the GDR established diplomatic relations, which surprised many observers because of the SED's previous criticism of the Shah's regime and its past aid to leftist anti-Shah emigres.[234] According to Childs, the new GDR policy was probably out of deference to Soviet interests, although Sodaro referred to several meetings between the Shah and top SED officials, and noted that on the eve of the Shah's overthrow in late 1978, the GDR was on the verge of welcoming him in East Berlin.[235] After the Shah fell, the GDR generally supported the new revolutionary regime in Iran, but the ensuing Iran-Iraq war put the GDR in an embarrassing position, since it also had maintained close ties with Iraq.[236] Sodaro noted that economic factors in the 1970s played an increasingly large role in the GDR's Third World activities in general, but

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[233]Sodaro, "The GDR and the Third World," 130.

[234]Childs, The GDR, 301-2.

[235]Sodaro, "The GDR and the Third World," 128.

[236]Childs, The GDR, 301-2.

especially in the Middle East--since the USSR's dwindling domestic oil reserves forced the GDR to seek more diversified energy sources. As a result, Iraq emerged as the GDR's principal oil supplier after the USSR.[237]

Observers noted in the 1970s and early 1980s that GDR advisers were active in the People's Republic of (South) Yemen.[238] Critically located at the "foot of the Arabian peninsula," with an anti-western position that dated from the late 1960s, Yemen became--as Scharf put it--"something of a special project" for the USSR, which offered training in foreign and military policy, hospital management and agricultural projects.[239] Sodaro said that in the Middle East, South Yemen came the closest to allowing the GDR to attempt to build a Marxist-Leninist infrastructure there. The GDR helped train South Yemeni troops for deployment in the Ethiopia-Somalia war, took credit for fashioning the Yemeni constitution of 1979, and continued its long history of trade and related agreements.[240]

Africa became the principal focal point of the GDR's direct involvement in the Third World during the Honecker period, specifically in the sub-Saharan area. In fact, a

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[237]Sodaro, "The GDR and the Third World," 123-24.

[238]Hanhardt, "Germanys and the Superpowers," 148.

[239]Scharf, 194.

[240]Sodaro, "The GDR and the Third World," 117, 129.

Washington Post article in 1977 ranked the GDR's influence third among that of communist powers in Africa, after the USSR and Cuba; and by 1985, Kuhns was suggesting that the GDR might have replaced Cuba as the USSR's "most important assistant in African affairs."[241] Winrow contended that the GDR's loyalty to Moscow made the Soviet leadership willing to "accord [the GDR] increasing autonomy in the conduct of its policies in Africa" during the Honecker era.[242] Interestingly, the GDR seemed to prefer to take a fairly low profile with its expanded activity in Africa, according to some, so it would not "draw Western protests or upset the process of detente."[243]

Analysts debated the GDR's motivation in furthering its activities in Africa, especially after the GDR achieved recognition goal. Predictably, the SED leadership claimed that its policy was rooted in Marxism-Leninism. Honecker said "We stand side by side against common enemies. Common effort inspires us to do everything for the good of working

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[241]Getler; Kuhns, 219. While the Soviet and Cuban military presences in Africa had stabilized during the 1970s, the GDR's had greatly increased.

[242]Winrow, 11. Valenta and Butler documented 22 high-level SED visits to Africa between 1975-79.

[243]George A. Glass, "East Germany in Black Africa: A Special New Role?" World Today 36 (August 1980):311; Winrow, 221.

people, for peace and for social progress."[244] Likewise, Axen wrote,

> The peoples fighting for national liberation, for stronger independence and progressive social transformations can always count on the solidarity of the socialist German Democratic Republic.[245]

Getler suggested, however, that Africa's attraction for the SED lay in its potential to help the GDR establish an international image, gain official recognition and new embassies, and to compete with the FRG.[246] And according to Glass, and Valenta and Butler, the GDR's relative wealth and its reputation for efficiency in "setting up political parties and organizing cadres and security organs" made it a good choice for an important role in Africa.[247]

Glass suggested that the SED hoped to further the interests of both socialism and the GDR by building mass support for local government while establishing "revolutionary consciousness." And overall, although the SED used ideological considerations to legitimize its actions in Africa, Glass felt that ideology mattered little more than the "achievement of concrete alliances and state goals," such as a chance to increase the GDR's prestige and

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[244]Quoted in Glass, 311-12.

