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Political relations between the two German states, 1979 - 1989.

by

Sarah L. Matthews

A Doctoral thesis submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the award of

Doctor of Philosophy

of the Loughborough University of Technology.

March 1993

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ABSTRACT

The thesis discusses the development of German-German relations in the 1980s in terms of their interaction with the overall East-West climate. An examination of the basic positions of the major parties in the two German states on Deutschlandpolitik since 1949 establishes the domestic parameters within which the governments had to conduct their relations in the 1980s. The international framework for those relations was created by the conclusion of a series of treaties in the early 1970s within the process of détente. The treaties the Federal Republic concluded with the East European states and the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe are therefore evaluated. An outline of the onset of the second Cold War considers the issues of rearmament, nuclear parity, crises in the developing world and the economic situation in Eastern Europe, and their relative roles in the deterioration of the superpower relationship.

The main focus of the thesis investigates whether the two German states were able to counter East-West confrontation and play a constructive role in continuing and developing the détente process. By assessing the development of German-German relations in the early 1980s, it is possible to determine how much room for manoeuvre the two German states were able to develop, independent of their alliance leaders, and whether this provided them with sufficient influence to act as a factor for the preservation of peace in Europe. The period after 1985 is examined in the same light, with a consideration of whether the apparent synchronisation of German-German and superpower relations relieved the two German states of their function as champions of dialogue. Within this context, the development of a security dimension in German-German relations is explored, and emphasis is given to the role of the SPD and SED in this sphere.
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ADN : Agentur der deutschen Nachrichten (German news agency) in the GDR
CC : Central Committee
CDE : Conference on confidence- and security-building measures and Disarmament in Europe
CDU : Christlich-Demokratische Union (Christian Democratic Union)
CFE : Conference on Conventional Forces in Europe
CMEA : Council of Mutual Economic Assistance
CP : Communist Party
CPSU : Communist Party of the Soviet Union
C(S)BM : Confidence- (and security-) Building Measure
CSCE : Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe
CSU : Christlich Soziale Union (Christian Social Union)
CWFZ : Chemical Weapon Free Zone
EC : European Community
FDP : Freie Demokratische Partei (Free Democratic Party)
FRG : Federal Republic of Germany
GDR : German Democratic Republic
INF : Intermediate Nuclear Forces
IPW : Institut für Internationale Politik und Wirtschaft (Institute for International Politics and Economic Affairs)
LDPD : Liberal-Demokratische Partei Deutschlands (Liberal Democratic Party of Germany)
MBFR : Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions
NATO : North Atlantic Treaty Organisation
NWFZ : Nuclear Weapon Free Zone
PUWP : Polish United Worker’s Party
SALT : Strategic Arms Limitation Talks
SDI : Strategic Defence Initiative (known as Star Wars)
SED : Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschlands (Socialist Unity Party of Germany)
SLBM : Strategic Land-Based Missile
SPD : Sozialdemokratische Partei Deutschlands (Social Democratic Party of Germany)
START : Strategic Arms Reduction Talks
TNF : Theatre Nuclear Forces
UN : United Nations
US(A) : United States (of America)
USSR : Union of Soviet Socialist Republics
WTO : Warsaw Treaty Organisation
INTRODUCTION

Relations between the two German states were of vital concern for peace and security in Europe, given their geostrategic positions and sociopolitical affiliations. It was always assumed that stability in these relations was essential for the maintenance of stability in Europe in general. Moreover, because the unification of the two German states was not considered realisable in the foreseeable future, until late 1989, the necessity of maintaining good relations between these two states was highlighted by all states involved in the East-West conflict.

This reassessment of the relations between the two German states in the 1980s was conceived in the early summer of 1989, when there was no indication that the situation in Germany was about to change so dramatically. Moreover, it can be assumed that even Kohl's ten point plan in November 1989 on a confederation between the two German states was not thought possible before the turn of the century. I decided to continue with the original outline of a thesis because the issue of the changing status of the two German states in the 1980s had become more tangible. Though the overall frame of reference for the thesis had changed significantly, the research was facilitated as a result of the more relaxed conditions in East Germany. Academics and political advisers in the former GDR were much more accessible and willing to be interviewed, and access to libraries etc. in East Berlin was easier.

Throughout the dissertation, the terms Deutschlandpolitik (German policy) and Ostpolitik (Eastern policy) have been used in the original German as these terms have been adopted into English political vocabulary and they convey the sense of the policies more clearly. Relations between the two German states are defined as “German-German” relations because this term is less politically loaded than “inner-”, “inter-” or “intra-German” relations. Inter-German relations was the term adopted by the Federal government to denote the special relationship between the two German states, but it was rejected by the GDR. In the course of the dissertation, the Federal Republic is used interchangeably with West Germany, and there is no distinction between the German Democratic Republic (the GDR) and East Germany.

A brief outline of the causes of the division of Germany is necessary to elucidate their role in the international arena after 1949. In May 1945, Germany was divided into four zones and Berlin into four sectors, under joint Allied control, according to the conditions laid down at the Yalta conference. Though the four powers (United States, Soviet Union, Britain and France) had different methods of achieving de-nazification, demilitarisation and decentralisation, there was no intention at that stage

1 See “Chancellor Kohl speaks before the Bundestag on intra-German relations - 10 points. 28 Nov. 1989”, in Report Round-up Volume 3 no. 11 November 1989.
to divide Germany permanently. Indeed, the joint control functioned adequately until the onset of the Cold War after 1947, which, when compounded by the economic collapse of Germany, contributed to the eventual division of Germany in 1949. The development of a Western currency zone and the refusal of the Soviet Union to accept Marshall aid for its zone accentuated the differences between the allies, culminating in the Western airlift to break the blockade imposed by the Soviet Union on the Western sectors of Berlin. As separate economic entities in the first instance, the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic were founded in May and October 1949 respectively, and integrated into the Eastern and Western community of values by the mid-1950s. The division of Germany was forced on the German people against their will and proved to be a major source of problems in Europe, particularly given the delicate situation in and around Berlin.

The division of Germany symbolised the division of Europe, and at that stage, ultimately the division of the world into East and West, into the opposing camps of communism and capitalism. As a result of being the front-line states of this divide, the Federal Republic and the GDR became the two mostly highly militarised territories in the East-West conflict. It is against this background that the thesis considers the development of relations between the two German states and their relationship with the superpowers in the 1980s.

The main aim of the thesis is to reassess the positions of both the Federal Republic and the German Democratic Republic in relation to each other and to their respective superpowers. The broad spectrum of German-German relations on the threshold of the 1980s opened up opportunities for the two German states to use chances for dialogue that would perhaps serve the further development of general East-West relations. The crux of the argument is whether or not they were able to counter the prevalent confrontation in East-West relations and play a constructive role in developing and maintaining the détente process. The thesis aims to show how the two German states were able to exercise a certain independence and thus gain sufficient influence within their alliances to demonstrate to the superpowers the importance of East-West cooperation in all spheres, by proposing answers to the following questions. Did the deterioration of superpower relations on the one hand and the growing German public demand for normalisation on the other have any observable impact on German-German relations after 1979? Could improvements in German-German relations be divorced from the state of US-Soviet relations? What room for independent manoeuvre did the two German states find, and what risks were they prepared to take to advance the cause

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2 It is not proposed to discuss the causes of the division of Germany further within the context of this dissertation. For further details, see Balfour, M.: West Germany - a contemporary history; Berghahn, V.R.: Modern Germany; Burkett, A.J.: Parties and elections in West Germany (C. Hurst and Company Limited, London 1975); Conradt, D.P.: The German polity (Longman, New York, 4th edition 1989); Grosser, A.: Germany in our time (London 1971); Hiscocks, R.: Germany revived (London 1966).
of normalisation? Was Deutschlandpolitik a functional equivalent of peace policy? Did an improvement in relations between East and West Germany constitute a necessary and sufficient factor for the preservation of peace in Europe?

