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AD-A224 475		3. REPORT TYPE AND DATES COVERED XXXXXX Dissertation	
1. AGENCY USE ONLY (Leave blank)		5. FUNDING NUMBERS	
4. TITLE AND SUBTITLE Soviet Policy Toward East Germany Under Brehnev and Gorbachev: Consistent Goals, Different Methods		6. AUTHOR(S) David Leo Ruffley	
7. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) AFIT Student at: University of Washington		8. PERFORMING ORGANIZATION REPORT NUMBER AFIT/CI/CIA -90-036	
9. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY NAME(S) AND ADDRESS(ES) AFIT/CI Wright-Patterson AFB OH 45433		10. SPONSORING/MONITORING AGENCY REPORT NUMBER	
11. SUPPLEMENTARY NOTES			
12a. DISTRIBUTION/AVAILABILITY STATEMENT Approved for Public Release IAW AFR 190-1 Distribution Unlimited ERNEST A. HAYGOOD, 1st Lt, USAF Executive Officer, Civilian Institution Programs		12b. DISTRIBUTION CODE	
13. ABSTRACT (Maximum 200 words)			
14. SUBJECT TERMS		15. NUMBER OF PAGES 117	
		16. PRICE CODE	
17. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF REPORT UNCLASSIFIED	18. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF THIS PAGE	19. SECURITY CLASSIFICATION OF ABSTRACT	20. LIMITATION OF ABSTRACT

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AUGO 1 1990
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THESIS ABSTRACT

TITLE: Soviet Policy Toward East Germany Under Brezhnev and Gorbachev: Consistent Goals, Different Methods (117 pages)

AUTHOR: David Leo Ruffley, Captain, USAF

DEGREE PROGRAM: Master of Arts in International Studies (Russian Regional Studies) University of Washington, 1990

Thesis Statement: Soviet policy toward the German Democratic Republic (GDR) has followed varying paths under the leadership of Leonid Brezhnev (1964-1982) and Mikhail Gorbachev (since 1985), and has resulted in dramatically different regimes in East Berlin. Nevertheless, this paper shows that the overriding goals of the Soviets, and the concepts shaping Soviet policy toward the GDR have remained the same.

This study chronicles significant events in Soviet-GDR relations under Brezhnev and Gorbachev. By comparing the Soviet motives and actions in these events, the paper demonstrates that Soviet policy toward the (GDR) has consistently adhered to the following principle: *Agreement & Economic Republic*

Although the GDR depended totally upon the USSR for its very survival, to the Soviets, the GDR was merely a tool to be used to further Soviet national interests. The Soviets will manipulate the pending unification of Germany to maximize Soviet benefits.

Under both Brezhnev and Gorbachev, Soviet security and economic interests led the Soviets to alternately support and then override stated East German policy. Both Soviet leaders facilitated the removal of Socialist Unity Party (SED) leaders who placed their own policies before that of the Soviets. Finally, under both of the Soviet leaders, the GDR was allowed a period of relative independence of action, during which the GDR moved to satisfy its own desires, sometimes in ways contrary to Soviet policy. *to provide the foreign policy goals*

90 07 31 069

Soviet Policy Toward East Germany
Under Brezhnev and Gorbachev:
Consistent Goals, Different Methods

by

David Leo Ruffley

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts in International Studies

University of Washington

1990

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CONTENTS

INTRODUCTION.....	1
CHAPTER 1: SOVIET POLICY TOWARD THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC UNDER LEONID BREZHNEV 1964-1982	
I. Introduction to CH1.....	3
II. Soviet GDR Policy in 1964.....	5
A. Functions of Soviet GDR Policy by 1964.....	5
1) East-West Context.....	6
2) East European Context.....	7
3) German Context.....	8
B. Limits of Soviet GDR Policy in Oct 1964....	8
1) East-West Context.....	8
2) East European Context.....	9
3) German Context.....	11
III. Soviet GDR Policy Under Brezhnev, 1964-1982....	11
A. Vigorous Soviet Support, 1964-1968.....	11
B. Brezhnev (and the world) vs Ulbricht:	
1968-1971.....	15
1) Soviet Receptiveness.....	15
2) Bonn's Overture.....	18
3) US Blessing.....	20
4) Ulbricht's Resistance and Isolation....	20
i) Resistance in Foreign Policy.....	22
ii) Domestic Policies and Obstruction.	25
C. The Treaties and the Coming New Order:	
1970-1975.....	28
1) The Treaty of Moscow.....	28
2) Quadripartite Treaty on Berlin.....	30
3) FRG-GDR Transit Agreement of May 1972..	31
4) Basic FRG-GDR Treaty.....	31
5) Four Power Accord on Germany.....	32
6) New GDR Constitution, 1974.....	32
7) Soviet-GDR Treaty of 1975.....	33
8) Helsinki Accords.....	33
D. Detente Ends...Or Does It?.....	34

IV. STATUS OF SOVIET GDR POLICY, 1982.....	35
A. Functions of Soviet GDR Policy in 1982....	35
1)East-West Context.....	35
2)East European Context.....	35
3)German Context.....	36
B. Limits of Soviet GDR Policy in 1982.....	37
1)East-West Context.....	37
2)East European Context.....	37
3)German Context.....	37
V. CONCLUSION TO CH1.....	38
VI. NOTES TO CH1.....	40

CHAPTER 2: BETWEEN BREZHNEV AND GORBACHEV:
GERMAN DRIVE AND SOVIET DRIFT

I. INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER 2.....	45
II. SOVIET DRIFT.....	46
A. Andropov.....	46
B. Chernenko.....	48
III. GERMAN DRIVE.....	50
A. Relative Conformity:Nov 82-Nov 83.....	53
B. Role Reversals, Restorations: Nov 83-Mar 85.....	53
IV. CONCLUSIONS TO CHAPTER 2.....	58
V. NOTES TO CHAPTER 2.....	60

CHAPTER 3:SOVIET POLICY TOWARD THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC
REPUBLIC UNDER MIKHAIL S. GORBACHEV 1985-1990

I. INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER 3.....	62
II. SOVIET GDR POLICY IN MARCH 1985.....	65
A. Soviet GDR Policy Through 11 Mar 85.....	65
1)East-West Context.....	65
2)East European Context.....	66
3)German Context.....	67

B. Gorbachev's Initial Policy Stance:	
Mar-May 85.....	67
1)East-West Context.....	68
2)East European Context.....	69
3)German Context.....	70
III. EVOLUTION OF SOVIET GDR POLICY UNDER GORBACHEV...	71
A. Harmony, Growing Divergence:	
Mar 85-Apr 87.....	71
B. Tolerance and Independence or Preoccupation and Neglect? Apr 87-Dec 88.....	75
C. Revolution, Loss of Control:	
Jan 89-Feb 90.....	83
D. 2+4 and the Balance of Power:	
Feb-Apr 90.....	90
IV. CONCLUSIONS TO CHAPTER 3.....	93
V. NOTES TO CHAPTER 3.....	95
CONCLUSION.....	99
BIBLIOGRAPHY.....	102

INTRODUCTION

Since WWII, the consistent goal of Soviet policy toward the German Democratic Republic (GDR--prior to 1949 the Soviet Zone of occupation) has been to use Soviet control of the GDR to enhance the vital security, political and economic interests of the USSR in Soviet relations with the West, with Eastern Europe and with West Germany. The Soviets have adjusted their policy toward the GDR to fulfill the needs of these perceived national interests in a rational, calculating manner, with ideological solidarity often taking a back seat to *Realpolitik*.

Under the leadership of Leonid Brezhnev (1964-1982) and Mikhail Gorbachev (since 1985) the relative priorities of Soviet security, economic and political interests have periodically shifted. With these shifts have come changes in the application of Soviet policy and the result that today's East German regime is dramatically different from that of 1982. Even the pending reunification of Germany will be manipulated by the Soviets in any way they can to maximize the benefits to the Soviet Union. Thus, Soviet use of the GDR as a tool for enhancing Soviet national interests has remained the same.

Under both Brezhnev and Gorbachev, Soviet security, political and economic interests led the Soviets to alternately support and then override stated East German policy. Both Soviet leaders facilitated the removal of Socialist Unity Party (SED) leaders who placed their own interests before that of the Soviets. Finally, under both of the Soviet leaders, the GDR was allowed a period of relative independence of action, during which the GDR moved to satisfy its own desires, sometimes in ways contrary to Soviet policy.

This study will first examine the status of the Soviets' GDR policy at Brezhnev's accession in October 1964. From this starting point, this study will chronicle significant events in Soviet-GDR relations under Brezhnev and Gorbachev, as well as in the brief period between them. By comparing Soviet motives, decisions and actions during these events, particularly as revealed in Soviet treaties with the GDR and other nations, pronouncements and declarations of the Warsaw Treaty Organization (WTO) and Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CMEA), and debates within the Soviet and East European press, this paper will illustrate the shifting priorities in Soviet vital interests and demonstrate the overall consistency of Soviet goals despite the vast changes in the GDR's status.

CHAPTER 1:
SOVIET POLICY TOWARD THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC
REPUBLIC UNDER LEONID BREZHNEV 1964-1982

I. INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER 1

During his eighteen years as leader of the Soviet Union, Leonid Brezhnev presided over three notable shifts in the priority of Soviet national interests, which naturally were manifested in Soviet policy towards the German Democratic Republic (GDR). While such priority shifts take place gradually over time, it is possible to categorize them by making note of significant events which indicate that the shift has occurred. In the Brezhnev years, such events included his accession after the 1964 ouster of Khrushchev, marking the transition from the primacy of political interests to a renewed focus on security concerns; the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia, marking a transition from the primacy of security interests to that of political and economic concerns; and the 1975 signing of the Helsinki Accords, which marked a return to dominance of economic and security matters.

Each time the national priorities of the Soviet Union changed, so did its policy toward the GDR. From Brezhnev's accession until the Czech invasion, the Soviets vigorously supported the leader of the GDR,

Walter Ulbricht. After the invasion, however, Ulbricht proved an obstacle to the newly reoriented Soviet Union, and was forced out of office in May of 1971. His successors were able to closely align themselves with the new Soviet line until the years following the 1975 signing of the Helsinki Accords. This time saw the Soviet priority shift again to security concerns, manifested by the deployment of SS20 missiles in Europe. While the GDR paid lip service to this new orientation, behind the scenes, it quietly moved to promote its own national priorities: economic and political interests. The conflict inspired by the incongruity of Soviet and GDR priorities was well established by the time of Brezhnev's death in 1982, and would break into the open before the accession of Mikhail Gorbachev in 1985.

After a brief review of the functions and limitations of Soviet policy towards the GDR at the time of Brezhnev's accession in 1964, this chapter will take a detailed look at the treaties, pronouncements and debates which chronicled the evolution of Soviet GDR policy during the Brezhnev years. While some of the changes seem more revolutionary than evolutionary, all of them comply with one basic principle: for the Soviets, the GDR is a tool, a lever to be applied alternately to the West, to the other nations of East Europe and to the Federal

Republic of Germany, depending on the best use of this tool as perceived in the Kremlin at any given time¹.

II. SOVIET GDR POLICY IN 1964

A. Functions of Soviet GDR Policy by 1964

In the nearly twenty years between the end of World War II and Brezhnev's accession, Soviet policy toward the GDR had become a vital tool of overall Soviet foreign policy.

The GDR served as a particularly useful tool. Due to its widespread perception (both domestically and internationally) as an illegitimate state, whose government was imposed upon an unwilling population by the Soviets, the GDR government had traditionally been unusually dependent on Soviet support. Having established the GDR as a "sovereign" state, the Soviets, as one of the four victorious powers in World War II nevertheless (as shall be discussed below) insisted on retaining their responsibilities for "Germany as a whole". This made the GDR absolutely dependent on the Soviets for its political existence, and illustrates why the Soviet-East German Treaty of 1964 (discussed below) was so important.

In addition to this political support, the GDR had

to rely on the Soviets for economic (especially energy) support after 1953. Before that time, the Soviets had extracted billions in "reparations" for WWII, but after the June 1953 uprising, the Soviets reverted to economic support to prop up the Ulbricht regime².

Beyond political and economic leverage against the GDR, the Soviets ensured GDR compliance via military policy. Nineteen Soviet divisions (380,000 men) are stationed in the GDR. Of all the members of the Warsaw Pact, the GDR is most severely restricted. The GDR's *Nationale Volksarmee* is the only East European force subjected directly to the Pact's Joint Command in peacetime. Further, the Soviets may unilaterally conduct military operations on GDR territory, after only "consultations" with the East German government. All other WTO members must consent to such operations on their territory³.

Thus, for most of the Brezhnev period, Soviet leverage over the GDR was well established in nearly every aspect, making the GDR a particularly pliant tool in East-West, East European, and Soviet relations with the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG).

1) East-West Context

From the end of the war until the building of the Berlin Wall in 1961, Soviet GDR policy as focused on

Berlin lay at the very heart of the Cold War. Both Stalin and Khrushchev had attempted to force the Soviet Union's former allies to bend to her wishes by manipulating the status of Berlin. Although the building of the Wall generated a stability that replaced the high drama of earlier Berlin crises, Berlin would again become a central focus of Soviet policy under Brezhnev.

Aside from Berlin, the GDR itself in 1964 formed the linchpin of the Soviet security system in Europe. Given the GDR's front-line position against NATO and especially her exposed position opposite a growing and assertive FRG, Soviet security concerns dominated her relations with the GDR in the first part of Brezhnev's reign.

2) East European Context

In addition to its role at the focus of the Warsaw Pact, the GDR also played a vital political role in Eastern Europe by 1964. Frequently the leaders of the GDR functioned as a sort of "loyalty lever" against the other Pact states. Either the leaders of the East German party (the Socialist Unity Party--SED) would loudly proclaim the dangers of "West German revanchism" to help inspire the Bloc states to toe the Soviet line, or (increasingly, as time passed) the SED would proclaim the successes of socialism as practiced within the GDR as a model for other Bloc states to emulate.

As this "success" continued, the GDR increasingly became a major source of high technology and high(er) quality goods for the rest of the Bloc. Nevertheless, Moscow's grip on the GDR remained among the tightest in the Bloc.

3) German Context

Less dramatically than Berlin, but just as often, the GDR was used by the Soviets as a lever against the FRG. Such attempts at leverage varied from trying to pull Bonn away from NATO in exchange for reunification with the GDR (variously suggested by Stalin⁴ and even Ulbricht⁵) to extorting hard currency from West German visitors⁶.

Indeed, by 1964 the Soviets had attempted to manipulate the West, Eastern Europe and both German states in various ways with its GDR policy. But, by the time of Brezhnev's accession in October, 1964, the give and take of world politics had imposed some limits on Brezhnev's GDR policy options.