[245]Quoted in Kuhns, 235.

[246]Getler.

[247]Glass, 311; Valenta and Butler, 146. The latter were referring to the Third World in general.

profile on the world stage, to establish common positions and support on various issues in international organizations such as the U.N., and to increase the GDR's strategic and military importance.[248] Improved Third World relations also provided an opportunity to battle the west, and to this end, the GDR launched a propaganda campaign in an effort to identify the FRG as the inheritor of Germany's imperialist and colonialist tradition.[249]

On the other hand, Kuhns concluded that the primary value of the GDR's Africa policy lay in an improvement of the SED's position within the socialist community, writing that "fidelity to Soviet aims in Africa must seem a small price to pay for maintaining their expanded role in the affairs of Eastern Europe." Ultimately, Kuhns believed the GDR's policy in Africa was "meant to serve the interests of the Soviet Union and the CPSU," demonstrated for instance, by the fact that the GDR had no "special clients" in Africa; that is, the USSR was active in every state the GDR was.[250] In turn, this policy was a blessing to the USSR, since the highly-qualified GDR specialists were relatively well

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[248]Glass, 307-8.

[249]Kuhns, 225. Kuhns noted, however, that the GDR was unable or unwilling to compete with the FRG in the amount of aid to Africa. In the period between 1969-1979, the GDR gave $440 million, compared with the FRG's $4.2 billion. Kuhns, 234.

[250]Kuhns, 228, 236.

received by the Africans and were less threatening to the world than a heavy Soviet presence.

By 1980, GDR trade relationships with African nations had developed relatively rapidly but remained proportionately small. Although good political relations with nations such as Ethiopia, Angola and Mozambique, raised trade turnovers significantly in the late 1970s, the value of exports to Africa as a percentage of exports to all developing nations in the early 1980s was only 10 percent.[251] This led some experts to conclude that trade benefits were not as critical as the military and political considerations.[252]

While the GDR had established relations with more than 40 African nations by 1980, the GDR again focused most of its efforts on a few states, namely Angola, Namibia, South

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[251]Childs, The GDR, 304; Kuhns, 227.

[252]See for example, Glass, 308. Getler, however, was careful to distinguish between the GDR's economic interests in central and southern Africa and its purely political interest in the "strategically-located" Somalia and Ethiopia.

Interestingly, despite Africa's important and valuable resources such as oil, diamonds and ores, by 1980 Glass noted that the GDR seemed to mainly import agricultural items such as coffee and husk products. On the other hand, the GDR exported capital equipment, electronic products, tractors, agricultural and construction machinery, medical items, textiles, and consumer items. Glass suggested the possibility that the GDR's was using the African continent to dump its surplus goods. Glass, 309.

Africa, Zimbabwe, Mozambique and Ethiopia.[253] In addition to diplomatic and commercial relations, the GDR funded technical and humanitarian aid programs and student exchanges, and assisted in the construction and organization of leadership cadres and building up of mass-based parties. Africans regularly were invited to the GDR for training in fields such as technology and journalism. The GDR's role in developing the infrastructure in the socialist-oriented states was, according to Kuhns, "a task specifically given the Democratic Republic by the Soviet Union in consultation with the other states of eastern Europe."[254]

By the late 1970s, political experts had noticed a distinct increase in more volatile forms of aid to sub-Saharan African nations, including small arms supplies, military advisers and internal security training--although the GDR was "extremely discrete."[255] Glass suggested that the GDR's new policy, with its more active military participation in national liberation movements and the "anti-imperialist" struggle, corresponded with changes in

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[253]Glass, 305.

[254]Kuhns, 231.

[255]Getler. Valenta and Butler said that as early as 1973, after signing military treaties with Angola and Congo-Brazzaville, the GDR became a "force to be reckoned with" (144).

Africa which sparked resistance from indigenous forces.[256] Winrow, on the other hand, felt that the GDR seized the opportunity to enhance the regime's legitimacy through the NPA, which was superior to the other WTO militaries.[257]

In any case, westerners estimated that the number of military advisers and technicians in sub-Saharan Africa had tripled or quadrupled between 1973-1977, from 100 to 300 or 400.[258] By 1980, three years later, Glass estimated that there were several thousand military advisers in Black Africa; and by 1985, Kuhns said the number ranged from "hundreds" to 9,000. Most analysts generally agreed, however, that the GDR's military role was limited primarily to advisory and training activities.[259]

By pledging its support to groups seeking national liberation, the GDR was able to take advantage of the Portuguese decision to free its remaining African colonies in 1974. Starting in 1969, the GDR had supported the Front for the Liberation of Mozambique (FRELIMO), and by the mid-'70s, had also established close ties with the Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA). When Portugal

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[256]Glass, 305.