An attempt will be made to establish an inverse relationship between German-German relations and superpower relations in the early 1980s and the impact this had on the German states. Though it must be acknowledged that the room for manoeuvre of the two German states was limited when the two superpowers confirmed their claims to leadership, the assumption that the two German states then lost completely their function as champions of dialogue in the détente process will be challenged.

Within this framework, the development of a security dimension in German-German relations will be analysed to ascertain whether it had an influence on the development of East-West co-operation in terms of arms control and peace in general. The contention is that contacts on security issues between East and West Germany had more than mere potential and contributed, indirectly, to the reduction of East-West tensions.

In order to set the scene within which the relations developed, the first chapter examines the basic positions of the major parties in the two states in terms of their Deutschlandpolitik since 1949. The party positions are delineated to facilitate understanding of the background positions to relations and to aid comprehension when the particular policies of the two states are discussed in the following chapters. The chapter considers the frame of reference within which all parties had to work as a result of the restricting four power rights and responsibilities, and the limitations imposed by alliance adherence. The aim of the chapter is to show that there was a certain degree of continuity in this policy on both sides, despite the rhetoric of the more conservative and radical elements of the various parties.

In the early to mid-1960s, as a result of fears of another Cuba/Berlin crisis, there was a thaw in the East-West relationship, particularly between the US and the Soviet Union, which provided the international impulse for improved relations between the Federal Republic and the GDR. The necessary spur in the German context was the formation of the first social-liberal coalition government in the Federal Republic in October 1969 under Willy Brandt. His de facto recognition of the GDR created a foundation from which a degree of normalisation could develop. With the establishment of a modus vivendi between the Federal Republic and the major East European states in the form of renunciation of force agreements and border recognition treaties and with the Quadripartite Agreement on Berlin, there was nothing, but German obstinacy, to prevent the negotiation and successful conclusion of a treaty between the two German states in December 1972. This process cleared the path for the convening of the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe (C.S.C.E.) in Helsinki in 1975, which was to
play a significant role in the 1980s in terms of opening up Eastern Europe to the West. This period from October 1969 to the end of the 1970s is considered in the second chapter in terms of its relevance for the development of relations in the 1980s.

The third chapter draws an outline of the onset of the second Cold War by considering the international situation at the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s, when the superpower relationship began to flounder on the issues of rearmament and political conflicts in the developing world and Europe. Here the deployment of Soviet SS-20s and the NATO twin-track decision are considered as are the conflicts in Ethiopia, Iran, Afghanistan and Poland in order to determine the causes for the ensuing Cold War. A brief exposé of the positions of the US and the Soviet Union with regard to German-German relations is undertaken within this chapter.

The remaining chapters present the nub of the thesis in support of the hypotheses. Chapter four is divided into three parts and deals with the period 1979 to 1985. It outlines the interests and perceptions of the two German states in terms of détente and security policy, prior to analysing German-German reactions to the international developments discussed in chapter three. The examination of German-German relations reassesses the importance of these relations and to what extent they were indicative of the general state of East-West relations. An important focal point is the visit by Chancellor Schmidt to the GDR in December 1981 and its consequences. An analysis of the European context for the development of German-German relations and of their own “community of responsibility” reveals the framework within which the Federal Republic and the GDR contributed to the maintenance of peace and détente in Europe. The role of the two German states in the early 1980s was exemplified by the developments of 1983 and 1984 against the background of the INF dispute in particular. The addition of a security dimension to their relations is examined in terms of whether the two German states had acquired a potential for autonomous contributions to stability in Europe, within the overall framework of their alliances, rather than being a stumbling block or an object of East-West confrontation. The conflict in the Warsaw Pact, allegedly over East German policy towards the Federal Republic, illustrated the newly-defined role of the GDR in its alliance and the extent to which it was willing to go in order to safeguard its interests with regard to the Federal Republic. Throughout this period, funeral diplomacy served an important function for the two German states offering the opportunity for direct contacts between their leaders.

Chapter five continues in a similar vein but discusses the development of German-German relations in the Gorbachev era up to 1989. The impact of Gorbachev and the response of the GDR influenced German-German relations in this era as did the SDI controversy. An important aspect of this era was the “new thinking” introduced by Gorbachev in the Soviet Union, and the contribution of the GDR to the development of
"new thinking" is ascertained in this chapter. The Honecker visit to the Federal Republic in September 1987 represented the most significant development in German-German relations since the conclusion of the Basic Treaty in 1972, but has been described by some as the beginning of the end of those relations. This view is challenged as the consequences of the visit are considered. The role of the two German states in the C.S.C.B. process throughout the 1980s was as an important impetus to the continuation of this forum, and this is examined in some detail.

Key areas in the security sphere, discussed in chapter six, were the links between the opposition Social Democrats in the Federal Republic and the SED in the GDR. The results of their discussions - proposals for weapon free zones and confidence-building measures, and the theoretical document "Conflicting ideologies and common security" - revealed the potential that existed between the two German states. Although in opposition, the SPD's "second wave of Ostpolitik / détente" did have some support from the West German population, but whether this had any influence on the Federal government in terms of security policy is discussed in this chapter.

The collapse of the GDR in late 1989 / early 1990 took most observers by surprise. That unification of the two German states was complete by October 1990 was astounding. The dynamics of this development, however, go beyond the parameters of this thesis. The causes are many - from the Gorbachev factor and the inability / unwillingness of the ageing GDR leadership to instigate reform to the critical economic situation. Unification was the ultimate fulfilment of the Federal Republic's aim in pursuing relations with the GDR, but how far was it the result of the former's policies?
CHAPTER ONE

THE DEVELOPMENT OF DEUTSCHLANDPOLITIK WITHIN THE MAJOR PARTIES IN THE TWO GERMAN STATES

In order to understand the background against which the two German states conducted their relations in the 1980s, it is necessary to consider the positions of the major parties in the two states on Deutschlandpolitik. Emphasis will be on the post-1969 period, and the parties to be considered are the Socialist Unity Party of Germany (SED) in the GDR, and in the Federal Republic, the Christian Democratic Union (CDU), the Christian Social Union (CSU), the Free Democratic Party (FDP) and the Social Democratic Party of Germany (SPD).\(^1\) Whilst outlining the framework for overall relations, this chapter will also assess how the parties’ perceptions of the role of Deutschlandpolitik changed, if at all, throughout this period. When considering the positions of the parties, the tactical nature of any changes undertaken must not be underestimated as domestic policy considerations influenced the approach to Deutschlandpolitik of the parties in both German states. There was always a need to satisfy the demands of the population and to create a profile to differentiate one party from another on a particular policy. It must, however, be recognised that the two German states were restricted, to a large extent, in the pursuit of their relations with each other by the rights and responsibilities for Berlin and Germany as a whole retained by the four victorious powers after 1945, which limited the sovereignty of the two German states.