B. LIMITS OF SOVIET GDR POLICY IN OCTOBER 1964

1) East West Context

Since 1956, the primary ideological basis of Soviet foreign policy had been "peaceful coexistence". This concept held that, due to the strength of the postwar

"socialist community", the previous "capitalist encirclement" of the Soviet Union had been broken; thus, war was not "fatalistically inevitable". Socialism would still inevitably triumph, but would do so via "economic competition and ideological struggle" without resort to nuclear war⁷. First enunciated by Khrushchev in 1956, this principle would influence Soviet foreign policy decisions strongly under Brezhnev as well. Unlike Khrushchev, whose brinkmanship in Berlin and Cuban crises could have led to the very East-West war his principle of peaceful coexistence promised to avoid, Brezhnev would not use his GDR policy in the same melodramatic manner as his predecessor, thanks to those same Berlin Crises of 1958-1961 and the Cuban Missile Crisis of 1962. Those events inspired a desire to avoid major East West conflict among key elements of the Soviet leadership, as well as in the West⁸.

2) East European Context

While the fundamental principle of peaceful coexistence was fairly consistently applied to East-West relations, within the Soviet Bloc a different primary ideological underpinning had been applied since 1960; that of "developed socialism"⁹. First proclaimed by the Czech Communist Party in 1960, this concept would become the basis of reform attempts throughout Eastern Europe

until 1971. This concept held that, since all East European states (except Poland) had completed collectivization, socialism had been achieved, and each state must work to perfect that socialism, hastening its evolution into true communism. This doctrine, beginning during Khrushchev's reign, was inconsistently applied and interpreted throughout the Bloc, and became the basis for such diverse plans as Hungary's New Economic Mechanism, the Czech Prague Spring and (as we shall see) the GDR's proclaimed "advanced model of socialism". Each of these attempts at reform would, in turn and to varying degrees, be repressed by the Soviets such that, by 1971, Brezhnev would enforce a standard orthodox interpretation of developed socialism throughout the Bloc. Brezhnev could act freely throughout Eastern Europe, given the relative stability gained by the Berlin Wall and the Czech invasion of 1968 (both discussed below).

While the Berlin Crises helped limit the scope of Brezhnev's actions on the world stage, the Berlin Wall helped expand it in Eastern Europe. The internal stability of the GDR that followed the building of the Wall led to a rapid rise in the economic strength of the country, increasing its prominence within the Bloc¹⁰.

The country's status was further enhanced by the June 1964 Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual

Assistance it signed with the Soviet Union. Long sought by Ulbricht, this treaty pledged alignment of the two nations' foreign policy, giving the GDR an opportunity to make inputs into Soviet foreign policy decision-making¹¹ and raising it to a level more commensurate with that of the other members of the Warsaw Pact.¹²

3) German Context

The same stability that enhanced the status of the GDR within the Bloc also forced the FRG to accept the long-term division of the nation¹³. At the same time, the new-found stability would enable both the Soviet and West German governments to consider overtures to each other that had not been possible before. In fact, Khrushchev himself seemed to be considering such an approach in the early fall of 1964¹⁴.

III. SOVIET GDR POLICY UNDER BREZHNEV, 1964-1982

A. Vigorous Soviet Support, 1964-1968

While Khrushchev may have seen the post-Wall stabilization of the GDR as a chance for an opening to the FRG, other members of the elite in both the GDR and Soviet Union recognized that such an opening could lead to penetration of the Bloc by the FRG¹⁵. This same fear of detente as a dangerous two-way street, which

contributed to Khrushchev's removal in October in 1964, was very much on Brezhnev's mind in September of 1965, when his call for the military and political "perfection" of the Warsaw Pact made it perfectly clear that Soviet concerns about security held priority in policy making at this time¹⁶. Security, for the Soviet leadership, included

sufficient strength and secure border areas to counter Soviet opponents...and (the imposition of) Soviet style regimes in Eastern Europe.¹⁷

While shared fear of penetration by the FRG had initially inspired unprecedented cohesion between the Soviets and East Germans, Brezhnev's call for perfecting the alliance sowed the first seeds of conflict of interest between the two allies. Like other East European states, the GDR resisted further surrender of its sovereignty to the WTO¹⁸. The divergence between GDR and Soviet interests was openly manifested in Bucharest in the early summer of 1966¹⁹.

Declaring themselves to have "no territorial designs on any country in Europe", the nations of the Warsaw Pact called for the convention of a European Security Conference (hereafter referred to as CSCE: Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe). At the same time, they urged the *de jure* recognition of the GDR, but did so

without making such recognition a prerequisite for the Security Conference (much to the GDR's dismay)²⁰. The Bucharest Declaration was intended by the Soviets to woo Western public opinion and put pressure on Bonn to recognize the European *status quo*²¹. Such recognition, which would legitimize the results of WWII and confirm world recognition of the Soviet Union's superpower status, had been (and would continue to be) a vital policy objective of the Soviets.

Even the relative unanimity of the Bucharest Declaration was to prove short lived. December 1966 saw the formation of the "Grand Coalition" in the West German government, bringing Social Democrats into the FRG government for the first time. Almost immediately, the FRG government initiated limited overtures toward Eastern Europe. Within two months, those initiatives would bear fruit and shatter the solidarity of the WTO²².

Rumania's February 1967 recognition of the FRG represented a major threat to the GDR. Throughout 1966 and into 1967 Ulbricht had worked hard to achieve unity among the WTO states behind his "Ulbricht Doctrine" which insisted that no East European state would recognize the FRG until the FRG had bestowed *de jure* recognition on the GDR²³.

The Rumanian defection inspired a level of

cooperation in Soviet and East German policy-making unmatched before or since. At Karlovy Vary in April 1967, Brezhnev renewed his calls for perfecting and strengthening the WTO. This time, however, he was joined by the other Pact states (except Rumania of course) in calling for *de jure* recognition of the GDR by the FRG prior to any FRG talks with other WTO states and as a prerequisite to any intra-German negotiations²⁴.

This renewed unity would carry over into 1968, with the SED leading a Soviet supported drive for Bloc integration and discipline. In the spring of 1968, this drive would become focused on a new potential threat to the Bloc; the Czechoslovakian party and government of Alexander Dubcek²⁵. In March of 1968, the GDR hosted a gathering of the WTO which explicitly warned the Czechs not to recognize the FRG on terms other than those demanded by the GDR. The GDR seemed to have achieved its "veto" power over Bloc FRG policy at last²⁶. This perception was further strengthened by a series of bilateral treaties signed by the GDR with the other Bloc states (except Rumania) in the spring of 1968. Then, in July, with the Czech reforms continuing, the SED formally warned the Czech party against becoming "economically dependent" on a capitalist state (the FRG), and urging the Czechs to join the other socialist states in avoiding

any "political consequences of economic inferiority" by increasing Bloc ties²⁷.

With the invasion of Czechoslovakia in August, GDR-Soviet cooperation had reached its peak. The SED had long called for the invasion, which, when completed, largely satisfied the long-standing Soviet emphasis on security concerns. The invasion, or more precisely, the lack of a strong Western response to it, established a *de facto* recognition of the postwar *status quo*, confirming the Soviet Union as the ultimate power arbiter in Eastern Europe.

B. Brezhnev (and the World) vs. Ulbricht 1968-1971

1) Soviet Receptiveness

Ironically, the same Prague Spring that had done so much for the credibility and status of Ulbricht as described above would also begin his undoing. The crushing of the Czech reform eliminated (for the time being) any vestiges of instability from the Soviet empire in Eastern Europe²⁸. The successful Czech intervention, complemented by the Brezhnev Doctrine which followed, raised the confidence of the Soviet Union to its highest point since WWII²⁹. Certain of their control over East Europe and "seriously engaged" in ideological and outright physical conflict with the Peoples' Republic of

China³⁰, the Soviets began to pursue "broader global interests and seek accommodation with the West on its terms...terms that ultimately threatened Ulbricht"³¹.

The Czech invasion had, as indicated above, satisfied Soviet security concerns for the time being; now political (formal recognition of the position in Eastern Europe that the invasion had consolidated) and economic (increasing concern about falling economic productivity at home) interests began to take precedence.

While some in the Soviet Union argued for domestic social reform as a means to revitalize the economy (most notably the late Andrei Sakharov), or for a combination of social reform and economic decentralization (as manifested in the 1964-1968 Kosygin reform proposals) the leadership was unwilling to accept this approach, fearing it could lead to pluralistic tendencies, thereby repeating the "mistakes" made by Dubcek in Prague in 1968³². Instead, the Brezhnev leadership elected to pursue a safer strategy: intensified discipline and integration in the Bloc, combined with infusions of aid and technology from the capitalist West (especially the FRG), to be obtained via a policy of *detente*³³. Signs of the growing Soviet preparation to make or receive overtures from the FRG on *detente* began to appear as early as March 1969. Meeting in Budapest, the Political Consultative Committee

(PCC) of the WTO appealed once again for a security conference. But this time, contrary to GDR interests and the policies of Karlovy Vary, the Soviets also took a much softer stand toward the FRG³⁴. Later in that same month, Soviet-GDR policy divergence would be further manifested in the ideological realm.

Politburo members Mikhail Suslov and Boris Ponomarev, celebrating the 50th anniversary of the Comintern, refuted Stalin's theory that Social Democrats represented the chief enemies of Communism. Ulbricht, speaking later at the same forum, devoutly defended the 1928 Comintern decision equating Social Democracy with Fascism³⁵. Such theoretical wrangling over the policies of a dead dictator and a defunct organization may seem superfluous, unless one takes note of the 1969 electoral campaign in the Federal Republic of Germany.

The ideological debate in the East continued in July, 1969. During a conference of world Communist Parties in Moscow, Ulbricht alone took an anti-FRG stand, calling the FRG's *Ostpolitik* a "trojan horse" attempt to penetrate the GDR³⁶.

Ulbricht's growing alienation from the Soviet line was again made apparent in early October. Appearing in East Berlin to celebrate the twentieth anniversary of the GDR, Brezhnev delivered a speech that was very

conciliatory toward the FRG, dropped the previously stated demands for *de jure* recognition of the GDR and explicitly opened the door for direct Soviet-West German talks³⁷.

2) Bonn's Overture

Ever since the August 1961 completion of the Berlin Wall, astute politicians in the FRG had recognized the failure of the old Adenauer-era policies of "reunion through strength"³⁸. The "Grand Coalition" of Social Democrat and Christian Union parties in the mid 60's had made incremental, yet positive steps toward changing Bonn's view of the GDR. These small steps, combined with the genuine desire of many Germans to resist the "drifting apart" of the two Germanies³⁹ would set the stage for the first Social Democratic Chancellor, Willy Brandt. Within a week of his election, Brandt made a public speech which clearly reversed many long-standing FRG policies. If the Soviets would abandon their policy of public hostility toward the FRG and renounce any rights to intervention in the Federal Republic, then Brandt was prepared to give *de facto* recognition to the GDR, renounce use of force in relations with other European states, sign the nuclear non-proliferation treaty and, most importantly, recognize the inviolability of the existing post-war boundaries, including the Oder-

Neisse line and the intra-German border⁴⁰.

The initial, indirect Soviet response to Brandt's message came just two days later, at a meeting of WTO Foreign Ministers in Prague. The Soviets gave approval for East European states to negotiate bilaterally with Bonn, effectively ending any GDR "veto" over Bloc relations with the FRG⁴¹.

Just as significant as the content of Brandt's message was its direction-- directly toward Moscow. Negotiations began in January 1970 in Moscow between Brandt's foreign minister Egon Bahr and the Soviets. These negotiations would be difficult and protracted for two reasons: first, because Brandt clearly insisted that his concessions could only be assured by a Four Power treaty on Berlin and second, because Brandt's policy epitomized the GDR's worst nightmare...a direct approach by a rational, flexible and realistic FRG to a receptive and willing Soviet Union, which seemed suddenly willing to forego its proclamation of the "full sovereignty" of the GDR in exchange for political recognition of the division of Europe and economic aid from the FRG. Nevertheless, the negotiations progressed, since both sides stood to benefit, as did the FRG's patron, the United States.

3) US Blessing

The diffusion of tension that followed the completion of the Berlin Wall witnessed a rise in contacts between East and West Europe in cultural and trade areas⁴². This same "thaw" and the growing Soviet conflict with the Peoples' Republic of China (PRC) convinced American policy makers under Kennedy and Johnson that the US could benefit from rapprochement with the Soviets⁴³. In addition, the US feared that Bonn's *Ostpolitik* might lead to concessions contrary to US interests if the US remained detached from the process⁴⁴. As a result, the US willingly participated in the process, and in January, 1970, President Nixon formally announced America's absolute minimum objectives: guaranteed access to West Berlin, continued garrison rights in that city, and the maintenance of West Berlin's special ties to the FRG⁴⁵. Needless to say, this backing for Brandt's plans, combined with the Soviets' willingness to negotiate, further isolated Ulbricht and the GDR.

4) Ulbricht's Resistance and Isolation, 1969-71

The most important objective of Brandt's *Ostpolitik* was, for the FRG, to "preserve the substance of the nation" via increased human contact between East and West Germans⁴⁶. Ironically, Brandt knew his only chance of

success lay in avoiding contact with certain East Germans--namely, Ulbricht and his government. Ulbricht's hard-line stance was well known in the FRG, so Bonn turned to the one power whose absolute authority in East Europe had been so brutally demonstrated in Czechoslovakia one year earlier⁴⁷.

These two aspects of Brandt's policy--the desire for personal contact increases and the direct approach to Moscow spelled absolute disaster for Ulbricht⁴⁸. The personal contacts would undermine the central aspect of Ulbricht's domestic policy, the policy of "demarcation"--an emphasis on the aspects of GDR life that were different from life in the FRG--which Ulbricht had pursued increasingly since 1961⁴⁹. Likewise, the principle tenet of Ulbricht's foreign policy--that of *de jure* recognition as a precondition to any negotiations with the West would be bypassed by the direct Bonn-Moscow dialogue. Economically, Ulbricht's heavy emphasis on developing the East German high technology industry had been intended to provide the Soviet bloc an alternative source of needed technology⁵⁰. But clearly, the GDR hi-tech development in 1969 wasn't ready to compete with that of the FRG. Finally, Ulbricht's ideological effort to advance the GDR as an example of "advanced socialist development"⁵¹ was jeopardized. True to form, Ulbricht

dug in his heels and resisted in each of these threatened areas. He undertook initiatives in the foreign policy, domestic economic and social areas, and finally, in the ideological realm. Each initiative was intended to hinder the development of FRG-Soviet (and general East-West) detente. In reality, as we shall see, each step led to Ulbricht's eventual isolation from his own populace, from his party, and from the Kremlin.