[257]Winrow, 221.

[258]Cited in Getler.

[259]Kuhns, 230. The numbers were difficult to establish because the SED maintained a "veil of secrecy."

granted Mozambique and Angola their independence, the GDR reaped the political benefits. For once, Childs noted, the rival FRG was "left out in the cold."[260] The GDR concentrated on building the administrative and economic infrastructures in Angola and Mozambique, while the USSR provided the bulk of the economic and military aid and Cuba provided military personnel.[261]

The GDR also signed various agreements with the African National Congress (ANC) in South Africa, and Southwest Africa People's Organization (SWAPO).[262] In 1979, Axen stated that the peoples fighting against the imperialists'

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[260]Childs, The GDR, 304. In response, the FRG changed its policy in the mid-1970s by making low-level contacts with Black independence movements in Africa.

[261]Brigitte Schulz, 221. Schulz contended that relations with Mozambique and Angola after the independence were a lot more complicated than most people realized, as the "socialist orientation" struggled to overcome centuries of economic exploitation and the east had limited funds to help; hence, the two were gradually moving closer to the wealthier west.

[262]Brigitte Schulz, 223. Schulz wrote an interesting article on the GDR in southern Africa, detailing its relations with the ANC. Long against apartheid, the GDR established formal ties with the ANC in 1978. It directly supported the ANC through its Solidarity Committee umbrella of social organizations, plus printing the ANC's monthly English-language journal and providing training and material support. Schulz also commented that the GDR's support for liberation movements in general earned it a "very positive image in the global struggle" against the "unjust" post-colonial order.

"exploitative, neo-colonialist aspirations . . . could always count on the solidarity of the GDR."[263]

Not everything in its Africa policy went smoothly for the SED, however. For example, in May 1977, Zaire expelled the GDR after accusing it of supplying arms to anti-government rebels in the Shaba palace, although the GDR denied the charges. In Zimbabwe, the GDR pinned its hopes on Joshua Nkomo and his Zimbabwe African People's Union (ZAPU) between 1973-1980, only to be surprised by Robert Mugabe's victory in April 1980; however, the GDR and Zimbabwe still established diplomatic relations in the fall of 1980.

To a lesser degree, GDR foreign policy in Asia also expanded during the Honecker era, with most of its engagement in eastern Asia focused on the communist states. By the mid-'80s, the GDR had established diplomatic relations with all Southeast Asian and Far Eastern states except Taiwan and South Korea. The "chief object of the GDR's attentions" in Asia remained India, and in 1976, Indira Ghandi became the first non-communist head of government to make a state visit to the GDR.[264] The GDR's relations with Afghanistan necessarily became more important in light of the Soviet invasion, mainly in "echoing approval

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[263]Axen, "The German Democratic Republic," 12.

[264]Sodaro, "The GDR and the Third World," 130.

of Soviet actions"; although according to Sodaro, the GDR tried to balance its support to prevent the Afghan situation from damaging its ties with the FRG and the rest of the west.[265] In Southeast Asia, the Honecker regime pledged fraternal aid to Vietnam in rebuilding the country by cancelling the debt on past credits in the early 1970s, and supported Vietnam in its war against China.[266]

The Honecker regime also engaged in Latin American policy. Relations with Cuba improved, as Cuba "settled down to being a more conventional Soviet client."[267] Cuba and the GDR signed a 25-year friendship treaty in the 1970s, committing both to support the Third World.[268] Relations with Chile were severed after the right-wing coup d'etat in 1973, and the GDR supported later left-wing Chilean exiles with refuge, training, and employment. In a wave of recognitions between 1972-1974, the GDR established diplomatic relations with Uruguay, Brazil, Columbia, Mexico,

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[265]Sodaro, "The GDR and the Third World," 131. The GDR also provided solidarity aid and medical assistance to the Babrak Karmal regime in Afghanistan.

[266]Hanisch, "The GDR and Its International Relations," 641.