1 The German Democratic Republic

1.1 The Deutschlandpolitik of the SED

Within the GDR, the SED had no real political rivals and was, therefore, basically free to determine its Deutschlandpolitik as it chose. However, the Federal Republic posed a unique threat to the GDR leadership by its mere existence, and by right-wing demands in the West for a revision of European borders. The international isolation of the GDR\(^2\) in the first two decades of its existence was also a significant factor in how the GDR

\(^{1}\) Other parties will not be addressed because they did not play a role in determining government policy, or they regarded Deutschlandpolitik as being of marginal importance. In the 1940s - 1960s, the smaller parties in the GDR did differ in their approach from the SED but had no opportunity to determine policy.

\(^{2}\) The decision to withhold or withdraw diplomatic recognition from governments, except the Soviet Union, that recognised the East German regime was officially announced on 9 December 1955, and became known as the Hallstein Doctrine, after Dr. Walter Hallstein, then State Secretary of the Federal Foreign Ministry. In Germany and Eastern Europe since 1945 (Keeling’s Research Report 8, 1973). p. 129. The ultimate goal of this policy was to isolate the GDR internationally, and cause the political and economic destabilisation of East Germany. It went hand in hand with the West German “Alleinvertretungsanspruch” - the claim to sole representation of all Germans. In the long-term, the policy proved non-productive to some extent because it sacrificed potentially fruitful political and economic relations with third countries, and prohibited membership of the UN.
leadership viewed its Deutschlandpolitik. It was reliant on the Soviet Union for its ultimate survival, and the Soviet perception of the West German threat to its hegemony in Eastern Europe determined its own, and the GDR’s, Deutschlandpolitik. The GDR defined German-German relations within the overall framework of relations with the West, and a specific Deutschlandpolitik only existed until 1969, although for the purposes of this dissertation, the term Deutschlandpolitik will be used throughout.

It is possible to assess the SED’s policy from two standpoints. The first argues that a leitmotif can be drawn throughout the period since 1949. The different variations of SED policy were more a question of tactical requirements than a change in the long-term strategy. The overriding desire of the SED was to bring about a situation in the Federal Republic whereby socialism would develop there as the precondition for the reunification of the two German states. Although this objective was pursued far more actively under the first leader of the GDR, Walter Ulbricht, nevertheless it remained an ambition of the Honecker regime despite the apparently less significant role accorded to it. The differing tactics of the SED in this respect can be seen as a reaction to the Deutschlandpolitik pursued by the Bonn government.

The main contention of the second view is that the replacement of Ulbricht by Honecker represented a complete break with the Deutschlandpolitik of the 1950s and 1960s, and that, thereafter, the GDR “formally renounced any interest in reunification.” The GDR no longer actively pursued a (con-) federation between the two German states and had accepted the status quo as permanent and as being to the long-term advantage of the GDR. An examination of the policy of the SED will consider these positions.

In the immediate post-war years until 1949, the SED was vehemently opposed to the division of Germany, but hoped that a completely different system in the East would prove so attractive to the West that reunification would be possible on their terms at some later point. The SED leadership implemented the Soviet Union’s preferred Deutschlandpolitik, which complemented its own aims. The first priority was to create a viable socialist state in the Soviet occupation zone that would remain under Soviet influence at the end of the formal occupation. The long-term “strategy on Germany” was to work from this operational base to extend Soviet influence to the three Western occupation zones and to West Berlin in the struggle for control over all of Germany. The Soviet Union hoped to sever the Federal Republic’s ties with the Western defence

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community (but if that were not possible, then a neutral Germany would be acceptable).

This long-term Soviet aim for Deutschlandpolitik was adopted and extended by the SED. The realisation of German unity was understood as a question of the class struggle against the rule of the capitalist imperialists in West Germany, hence the appeals to the working class in West Germany - the SPD, the trade unions and the Communist Party - to unite in an “action alliance” against the Western allies and the Federal government, and to force a change of the social structures of West Germany, as the motor towards German reunification.

Initially in the years after 1949, the SED followed the all-German option. The main line of Ulbricht’s policy was to bring “Germans to one table” to negotiate the future of the nation, with proposals for an all-German confederation in 1956 - part of the offensive use of the national question. In 1964 and again in 1966, the SED tried to initiate talks with the SPD opposition and also with the West German government on the question of reunification, attaching the precondition of the diplomatic recognition of the GDR by West Germany, because of the realisation that reunification would mean the end of the GDR. Throughout this period, the SED maintained the idea of the unity of the German nation. This can be seen by a consideration of the East German constitutions. In 1949, in article one of the constitution, Germany was described as “an indivisible democratic republic”, with “only one German citizenship”. This position was maintained in most party statements and at party congresses. In 1968, the constitution was amended but still maintained the idea of the unity of the nation. In article one, the GDR was portrayed as “a socialist state of the German nation” and article eight referred to the

“overcoming of the division of Germany forced on the German nation by imperialism” which would lead to a “gradual rapprochement of the two states until their unification on the basis of democracy and socialism”.

In the second half of the 1960s then, the national question was used as a defensive instrument to legitimate the two states theory.

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8 Zieger 1989 op. cit. p. 135. This was seen as a method of implementing the Potsdam Agreement.

7 See for example: Es ging um Deutschland - Vorschläge der DDR zur Konföderation zwischen beiden deutschen Staaten 1955-67 (Dietz Verlag, Berlin 1990)


11 East German constitution 1949, Gesetzblatt der DDR p. 4. As quoted in Lieser-Triebnigg, Erika: Recht in der DDR. Einführung und Dokumentation (Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, Köln, 1985). p. 17

12 East German constitution 1968, Gesetzblatt der DDR p. 199. In Lieser-Triebnigg op. cit. p. 17

13 Spittmann op. cit. p. 227
This situation began to change in late 1969 when the social-liberal coalition came to power in the Federal Republic. The SED began to distance itself from its position on the German nation and the possibility of a gradual unification of the two German states as the new West German government based its policy on the common declared belief in the German nation. Ulbricht began to move away from the one nation two states position and referred to the GDR as a socialist German nation state with a socialist national culture in January 1971. The full potential of this policy was realised when Erich Honecker became the leader of the SED and the GDR in May 1971, and this appears to support the position of those who saw a full-scale change in the SED’s Deutschlandpolitik. At the VIIIth Party Congress in June 1971, the German question played a very minor role, and in December of the same year, Honecker declared that the German question had already been decided by history, in other words the division of Germany had been accepted by both German states and by their neighbours and allies.

The VIIIth Party Congress was an important break in East German history. Thereafter a policy of demarcation or delimitation from West Germany began in earnest, to counter the increase in contacts between the two German states which resulted from the conclusion of the Basic Treaty in 1972 and the related treaties (see chapter two). A social policy of improving living standards and greater access to consumer goods and basic social provisions, in order to create fealty to the socialist GDR and counterbalance the increased influence of the Federal Republic, was initially successful, gaining tacit support from the GDR-population and increasing pride in that country (this was also achieved through sporting excellence and international recognition).