1) Ulbricht's Resistance in GDR Foreign Policy

In December 1969 and January 1970, Ulbricht tried to initiate direct negotiations with Brandt, forwarding to Bonn a draft FRG-GDR treaty. Though the draft treaty repeated long standing GDR demands, it did begin intra-German negotiations without prior *de jure* recognition of the GDR--an SED concession. Ulbricht probably (and successfully) intended the draft to slow Soviet and Polish talks with the FRG. They had to wait for Bonn's response to Ulbricht's move⁵². Sooner than Ulbricht would have liked, Brandt rejected the draft treaty (it called for *de jure* recognition), submitted a counter-proposal and expressed a willingness to compromise. Ulbricht rejected the counterplan, for it contained Brandt's "two German states in one German nation" concept. In response to Brandt's compromise stance (and under intense Soviet pressure; notably a February visit from Gromyko which

forced Ulbricht to drop his demands for *de jure* recognition prior to face-to-face negotiations⁵³), Ulbricht suggested direct meetings between Brandt and GDR Premier Stoph in Erfurt, East Germany⁵⁴. Brandt would have visited East Berlin, but Ulbricht and the GDR objected to his plan to also visit West Berlin, fearing that this would concede Bonn's "special interest" in the city⁵⁵. While the Erfurt meeting ended with each side reiterating its established positions, it did have several important effects. First, the meeting itself was the first manifestation of *de facto* recognition of the GDR by the FRG. Secondly, it crystallized the importance to both sides of the Berlin issue. Brandt emphasized that a Four Power agreement on Berlin was a prerequisite to progress for the FRG⁵⁶. Stoph, in return, declared the GDR position that the Four Powers had no authority or responsibility for Berlin or the GDR⁵⁷. Finally, at Erfurt, the two sides agreed that both would seek entry to the United Nations. This was important, for it revealed the FRG's willingness to see the GDR receive *de jure* recognition from the world community.

Several minor agreements followed the Erfurt meeting. In April, 1970, postal, telephone and trade agreements were reached, increasing FRG contacts with East Germans. In return, the FRG repealed a law that had

allowed for the prosecution of East German officials who visited the FRG if they were believed to have prevented East Germans from emigrating⁵⁸.

At Kassel, West Germany in May, 1970, the GDR once again took a hard-line stance. That the meeting occurred at all, in light of major anti-GDR demonstrations⁵⁹, was probably only due to heavy Soviet pressure. (Ulbricht had been in Moscow until the day before, and Soviet-PRC polemics were raging⁶⁰.)

At Kassel, Brandt presented a 20 point proposal for FRG-GDR relations that was rejected outright, but would resurface again in 1972⁶¹.

Ulbricht's next foreign policy effort was directed towards the other nations of East Europe. As early as 1967, as discussed earlier, Ulbricht had sought to create a "united front" among the Eastern nations against the FRG. They had rejected his overture then, and did so again in 1970. Clearly, they wanted detente⁶². Poland, in fact, had also initiated negotiations with Bonn concerning the Oder-Neisse frontier⁶³. Ulbricht was virtually completely isolated from other East European leaders throughout 1970. He began to temporize, declaring that some attitudes in the FRG were "progressive" and the status of intra-German relations might improve after a Bonn-Moscow treaty⁶⁴. But even after the signing of the

Treaty of Moscow in August of 1970, Ulbricht continued his obstructionist policy, hoping to prevent its ratification which Bonn, as mentioned, had made contingent on a Berlin treaty⁶⁵. Ulbricht's next series of foreign policy moves was much more serious from the Soviet perspective. He attempted to contact and ally with forces in the Soviet Politburo who opposed the negotiations with Bonn, notably Petr Shelest and other Brezhnev opponents⁶⁶. Then, in November 1970 and February 1971, Ulbricht attempted to negotiate directly with the West Berlin Senate, circumventing Four Power control. The Senate rejected his overture⁶⁷. Finally, in March 1971, Ulbricht played his last foreign policy card. Addressing the 24th Congress of the Soviet Communist Party (CPSU), Ulbricht stressed his personal friendship with Lenin, and suggested that even his Soviet comrades had lessons to learn, as he again emphasized the unique and advanced nature of socialism in the GDR⁶⁸. Six weeks later, the results of these foreign policy efforts would be quite clear.

ii) Domestic Policies and Obstruction

At home, Ulbricht's ideological and economic policies were only slightly more successful. The emphasis on high technology begun in 1967-68 had, by 1970, led to some growth in that area, but not nearly as much as

Ulbricht had planned.

By mid 1970, other SED leaders were beginning to question Ulbricht's "revision" of priorities⁶⁹. When, in September 1970, the 1971-1975 plan was revealed, Ulbricht's opponents had forced more modest hi-tech goals than those which Ulbricht had sought⁷⁰. Further opposition developed from Ulbricht's elevation of technocrats--plant managers and specialists--to a level previously reserved for Party *apparatchiks*⁷¹. Further economic complications developed throughout 1970, as the impact of worldwide recession caused the GDR economy to falter. The consumer goods that had helped resign the GDR's people to their fate became more scarce, and Ulbricht's support dwindled. At the same time, his emphasis on the "unique" accomplishments of the GDR (his "demarcation" policy) began to sound more hollow as the initial contacts with FRG citizens began after Erfurt.

While the discussion so far has centered mainly on Ulbricht's resistance, the FRG and Soviets were also actively asserting themselves, pressing to advance detente. In addition to the PRC clashes mentioned, the Soviets were also motivated by economic failures in their own country and throughout Eastern Europe. The January 1970 announcement by the FRG of a DM1.2 billion gas agreement with the Soviets wasn't made just days before

Bahr and Gromyko began to negotiate the Treaty of Moscow just by coincidence⁷². The signing of that Treaty in August, and the conclusion of the Polish-West German Agreement in November kept the heat on Ulbricht and ended all GDR hopes for any "package deals". When Ulbricht skipped the informal WTO summit in Hungary in November and sent a second level SED member at the head of his delegation, Gromyko visited East Berlin. Ulbricht's isolation from the rest of the Bloc was again clear in December, when the WTO PCC met in East Berlin, calling for GDR admission to the UN and renewing the call for CSCE, but without linking the two concepts⁷³.

Ulbricht's ideological support within the SED also fell throughout 1971. The "advanced system of socialism" he'd advocated, first in January, then in March, was clearly unacceptable to the Soviets. Visits to East Berlin by Gromyko and open opposition by SED and CPSU speakers throughout the winter of 1970-1971, as well as omissions of Ulbricht speeches by the Soviet press should have made clear to Ulbricht the unacceptability of his position. Honecker and the other key SED leaders openly adopted the Soviet position early in 1971⁷⁴. Bypassed by Bonn, ignored by others in East Europe, deserted by his own SED, chastised by the Kremlin and faced with a signed Treaty of Moscow and a pending one on

Berlin, Ulbricht was, by May 1971, completely isolated. On the third of May, after a visit to Moscow, Ulbricht requested retirement for "health reasons"⁷⁵. Less than one month later, a draft Four Power treaty was initialed in Berlin.

Ulbricht had clearly delayed the Berlin pact, and hence the ratification of the August 1970 Treaty of Moscow. With his departure, the negotiations gained new momentum. In September, 1971, the Quadripartite Treaty on Berlin was completed. Ulbricht's removal (and the July fifteenth US announcement that Kissinger would visit the PRC⁷⁶) had cleared the way for this, the cornerstone of the series of treaties that would change the status of Europe.

C. The Treaties and The Coming New Order, 1970-1975

Ulbricht had delayed the Berlin agreement and the ratification of the Treaty of Moscow. That August 1970 treaty represented the first time that the Soviet Union had rejected clearly stated GDR positions in favor of relations with the West. Given this fact, and the depth of Ulbricht's opposition, the treaty deserves review.

1) The Treaty of Moscow, 12 Aug 1970

The invasion of Czechoslovakia and the Brezhnev

Doctrine had clearly established the Soviet Union as the ultimate arbiter of East Europe. Thus Brandt and the FRG made their first proposals to the Soviets. Basically a renunciation of force treaty, the Treaty of Moscow contained several major concessions by Bonn.

For the first time, Bonn agreed that existing borders were inviolable (not permanent, as we shall see). It extended *de facto* recognition to the GDR, and ended the Hallstein Doctrine (which had specified that the FRG would not have relations with any state recognizing East Germany)⁷⁷. Bonn did insist on one Soviet concession. By linking ratification of the treaty to a Four Power agreement on Berlin, Bonn forced the Soviets to admit to Four Power responsibility. Two additional caveats to the ratification were attached to, but not part of, the treaty. The Soviets silently accepted Bonn's declaration of intent to seek peaceful reunification via self determination and Bonn's acknowledgment of Four Power responsibility for all of Germany⁷⁸. The note on reunification was required by Bonn's need to adhere to the Basic Law of the FRG, by which the FRG government is bound to work toward reunification⁷⁹.

Thus, without the Four Power Berlin Treaty, no other treaties could come into effect. The Quadripartite Treaty

therefore formed the cornerstone of the treaty series.

2) The Quadripartite Pact on Berlin, Sept 1971

The Four Power treaty on Berlin didn't resolve any of the problems affecting that troubled city. It did however, legitimize the *status quo*⁸⁰.

The treaty confirmed the right of the three Western powers to garrison West Berlin. The Soviet Union guaranteed access by the Western powers to West Berlin (another blow to the GDR). All parties agreed that the FRG should not be allowed to conduct certain federal functions in West Berlin (election of Chancellor, etc.), but that the FRG could represent West Berlin in non-military international affairs. Thus, West Berlin was agreed to be not part of either the FRG or GDR, but to have "special ties" to the FRG. West Berliners were, for the first time, to be allowed to visit the GDR in the same status as FRG citizens. Finally and most importantly, the Four Powers agreed that the details of transit and communications that the treaty guaranteed should be worked out between the GDR and FRG, subject to Four Power approval⁸¹.

Negotiations on the transit agreement would mark the first time that the FRG and GDR would meet, as equals, without preconditions in an internationally recognized

negotiation⁸². Though the GDR initially slowed the negotiations, both the US and USSR applied pressure⁸³ and in May 1972, the FRG-GDR agreement was completed.

3) FRG-GDR Transit Agreement of May 1972

The minutiae of the transit agreement are not in themselves important. What is significant is the fact that the agreement opened the way for continuing FRG-GDR talks. Once these talks were complete (in May 1972) and were recognized as fulfilling the Four Power requirements set forth in the Quadripartite Agreement, the stage was set for the ratification of the Moscow Treaty and the Quadripartite Agreement. Ratification was achieved in June 1972 and in itself set the stage for the next step, the FRG-GDR Basic Treaty of 1972.

4) Basic FRG-GDR Treaty

After three years of continuous effort, Brandt's *Ostpolitik* achieved its crowning glory. The Basic Treaty established FRG-GDR relations largely along the points of Brandt's draft from Kassel, and it resembled the Treaty of Moscow and the Berlin accord. In it, the two Germanies renounced the use of force in dealing with each other, declared the inter-German border inviolable, recognized each other's territory and authority, renounced claims to speak for each other's citizens and agreed to exchange missions (not ambassadors). The treaty was signed in

December, 1972. Less than one year later, both Germanies entered the United Nations. Thus, both states achieved "normal" world status and "special" intra-German relations. Both sides had given concessions, but time would show that both had also gained a great deal.

5) Four Power Accord on Germany

As negotiations on the Basic Treaty drew to a close, the final Four Power Treaty of the treaty series was completed. On the fifth of November, 1972, the Four Powers agreed to formally reaffirm their responsibility for Berlin and all of Germany, independent of the Basic Treaty and pending UN membership of the two German states⁸⁴.

6) New GDR Constitution of 1974

While not technically a treaty, the revised GDR constitution of October 1974 is included here because it marks a significant readjustment on the part of the SED, seeking to cope with the world as redefined by the treaties mentioned above. Most significantly, the new constitution deleted all previous references to the existence of one German nation. Instead, it stresses the existence of the GDR as a separate, sovereign and permanent nation that is "irrevocably allied" with the Soviet Union⁸⁵. These clauses betray the fear of penetration by the West that continued to haunt the SED,

driving Honecker's government (at least, for a while) to the most abject loyalty to the Soviets. This loyalty was formally manifested one year later, in the renewal of the Soviet-East German Treaty of Friendship, Cooperation and Mutual Assistance of October 1975.

7) Soviet-GDR Treaty of October 1975

The renewal of this treaty before the expiration of the old one reveals how important it was to the GDR. Like the constitutional reform of 1974, the treaty stresses the "irrevocable alliance" of the Soviet Union and the GDR, with the significant difference that this time the Soviets say so too⁸⁶. Even more important to the Soviets, however, were the Helsinki Accords, also signed in 1975.

8) Helsinki Accords

Officially the Final Act of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, the Helsinki accords marked the high point of Soviet East European policy, and another transition point in the priority of Soviet national interests. The successful completion of this long-sought conference with its accompanying East-West detente inspired the Soviet leadership with confidence⁸⁷. Having attained formal recognition of their security interests (*de facto* recognition had existed since Czechoslovakia 1968) as well as formal recognition of

Soviet superpower status (the major political interest since WWII), Brezhnev and the Soviet elite counted on the improved relations with the West to help solve their ongoing economic crises as a safer option than internal reform as discussed earlier. Given extra room for maneuver by the relaxation of tensions, even the GDR began to pursue increased economic dealings with the FRG, covering its bets by stressing all the while further integration and discipline within the Bloc. Unfortunately for the Soviets and East Germans, the "honeymoon" with the West after Helsinki would be all too abruptly ended.

D. Detente Ends...Or Does It? (1976-1982)

The same confidence inspired in the Soviet elite by Helsinki would contribute to the end of detente. Soviet adventurism in the Third World (actively supported by the GDR) and especially the invasion of Afghanistan, would increase tensions with the West. These tensions were further aggravated by Western (especially the US under Carter) emphasis on the human rights aspects of the Helsinki Accords, and the rapidly worsening economic situation throughout Eastern Europe (which would soon lead to the Solidarity explosion in Poland). Soviet deployments of SS20 missiles in Eastern Europe and the western Soviet Union would inspire the 1979 NATO "dual

track" decision to deploy its own updated intermediate nuclear force. On the surface, the rise in tensions seemed to push the Soviets and East Germans even more closely together, as reflected in Honecker's increasingly hard-line rhetoric⁸⁸. Behind the scenes, however, GDR-FRG ties continued to grow, with implications that would only become clear after the death of Brezhnev in 1982.

IV. STATUS OF SOVIET GDR POLICY, 1982

A. Functions of Soviet GDR Policy in 1982

1) East-West Context

Upon Brezhnev's death in November, 1982, the role of the GDR in overall East-West relations remained similar to, but less prominent than its role in 1964. In 1982 the GDR remained the linchpin of the Soviet buffer zone against NATO, especially in light of the 1980-81 crisis in Poland. The SS20s stationed in the GDR served as reminders of the exposed status of the country. Likewise, the growing role of the GDR in Moscow's Third World plans kept the GDR playing a prominent role in East-West relations⁸⁹.