[267]Childs, The GDR, 310. Sodaro noted, however, that despite the "constant vilification in the East German press" of Augusto Pinochet's regime, the GDR and Chile signed a trade agreement in 1980, "following two years of negotiations at the GDR's behest." Sodaro, "The GDR and the Third World," 133.

[268]Valenta and Butler, 165.

Argentina, Peru, Costa Rica, Guyana, Ecuador, Venezuela, Bolivia, and Panama; but according to the evidence, this did not lead to any significant increase in trade.[269]

In 1975, the GDR signed a cultural agreement with Mexico, and also exchanged diplomatic visits and contacts. The GDR hoped to weaken ties Mexican ties with the U.S. and obtain oil; while Mexico sought aid in education, health care, planning, and technical assistance.[270]

Sodaro pointed out that events in several Latin American countries "opened up new opportunities for the GDR to expand its political and economic undertakings there."[271] For example, the GDR backed the Sandinistas by providing economic and medical assistance in their struggle against the ruling Somoza family in Nicaragua in the late 1970s, and developed relations with Daniel Ortega after his victory in 1979. It also backed the revolutionary forces in El Salvador against the rightist U.S.-backed dictatorship there. In fact, the SED enjoyed relations with all the communist parties and some socialist parties throughout

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[269]Childs, The GDR, 310.

[270]Childs, The GDR, 312; Sodaro, "The GDR and the Third World," 133.

[271]Sodaro, "The GDR and the Third World," 133.

Latin America and the Caribbean, as the GDR's influence in those areas expanded during most of the Honecker era.[272]

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[272]Childs, The GDR, 310.

Chapter 4

EPILOGUE

Late in November, Helmut Kohl announced plans to create a confederation between East and West Germany, which met with a negative response from Gorbachev. Meanwhile, East German elections in March 1990 reflected a strong desire for rapid reunification and helped Kohl's agenda.

After the SED collapsed, Gorbachev chose not to intervene with force to resurrect communist rule in the GDR; and ultimately, he modified the historical Soviet requirements for a unified Germany. During 1989 and 1990, a series of events occurred that resulted in German reunification on October 3, 1990. The Soviet Union played a much smaller role in the reunification process than many observers expected.

While officially accepting the principle of unification in the beginning of 1990, Gorbachev continued to reject full NATO membership for Germany, calling for a neutral German state. Alternative Soviet suggestions were joint membership for Germany in both NATO and the WTO, or the dismantling of all alliances. The USSR hoped that Soviet troops still stationed on East German soil would enable negotiators to link Soviet troop reduction--or removal--to restrictions on western and German military power, or possibly even to

create a demilitarized zone in former East German territory. For the most part, these Soviet goals were not realized.

In February 1990, Kohl and U.S. President George Bush agreed that a united Germany should remain a full member of NATO, including its military structures; however, Bush acknowledged Germany's right to make its own choice as guaranteed by the Helsinki Final Act. The East German Prime Minister, Lothar de Maiziere, joined western support for continued German membership in NATO. Meanwhile, the FRG offered financial support for Soviet troops in the GDR and agreed to honor all of East Germany's commercial contracts with Moscow, even to buy uranium for Moscow on the world market to replace dangerous shipments from a radioactive mine in the GDR. Bonn also offered to cut its army during the next decade in exchange for the removal of Soviet forces from East Germany by 1995. Also, the Pentagon planned to close all of its German air bases east of the Rhine. In exchange, existing NATO boundaries would be extended to the Polish border, but no foreign or integrated NATO troops would be allowed east of the current inner-German border.

At a February conference in Ottawa among the ministers of the two Germanys and the four World War II allies, the "two-plus-four" formula evolved, whereby the two German states would agree on intra-German modalities of unification, while the Four Powers and the two Germanies

would have to agree on the security structure, status and obligations of a united Germany.

The two Germanys agreed to merge their economies by July 2, having already decided on all-German elections. The Soviets had to consent to a Four-Power treaty officially ending World War II, and to cease occupation rights in Germany. Moscow suggested in May that Germany go ahead with reunification while the four allies retained occupation rights, an idea brushed aside by Bush and Kohl, who continued to advocate a united Germany with full sovereignty and full membership in NATO. Gorbachev, while appearing to accept the collapse of pro-Soviet regimes in eastern Europe, balked at the withdrawal of Soviet troops from the region, especially East Germany. Finally, the USSR removed one of the last remaining obstacles to reunification, when it agreed to allow the Germans to decide about NATO membership in accordance with the Helsinki Act.