The changed situation was reflected in a new constitution in October 1974 which referred to the GDR as a “state of workers and farmers” and erased all references to a common German nation. The use of “German” and “Germany” was also avoided as much as possible, although some usage was inevitable, such as in the name of the leading party and its central newspaper (Sozialistische Einheitspartei Deutschland and Neues Deutschland). The confusion caused by SED propaganda, however, was such that, in December 1974, it had become necessary for Erich Honecker to answer the question of the national affiliation of the GDR citizens. He gave a simple reply: “Citizenship: GDR, nationality: German”. This once again introduced the question of the German nation, because nationality is generally understood as ‘belonging to a nation’. However, two separate German nations were emphasised, defined in socio-economic terms - the socialist GDR and the capitalist Federal Republic - throughout the

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13 Zieger 1989 op. cit. pp. 139 - 140
14 ibid. p. 141
15 Winters op. cit. p. 181
16 East German constitution 1974, Gesetzblatt der DDR p. 425. In Lieser-Triebnigg op. cit. p. 17

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A further assessment of the party congresses during the Honecker regime, reveals far less emphasis on the national question and German-German relations in general than there had been under Ulbricht. They were not mentioned at all in 1976 and only briefly in 1981. In 1986, the matters were discussed, not by the SED leader, but by the new leader of the CPSU, Gorbachev. Thus the change from Ulbricht to Honecker had accomplished an apparent full change of scenery. Whereas for Ulbricht the German question had been an important element of SED party politics, for Honecker it had apparently much less significance. This provokes the justifiable question: whether was Honecker’s policy: a change of political strategy or merely a change of political tactics? A closer examination of the events of the 1980s in particular seems to indicate that it was a tactical change brought about by political expedience.

Political developments had no sustained effect on the long-term Deutschlandpolitik of the SED nor on the relations between the two German states. In February 1981, it became clear that Honecker too regarded the reunification of a socialist Germany as his long-term aim. In a speech to party functionaries in Berlin on 15 February 1981, Honecker said as a warning to the Federal Republic:

“Be careful! One day, socialism will knock on your door, and when the day comes, on which the workers of the Federal Republic undertake the socialist transformation of the FRG, then the question of the unification of both German states will be seen in an entirely new light. There should be no doubt how we will then decide.”

This was in response to a series of articles in Der Spiegel in West Germany on the reunification issue. Honecker was attempting, however, to regain the initiative on this front and show that the East Germans still considered reunification a useful political card to play. It proved that the GDR leader was willing to confront the future, assert his country’s strengths and to dare the Federal Republic to meet him head on. It was the most clearly formulated statement on the perspective of a socialist united Germany

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18 To justify this claim, a new definition of the terms “nationality” and “nation” was propagated. “Nationality” should describe the ethnic characteristics - language, customs, traditions and habits - that were still familiar to all Germans. “Nation”, however, became a narrower term which covered economic, social, political and ideological factors rather than ethnic ones. This is where there were specific differences between East and West. See Nawrocki op. cit. p. 7 This position reflects that of the SED itself from 1974. See Kosing A. / Schmidt W.: “Zur Herausbildung der sozialistischen Nation in der DDR”, In Einheit 29 Jg. 1974 H. 2 p.182

19 Zieger 1989 op. cit. p. 142

20 Neues Deutschland 16 Feb. 1981. In the report on this speech, “loud applause” was indicated on two occasions and at the end of this section “continuous loud applause” was recorded.

21 A lengthy passage on the perspective of unification of the two states in socialism had also been considered for the Central Committee report at the IXth Party Congress in 1976, but it had been withdrawn, as the SED leadership decided that the time was not right for the discussion of such a matter. This information is from Wolfgang Seiffert, at the time still an academic in the GDR. In Spittmann op. cit. p. 227
by a member of the SED for over a decade.

Honecker’s comments complemented the co-ordinated foreign policy of the Warsaw Pact and revealed Honecker as a politician who thought in terms of long-term strategies and calculated on changes in world politics. In a sense, this supports both the ideas on SED Deutschlandpolitik of the 1980s. It reveals the long-term interest of the SED in unification, but it also serves to define the new role that the SED was about to carve for itself in international politics. It is perhaps possible to see that Honecker was using the relations between the two German states in an attempt to redefine the role of the GDR in terms of serving the overall aims of the Soviet Union in its search for peace, but by doing so on its own terms and according to its own methods. Throughout the early 1980s, the GDR was to test the limits of its autonomy in foreign policy, and this can be seen in these terms. At a time when the Soviet Union needed a stable partner on its Western flank, the GDR was proving that it also had its own priorities.

Other indications in the 1980s lead to the conclusion that even though the policy of the SED was not actively pursuing the goal of reunification, the idea had not been forsaken. A significant move was the letter to Chancellor Kohl written by Honecker in “the name of the German people” in October 1983 on the question of the new missiles in Europe, an attempt to use Deutschlandpolitik as “peace policy”. This too can be seen in terms of the GDR’s new perception of its role in the world. Since the early 1970s, historians in East Germany had been dealing with all-German history, although this only became apparent to West Germans in 1981, when the statue of Frederick the Great was restored to its place on Unter den Linden, and when such diverse characters as Bismarck and Martin Luther were rehabilitated as ‘great sons of the German nation’. This was a distinct change of direction by the SED emphasising the German national consciousness, which was also highlighted by a rediscovery of literature, particularly the romantics. However, it failed to fulfil its overt aim of highlighting the humanistic aspects which it was claimed had continued in the socialist German state.

The rationale behind the specific SED policy towards the Federal Republic after 1969 was peaceful coexistence, in which the GDR would be recognised as a state of equal status; and economic necessity. The dilemma posed by the need to emphasise the socialist GDR and also the unity of the German nation contributed to the problems faced by East Germany. Its absolute dependency on the Soviet Union for its survival was in direct contrast to its apparent and real room for manoeuvre. Its economic weakness dictated its policy even when it caused it to compromise and open up to the West.

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22 Nawrocki op. cit. p. 7
23 See chapters four and five.
24 Zieger 1988 op. cit. p. 243
Given the circumstances of the early 1970s, the policy introduced by Honecker in terms of Deutschlandpolitik can indeed be seen as a tactical rather than a strategic change. The Deutschlandpolitik of the SED was marked by a certain continuity of aim - to foster socialism in the Federal Republic as the precondition for the eventual unification of the two parts of Germany under socialism. Any changes in the policy pursued were of a tactical nature brought about by the circumstances in which the policy was conducted.

2 The Federal Republic of Germany

All government parties in the Federal Republic worked within the same framework for their Deutschlandpolitik, despite the differing accents placed on some issues. The legal basis for Deutschlandpolitik was the imperative for reunification in the preamble (Wiedervereinigungsgebot) of the Basic Law of 23 May 1949, and by the 1980s, the treaties negotiated in this sphere by the various governments.26

Within these confines, the aim of Deutschlandpolitik was to search for ways to overcome the division of Germany, in other words to maintain the claim on unity, to preserve the cohesion of the nation, to make the division of Germany more bearable, and to guarantee the freedom of Berlin.26 The ultimate goal of reunification was basically never questioned, although the Deutschlandpolitik of all the parties underwent significant change throughout the post-war era as a result of the changing circumstances in the international climate which, in turn, had repercussions on the domestic situation in the Federal Republic. An examination of these changes and how the consensus on Deutschlandpolitik was formed and then destroyed in the 1980s is the main focus of this chapter with respect to the Federal Republic.