2) East European Context

The loyalty and relative prosperity of the GDR seemed all the more pronounced and important in 1982 when

compared to the shambles of Poland. Ideologically and economically, the GDR represented the most promising success story of East European socialism. Just as vitally, the GDR's access to Western goods and technology via the FRG were increasingly important as the WTO economies continued to decline. The improved status of the GDR within the Bloc was evident at the 26th Party Congress of the CPSU in 1981, when Honecker was the first of the East European leaders to speak, a privilege previously reserved for Poland.

3) German Context

On the surface, the GDR in 1982 strongly supported the Soviets' objectives, leading the fight to convince the FRG not to go ahead with the deployment of NATO INF forces. But this attempt to weaken the FRG's ties with NATO and the US was secondary to the GDR's primary goal--to safeguard intra-German economic ties⁹⁰. The GDR economy was increasingly dependent on FRG support, and the SED moved behind the scenes to insure that the support continued. In addition to these rather obvious economic motives, the SED policy of "damage limitation" and keeping the relationship with Bonn open gained valuable public support for the SED leadership with the East German population⁹¹.

B. Limits of Soviet GDR Policy in 1982

1) East-West Context

The Afghan invasion combined with the election of Ronald Reagan as US President placed strong constraints on any Soviet use of the GDR as a lever against the West (other than the FRG). The renewed Cold War contrasted strongly with the tendencies toward detente evident in 1964.

2) East European Context

The virtual collapse of Poland in 1980-81 had seen the GDR take its place as the "second among equals" within the Bloc, as noted above, and the Soviets increasingly demanded high technology and high quality goods from the GDR.

3) German Context

Ever since the signing of the Eastern Treaties, both Germanies gradually began to shed their absolute dependence on and subservience to their respective superpowers. The new system of relations, defined by the Eastern Treaties, enabled them to pursue their own interests⁹². Thus, even while waging rhetorical battles with the FRG, Honecker and the SED sought to insulate the intra-German relationship from the overall decline in East-West relations. The SED's ability to do so is indicative of the greatly increased strength and self

confidence of the GDR since 1964, as the GDR's interests were, by 1982, no longer in complete synchronization with those of the Soviet Union. This difference would become much more pronounced after 1982, and will be dealt with in the next chapter.

V. CONCLUSION TO CHAPTER 1

As we have seen, Soviet priorities have shifted through several pronounced phases from 1964-1982. Each of those shifts has been manifested in a change in the nature of Soviet GDR policy. Generally speaking, the Soviets strongly supported GDR national interests prior to the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia, when the Soviets' primary concern involved security interests, namely the consolidation and recognition of the East European buffer zone. On the contrary, from 1968 to 1975, the Soviets blatantly overrode stated GDR national interests to accommodate the Soviets' increased emphasis on political objectives (obtaining formal recognition of the East European *status quo* via detente) and economic needs (not the least of which was the purchase of US grain to offset the agricultural disasters of the early 70's). Finally, in the period after 1975, when security and economic issues became most critical, the Soviets and East Germans drew closer, on the surface, to sharing similar

interests. Sometimes, however, behind the scenes tensions began to grow in visibility and severity over the nature of GDR-FRG relations. The single constant throughout the Brezhnev period has been repeated Soviet manipulation of the GDR as a tool to gain leverage against the West, the other East Europeans, and most vividly, against the FRG.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 1

- ¹ For a detailed discussion of Soviet manipulation of the GDR in various areas, see Angela Stent "Soviet Policy Toward the German Democratic Republic" in S.M. Terry, *Soviet Policy in Eastern Europe* pp.33-60.
- ² Turner, H.A. *The Two Germanies since 1945*, p. 125.
- ³ For more detailed descriptions of the "second class" role of the GDR in the WTO, see Croan, M. *East Germany: The Soviet Connection* p. 49 and A. Ross Johnson "The Warsaw Pact: Soviet Military Policy in Eastern Europe" in Terry, pp. 267-268.
- ⁴ Turner, p. 123.
- ⁵ M. McCauley "The GDR and the Soviet Union" in D. Childs *Honecker's Germany*, (henceforth Childs 85) p. 155.
- ⁶ Windsor, P. *City on Leave: A History of Berlin* p. 226.
- ⁷ Reshetar, J.S. *The Soviet Polity*. 2d ed p. 85.
- ⁸ Wettig G. *Community and Conflict in the Soviet Camp* (henceforth Wettig 75), p.10 and p. 16.
- ⁹ Much of the following discussion of developed socialism is taken from Terry "Theories of Socialist Development in Soviet East European Relations" in Terry, pp. 221-253.
- ¹⁰ Moreton N.E. *East Germany and the Warsaw Alliance: The Politics of Detente*, (henceforth Moreton 78) p. 39 and Griffith W.E. *The Ostpolitik of the Federal Republic of Germany* (henceforth Griffith 78), p. 102.
- ¹¹ McCauley in Childs 85, p. 157.
- ¹² Remington, R.A. *The Warsaw Pact: Case Studies in Crisis Resolution*, p. 39.
- ¹³ Griffith 78, p.102.
- ¹⁴ Stent in Terry, p. 37.
- ¹⁵ Croan, p. 16.

- ¹⁶Remington, p. 83.
- ¹⁷A. Ross Johnson in Terry, p. 255.
- ¹⁸Remington, p. 83.
- ¹⁹While the meeting occurred in late May, the declaration was not published in *Pravda* until July. See Larrabee, F.S. *The Two German States and European Security* p. 187.
- ²⁰Complete text of Bucharest Declaration is translated in Remington, pp. 209-221.
- ²¹Larrabee, p.187.
- ²²*Bundestag Press, Questions on German History* p. 411.
- ²³Croan, p21 and Stent in Terry, p. 37.
- ²⁴Remington, p.90 and McCauley in Childs 85p. 150.
- ²⁵Croan, p. 16.
- ²⁶Remington, pp.96-98.
- ²⁷Sodaro, M. "Ulbricht's Grand Design: Economics, Ideology and the GDR's Response to Detente" in *World Affairs*, Winter, 1980, p. 153.
- ²⁸Heidenheimer, A.J. *The Governments of Germany*, 4th ed p. 349.
- ²⁹Larrabee, p. 188.
- ³⁰Griffith 78, p. 184 and Heidenheimer, p. 349.
- ³¹Stent in Terry, p. 38.
- ³²Edmonds, R. *Soviet foreign Policy: The Brezhnev Years*, pp.84-85.
- ³³Ellison H.J. (ed) *Soviet Policy Toward Western Europe: Implications for the Atlantic Alliance*, pp. 16-17 and Hutchings, R.L. *Soviet-East European Relations: Consolidation and Conflict* p.9.
- ³⁴Wettig 75, p. 52; Croan, p. 23; Remington, p. 114. Full text of Budapest Appeal in Remington, pp. 225-228.

- ³⁵Stent in Terry, p. 39; Wettig 75, p. 53; Croan, p. 23
Remington, p. 119 and Childs, D. *The GDR: Moscow's German
Ally* (henceforth Childs 88), p.80.
- ³⁶Remington, p. 120.
- ³⁷Remington, p. 121.
- ³⁸Keithly, D.M. *Breakthrough in the Ostpolitik: The 1971
Quadripartite Agreement* p. 53.
- ³⁹Bundestag, p. 422.
- ⁴⁰Griffith 78, p. 174 and Bundestag, p. 427.
- ⁴¹Remington, p. 122.
- ⁴²Korbonski, A. "East Europe and the US" in *Current
History*, April, 1969 p. 203.
- ⁴³*Ibid.* p. 201.
- ⁴⁴Frey, E.G. *Division and Detente: The Germanies and their
Alliances* p. 62.
- ⁴⁵Keithly, p. 67.
- ⁴⁶Bundestag, p. 422 and Griffith 78, p. 125.
- ⁴⁷Keithly, p. 60 and Stent in Terry, p. 38.
- ⁴⁸Keithly, p. 75.
- ⁴⁹Wettig 75, p. 140.
- ⁵⁰Sodaro in *World Affairs*, p. 157.
- ⁵¹Turner, p. 142 and Griffith 78, p. 204.
- ⁵²Griffith 78, p. 186; Wettig 75, p. 57; Croan, p. 25 and
Remington, pp. 126-128.
- ⁵³Remington, p. 135.
- ⁵⁴Keithly, p. 79.
- ⁵⁵Keithly, p. 90; Wettig 75, pp. 71-72; Croan, p. 26 and
Remington, p.136.

- ⁵⁶Keithly, p. 96; Wettig 75, p.74 and p. 83; Heidenheimer, p. 357.
- ⁵⁷Moreton 78, p. 162; Keithly, p. 92.
- ⁵⁸Keithly, p. 97.
- ⁵⁹Remington, p. 146.
- ⁶⁰Keithly, p. 97 and Remington, pp. 139-140.
- ⁶¹Griffith 78, p. 189 and Turner, p. 150.
- ⁶²Stent in Terry, p. 41 and Keithly, p. 58.
- ⁶³Turner, p. 51.
- ⁶⁴ Moreton 78, p. 69.
- ⁶⁵Croan, p. 28 and Remington, p. 156.
- ⁶⁶Wettig 75, pp.91-92; Croan, p. 24; Griffith 78, p. 203 and Moreton 78, p. 175.
- ⁶⁷Keithly, p. 122;Griffith 78, pp. 200-201.
- ⁶⁸Frey, p. 9; Croan, p. 28; Keithly, p. 126 and Wettig 75, p. 92.
- ⁶⁹Sodaro in *World Affairs*, p. 163 and Remington, p. 146.
- ⁷⁰Sodaro in *World Affairs*, p. 164
- ⁷¹Sodaro in *World Affairs* p. 161 and Turner, p. 144.
- ⁷²Remington, p. 128.
- ⁷³Remington, pp. 160-161.
- ⁷⁴Griffith 78, p. 201-202 and Wettig 75, p. 85.
- ⁷⁵Turner, p. 153 and Moreton 78, p.102.
- ⁷⁶Keithly, p. 133 and Wettig 75, p. 102.
- ⁷⁷Griffith 78, pp.191-192.
- ⁷⁸London, K. in *Current History*, Oct 70, pp.238ff.

- ⁷⁹Moreton 78, p. 150 and Turner, p. 150.
- ⁸⁰Keithly, p. 151 and Turner, p. 153.
- ⁸¹Turner, p. 153 and Griffith 78, p. 200 and Wettig 75, pp108-110.
- ⁸²Keithly, p. 173.
- ⁸³Keithly, p. 178 and Turner, p. 154.
- ⁸⁴*Current History* Jan 73, p. 41; Ginsbergs, G.S. (ed) *A Calendar of Soviet Treaties: 1958-1973* p.82; Wettig 75, pp.128-129.
- ⁸⁵Croan, p. 34 and McCauley in Childs 85, p. 160.
- ⁸⁶McCauley in Childs 85, p148, p. 160; Stent in Terry, p. 42.
- ⁸⁷Edmonds, p. 150: Griffith Wm. E. *Central and Eastern Europe: The Opening Curtain?*, pp.110-111.
- ⁸⁸Note particularly Honecker's "Gera demands" of Oct 1980 in Stent in Terry, p. 57.
- ⁸⁹For a brief overview of GDR activity in the Third World, see Krisch, H. *The German Democratic Republic: The Search for Identity* pp.65-72.
- ⁹⁰R. Fritsch-Bournazel in Larrabee, p.47.
- ⁹¹Childs *The GDR: Moscow's German ally 2d ed*, p. 325 and Asmus, R.D. "The Dialectics of Detente and Discord: The Moscow-East Berlin-Bonn Triangle" in *Orbis* Winter 1985, p. 768.
- ⁹²R. Fritsch-Bournazel in Larrabee. pp.41-42.

CHAPTER 2:
BETWEEN BREZHNEV AND GORBACHEV:
GERMAN DRIVE AND SOVIET DRIFT

I. INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER 2

Security and economic priorities remained the dominant factors of Soviet policy toward the GDR in the immediate post-Brezhnev period. Security priorities were manifested in the deployment of SS20 missiles in the GDR and Czechoslovakia, which accelerated in October 1982. Economic concerns would be focused by the June 1984 CMEA summit meeting in Moscow. In retrospect, however, the most important aspect of Soviet-East German relations during this inter-regnum period is the growth of self-confidence and assertiveness in the GDR. Caused in part by the continuing weakness and temerity of Soviet leadership, the dynamism of the Honecker regime between 1982 and 1985 led to great changes in the relationships between the GDR and Soviet Union, and between the GDR and other socialist states. These changes would, in turn, set the stage for Soviet policy toward the GDR upon the accession of Mikhail Gorbachev in March 1985.

This chapter will focus on the interaction between the aggressive GDR leadership and the seemingly paralyzed Soviet elite in the pre-Gorbachev years, with particular emphasis on the growing role of the Federal

Republic in SED decision-making and on the "alliance" of interests that developed between the GDR and Hungary, who frequently acted in concert, supporting each other ideologically in opposition to Soviet positions. The chapter will conclude with the September 1984 reassertion of Soviet dominance, as manifested in the postponement of Honecker's planned visit to the FRG, and an assessment of the legacy that these years of turbulence in Soviet-GDR relations would present to Gorbachev.

II. SOVIET DRIFT

As Brezhnev's health gradually failed in the last years of his tenure, Soviet policy towards the GDR (and, in fact, Soviet foreign policy-making in general) took on an air of listlessness, of "muddling through" that some writers would come to classify as a "malaise" among Soviet leaders by the end of 1982¹. This atmosphere of confusion and factionalism that dominated the Kremlin leadership continued under both Yuri Andropov and Konstantin Chernenko, and was vital to the new latitude available to the GDR and other Bloc states.

A. Andropov (Nov 82-Feb 84)

The accession of Andropov, former head of the KGB and Ambassador to Hungary in 1956 gave rise to many

rumors and much speculation in November 1982, ranging from predictions of a return to Stalinism to expectations of reform. In his first major speech (22 Nov 82), Andropov seemed ready to take command. He repeated Brezhnev's policy (expressed in his last major speech on 27 Oct) of increasing the Soviet arms build-up as a response to that of the Reagan Administration, yet also asserted a willingness to pursue a return to detente with the US, though he ruled out any "preliminary concessions"². Despite this pronouncement, concessions did occur, most notably in February 1983, when Soviet negotiators at the Strategic Arms Reduction Talks (START) hinted that on-site verification, long a US demand and a Soviet taboo, might be possible. Such overtures, combined with top echelon personnel shifts (most significantly for this study, the promotion of Mikhail Gorbachev to full Politburo membership and the removal of Petr Abrasimov as ambassador to the GDR) and the announcement in January 1984 of a plan to streamline management procedures in selected industries promised a vitality long lacking in the Soviet leadership³. The expectations raised by these initiatives were, however, to go unfulfilled. By late 1983, Andropov's own deteriorating health led to the return of the drift in

Soviet policy. In contrast to the atmosphere of expectation that had surrounded Andropov's accession, the February 1984 announcement of his death and succession by Konstantin Chernenko did nothing to inspire hope for a continued regeneration of Soviet leadership.