At the Moscow conference during the second week of September, leaders of the two Germanys plus the four World War II allies finally ended the vestiges of postwar German occupation, clearing the way for reunification on October 3. For a four-year transitionary period, Germany agreed to cover the costs of withdrawal and relocation inside the USSR. The treaty signed in Moscow included these points: Germany would renounce all claims outside existing German

borders; non-German NATO forces would be restricted to existing West German territory and Germany would reduce its armed forces from the current combined level of 667,000 to 370,000.

Despite the almost-unanimous interest among Germany's neighbors that unification proceed slowly and in an orderly fashion, history took a different course. The SED's collapse stimulated rapid unification, and in the GDR, public opinion heavily supported reunification.

Chapter 5

CONCLUSIONS

Between its foundation in 1949 and its extinction in 1990, the GDR evolved into one of the world's most industrialized nations with the highest standard of living of any communist country. The state was guided by a small, highly centralized party elite which remained amazingly stable--after some initial challenges in the early and mid-'50s, and despite a change in leadership in 1971--until its last year. In its foreign policy, the GDR was dominated for most of its history by its two long-time first secretaries, Walter Ulbricht and Erich Honecker; and to a lesser degree, by the other members of the Central Committee Politburo.

In addition to the personalities of the leaders themselves, several factors influenced GDR foreign policy. Some of these were internal factors and some were external--although to a large extent the two overlapped, as linkage theory suggested. To the extent that they could be separated, however, the major internal factors were the need for legitimacy and the creation of a distinctly East German nationality; while the major external factors were the GDR's ideological, political and economic reliance on the USSR, its cultural and historical ties to the FRG, its quest for international legitimacy and recognition through diplomacy

and trade, and the fluctuations of the Cold War.

Evidence from the East Germans themselves indicated that ideological considerations stood at the forefront of the SED's foreign policy. But although the SED consistently claimed Marxist-Leninism as the scientific foundation for its external relations, in reality, it often demonstrated much more pragmatic objectives. Hence, while ideology undoubtedly played a role in the formation of the GDR's foreign policy, it also served as an important propaganda and legitimizing tool. For example, its commitment to world peace and the furthering of socialism ostensibly guided the SED in its policymaking--especially in the developing nations--but it also increased the regime's legitimacy by providing a foil to the "revanchist" FRG and improving its standing with the USSR among socialist bloc nations. In any case, ideology cannot be omitted from this discussion.

The GDR presented a unique case in eastern Europe, having come about as a result of the superpower struggle in Europe following World War II, and forced to battle for its claim to existence with the FRG. As such, the SED's very survival depended on continuing Soviet support, a point of which the Party leadership was acutely aware. From the beginning, but especially in the early years of both the Ulbricht and Honecker regimes, the SED tied itself closely to the CPSU. This changed somewhat as Ulbricht and then

Honecker gained confidence within the GDR; but generally speaking, East German foreign policy was built around avoiding conflict with the USSR, neutralizing the attraction of the "other" Germany, and demonstrating its legitimacy with an "independent" foreign policy. These objectives were, by nature, paradoxical; and were further complicated by the FRG's efforts, prior to the early 1970s, to prevent recognition of the GDR.

In its relations with the USSR and other socialist states, the GDR's policies were officially dictated by "socialist internationalism," a theory suggesting close bonds and unity of purpose within the communist bloc. Despite ongoing tensions with its fellow bloc members, the SED viewed unity to be crucial for its survival, especially after the advent of East-West detente in the late 1960s and early 1970s, and again starting in the mid-'80s. Overall, evidence shows that its relations with the socialist nations outside the USSR evolved in a pattern similar to its relations with Moscow.

Within the context of its dependency on the USSR, the expansion of GDR international relations outside the socialist bloc served "mainly to support a degree of national autonomy," as Zimmermann suggested.[1] The SED's

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[1]Hartmut Zimmermann, "The GDR in the 1970's," Problems of Communism 28 (March-April 1978):12.

official policy toward the west was the Leninist concept of "peaceful coexistence"--a commitment to resolving the disputes of two radically different social systems through diplomacy rather than warfare--but it almost consistently sought improved political and economic relations, and hence increased legitimacy, with the western capitalist states, despite the differences between them. In its official policy toward the developing nations, the SED's emphasis on the class character of foreign relations caused it to favor those countries or liberation movements which leaned toward socialism, although prior to recognition, Party leaders seemed to focus more on those states which it considered most likely to extend the GDR its desired international recognition.