2.1 The Deutschlandpolitik of the CDU

In the period immediately after World War II, the policy of Konrad Adenauer dominated the CDU’s conception of Deutschlandpolitik. Adenauer’s priority was firm commitment to the West and the Western community of values, and policy towards Eastern Europe was merely an extension of the Western policy of “roll back”. Adenauer saw the reunification of Germany as a long-term aim after free elections in the GDR, but never at the cost of freedom and therefore isolation from the West.27 As a result of this priority, Deutschlandpolitik was limited. Stalin’s suggestion in 1952 for a neutral German state to be formed after free elections was dismissed out of hand by

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Adenauer as a mere manoeuvre by the USSR to prevent or delay the signing of the Treaty on Germany (Deutschlandvertrag) which allowed the Federal Republic to join the defence community of the West. In 1955, the Federal Republic nevertheless took up diplomatic relations with the Soviet Union, whilst continuing to disregard the existence of the GDR. In the last few years of the Adenauer era, therefore, close integration with the West, at the expense of reconciliation with the East, dominated policy decisions, and little was achieved in terms of Deutschlandpolitik.

The policy of Adenauer’s successors moved towards the more flexible position of the other parties in the Federal Republic, although any possible rapprochement with Eastern Europe in general continued to be hindered by the determination not to recognise the GDR. The CDU, under Kiesinger’s chancellorship, had to work with the SPD in the Grand Coalition, and although some progress was made, the differences on questions of Deutschland- and Ostpolitik became too great. In 1969, the first social-liberal coalition government was formed. The CDU was confined to the ranks of opposition for thirteen years, and in this period, it had to reassess its position on Deutschlandpolitik and Ostpolitik in general.

The period spent in opposition by the CDU was one of change in all senses. Prior to 1969, the party had attached little significance to building up a party apparatus as such, but with the election of Kohl in 1973, the CDU found a leader willing to renew it. Gradually, old positions were replaced with new on all questions, including foreign policy. In the early 1970s, the majority of the CDU had been vehemently opposed to the Eastern treaties concluded by the social-liberal coalition, particularly the Basic Treaty with the GDR, arguing that it confirmed the division of Germany and the status quo in Europe. Although the CDU did not deny by this stage that some sort of accommodation with the East was necessary, the Christian Democrats regarded the treaties as rushed and ill-conceived. However, the popularity of the Ost- and Deutschlandpolitik of the SPD-FDP government amongst the electorate and the changing international situation forced the CDU to reconsider its position.

The party conference in Dusseldorf in 1977 contributed significantly to the debate on future orientation in terms of Deutschlandpolitik, with a discussion on “Our responsibility for Germany”. The fact that the CDU undertook a debate on such a controversial issue indicated that the position of the party had moved towards reaching accommodation with East Germany, although the CDU would have to devise its own policy in this area to ensure that the aim remained the reunification of Germany and to ensure that gains were reciprocal. In 1978, the main tenets of the CDU’s Deutsch-

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28 Interview with Dr. Zimmer in June 1991.
landpolitik were presented in a document on basic principles:
1. Freedom and unity for all Germans was the most important task of German policy.
2. Unity was to be gained through the right of self-determination for all Germans in a condition of peace in Europe.
3. The CDU considered the German question open in historical, legal and political terms.
4. The economic and political viability of free Berlin (the three Western sectors) was to be guaranteed and strengthened, and ties between the Federal Republic and West Berlin were to be maintained and developed further.

The change of heart became more apparent in the early 1980s. In June 1980, Richard von Weizsäcker, not then the leading figure he was to become, made it clear that the CDU was interested in playing a larger role in terms of Deutschlandpolitik and not allowing it to remain the monopoly of the SPD, and, in 1981, he fully endorsed the SPD / FDP policy towards the GDR. In mid-1980, the CDU had published a booklet on Deutschlandpolitik in which it accepted the validity of the Eastern treaties - “pacta sunt servanda”, and in October 1980, two articles argued that the new position was not a renunciation of former policy but rather a further development with a view to the future creation of a common and realistic basis for Deutschlandpolitik between the government and opposition. Thus, by 1981, at the party conference in Hamburg, those in favour of continuity in Ostpolitik were in the majority.

“The inability of the CDU / CSU to move quickly and flexibly enough in the late 1960s and early 1970s on the issue of détente... was one factor contributing to its fall from power. Leading Christian Democrats, and Kohl in particular, understood how popular détente (was) in domestic political terms and (were) determined never again to be outflanked by the SPD or FDP on relations with the East.”

Thus by the late 1970s and early 1980s, Kohl and other CDU reformers had moved their party closer to the political centre on the question of Ost- and Deutschlandpolitik.

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32 The deutsche presse agentur reported an article from Die Welt on 20 June 1980, “Weizsäcker kündigt neue deutschlandpolitische Aktivitäten der CDU an”. He also said in this article that there was a need to achieve a higher degree of consensus on Deutschlandpolitik without eliminating democratic debate.
33 Zum Thema DEUTSCHLANDPOLITIK”, in Mehr Tun für Deutschlands Einheit. Die CDU zur deutschen Frage (Bonn 1980). p. 8
This new consensus is what allowed the Kohl government, when it took office in October 1982, to pursue a policy of continuity in this field despite the predicted change. It must, however, be pointed out that the CDU never fully rid itself of its scepticism with regard to the Eastern treaties and the C.S.C.E. in particular. Acceptance of the treaties grew as it became clear that subsequent treaties did not cement the division of Germany, but rather brought the Germans together. Indeed, in the 1983 election programme, the CDU acknowledged and stressed that the treaty policy with the GDR did not cement the division of Germany, and that agreements were not final, but described the prevailing conditions that would one day be overcome through the free self-determination of all Germans. By 1987, this position had been expanded to criticise the SPD on specific issues, for example the question of citizenship, and also to delineate specific areas whereby contacts would be maintained between the people. Moreover, by the early 1980s, the CDU had realised that through the C.S.C.E. process, the situation in Eastern Europe could be changed, and exploited this opportunity.

Throughout the 1980s, the principal aim of CDU governments in Deutschlandpolitik was to maintain national unity, by achieving what was possible and what was responsible given the international climate. The CDU-led government had a strong commitment to the open German question, reflected in Kohl’s first major statement to the Bundestag on Deutschlandpolitik - the “Report on the State of the Nation in Divided Germany”. The term “in divided Germany” had been avoided by the Chancellors of the SPD-FDP governments to prevent misunderstandings.

However, in operational political terms, the CDU accepted that the reunification of Germany would not come about in the foreseeable future, and despite the political rhetoric of the “open German question”, the CDU improved relations with the GDR and with Eastern Europe in general. The CDU was not under pressure to justify its policy as the SPD government had been, and it saw itself as the better qualified to deal with the communist regimes because of its strong unquestioned commitment to the West. Thus it was perhaps more flexible than its predecessor had been. Despite maintaining strong German-German ties during the INF-crisis, the CDU never called into question the defence commitments of West Germany to the Atlantic Alliance. “Deutschlandpolitik is European peace policy”. This formulation adopted by Foreign Minister Genscher was supported by the CDU and underlined the commitment to

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38 Interview with Dr. Dobiey in January 1992.