B. Chernenko (Feb 84-Mar 85)

Most observers of Kremlin politics expected very little innovation by the Chernenko regime, and they were not disappointed. A long-time Brezhnev protege, Chernenko's short tenure witnessed the return of many of the classic elements of the Brezhnev and even earlier years, including policies toward the West and toward Eastern Europe that hearkened back to the frostiest days of the Cold War.

Chernenko's foreign policy was dominated by a fixation on the continuing NATO deployment of Intermediate Range Nuclear Forces (INF). To counter Soviet SS20 deployments, NATO had decided in December 1979, to pursue a "dual-track" policy of negotiating with the Soviets, while at the same time proceeding with the deployment of Pershing 2 and Ground Launched Cruise Missiles (GLCMs) throughout Western Europe. In December, 1983, following the decision by the Federal Republic to proceed with its scheduled deployment, the Soviets

abandoned the INF negotiations in protest⁴. In April 1984, at a meeting of Warsaw Pact Foreign Ministers in Budapest, Chernenko demanded that the West restore the pre-deployment *status quo* as a precondition to resumption of negotiations, seconding a hard-line speech the week before by that pre-eminent cold warrior Andre Gromyko, who had referred to Western proposals for renewed negotiations as "camouflage" for policies of aggression⁵.

In addition to Chernenko's demands and the Soviet boycott of negotiations, a third relic of the Cold War years was injected into overall East-West relations in May and June of 1984, when the Soviet press launched a vicious attack on the "revanchist" tendencies of the Bonn government (which will be discussed in detail below).

Cold War tactics resurfaced within the East European context of Soviet foreign policy as well. The WTO Foreign Ministers' meeting at which Chernenko issued his demand to the West was held in Budapest, which, as we shall see, was engaged in an ideological struggle with the Kremlin at the time. The very fact that such a multilateral forum was chosen for Chernenko's demands was a means of applying pressure to the Bloc states to concur with the Soviet position. This maneuver would be repeated in Moscow in June of 1984, when the CMEA held its first summit in the Soviet capital in fifteen years. But the

most ominous replay of Cold War tactics occurred in the GDR in June and July of 1984. Exasperated with the Honecker regime, Chernenko ordered the conduct of Soviet military maneuvers within the territory of the GDR without the consent of East Berlin⁶.

The crude, arrogant, unsophisticated nature of Soviet foreign policy under Chernenko, as indicated, was not new. Stalin, Khrushchev and Brezhnev had each issued ultimata, boycotted negotiations and/or bullied satellites with high pressure conferences and military force. What made 1984 unique was not these tactics, nor the high tension between the Soviets and the West and among the Bloc states. The tensions of 1984 differed from those of earlier years because of the self-confident actions of East European states which helped inspire the tension, and in the reactions of the East Europeans to the harsh tactics, once they were applied. Ironically, the primary inspiration for and target of Chernenko's Cold War wrath was that recently most orthodox and loyal of the satellite states, Honecker's German Democratic Republic.

III. GERMAN DRIVE

As discussed earlier, the GDR under Erich Honecker had, since 1980-1981, replaced Poland as the most

stable, reliable and orthodox of the Soviet satellites. It is critical to keep in mind, throughout the discussion which follows, that Honecker and the SED were still devout Communists, still the rock of the Warsaw Pact, and still loyal to the Soviet Union⁷. First and foremost, however, the leaders of the GDR were East German Communists, acting in the perceived best interest of the GDR by cultivating relations with Bonn. The fact that the SED leaders were unwilling to subordinate the national interests of the GDR to the "socialist internationalist" interests of the Bloc as proclaimed by the Soviets was not, as we shall see, unique. Other Bloc states acted in the same way. What most worried Moscow was the fact that East Berlin's benefactors in Bonn were also German. The ethnic, cultural and "national" connotations were obvious, and to Moscow, ominous.

The treaties of the early 1970's discussed in Chapter 1 (and which, ironically, had been forced upon the GDR by the Soviets) established a system of intra-German relations that proved to be mutually beneficial for the two German states. Governments in Bonn fulfilled their constitutional obligations to pursue reunification by maintaining Brandt's "substance of the nation". Honecker's regime gained domestic legitimacy and economic benefit. Given Honecker's impeccable record of loyalty

and hard-line orthodoxy, Moscow tolerated East Berlin's special relations with Bonn throughout the 1970s. As Brezhnev's prowess, and the Soviets' leadership, began to erode after 1978, and as economies throughout the Bloc continued to decline, that tolerance withered. The INF deployments, and the resultant tensions, would stretch that tolerance to the breaking point.

The real deterioration in Soviet-GDR relations began gradually in 1982. Honecker's government, having repeatedly demonstrated its orthodox loyalty since the NATO "dual track" decision (via Honecker's 1980 hard-line Gera demands, increase in the minimum currency exchange for visitors from the FRG and 1981 pre-eminence at the 26th CPSU congress, all mentioned earlier) suddenly found itself ravaged by a massive (and unexpected) cut in Soviet oil exports in mid 1982. Only large scale credits from the FRG *Bundesbank* prevented a major financial crisis⁸.

Brezhnev's October 1982 announcement of increased defense spending, reaffirmed by Andropov in November as discussed above, gave increased credence to the perception throughout Eastern Europe that Soviet economic subsidies would continue to decline⁹. This perception, in turn, increased the significance of East German economic ties to the Federal Republic. (As we shall see,

this would, in turn, increase Soviet suspicions.)

A. Relative Conformity: Nov 1982-Nov 1983

Nevertheless, Soviet and East German positions remained well coordinated throughout late 1982 and most of 1983 (despite a DM1 billion credit from the FRG to GDR in June of 1983¹⁰). Both Moscow and East Berlin carried on a vigorous rhetorical campaign against the pending INF deployments in West Germany, and support for (in the West) and toleration of (in the GDR) unofficial "peace movements" opposed to the deployments. This would change in November 1983, when the FRG announced that it would proceed as scheduled with the deployment of the Pershing and GLCM missiles.

B. Role Reversals and Restorations: Nov 83-Mar 85

Despite condemning the Bonn decision, Honecker immediately announced a policy of "damage limitation", intended to preserve the system of intra-German relations established by the Eastern Treaties¹¹. This position differed dramatically from that of the Soviets, who broke off INF negotiations in December 1983 and urged their allies to pursue policies intended to "punish" the FRG for its deployment decision. Thus the beginning of 1984 saw the Soviet Union and GDR in positions exactly opposite those of the late 1960's and early 70's, when

the Soviets had had to prod the Ulbricht regime toward detente with the West, and especially with the FRG. These diametrically opposed viewpoints would make 1984 a year of dramatic and unprecedented ideological confrontation between two "mini-coalitions" within the Soviet Bloc¹².

In January 1984, the Hungarian newspaper *Társadalmi Szemle* published an article by Hungarian Central Committee Secretary for International Affairs Matyas Szuros that would turn East Berlin's non-compliance with the Soviets' punishment policy into a Bloc-wide ideological struggle. Briefly summarized, Szuros' article maintained that the days of the Cold War-mandated unity of Soviet and East European interests were past, and that the national interests of each socialist country must take priority in the policy making of individual socialist states and must be considered by the Bloc when formulating common policy. Additionally, it was both possible and prudent for individual socialist and capitalist states to maintain and develop good bilateral relations, even in times of overall East-West tension¹³, as such ties would enhance peaceful stability and lower such tension.

Szuros' position was attacked in late March in the party newspaper of Czechoslovakia, *Rude Pravo*, with special emphasis on the falsity of Szuros' emphasis on

"national interests" and the independent role he envisaged for small states. The socialist commonwealth must remain unified to avoid penetration by the West. This attack was reprinted by the Soviets' *Novoe Vremya* in April 1984, revealing the Soviet stance on the issues.

Szuross defended his position in several articles in April, and received backing from Hungarian party leader Janos Kadar. Szuro's defense was reprinted in April in the SED mouthpiece *Neues Deutschland*. This time the Soviets replied directly, with an article in *Voprosy Istorii KPSS* written under pseudonym by O. Rakhmanin, the CPSU Deputy Head of the Central Committee Department for Liason with the Communist and Workers Parties of the Socialist Countries¹⁴, who again emphasized the need to avoid "nationalist" deviations which could harm the common interests of the Bloc.

Thus the ideological battle lines were drawn, with the Hungarians and East Germans (supported to some degree by Rumania) opposed to the Soviets and Czechs. This ideological struggle would be reflected in increasingly visible divergence of interests between these "mini-coalitions" throughout 1984.

As discussed above, Chernenko used the WTO Foreign Ministers' meeting in Budapest in April to issue demands to the West for reversal of the INF deployment. While

this tactic of pressuring the Bloc states for compliance was straight from the Cold War annals, the result was not. The final communique of the conference reflected divisions within the Bloc, holding that although the current situation was difficult, the socialist nations did not consider it to be irreversible, and that it (contrary to Chernenko's position) "...could be resolved through constructive and productive talks"¹⁵.

East German determination to maintain good relations with the FRG was manifested again in the press in April and May. As discussed above, the Soviets unleashed strident attacks on the "revanchist" nature of Bonn's policies in light of the INF deployments. East German support for this campaign was lukewarm at best, with the GDR press directing tirades only against "Ultras" and other fringe elements of the West German society, not against the Bonn government¹⁶.

The "business as usual" tendencies of intra-German relations were further demonstrated in July, when the FRG announced a credit to the GDR of over DM330 million¹⁷, which was "coincidentally" followed by relaxation of intra-German travel restrictions by the GDR. Also in July, in an interview with the Italian *Messaggero* Honecker stressed the need for a German responsibility to prevent "war from ever again starting

on German soil"¹⁸, a shocking statement considering the years of emphasis on the "demarcation" of East and West German citizenship which Honecker had pursued. It was in these months of June and July that tensions reached their peak, with the Soviet military conducting maneuvers in the GDR as described above, and *Pravda* attacking the status of intra-German relations using some of Honecker's own quotations from Gera in 1980¹⁹. Simultaneously, a second attempt to impose (or at least attain Bloc indorsement of) the Soviet position came at the CMEA summit in June of 1984. At this meeting, (long sought by the Soviets, long avoided by the Bloc states), the Soviets declared an end to the subsidies of Bloc economies continuing since 1971, and demanded exports capable of meeting "world technical standards" from the Bloc²⁰. Further, the Soviets stressed the need for a much greater integration (the Soviets sought *sblizhenie*, a drawing together) of economic functions than ever before. To the East Europeans, this sounded a lot like increased Soviet control of their economies, and they resisted accordingly. The final communique of the conference appeared to represent a victory for the East Europeans, as integration was to take place on a voluntary basis. The heavy Soviet pressure began to take its toll, however, and the more conventional alignment of Soviet

and East German policies became evident once again. Honecker joined in the Soviet boycott of the Los Angeles Olympics, and in September, he postponed his planned visit to the FRG. Both of these actions cost him heavily in terms of popular domestic support, but were dictated by his loyalty to the international Socialist cause as much as to Soviet pressure. By October, when a Soviet delegation led by Gromyko arrived to celebrate the 35th anniversary of the GDR, the worst of the tension was past. Gromyko had met with Reagan in September, and a return to less confrontational policies had begun. The sensitive issue of intra-German relations would surface again in mid-1985, but by then the Soviet leadership transition would overshadow all other issues, as will be addressed in the next chapter.

IV. CONCLUSIONS TO CHAPTER 2

As we have seen, the two dominant factors shaping Soviet-GDR relations in the Andropov-Chernenko years were the weakness of Soviet leadership contrasted with the self-confidence and assertiveness of the Honecker regime. Honecker's confidence, bolstered by Hungarian ideological support and backed by the underlying knowledge of West German financial assistance, inspired him to acts of defiance of Soviet policies that would have been

intolerable to earlier Soviet leaders. For example, in August 84, with Soviet-GDR tension at its height, Honecker attended the 40th anniversary of Rumania, the only Communist leader to do so. This act revealed both the extent of Honecker's confidence and the weakness of Soviet leadership. Nevertheless, Honecker never wavered in his overall devotion to the Communist cause, maintaining strict party control, centralized economic planning and other traditional orthodox tenets, even sacrificing some of the rare genuine public support he'd enjoyed earlier in 1984 to comply with the Olympic boycott and Soviet wishes concerning his FRG trip. This combination of strong self confidence and orthodoxy would shape the evolution of Soviet GDR policy after the March 1985 accession of Mikhail Gorbachev, and would eventually lead to Honecker's political demise, and the end of the German Democratic Republic as it existed under his control.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 2

¹Caldwell, L.T. and Benz, G.W. "Soviet-American Diplomacy at the End of an Era" in *Current History* May 83 p.205 and Edmonds, R. *Soviet Foreign Policy: The Brezhnev Years* p.150.

²Speeches as presented in Jacobsen, C.G. "East-West Relations at the Crossroads" in *Current History* May 83 p. 201 and Caldwell and Benz, pp. 205, 207.

³For comments on personnel changes and reforms, see Jacobsen, p.202 and Colton, T.J. "The Soviet Union Under Gorbachev" in *Current History* Oct 85 p. 308.

⁴Larrabee F.S. *The Two German States and European Security*, p. 4.

⁵Asmus *East Berlin and Moscow: The Documentation of a Dispute*, henceforth Asmus *Documentation* p. 34.

⁶Such consent was not required. See Chapter 1, p.6 For more details on maneuvers, see Moreton N.E. *Germany Between East and West* (henceforth Moreton 87), pp.111,168.

⁷For discussions of Honecker's motives, see Childs, D. *The GDR: Moscow's German Ally 2d ed.*, p. 325; Asmus *Documentation*, pp. 15-17; Dawisha K. *Eastern Europe, Gorbachev and Reform: The Great Challenge*, pp.114-117.

⁸Kaser in Moreton 87, pp.131-133 and Hardt, J.P. "Soviet Energy Policy in Eastern Europe" in Terry, S.M. *Soviet Policy in Eastern Europe* p. 215.

⁹For detailed discussions of Soviet-East European relations in the early 80s see Keith Crane in M. Carnovale & W.C. Potter *Continuity and Change in Soviet-East European Relations* or P. Marer "The Political Economy of Soviet Relations with Eastern Europe" in Terry. A quick summary of Soviet subsidies is found in Gati "Soviet Empire, Alive But Not Well" in *Problems of Communism*, henceforth Gati *PDC* Mar-Apr 85, p. 75.

¹⁰Croan in *Current History* Nov 85, p. 388 and Asmus in *Orbis*, W85, p.747.

¹¹Text of Honecker's speech to the 7th SED CC Plenum as translated in Asmus *Documentation*, p. 20.