Foreign policy in the GDR evolved around several historical phases, including the development of increased internal stability and economic successes, the erection of the Berlin Wall, the transition in leadership from Ulbricht to Honecker, and especially, changes in the USSR's foreign policy and the dynamic nature of East-West relations. For example, as a result of its transition vis-a'-vis the USSR from defeated enemy, to dependent satellite, to staunch ally and "junior partner," the GDR became more active in bloc affairs, and more confident and assertive in its foreign policy in general. Its external relations were also

affected by changes in the Soviet regimes, particularly in the 1970s and 1980s. The evidence indicates that Andropov, and gradually Gorbachev, allowed the SED more latitude in foreign policymaking than Brezhnev or Chernenko. Moreover, fluctuations in the Cold War and the state of detente heavily affected virtually all of the GDR's external relations; and as general East-West relations evolved, so did the GDR's foreign policy.

A big question among students of international relations was the extent of the GDR's "room for maneuver." While the USSR's primacy in eastern Europe denied the possibility of a sovereign East German foreign policy, the SED's room for maneuver definitely increased during the Honecker era. This was true especially in the 1980s, primarily because of changes within the Soviet Union and the GDR's growing confidence and importance within the bloc. But despite limited autonomy in certain areas, the SED remained reliant on the USSR, and it seems clear that the Kremlin would have thwarted any attempt at independence which it deemed unacceptable alliance conduct. And through it all, the SED--at least officially--continued to enthusiastically support USSR foreign policy.

Ultimately, then, GDR foreign policy was driven primarily by the SED's need for security, which kept it tied closely to the USSR. Undoubtedly, their similar ideological

orientation meant that the GDR and USSR genuinely agreed on many foreign policy objectives; however, despite all their protestations to the contrary, the SED leaders did diverge on certain issues--or at the very least, emphasize different aspects--related to foreign policy, from foreign trade to detente. The SED's willingness to risk Moscow's displeasure on issues it considered critical to the GDR's interests showed that the SED was not a carbon copy of the CPSU.

This divergence of policy showed up most clearly during three brief periods: The period during 1970-71 when Ulbricht departed from the Soviet's policy toward the west during the initial phase of detente, the period during 1983-84 when Honecker fought to maintain its improved relations with the west in light of renewed cold war, and the period from 1987-89 when Honecker rejected Gorbachev's reforms within the USSR. But while these events clearly demonstrated marked differences between the USSR and GDR, they each concluded with Moscow's victory in determining foreign policy priorities.

Finally, the evidence indicated that the SED analyzed its foreign policy in incremental steps, as described by Charles Lindblom. As Lindblom noted, in fact, it is common for authori

tarian systems such as the GDR to move slowly. The incrementalist model must be adjusted slightly in the case

of East Germany, however, for at least two reasons. First, incrementalist theory implied a plethora of public and private actors, which the GDR--whose foreign policy was dominated by a small party elite--did not possess. Second, the fact that the SED analyzed its foreign policy in small steps did not indicate irrationality among SED leaders, as the incrementalist model might suggest; rather, the SED demonstrated a very rational recognition of the GDR's considerable limitations in its foreign policymaking. In other words, the SED's inherently weak position--both internal and external--meant that it lacked the margin of safety necessary for radical changes.

In many other aspects, however, the SED fit into the incrementalist framework: It built its foreign policy step by step and in small degrees, it commonly intertwined policy means and ends--in other words, when values conflicted, the SED had to rank them before determining a specific policy--and Party leaders placed less emphasis on theory and more on comparison to similar policies already in effect. Several areas demonstrated this incremental approach to foreign policymaking in the GDR between 1953 and 1989.

One of the clearest examples of incremental analysis was the SED's approach to the nationality problem and German reunification, where it is easy to trace the evolution of GDR foreign policy. Initially, the SED claimed that the GDR

represented all Germans and pushed aggressively for reunification under a socialist system. By the mid-'50s after the FRG joined NATO, the SED had backed off the reunification issue and began to stress the GDR's independence and separate national consciousness. This trend continued through the 1960s and into the 1970s, as the SED created a separate East German citizenship and revised its earlier position by claiming the heritage of German historical figures. In the early 1970s, however, the SED retreated from its position on the existence of a distinctive East German nationality and in a 1974 amendment to the constitution, abandoned the concept altogether by calling the GDR a "socialist state of workers and farmers."