39 CDU-Deutschlandpolitik: "Geißler-Kommission für mehr Begegnungen und Zusammenarbeit", in deutsche presse agentur. 18 February 1988
working towards peace within the framework of German-German relations; in other words supporting the idea that "never again should war emanate from German soil", and ensuring that no further tensions afflicted the international climate as a result of German-German relations.\(^4\)

The CDU had always criticised the SPD-led government for giving away agreements without achieving any reciprocal acts from the SED leadership, and had said that this reciprocity would be the only principle under which it would do business with the SED. However, in practice, this was not always possible, and the CDU adopted the principle of "trust for trust", where reciprocal acts were not always contemporaneous. Examples of this are shown chapters 4 and 5. As the deputy leader of the parliamentary group of the CDU (/ CSU), Volker Rühe, said:

"Whoever responds quickly, will respond doubly, and we maintain our offer of fairness. No-one need be overburdened, but no-one should be disappointed either."\(^4\)

The CDU argued that its policy was at once realistic and positive, and that it had brought results.\(^2\)

The position represented by Chancellor Kohl had the support of the majority within the CDU. Members of the CDU on the right-wing of the party - the Stalhelm group - were always highly critical of the continuation of the SPD / FDP policy and were on occasion the source of tension between the two German states. A senior member of the government, Heinrich Windelen, warned in 1985, for example, that any impression of special German deals or unpredictability of German policy would trigger suspicion in East and West.\(^4\) In contrast, in 1987, Bernhard Friedmann, a CDU backbencher, drew a direct connection between Deutschlandpolitik and security policy, arguing that the Federal Republic had to work more actively itself towards achieving reunification as this would significantly enhance European security, although the superpowers were not interested in bringing the two German states closer together.\(^4\) Friedmann’s critics argued that the superpowers had to be involved for reunification to be possible, and the government position was presented by the last Minister for Intra-German Affairs, Dorothee Wilms: it sought a solution to the German Question

"on the basis of freedom, human rights, and national self-determination


\(^4\)Rühe bittet Ost-Berlin: Vertrauen gegen Vertrauen setzen", in Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung (FAZ) 13 September 1983

\(^4\)Kleinfeld, Gerald R.: "Holes in the wall - German-German relations", in Cooney et al op. cit. pp. 221 - 240. Here p. 233


for the Germans and for the Europeans in a European peace order (through)... unity in freedom."

Thus the Deutschlandpolitik of the CDU can be traced from its categorical rejection of the GDR in the first decade of its existence to gradual acceptance and, finally, to the realisation of the need to do business with the leaders of the GDR as the only way of maintaining contacts between the people of the two German states. The changes wrought within the CDU to reach acceptance of the status quo were far-reaching and were in part due to the leadership of Helmut Kohl, who had acknowledged the importance of the Deutschlandpolitik introduced by the social-liberal coalition and who adopted a policy based on pragmatism and realism.

This policy was pursued by the Kohl government until events in the autumn of 1989 began to move beyond the control of the authorities in the GDR. With the opening of the Berlin Wall and, therefore, of the borders between the two German states on 9 November 1989, the CDU seized the chance to take the initiative altering the focus of its Deutschlandpolitik. The speech that Kohl delivered on 28 November 1989, known as the “ten point speech”, paved the way for a confederation of the two German states on the road to eventual reunification, although this was still regarded as a long-term perspective. In the event, even this was overtaken by the speed of developments in the GDR, but it indicated a change in the Deutschlandpolitik of the CDU responding to the sentiments of the populations of the two German states.

2.2 The Deutschlandpolitik of the CSU

The Bavarian-based sister party of the CDU, the Christian Social Union, had perhaps the most stable Deutschlandpolitik in the post-war era in both operative and declarative terms. Whilst it is often difficult to distinguish CSU policy from that of its bigger partner, and, in many respects the similarities between the two are greater than the differences, it did have a more inflexible attitude on Deutschlandpolitik. Indeed, after 1949, of all the major parties in the Federal Republic, the CSU was the most vociferous in its support for the overriding aim of reunification, taking the SPD-FDP coalition to the Constitutional Court over the Basic Treaty. The latter’s judgement of 1973 and those made in the 1980s proved significant influences and restraints on the interpretation of the Basic Treaty and on relations with the GDR in general. However, the CSU too gradually came to accept the idea that the West German government should concentrate on what was possible, given the lack of opportunities to achieve unification in the foreseeable future.

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44 Dorothee Wilms in a Bundestag debate, as quoted in Kleinfeld op. cit. p. 234
44 “Chancellor Helmut Kohl speaks before the Bundestag on intra-German relations - 10 points. 28 November 1989”, in Report Round-up Volume 3 #11 Nov. 1989. 5 pages
CSU policy was basically defined by its leader, Franz Josef Strauß, until his death in 1988. During the first two decades after 1949, when the CSU was a member of the Federal government, it accepted and supported Adenauer’s policies with regard to Western integration as the basis for any kind of Ostpolitik. It too regarded such integration as a priority in terms of freedom ranking more highly than reunification. Indeed, Strauß stated this publicly before Adenauer did, and he also acknowledged that the creation of a German national state would not be possible in the foreseeable future.

However, at Land level, the CSU pursued its own Deutschlandpolitik. In the late 1950s, the CSU in Bavaria declared the Sudeten Germans as the “fourth tribe” of Bavaria along with the Old Bavarians, the Franks and the Swabians, although it was quick to point out that it in no way had territorial claims on Czechoslovakia. It was merely confirming the right of domicile as an important form of the right of free self-determination. The CSU had then (and continues to have) close links with the organisations of the exiles - those Germans forced to flee their homes in German-speaking areas of Eastern Europe. Deutschlandpolitik had to be a policy for and with the exiles. This emphasis was what distinguished the CSU from the other parties in the Federal Republic on occasion. The CSU position was that the right of domicile was forcibly withdrawn from these people, and that this could not be justified with reference to the crimes that the National Socialists had committed in the name of Germany.

Such limited moves were the only option open to the CSU after 1969, when it became a member of the opposition in the Bundestag and remained highly sceptical of the new Deutschlandpolitik followed by the SPD. It maintained its majority in the Bavarian government and from there attempted to direct Deutschlandpolitik as far as possible. It regarded the treaties negotiated by the Federal government with Eastern Europe as too hastily decided and therefore to the disadvantage of the Federal Republic. It also argued that the Basic Treaty in particular rejected certain legal positions enshrined in the Basic Law (for example the Wiedervereinigungsgebot). However, in the mid-1960s, Strauß had supported Brandt’s proposed policy. Indeed, it has been argued that his main objection to Brandt’s Ostpolitik may have been that it was not he but Brandt who had introduced it so successfully. Strauß became the most vociferous opponent of that policy he himself had thought necessary and realistic. The CSU did, however, work towards expanding the German people’s knowledge of Germany. For example, it was a driving force in the school book commission to have maps showing the 1937

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41 Interview with Dr. Boysen in January 1992.
50 Bender (1) op. cit. p. 123
51 Grille op. cit. p. 162
borders of Germany and the border between the two German states as equivalent to those state borders between Bavaria and Hesse.