¹²The term "mini-coalition" is Gati's, used in *POC* p. 85. Unless otherwise indicated, newspaper and journal articles cited in the following discussion are taken from texts translated in *Asmus Documentation*.

¹³In addition to the texts in *Asmus*, analyses of Szuros' position are available in P. Ramet's article "Gorbachev's Dilemma in Eastern Europe" in L. Lerner & D.W. Treadgold, (eds) *Gorbachev and the Soviet Future* pp. 230-231; A.Z. Rubinstein, *Soviet Foreign Policy Since WWII: Imperial and Global* 3d ed. pp. 121-128; McCauley *The Soviet Union Under Gorbachev* pp. 174 and 184-185; R.D. Asmus in "The dialectics of Detente and Discord: The Moscow-East Berlin-Bonn Triangle" in *Orbis* W85, pp. 754-755.

¹⁴As translated in *Asmus* in *Orbis* W85, p. 755.

¹⁵*Asmus Documentation*, p. 37.

¹⁶Gati *POC*, p. 77.

¹⁷Exact amount unknown: *Asmus* in *Orbis* says DM509 million. Gati *POC* says DM330 million.

¹⁸As translated in *Asmus Documentation*, pp43-44.

¹⁹*Pravda* 27 July 1984, "In the Shadow of American Missiles".

²⁰*Dawisha* 88, pp. 93, 159; Crane in Carnovale & Potter, p. 95.

CHAPTER 3:
SOVIET POLICY TOWARD THE GERMAN DEMOCRATIC
REPUBLIC UNDER MIKHAIL S. GORBACHEV 1985-1990

I. INTRODUCTION TO CHAPTER 3

In contrast to the shifting priorities of the Brezhnev years and the uncertainty of the inter-regnum, Soviet priorities under Mikhail Gorbachev have been remarkably consistent since his March 11, 1985 accession. The increasingly desperate need to reinvigorate the failing Soviet economy has been, and continues to be, the absolute national priority. All policy initiatives have stemmed from that reality. Clearly, Soviet policy towards Eastern Europe in general and the GDR in particular have changed dramatically in Gorbachev's five years in power. Nevertheless, the basic Soviet motivation--enhancement of Soviet national interests -- has been the consistent root of each different policy. As this chapter will show, the rational, conservative, power-politics root of Soviet initiatives became increasingly obvious in the aftermath of the East European revolutions of 1989. Having lost the ability (perhaps more precisely, having relinquished the desire) to decisively control the course of events in Eastern Europe, the Soviets, in the spring of 1990, have been

reduced to scrambling attempts to salvage any vestiges of international prestige and influence which they can save, all the while seeking solutions to the worsening economic crisis at home.

This chapter will assess the status of Soviet-GDR policy on Gorbachev's accession, then chronicle his various attempts to help solve Soviet economic problems through his overall foreign and East European policies, and the increasingly central focus on the GDR and FRG as German reunification evolved from a theoretical possibility into a pending certainty.

From March 1985 through April 1987, Soviet-East German relations largely continued the harmony re-imposed in September 1984 as discussed in Chapter 2, with both states pursuing economic progress within the extant international frameworks: the GDR taking advantage of its "special" relations with the FRG and the Soviets under Gorbachev calling for continued increased integration and cooperation in CMEA.

The first open cracks in Soviet-GDR conformity appeared in April 1987, with Honecker critical of Gorbachev's style of reform at the Leipzig trade fair. Nevertheless, no major differences seemed apparent, and through the summer of 1989 Gorbachev defended the GDR's

right to its own choices. This defense was in keeping with his overall East European policy throughout the time period.

Not until the 40th anniversary of the GDR in October 1989 was the real divergence between Gorbachev and Honecker openly presented to the world. Honecker looked to Gorbachev's visit to East Berlin for as a manifestation of support for his continuing orthodoxy, until Gorbachev arrived and warned him to adapt or be left behind. In short order, Honecker was gone, followed into obscurity by his groomed successor, Egon Krenz. The two were swept away in a revolution that they could not, and Gorbachev would not, prevent.

By January, 1990, neither the GDR's last Communists nor the Soviets could effectively avert the GDR's headlong rush to union with the FRG, as thousands of East Germans fled west daily. Bereft of ideological and economic leverage over the GDR, and unwilling to attempt military coercion, the Soviets could rely only on their status as one of the victorious WWII allies to influence the fate of their former German satellite. In this reliance, the veneer of the Soviets as unique or revolutionary "internationalists" was, after years of decay, finally and completely stripped away. In the rapidly changing positions of Gorbachev's government on

unification, neutrality and arms control in the spring of 1990, we see the mechanism of Soviet policy making stripped bare. What we see is a rational, conservative, faltering Great Power trying desperately to maintain itself in that capacity, while acting with other "powers" in a process reminiscent of the 19th century concert of Europe. As always, for the Soviets, the German Democratic Republic is merely a tool in that struggle.

II. SOVIET GDR POLICY IN MARCH 1985

As may be expected, given Chernenko's penchant for re-imposing old techniques as discussed in Chapter 2, Soviet GDR policy at the beginning of March 1985 was set up much like it had been in October of 1964; to maximize Soviet leverage in dealing with the West, with the satellite states of the Bloc, and in manipulating the Germans on both sides of the border.

A. Soviet GDR Policy Through 11 March 1985

1) East-West Context

Despite the fledgling hopes for reduction in East-West tension inspired by Gromyko's meeting with Reagan in the fall of 1984, and the planned return to INF negotiations in Geneva, the spring of 1985 found the GDR fulfilling a long-familiar role--that of key element in

the Soviets' defensive buffer zone. SS20 deployments were ongoing, and when it came to overall East-West relations, traditional Cold War rules applied. An illustrative example was the shooting of a US Army Major working out of the US Military Liaison Mission (USMLM) in Potsdam. Allegedly entering a restricted area, the officer, in uniform and accompanied by an American Noncommissioned Officer, was wounded by a security guard and denied medical treatment until he died. The officer's presence in the GDR was nothing unusual, USMLM has existed since the end of the war. What made the incident noteworthy was the barbaric manner in which he was allowed to die. Clearly, the atmosphere prevailing in East-West relations in early March 1985 was not the *detente*-oriented atmosphere of the late sixties and early seventies¹.

2) East European Context

Likewise in the East European arena, the East German role was reminiscent of an earlier age. The orthodox Honecker regime represented the most economically successful example of socialism among the satellites, a status of which Honecker was proud to speak (ironically, as we shall see, very much like his predecessor Ulbricht had in the late sixties). As such, the GDR was a potential "loyalty lever" for the Soviets against the other satellite regimes once again. Further,

the press campaign discussed in Chapter 2 had wound down, but not stopped, and cries of "revanchism" would still occasionally be heard.

Another ghost of the Ulbricht era played a part in the East European context of Soviet-GDR relations by March of 1985. GDR production of high technology goods in accordance with the June 1984 CMEA summit plan hearkened back to Ulbricht's hopes in his final years in power.

3) German Context

The relatively robust nature of the GDR's economy was (as 1989 would reveal) largely dependent on the special relationship with the FRG. As it had since the early seventies, the GDR relied on these ties for hard currency and Western technology. In addition to the earlier concerns for the status of Berlin or personal visitations which had served as levers against Bonn before the Eastern Treaties, a "plum" used by the Soviets to manipulate the German relationship in this time was the prospect of rescheduling Honecker's visit, which, though postponed in September 1984, had never been canceled and was repeatedly discussed.

B. Gorbachev's Initial Policy Stance, Mar-May 85

On March 11, 1985, an Extraordinary Plenum of the Central Committee (CC) of the CPSU elected Mikhail

Gorbachev General Secretary of the Party. At this plenum, and the one which followed in April 1985, Gorbachev established the basic policy precepts which would come to change the face of Europe.

1) East-West Context

Gorbachev had been nominated by the eminent Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko at the March Extraordinary Plenum, and fittingly, devoted a large part of his initial address as leader to foreign policy². The principles he put forth have been enhanced and polished since, but fundamentally, they remain unchanged.

Gorbachev declared that in relations with the capitalist states the Soviets would "firmly follow the Leninist course of peaceful coexistence", stressing the need for "termination of the arms race" and seeking a "new *detente*, based on equality, mutual respect and non-interference in internal affairs"³. None of these phrases represented anything new, all had been mainstays of the Soviet diplomatic vocabulary throughout the years. Gorbachev revealed some of the motivation which would drive the re-shaping of these old terms into his own dynamic (and eventually, revolutionary) foreign policy one month later. Speaking to the regular CC Plenum held in April, Gorbachev asserted that despite the overall tension in East-West relations, which was solely the

fault of the US, international economic cooperation was still possible, and that the Soviet Union favored "extensive, versatile and mutually beneficial" economic relations with Western Europe, Japan "and other" capitalist states⁴.

If this formulation sounds familiar, it should, as it represents adoption of the very formula for preserving economic contacts with the West pursued by the GDR and Hungary (and attacked by the Soviets) throughout the inter-regnum as detailed in Chapter 2.

2) East European Context

Any joy at the above apparent adoption by Gorbachev of the Szuros position which might have been felt in Eastern Europe was tempered, however. In the same two addresses, Gorbachev seemed to implicitly limit the right to cooperate despite tension to the Soviet Union alone. When discussing Eastern Europe in March he pledged to "expand cooperation with the socialist states" and noted that the "agendas of the fraternal parties" included plans for "implementation" of the program of the June 1984 CMEA summit, which had stressed greater integration of the Soviet and satellite economies⁵. Such references to "cooperation" and "integration" carried ominous overtones of Soviet dominance to East Europeans, especially given the international climate established by Chernenko.

3) German Context

If the initial messages from Gorbachev discussed above sent a mixed signal to the states of the West and the Bloc, his first message on the German question contained even more mixed messages. Speaking in May 1985 at a luncheon in honor of former FRG Chancellor Willy Brandt (who was being lauded in his capacity as leader of the Socialist International), Gorbachev commented:

We appreciate highly the firm position of your party, which stands for *preventing any new war from being unleashed from German soil*⁶ (emphasis added).

While we can never precisely know what, if anything, Gorbachev meant to imply with this statement, his choice of Honecker's phrase (from the July 84 interview with *Il Messaggero* cited in Chapter 2) loaded with German implications to the architect of the concept of "two German states in one German nation" had to set minds racing on both sides of the Wall.

Mixed signals of this type would occur repeatedly throughout the first two years of Gorbachev's tenure, as will be discussed below. Gradually, however, they would take on a revolutionary focus few could foresee in the spring of 1985.

III. EVOLUTION OF SOVIET GDR POLICY UNDER GORBACHEV

The mixed signals emanating from the Kremlin may attest to the usual period of power consolidation following a change in the Kremlin leadership, or may have been the reflection of Gorbachev's own uncertainties. The truth, most likely, is a combination of these and other factors. What is crucial to this study is not the cause of these mixed signals, but rather their effects on Soviet GDR policy.

A. Harmony, Growing Divergence: Mar 85-Apr 87

In his "inaugural address" to the CC Plenum which elected him General Secretary, Gorbachev opened his statement on foreign policy by stressing:

The first precept of the Party and state is to safeguard and strengthen in every way the fraternal friendship with our closest comrades-in-arms, the countries of the great socialist commonwealth⁷.

Gorbachev immediately put this precept into practice with a series of multilateral and bilateral statements affirming long-held Bloc positions. At the renewal of the Warsaw Pact agreement in Warsaw on 26 April 1985, Gorbachev, seconded by the hosting Jaruzelski, called for the "simultaneous dissolution" of the WTO and NATO⁸, a Soviet position virtually since the

1955 founding of the Pact.

Two weeks later, after his first meeting with Honecker, Gorbachev echoed another long-standing Soviet position with the affirmation: "The USSR and the GDR resolutely oppose any and all notions of an 'unresolved' German question"⁹. While such a declaration was clearly welcome to Honecker, who had worked for years to build the GDR's international image as a sovereign state, these renewed appearances of old Soviet declarations, in the cool context of East-West relations, inspired caution and skepticism among the Bloc leaders. Such caution would seem further justified by Gorbachev's 8 May praise for the WTO as a forum for the policy coordination of the socialist states¹⁰.

The uncertainty generated by the juxtaposition of Gorbachev's "negative" (from the East European perspective) affirmations of dusted-off dogmas with "positive" intimations like the praise for Brandt and adoption of the Szuros position mentioned earlier may have dictated hesitation for some Bloc leaders, but for the confident Honecker, these seemingly contradictory statements signaled potential room for maneuver. In mid-1985, his SED concluded a joint policy statement with the West German Social Democratic opposition (SPD) calling for a chemical weapons-free zone in Europe, beginning

with the Germanies¹¹. Actions like this move by a "small state" to conduct a "bridge-building" operation at a time of East-West tension helped initiate a raging debate in the Soviet press about the need for reform in the USSR, touched off in June 1985 by a call in *Pravda* for renewed emphasis on Bloc solidarity¹². This debate is very important, as it marks the domestic division within the Soviet Union as the Party prepared for the 27th Party Congress, scheduled for late February. (Such domestic preoccupation will become increasingly important, as will be discussed below.)

As 1985 progressed, Gorbachev made it clear that the Soviet economy would be reformed. Praising the GDR's *Kombinat* system of enterprise organization in the fall¹³ (as opposed to less orthodox mechanisms in Hungary and Poland) and emphasizing CMEA integration and cooperation to insure "technical independence and invulnerability to pressure or blackmail" by the "imperialists"¹⁴, a stance eerily reminiscent of Ulbricht in 1968¹⁵, Gorbachev added further to the confidence of the East German regime.

This growing confidence was manifested in December, when SED Politburo member and *Volkskammer* President Sindermann visited the People's Republic of China--a move that went far beyond the then-prevailing status of

Soviet-PRC relations¹⁶. This same confidence would begin to lead to a divergence of Soviet-GDR priorities in the aftermath of the 27th Congress of the CPSU.

That Congress provided more calls for CMEA integration, to support the planned "socio-economic acceleration of Soviet society"¹⁷, but more importantly, a new message began to appear, a message that received only minor attention at first, but in retrospect may be seen as marking the beginning of the revolutions of 1989: and the beginning of the end for Honecker and the GDR.

The new message appeared in the Central Committee Report to the Congress. After calling for a new world security system and the reduction of all armies to levels required for "reasonable adequacy" in defensive roles¹⁸, the report called for the Soviet Union to support

strict respect in international practice for the right of each people to choose the ways and forms of its development independently¹⁹.

While Gorbachev personally had said very similar words upon his accession²⁰, Central Committee approval for including such a message in the Party program made this more than just a dusted-off rhetorical flourish.