A second example on incremental analysis was the SED's application of Marxist-Leninist ideology in its foreign policymaking, with theory frequently diverging from pragmatic considerations. For example, despite its constant denunciation of western "imperialism" and "revanchism," especially toward the FRG and U.S., the SED actively pursued political and economic relations with the west under both the Ulbricht and Honecker regimes. Toward the end of his rule, Ulbricht began to depart from accepted orthodox Soviet ideology, claiming a special East German road to socialism. With Honecker's succession in 1971, however, the SED repudiated Ulbricht's deviation and pledged itself to

reflect Soviet dogma--but by the early 1980s, the SED had changed again, to exhibit some independent approaches to socialist ideology.

Another example of incrementalism was the evolution of foreign policy emphases during the 1970s, inspired by the GDR's growing influence in the bloc, its relative economic success, the SED's increased popularity in East Germany, and especially, the achievement of international recognition. The erection of the Berlin Wall in 1961 played an important role in this evolution, helping to pave the way for economic success and ironically, increasing internal and external legitimacy and stability.

The change in emphases was typified by the GDR's policy toward the developing countries. In the 1950s and 1960s, foreign policy focused on those states perceived to be either anti-Bonn or less susceptible to the Hallstein policy, in order to achieve diplomatic recognition. When that objective was realized as a result of improved FRG-GDR relations by the early 1970s, the SED's emphasis on Third World relations became more ideologically and economically driven, as it sought out states with socialist tendencies or needed resources--especially energy sources, in light of the USSR's declining domestic oil reserves--and strove to exploit the differences between the "peaceful socialist" GDR and the "revanchist" FRG in an era of general East-West

detente.

The GDR's involvement in the developing nations was stepped up in the Honecker era, peaking in the 1970s. While the GDR continued to claim its goal was to advance socialism, it seemed obvious that national interests played an equally large role. Through supporting the Soviets, the SED hoped to maximize its benefits to the CPSU, improve its position within the CMEA and WTO, and increase its internal and external legitimacy; but when its rivalry with the west faded in the 1980s and the GDR faced dwindling resources available for foreign policy intervention, the SED recalculated its interests in the Third World. Also, as Childs pointed out, the SED's ideological considerations did not always translate into votes in the U.N., showing another element of the GDR's pragmatic approach to foreign policy.

Frequently, shifts in GDR foreign policy directly reflected changes in Soviet policy. Ulbricht's concept of "developed socialism," with its claim to have arrived at a uniquely German approach to socialist development--in part to combat the unwanted consequences of Ostpolitik--was curtailed rather dramatically by his forced resignation in 1971.

This trend was true also of the USSR's policy toward the west, specifically with detente. While Ulbricht tried to obstruct detente and paid for it with his career,

Honecker opted to tie GDR foreign policy closely to Moscow's policy. Honecker seemed to strive for the maximum gain with detente at the minimum price, apparently hoping that his loyalty would result in limited autonomy in foreign affairs and a bigger part in the formation of bloc foreign policy. Hence, the SED compromised on detente, dropping its utopian hopes for reunification under socialism and pledging to live side by side with the FRG, in a reversal of SED policy under Ulbricht.

Initially, the SED just paid lip service to detente, vacillating between conciliation and a hard-line approach. Although it proposed a draft treaty with the FRG, initiated the meetings at Erfurt and Kassel in early 1970, and again proposed talks late in 1970, the East Germans simultaneously stepped up their demands on Bonn and implemented the Abgrenzung policy. By the early 1980s, however, the SED's policy toward the west--particularly the FRG--had evolved into a much more positive one; in fact, when the USSR backed off from its position on detente, the GDR fought to preserve its dialogue with the west. By the 1980s, as a result of the improved inter-German relations, the GDR had become increasingly reliant on its political and economic benefits from the west, and seemed willing to risk Soviet displeasure on its divergence from USSR policy--although it still depended far too much on Moscow to make a real break. With

its new confidence, however, the SED tried to work within the system but being careful not to challenge Soviet hegemony directly--as Ulbricht had done--resulting in a series of debates about the difference in foreign policy emphases in the bloc. And in areas which did not directly affect the GDR, such as China, the SED continued to mirror USSR foreign policy.

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