In 1976, the programme of basic principles was amended after three years work under Theo Waigel. The section on Deutschlandpolitik and Germany revealed the commitment of the CSU to achieving reunification.

"The political aim of the Christian Social Union remains the restoration of the state unity of the German people in free self-determination. The ties with Berlin as a Land of the Federal Republic of Germany must be strengthened and developed further.

The German question remains open until there is a freely agreed peace treaty. There is only one German nation, the maintenance of its unity is the duty of free liberal Germany because it carries responsibility for the whole of Germany.

The Christian Social Union holds that there is one united German citizenship. . . . The Christian Social Union demands freedom and self-determination for all Germans." 52

It went on to say that any policy in the sense of "change through rapprochement" which foresaw an alignment with the system in the "GDR" was in direct contradiction of this policy - an overt attack on the policy pursued by the SPD-FDP government, accusing it of working towards an alignment with the GDR system. In other words, the CSU’s Deutschlandpolitik was based on the right of free self-determination and the restoration of national unity,4 within a European framework.

After the ideological priority of achieving reunification in freedom, then the practical priority of the CSU Deutschlandpolitik was to maintain and develop the cultural and historical legacy of the whole German nation as a means of keeping the German nation together - reminding Germans in both East and West of their common heritage and, therefore, of their common future. Maintenance of national unity was a significant aspect of the CSU’s Deutschlandpolitik, through close human contacts between the two German states. An important part of its Deutschlandpolitik was the desire to achieve more human rights for all Germans and the right of domicile had to be included in this. This had to be acknowledged by the East Europeans as a precondition for understanding and partnership to develop.54

The more pragmatic CSU position was revealed by Franz Josef Strauß in the mid-1980s:

"In the short-term we must do what we can; in the medium-term we

52 Grundsatzprogramm der Christlich-Sozialen Union (Munich 1976). p. 72
53 ibid.
54 Guber, Franz: "Die deutsche Frage aus der Sicht der CSU", in Blumenwitz and Zieger op. cit. pp. 165 - 172. Here p.165
55 ibid. p. 169
56 ibid. pp.169 - 170
must prepare what it is possible to do; and in the long-term we must
never lose sight of the aim of unity."

This position was all the more surprising since, throughout the 1970s and the early
1980s, Strauß had been the loudest and strongest proponent of the principle of
reciprocity, calling any unilateral moves by the West German government "utter
stupidity". Strauß' pragmatism was illustrated by his role in facilitating a major loan
to the GDR, where he had been "enemy no.1", in 1983. The significant implications of
this loan will be discussed in chapter four. Here the position of the CSU is the
important issue. The right-wing of the party attacked Strauß for his contribution in
arranging the loan and one leading member resigned in protest. The official CSU
position argued that the loan was very different to financial "contributions" made by the
previous government, and it therefore accepted it. A general consensus was that
Kohl and Genscher had manipulated Strauß to some extent to take some of the steam
from his attacks on the continuity of Deutschlandpolitik.

It must be acknowledged that Strauß was a realist and was willing to bring the CSU
more into line with CDU Deutschlandpolitik. The CSU, with some exceptions, thus
accepted the policy of the government in this realm and although it maintained its basic
positions, it no longer demanded them so forcefully.

2.3 The Deutschlandpolitik of the FDP

Deutschlandpolitik, always of particular interest to the Free Democratic Party, was
perhaps the area where it was able to exert its influence most markedly. This may have
been because many leading members of the FDP had their roots in the GDR and felt
close affinities to the people there. From 1949 - 1957, FDP policy was parallel to
that of Adenauer, giving priority to Western integration. However, by the late 1950s, it
was becoming clear to the leaders of the FDP, particularly to Thomas Dehler, that the
Western orientation of the Federal Republic alone would not lead to reunification.
Various alternatives were discussed within the FDP, such as possible neutrality for the
whole of Germany or the dissolution of the two military alliances, but with no

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57 As quoted in Guber op. cit. p. 167
58 Strauß had created a false impression of himself in the East by confirming and embodying what
Eastern European leaders feared most, a German policy gaining Western support to overrun the East.
Bender (1) op. cit. p. 123
59 Finkenzeller, Roswin: "Was die Mitglieder der CSU noch im Ohr haben", in FAZ 8 July 1983
60 For example: Reif, Genscher, Mischnick, Baum, Hoppe, Borm. See Rottmann, Joachim: "Die
Vorstellungen der Freien Demokratischen Partei (FDP), und der Liberaldemokratischen Partei (LDP) der
sowjetischen Besatzungzone (SBZ) und der späteren Deutschen Demokratischen Republik (DDR) in
der Wiedervereinigungfrage", in Blumenwitz and Zieger op. cit. pp. 71 - 81. Here p. 79
61 Mischnick, Wolfgang: "Zum 10. Jahrestag der Unterzeichnung des Grundlagenvertrages mit der
DDR", in Deutschland Archiv Heft 11 November 1982 15. Jg. pp. 1150 - 1152. Here p. 1150

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consensus reached.\textsuperscript{52} In 1962, Wolfgang Schollwer, a Deutschlandpolitik-expert in the FDP, suggested a four point plan in order to maintain the unity of the German nation - from recognising the division of Germany to officially respecting the Oder-Neiße border. These proposals were accepted by the FDP-leaders, though it was recognised that they would not be adopted at that stage. Nevertheless, it broke the dogmatic adhesion to the idea of non-recognition.\textsuperscript{63} Throughout this period, the FDP had above-average commitment to the German question through its close contacts with the LDPD. After 1966, there were many occasions on which the FDP sent delegations to the GDR to attend LDPD congresses, and they received the LDPD leaders in return.\textsuperscript{64} It was seen as an important contribution to the feeling of belonging together of all Germans, and such a policy has since been taken up by other West German parties.

In 1966, the FDP became a member of the opposition in the Bundestag and, taking a new direction in Deutschlandpolitik, it offered a clear alternative to government policy, encouraging the SPD to seek real progress in Deutschlandpolitik. In December 1966, Schollwer again put forward a series of suggestions for a policy of ‘easing’ relations between the two German states.\textsuperscript{65} This was in line with the SPD’s policy of “change through rapprochement” and of small steps.\textsuperscript{66} It provoked a debate within the FDP in which it was accepted by many that “whoever wants to see reunification must accept the Oder-Neiße line and recognise the existence of the other communist state on German soil.”\textsuperscript{67}

Throughout the life of the Grand Coalition, the FDP maintained its position that the GDR had to be included in the process of détente in Europe for it to succeed, and it acknowledged that Deutschlandpolitik (and Ostpolitik) had to be pursued within the wider European framework.\textsuperscript{68} In early 1969, the FDP’s draft of a treaty between the two German states,\textsuperscript{69} which foresaw state recognition of East Germany linked with the maintenance of the aim of reunification and concrete proposals for shaping political,

\footnotesize{\textsuperscript{52}Rottmann op. cit. p. 80
\textsuperscript{53}Bender (1) op. cit. pp. 133 - 134
\textsuperscript{54}Mischenick, Wolfgang: "Deutschlandpolitik - ein zähhflüssiger Prozeß", in LIBERAL Vierteljahreshefte für Politik und Kultur, Heft 4 November 1987 29. Jg. pp. 3 - 6. Here p. 4
\textsuperscript{56}Brandt would have preferred a coalition with the FDP in 1966 but feared the parliamentary majority would have been too small for the policies intended. Bender (1) op. cit. p. 134
\textsuperscript{57}Juling op. cit. p. 130
\textsuperscript{58}ibid. p. 131
\textsuperscript{59}Kühn, Detlef: "Die FDP und die Deutschlandpolitik", in Blumenwitz and Zieger op. cit. pp. 83 - 87. Here p. 83}
economic and cultural relations between the two states, had an important impact and proved to be the forerunner of the Basic Treaty in 1972. The FDP also called for an all-European security conference with US participation, but it gained no support. Its election manifesto laid out clearly its Deutschlandpolitik, and the commonalities in this sphere provided the backbone of the social-liberal coalition after 1969.