For Honecker, Gorbachev's combined praise for the GDR economic system and indicated willingness to allow both differentiation in Bloc domestic political systems

as well as economic links to the capitalist states further raised his confidence in the GDR. When the 11th SED Congress convened in April 1986, the visiting Gorbachev made no mention of Honecker's renewed plans to visit the FRG, thereby seeming to confirm his proclaimed respect for Honecker's right to choose. Honecker, for his part, proclaimed the GDR a "stable, efficient and advanced" socialist state²¹, that (unlike the USSR) was not in need of reform.

Over the course of the next twelve months, the relationship between Gorbachev and Honecker took on more and more similarity to the "Soviet Reformer versus East German Orthodox" relationship that had marked the Brezhnev-Ulbricht struggle in 1968-1971. When, in January 1987, Gorbachev initiated his policy of *Perestroika* with a call for "mass participation" in the "democratic change in public life"²², he began to pose a direct threat to the elitist and aloof SED. Like Ulbricht before him, Honecker spoke out, declaring in April at the Leipzig trade fair his strong opposition to any such reform in the GDR²³.

B. Tolerance and Independence or Preoccupation
and Neglect? Apr 87-Dec 88

As Gorbachev's *Perestroika* campaign continued at home

and INF negotiations with the US progressed throughout 1987, three factors became increasingly important in Soviet policy toward the GDR, and indeed toward all of Eastern Europe. The first was that Eastern European policy, and foreign policy in general (besides arms negotiations) no longer represented the dominant, driving force in Soviet decision-making that it had in the past. This had been openly admitted by Gorbachev in February, when he declared that "Our foreign policy today is to a greater extent than ever before determined by *domestic* politics"²⁴ (emphasis in original). The second, complementary factor was the continued re-assertion of Soviet willingness to tolerate diversity in Bloc politics. When explaining *perestroika*, Gorbachev insisted that:

The entire framework of political relations between the socialist countries must be strictly based on absolute independence... The independence of each party, its sovereign right to decide issues facing its country and its responsibility to its nation are unquestionable principles²⁵.

While these first two factors gave East European leaders the opportunity to pursue more differentiated policies, the third provided them with inspiration to do so, if such inspiration was needed. Gorbachev began to criticize his predecessors in the Kremlin,

particularly the "loss of momentum" in the late seventies, which had been characterized by a "fixation on extensive production" and had caused a severe "divergence" between the Party and the people and reality²⁶ (emphasis in original). When one considers that, with the exception of Poland, all of the East European leaders had been in place for at least sixteen years by mid-1987 and had largely adhered to Brezhnev's policies, it is not hard to see why their enthusiasm for emulating this aspect of Gorbachev's policy might be weak.

Honecker, as might be expected, took full advantage of the opportunity that Gorbachev's relaxation of control offered, maintaining strict orthodoxy in domestic control while pursuing enhanced economic relations with the FRG. In June, police clashed in the streets of East Berlin with rock fans who had gathered near the Wall to hear an outdoor concert being played in West Berlin²⁷. In July, more than 5,000 political prisoners were given amnesty²⁸, a move designed to smooth FRG-GDR relations as plans were resurrected for Honecker's visit. In August, the SED and West German SPD issued a joint statement of "Principles of Ideological Existence" which asserted that "imperialism [is] capable of pursuing peaceful policy"²⁹. Finally, in September 1987, Honecker made his trip to

the FRG, where his reception with the same honors normally accorded a head of state bolstered his self-confidence, and the international prestige of the GDR, to their zenith.

Honecker had good reason to be confident, despite the restlessness of his population, as manifested in the June clashes in East Berlin. Throughout the year, as he pursued his unique mixture of domestic orthodoxy and intra-German *detente*, Gorbachev was repeatedly defending the GDR's status and interests before the world. In July, during a visit to Moscow by FRG Federal President Richard von Weizsaecker, Gorbachev asserted that the existence of two separate German states was a "historical reality" with each state possessed of "values of its own" and warning that "any realistic politician must proceed from the reality of two German states as recognized by international law"³⁰. Again in December, on the eve of his summit meeting with Ronald Reagan to sign the INF Treaty, Gorbachev stated on American television his strongest defense of the GDR to date, in terms that sounded strangely incongruent with his emphasis on East-West cooperation. Gorbachev defended the Berlin Wall as part of "the sovereign right of the GDR to defend and protect its choice and not allow any interference in its domestic affairs"³¹.

It should be noted that, for all of Gorbachev's emphasis on the "sovereign rights" and "independence" of the East European states and parties, throughout all of 1987 and into 1988, he never clearly renounced the Brezhnev Doctrine or socialist internationalism, despite the best efforts of western journalists and statesmen to pin him down on this subject. A prime example occurred in May 1988, when Gorbachev was being interviewed by the American magazine *Newsweek* and newspaper *The Washington Post* just prior to his summit with President Reagan in Moscow. When asked about the ongoing labor unrest in Poland and movements by the Hungarian Party toward reform (Kadar was ousted in that same month), and how those events related to Soviet reform efforts, Gorbachev replied that the Soviet Union "recognizes the right of each people to have its own social option, to choose its own way of developing its society". He continued with "...we will not impose our methods on any other country"³². When the American reporters pressed further, clearly hoping to hear the words "Brezhnev Doctrine" and asked if military interventions like those in Hungary in 1956 or Czechoslovakia in 1968 could reoccur, Gorbachev replied with the tantalizing: "interference from any side is impermissible"³³.

Gorbachev's defense of the GDR also continued

throughout 1988. On the eve of Chancellor Kohl's visit to Moscow in October, Gorbachev warned that "any attempts to erode the border between the sovereign German states...are inadmissible and potentially catastrophic"³⁴. Again, after Kohl's arrival, Gorbachev asserted that:

The present [German] situation is a result of history. Attempting to undo what history has created or to inflame the situation by means of an unrealistic policy is an unpredictable and even dangerous exercise³⁵.

The consistency of Gorbachev's insistence on the independent rights of the East European parties and states, as well as his vigorous defense of East German sovereignty throughout 1988 was astounding, considered against a background of political reform in Hungary and labor unrest in Poland, which in August had led to the "roundtable" discussions between the government and Solidarity. His resolve to maintain this course of action was emphasized again in December at the United Nations, when he renounced force as an instrument of foreign policy³⁶ (once again implicitly renouncing the Brezhnev Doctrine, this time before a true world audience). Doing so at such a turbulent time at home and in Eastern Europe indicates very strong motivation. Why

did Gorbachev defend Honecker's orthodox repression in the GDR while advocating "democratization" "socio-economic acceleration" and *perestroika* at home? Several incidents occurring throughout 1988 shed light upon that motivation, and should be considered here, before turning to the revolutionary year of 1989.

Having admitted in December 1987 that the Soviet Union's inefficient economic system was using less than one-half of its potential³⁷, Gorbachev's foreign policy throughout 1988 centered on obtaining improved conditions for economic cooperation with the West. During 1988, the Soviets clearly expressed desires to become more involved with world economic organizations, like the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund and the General Agreement on Trade and Tariffs³⁸. In May, a trade pact was signed between CMEA and the European Community³⁹. Especially significant were Soviet-FRG interactions throughout the year. The FRG had long been Moscow's top trading partner in the West, and in 1988 the Kremlin sought to improve this relationship, counting on German capital and technology to help solve the dire economic problems of the Soviet Union. In January, Eduard Shevardnadze became the first Soviet Foreign Minister in 15 years to visit Bonn. That is, his was the first such visit since the peak of Soviet-FRG cooperation in the aftermath of the

Eastern Treaties. But the incident which best illuminates Gorbachev's motives involved the Moscow visit of Helmut Kohl described above. In addition to debating the German question, Kohl and Gorbachev announced an agreement by which West German firms would "participate in modernizing nearly 200 light and food industry enterprises in the USSR"⁴⁰. While Soviet sources carefully omitted any references to the monetary value of this agreement, Western sources estimated it represented over 1.6 billion dollars in FRG aid and stressed that the "light" industries involved were *consumer* industries⁴¹.

Given this background, Gorbachev's seemingly contradictory affirmations of citizens' rights to choices and his defense of the repressive Honecker regime make more sense. To attain Western technology and capital for the economic battle at home, he needed stability in Eastern Europe and a favorable image in the West. In 1988, the orthodox Honecker regime seemed the most stable and least challenging of the satellites, as well as a valuable "back door" route of access to the European Economic Community, therefore Gorbachev sought to preserve the current status of that regime, discouraging any discussions of reunification that could undermine Honecker's position. Meanwhile, his proclamations of the freedom of choice that the peoples of East Europe should

have earned him great acclaim in the West (especially in the FRG, where the term "Gorbymania" would soon be coined to express his popularity there).

Nevertheless, the inherent contradiction between the concept of "peoples' choice" and stable communist regimes in Eastern Europe remained. As the peoples of Eastern Europe tested Gorbachev's sincerity by making choices in 1989, the stability he so earnestly sought would quickly disappear.

C. Revolution and Loss of Control: Jan 89-Feb 90

Gorbachev's desired stability survived the first choices of the people in Poland and Hungary in 1989. Hungary's reformers voted to allow legal opposition parties to exist in January, and Poland's "roundtable" discussions mentioned above resulted in the legalization of Solidarity and plans for elections in June. While each of these events marked dramatic departures from tradition by ending the legally guaranteed monopolies of the ruling Communist parties, neither event was inherently de-stabilizing, and in fact, promised increased long-term stability for these states by increasing the domestic legitimacy of the governments. Given the relatively strong economic ties both Poland and Hungary had with the West, this potential for increased

stability bode well for Gorbachev's economic battle.

Hungary took the first action of 1989 that would prove revolutionary, signing in March the United Nations Refugee Convention, refusing to force political refugees to return to their country of origin. This act, seemingly well aligned with Gorbachev's "freedom of choice" doctrine, would combine with Hungary's May decision to dismantle part of the fortifications along its border with Austria to serve as the catalyst that would destroy Gorbachev's hoped-for stability. Later in the summer, first hundreds and then thousands of East German citizens used this open border to flee from Honecker's continuing domestic repression to the FRG. By September, Hungary had renounced a 1969 treaty with the GDR which had obligated it to return such refugees, citing this treaty as incompatible with Hungary's compliance with the UN Convention on Refugees.

Desperately seeking a way to restore stability to the GDR, which remained the key to Gorbachev's hopes for Western technology and capital, the Soviets tried to force Honecker to accommodate his populace and stem the exodus. While in Paris for the abortive Cambodian peace conference, Shevardnadze told US Secretary of State Baker that the Soviet Union would not use force to stop the ongoing changes in Eastern Europe⁴². Faced with

increasing unrest at home (most notably the coal miners' strikes of July) Soviet actions repeatedly demonstrated the primacy of stability over ideology, holding forth Hungary and Poland in July as models of "independent and sovereign states...free to deal with East and West as they choose"⁴³. By actively facilitating the ongoing reforms in those countries, the Soviets further demonstrated their desperate search for stability, which they now believed could only be maintained by such reform. Lest Honecker continue to rely on the guarantees of support that Gorbachev had provided earlier, Valentin Falin, head of the Party's International Department, declared in August that

The Soviet Union would not interfere if the emigration of the GDR continued on a greater scale and there was a further loss of authority by the GDR leadership as a result⁴⁴.

In the face of this, the largest exodus of GDR citizens since the construction of the Berlin Wall, the GDR's government under Honecker remained adamantly orthodox and unyielding. Even urgings to reform or be left behind by Gorbachev himself, visiting the GDR in early October for celebration of the 40th anniversary of its founding, failed to move Honecker⁴⁵. Then, as massive public demonstrations spread throughout East

Germany, Honecker's intransigence proved fatal. Honecker ordered security forces to be prepared to open fire on protesters in Leipzig, thus opting for a "Chinese solution" to the unrest. On 9 October 89, his orders were countermanded by local Leipzig officials and new orders to police from East Berlin, possibly originating with the party member responsible for internal security, Egon Krenz⁴⁶. His authority completely undermined, Honecker resigned under pressure less than ten days later, and was succeeded by Krenz. Within one month, attempting to regain some legitimacy for his own leadership and that of his party, Krenz had lifted all travel restrictions on GDR citizens, including opening the Berlin Wall, and had agreed in principle to free elections. No amount of concessions, however, could remove from Krenz the taint of his long association with Honecker, and he resigned under heavy public pressure with the rest of the Party leadership on 3 December. That was the same day that Gorbachev, meeting with US President Bush at Malta, revealed his continued hopes for a re-stabilized GDR, stressing his support for the ongoing reforms as "the peoples' desire to humanize their societies" while emphasizing the "historical reality" of two German states and warning against "artificial prodding" of the German situation (no doubt a reference to a plan for

unity revealed by Kohl the week before)⁴⁷.

Gorbachev's stance at Malta revealed both his hopes for the development of a newly stabilized, domestically legitimate GDR as well as his expectations that the Soviet Union would be able to control, or at least influence this new GDR. But as Gorbachev and other Soviet leaders plunged into a hectic domestic agenda in December (which included introduction of a two-stage five year plan intended to integrate market forces into the Soviet economy and a Congress of Peoples' Deputies debate on the Soviet retention of the Party monopoly), the people of East Germany continued to make choices--with their feet, as the exodus climbed to over 2,000 per day in January.

This exodus sounded the death knell of the GDR, as the FRG called on the yet-to-be-freely-elected government of the GDR to agree to unification⁴⁸. One day later, the Soviets were further distracted from the GDR, as thousands of Soviet troops were dispatched into Baku to quell Armenian-Azerbaijani fighting that threatened to engulf the USSR in civil war. With its foreign policy thus temporarily paralyzed (postponement of the critical January CC Plenum reveals the significance of the Baku distraction), the Soviet Union lost influence over GDR affairs at a crucial time. This loss of control forced the Soviets to adopt a policy of reaction to the

proposals of others regarding the GDR. By the end of the month, order had been restored in Baku and GDR Prime Minister Hans Modrow was on his way to Moscow. In the meantime, however, East Germans had rioted against the reformation of the "Stasi" (proposed by Modrow on 17 Jan) and the East German Christian Democrats, long subservient to the SED, had left the government coalition, forcing Modrow to accelerate the elections (planned for May) to 18 March and to include members of the opposition in his cabinet.

In an attempt to regain influence over German affairs, Gorbachev conceded during Modrow's visit that "Basically, no one casts any doubt" on German unification, but insisted that "Four Power obligations still exist, and there is the European process"⁴⁹. Shevardnadze called for an international referendum on unification and Modrow insisted that any unified Germany must be militarily neutral as the Soviets scrambled to get a grip on events. But that grip belonged to Helmut Kohl and the East German people. Kohl immediately rejected any international referendum, calling the process a "German affair"⁵⁰ and the East Germans continued to flee in even greater numbers. The growing refugee problem inspired Kohl to call for rapid financial and economic union of the FRG and GDR. Once again,

domestic concerns dulled any Soviet initiative, as the delayed CC Plenum took up the issue of the Soviet communists monopoly on power, and James Baker arrived in Moscow to conduct arms negotiations in preparation for the planned US-Soviet summit. Soviet disorientation at this time was revealed in arms concessions they made to Baker, which reversed many long-standing Soviet policies on certain weapons, and caught even Baker by surprise⁵¹. (A month later, the Soviets would reverse themselves again, undoing the concessions.)

Hard on Baker's heels came Helmut Kohl to Moscow. Gorbachev finally was able to slow down the dizzying pace of events. Acknowledging the right of the German people to self determination, Gorbachev nevertheless rejected plans advanced by the FRG and US that a unified Germany must be part of NATO, and called for a determining role in the process by the thirty-five nation Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe⁵². With this position, Gorbachev made the Soviet Union once again a determining factor in the fate of the GDR. However, for the first time since the immediate postwar period, the Soviets would be negotiating Germany's fate solely as one of the four WWII era Great Powers, rather than as the imperial master of Eastern Europe.

D. 2+4 and the Balance of Power: Feb-Apr 90

Meeting in Ottawa, Canada in mid-February, the Foreign Ministers of NATO and the Warsaw Pact saw their planned agenda on mutual "Open Skies" reconnaissance flights suddenly overshadowed by the evolving German question. On 13 February, the Foreign Ministers of both German states and the four WWII Powers issued a statement describing their plan for negotiating the unification. Quickly dubbed "2+4", the plan called for the two German states to work out the internal political, social and economic aspects of unification. Then, the Four Powers would meet, with the Germans included, to discuss the "external aspects...including the issues of security of the neighboring states"⁵³.

In the finest tradition of the 19th century Congresses of Europe, the Powers immediately began jockeying for position, attempting to settle the substantive issues before their formal meetings (expected in the fall) begin. The Soviets' initial position was another dusted-off dogma: any unified Germany must be demilitarized and neutral. The Western allies countered with a slight modification of their traditional stance that a united Germany must be allied with NATO--allowing that no NATO troops would advance into the area of the former GDR. In an interview on West German radio,

Valentin Falin rejected such a plan: "If the Western alliance sticks with its demand for a NATO membership of all of Germany, then there won't be any reunification"⁵⁴. Gorbachev himself strongly reiterated this rejection in an interview with West German television on March 8. In answer to a question asking if a unified Germany could belong to NATO, Gorbachev replied: "We will not agree to that. That is absolutely ruled out"⁵⁵.

This was to remain the official Soviet line for some time, as once again the Soviets were distracted by domestic developments. In rapid succession, ethnic rioting exploded on the streets of Dushanbe in the Tadzhik Soviet Socialist Republic (SSR), peaceful yet massive demonstrations of impatience with and opposition to Gorbachev's policies occurred throughout the country on 25 February, the Lithuanian SSR declared itself to be independent of the Soviet Union on 11 March, and on 15 March, Gorbachev was elected to the newly-strengthened Presidency of the Soviet Union. Immediately after these dizzying events, the Soviets made a feeble attempt to regain the initiative in preparing for the negotiations on Germany by calling for reduced (unspecified) force levels in the armed forces of the unified Germany as part of the unification agreement⁵⁶.

Any momentum such a proposal may have given the Soviets was snuffed out almost immediately. At a meeting of WTO Foreign Ministers in Prague, the Soviets found their position on the neutrality of a united Germany unanimously opposed by the other WTO members⁵⁷. This would be the last word from the Soviets on the German question for nearly a month, as Gorbachev's struggle with the Lithuanian issue, the election of the GDR's first popularly chosen government, and the election victory of opposition candidates to local city governments throughout the USSR absorbed the world's attention.

Foreign Minister Shevardnadze put the Soviets back on track in the march to the "congress" on Germany while visiting the US in April. Dropping the previous insistence on neutrality, Shevardnadze suggested that the unified Germany could be a member of both NATO and the WTO, though he did not specify the details of such an arrangement. Gorbachev went one step farther, calling for the formation of "new structures of security for all of Europe, from the Atlantic to the Urals" to be established simultaneously with German unification⁵⁸. Though initially rejected by the West, these positions will likely evolve into the basis of the eventual Soviet positions in the final negotiations.

IV. CONCLUSIONS TO CHAPTER 3

Gorbachev's search for a solution to the economic woes of the Soviet Union have been the driving force behind all of his domestic and foreign policies, including, of course, his GDR policy, since the day he took office. For most of his first two years in power, Gorbachev pursued the traditional route to Soviet reform. He shuffled "new blood" into the key positions of the Party elite, called for rapprochement with the West (notably via arms reduction proposals), and tightened the screws on the CMEA members by lowering subsidies and demanding higher quality goods. He encouraged the GDR to maximize the benefits to itself and the Bloc that were offered by its special economic relationship with the Federal Republic. These measures initially generated some success, but by 1987, clearly something more was needed.

Gorbachev's answer to this need was his policy of "free choice" for the peoples and parties of Eastern Europe in the dual hope that such a policy would enhance the ongoing rapprochement with the West, while simultaneously increasing the stability of the Bloc regimes by augmenting their domestic legitimacy. As we have seen, this policy almost worked. In Poland and in Hungary, the governments and peoples moved in a gradual, step by step manner toward reform, culminating in the

Polish elections of June 1989. Ironically, it was Honecker's government, that formerly most stable, reliable and prosperous of the East European regimes which disrupted the plans. Honecker's refusal to consider reform, a refusal based on a self-confidence largely built by the Soviets, and his increasing repression of any dissent raised the tension within the GDR to the breaking point by the summer of 1989. When Hungary's newly opened border with Austria provided an opening, East Germany's best citizens rushed to escape that repression and pressure, destroying Honecker's house of cards, and setting a poignant example for the Czechs, Bulgarians and Rumanians to follow.

Gorbachev's economic woes have now been aggravated by ethnic and political pressures within the USSR. Precisely how these factors will influence his still-developing policy on German unity remains to be seen. What is certain, however, is that he will need both stability in Eastern Europe and technical and financial help from the West if he is to succeed in transforming the Soviet Union. Equally certain is that, whatever the Soviet position at the "congress" of powers that reunites Germany will be, that position will be carefully formulated to maximize the benefits such a united Germany can provide to the Soviet Union.

NOTES TO CHAPTER 3

¹*Pravda* 3 Apr 85 mentioned only that the incident would be resolved by the appropriate military commanders, and that procedures would be implemented to prevent any such reoccurrence.

²The text of Gromyko's speech is found in *Kommunist*, Number 5, March 1985, pp.6-7 and *Current Digest of the Soviet Press (CDSP)* Volume 37, #16, pp.4-5.

³Gorbachev, 11 Mar 85 speech to the Extraordinary CC Plenum as translated in *A Time for Peace*, pp.9-10.

⁴Gorbachev 23 Apr 85 speech to CC Plenum as translated in *A Time For Peace*. p. 87.

⁵Gorbachev, speeches of 11 Mar and 23 Apr 85, *A Time For Peace*, pp.19, 86.

⁶Gorbachev, 27 May 85, *A Time For Peace*, p. 137.

⁷*Pravda* 12 Mar 85 (CDSP 37:#9, p. 8.)

⁸J. Erickson, "The Warsaw Pact from here to Eternity" in *Current History* Nov 85 p. 358.

⁹*Pravda* 6 May 85 (CDSP 37:#18, p. 15.)

¹⁰Gorbachev speech of 8 May 85 in commemoration of WWII victory as translated in *A Time For Peace*, p. 106.

¹¹N.E. Moreton *Germany Between East and West* (henceforth Moreton 87), p. 117.

¹²*Pravda* 21 Jun 85 (CDSP 37:#25, pp. 10-12). Article by "O. Vladimirov"--a pseudonym of Oleg Rakhmanin, Central Committee Liason for Ruling Communist Parties took up a strong anti-reform stance. Analysis of article and subsequent rebuttals may be found in Rubinstein *Soviet Foreign Policy Since WWII: Imperial and Global* pp. 126-129. See bibliography entries for Bogomolev, Novopashin and Shishlin for three most prominent rebuttals.

¹³M. McCauley (ed). *The Soviet Union Under Gorbachev*, p. 182.

- ¹⁴Gorbachev 18 Dec 85 speech to the 41st session of the CMEA as translated in *The Coming Century of Peace*, p. 143.
- ¹⁵See Chapter 1, p. 16.
- ¹⁶Moreton 87, p. 117.
- ¹⁷ Gorbachev 25 Feb 86 CC Report to the 27th CPSU Congress as translated in *Towards a Better World*, p. 168.
- ¹⁸*Ibid.* p. 172.
- ¹⁹*Ibid.* p. 177.
- ²⁰ Undated *Pravda* interview translated in *A Time For Peace*, p. 65.
- ²¹D. Childs *The GDR: Moscow's German Ally*, 2d ed. p.329. Also K. Dawisha *Eastern Europe, Gorbachev and Reform: The Great Challenge* (henceforth Dawisha 88)p. 177.
- ²²Gorbachev *Perestroika: New Thinking for Our Country and the World*. pp. 33,44.
- ²³Dawisha 88 p. 249.
- ²⁴Gorbachev Feb 87 speech to International Forum for a Nuclear Free World as translated in *At the Summit*, p. 7.
- ²⁵Gorbachev, *Perestroika*, p. 165.
- ²⁶*Ibid.* pp. 19-22.
- ²⁷Dawisha 88, p. 249.
- ²⁸Dawisha 88, p. 249.
- ²⁹F.S. Larrabee "From Reunification to Reassociation: The New Dimensions of the German Question" in Larrabee (ed)*The Two German States and European Security* (henceforth Larrabee 89), pp.18-19 and 22-23.
- ³⁰Gorbachev *Perestroika*, pp. 199-201.
- ³¹Gorbachev in 30 Nov 87 interview with NBC TV as published in *At the Summit*, p. 87.
- ³²*Ibid.* p. 219.

- ³³*Ibid.* p. 220.
- ³⁴Gorbachev in interview with *Der Spiegel* as excerpted in *Pravda* 24 Oct 88 (CDSP40:#43, p. 10).
- ³⁵*Ibid.* p. 11.
- ³⁶ See transcript of speech in *The New York Times* (hence *NYT*) 8 Dec 88.
- ³⁷Gorbachev 8 Dec 87 speech to American intellectuals in Washington as translated in *At the Summit* pp. 110-111.
- ³⁸P. Marantz "Soviet New Thinking and East-West Relations" in *Current History* Oct 88 p. 346.
- ³⁹See J. van Oudenaren "The Soviet Union and Eastern Europe: New Proposals for Old Dilemmas" in Wm E. Griffith (ed) *Central and Eastern Europe: The Opening Curtain?* p. 121.
- ⁴⁰*Pravda* 26 Oct 88 (CDSP 40: #43, p. 12)
- ⁴¹Larrabee "The View from Moscow" in Larrabee 89, p. 197.
- ⁴²*The Washington Post National Weekly Edition* (hence *Post*) 8-14 Jan 90, p. 14.
- ⁴³Foreign Broadcast Information Service *Daily Report: Soviet Union* 19 Jul 89.
- ⁴⁴Hamburg *Die Welt* as cited in *Post* 8-14 Jan 90, p. 7.
- ⁴⁵*TIME* Magazine 16 Oct 89, p. 39 and *Post* 23-29 Oct 89, p. 16.
- ⁴⁶According to *NYT* 17 Nov 89, the order came from Krenz. The actions by local officials as well as the possibility that the order may have come from Soviet military officials inside the GDR are described in *Post* 22-28 Jan 90, pp. 10-11.
- ⁴⁷Transcript of press conference in *NYT* 4 Dec 89 and excerpts in *Pravda* 5 Dec 89 (CDSP41: #49, p. 20)
- ⁴⁸Associate Press and *NYT* News Service release as published in Everett WA *Herald* 19 Jan 90.
- ⁴⁹*NYT* 31 Jan 90.

50 Associated Press News release as published in Everett WA Herald 4 Feb 90.

51 Los Angeles Times news service release as published in Everett WA Herald 11 Feb 90.

52 NYT 11 Feb 90 and TIME 19 Feb 90, p. 39.

53 Text of statement in NYT 14 Feb 90.

54 Post 26 Feb-4 Mar 90, p. 13.

55 NYT 21 Mar 90.

56 NYT 16 Mar 90.

57 NYT 18 Mar 90.

58 NYT 11 Apr 90.

CONCLUSION

Leonid Brezhnev after 1968 and Mikhail Gorbachev since 1985 faced similar problems, and both shaped their policies accordingly. Stagnation in the economy of the Soviet Union, soaring defense costs and satellite regimes in Eastern Europe which proved either loyal and reliable (but domestically unpopular and illegitimate) or popularly supported and stable (but ideologically unreliable). Each Soviet leader considered the pros and cons of domestic reform as he attempted to solve his challenges, and each elected to pursue a "safer" option, at least initially. Brezhnev rejected the appeals of Sakharov for increased openness in Soviet society as a way to increase Soviet productivity. He also presided over the rejection of the Kosygin reforms, which would have allowed some increased openness as well as limited market factor influence in the economy. Brezhnev chose instead to pursue the less risky course of integration of Eastern European resources more tightly via CMEA, and to pursue *detente* with the West in the hopes of gaining access to Western capital and technology, which could help solve Soviet economic dilemmas. Brezhnev counted on his most prosperous and loyal satellite, the German Democratic Republic under Walter Ulbricht to apply pressure whenever needed to Moscow's largest Western

trading partner, the FRG. When Ulbricht stood in the way of Brezhnev's desired *detente*, he was removed in 1971 in favor of Erich Honecker.

Likewise, Mikhail Gorbachev first attempted the "safe" route to solving his economic problems. He called for increased discipline at home and within the CMEA, and initiated a rapprochement with the West. Like Brezhnev before him, he found that this approach was insufficient to meet the needs of the USSR. He therefore adopted the doctrine (yes, some do call it the "Gorbachev Doctrine") of "free choice" for the parties and peoples of Europe, seeking to increase the stability of those satellites, thereby increasing their ability to help the Soviet Union and to enhance the Soviet image in the eyes of the West. Like Brezhnev, he counted on Honecker to exploit the special relationship with the FRG (which had been made much more extensive thanks to Brezhnev's *detente*). When Honecker became an obstacle, he was removed, as Ulbricht had been (though Gorbachev's role in this was much more subtle than in the case of Brezhnev and Ulbricht). In 1989, the situation in Eastern Europe escaped Gorbachev's control, and pressing domestic issues impaired his ability to regain that control for a time. But the events of 1989 and spring of 1990 lay bare the workings of Soviet policy toward the GDR and the rest of Eastern

Europe. As the Soviets under Gorbachev prepare for the pending negotiations on the fate of East Germany, Soviet decision-making will proceed in a conservative, deliberate, rational way, using the influence it earned as a victorious power in WWII to manipulate German unification in any way it can to satisfy Soviet concerns; just as it always has. Except this time, the mechanism is there for all to see.

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