With the successful conclusion of the Basic Treaty in 1972, there was a general decline in interest in Deutschlandpolitik, not least within the FDP. It was realised that the new Ost- and Deutschlandpolitik would not bring reunification in the foreseeable future, so in 1975, the FDP reassessed the possibilities and limitations of Deutschlandpolitik within the overall East-West framework and the specific positions of the two German states. It came to the conclusion that

"Deutschlandpolitik must be understood as both peace policy and defence policy which also encompasses the reduction of confrontation in Europe and the development of forms of co-operation between the two systems."

Therefore, preconditions for a successful Deutschlandpolitik included an improvement in the overall East-West relationship in Europe. European integration and German-German normalisation should complement each other, and the situation in Berlin should be stabilised further to use its special status positively. Most importantly, relations between the two German states should serve as an example for relations between states with different social orders. Thus the core of FDP Deutschlandpolitik was the development and implementation of treaties with the GDR, taking into account the economic situation in Eastern Europe and fulfilling the obligations of the C.S.C.E. agreements, working towards the creation of a European peace order where the right of free self-determination would be realised. Domestically, the Federal Republic was to continue its policy of reform in the spirit of social liberalism because only a humane social system in the Federal Republic could hold its own in the competition of the political systems between the two German states. This continued to be the basic position of the FDP in the following years, reflected in the treaties and agreements concluded with the GDR.

Despite the collapse of the social-liberal coalition in October 1982, continuity in Deutschlandpolitik was maintained because of the continued participation in govern-

73 ibid. p. 174
74 ibid. p. 174 - 177
75 ibid. p. 177
76 ibid. pp. 177 - 178
ment by the FDP, particularly of Genscher as Foreign Minister and Vice-Chancellor. In 1984, some months after a joint declaration on the situation of the nation had been agreed by all members of the Bundestag (except the Greens), the FDP reconsidered its Deutschlandpolitik in an effort to regain the "leadership role" it had enjoyed in this sphere in the 1960s. Uwe Ronneburger (FDP spokesman on matters related to Deutschlandpolitik) argued that reunification in the form of German neutrality or restoration of the former Reich was not the intended outcome of the task in the Basic Law. Borders had to be made more open to overcome the division peacefully.

The FDP hoped to create stability in the heart of Europe - that is in relations with the GDR - and suggested four practical ways to achieve this: through political consultations at all levels between the two German states and efforts to combine Deutschlandpolitik and security policy; through a wider education policy; through encouraging international support for a solution to the German question; and finally through a continuation of the treaty policy with the GDR in the interests of the people. In reality, there was little that was remarkable or new in this paper. It must be seen against the background of the differences within the coalition government with regard to Deutschlandpolitik.

In the late 1980s, the FDP considered the German question and the shape of the German future again, discussing the connection between Deutschlandpolitik and security policy, and between Deutschlandpolitik and European policy more closely. Despite this, it failed to find satisfactory answers to the questions it posed itself, although it acknowledged that real solutions, not palliative measures, should be proposed. In 1987, Ronneburger reiterated the fact that the overall aim of West German policy was to achieve German unity, rather than to solve technical or administrative problems, and this had to be done within the European dimension. He also emphasised the responsibility of the four powers to work towards creating the preconditions for overcoming the division of Europe and, therefore, of Germany. Deutschlandpolitik, so Ronneburger argued, in future years should aim to make the peaceful solution of the German question part of the policy of West Germany’s European and Western allies. In May 1987, Lambsdorff reiterated the role the Soviet Union could play in the question of reunification, and the link between Deutschlandpolitik and security policy.

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77 Ronneburger, Uwe: "Deutschlandpapier der F.D.P.-Bundestagsfraktion. Freie Demokratische Korrespondenz. Nr. 366 Bonn, 26 April 1984", in Materialien zur Deutschlandpolitik der Freien Demokratischen Partei (Friedrich-Naumann-Stiftung, Königswinter). p. 8

78 "FDP will Deutschlandpolitik voranbringen", in Süddeutsche Zeitung 27 April 1984

79 Kühn op. cit. p. 85
The latter position never gained full acceptance within the FDP.¹⁰

In the late 1980s, the FDP aimed to make Deutschlandpolitik the central theme of FDP party politics again, as it had been in the 1950s and 1960s. Then, it had been understood as a step towards reunification, but this aspect had been ignored when implementing the policy, according to the FDP. Events in early 1988 within church circles in the GDR showed that more should be done towards this aim because freedom for GDR-citizens would only be possible in a united Germany, since the SED would be unlikely to give up part or all of its power in an independent GDR. Thus in the late 1980s, the prospects for the FDP to reassume its leading role in discussions in Deutschlandpolitik were positive, although it was aware that the mistakes of the past had to be avoided.¹¹

In summary, the FDP always played an important role in terms of Deutschlandpolitik in the Federal Republic, contributing to the major rethinking in this area throughout its history. Deutschlandpolitik for the FDP had always been a policy in the interests of the people and was understood as an active European peace policy which excluded any national solo effort to find unification.²²

2.4 The Deutschlandpolitik of the SPD

The Social Democratic Party initially played only a minor role in the formation of Deutschlandpolitik, but over the years it developed its full potential in this sphere. Several clear stages can be drawn in a consideration of the SPD’s policy, the first of which was defined by the leader, Kurt Schumacher. After 1945, the SPD pursued the aim of maintaining the unity of the four zones in Germany, by supporting economic recovery first in the Western zones and then throughout the state, followed by free elections. This was known as the “magnet theory” - the SPD’s version of the “policy of strength”,³³ revealing a certain amount of consensus with Adenauer’s policy. After Schumacher’s death and the rejection of the Stalin note in 1952, the SPD hardened its position to either reunification or support for the Western treaties, because the inclusion of West Germany into the Western defence community seemed to preclude unification, paving the way for the integration of the GDR into the Eastern defence system.

¹⁰ Different positions on Deutschlandpolitik did not occur on party lines, but rather within and across all parties. In all parties, there were those who accepted the status quo and who wanted to continue the policy of human improvements. Likewise within all parties, there were those who not only wanted to make the division more bearable but who also wanted to end it. The latter remained in a minority but it was a sizable one that could not be ignored. In Köhn op. cit. p. 86

¹¹ ibid. pp. 85-87

²² Mischnick 1987 op. cit. p. 5

A third phase of SPD Deutschlandpolitik lasted from 1955 to 1959 during which time the SPD advocated a collective security system in Europe and an “Austrian solution” to the German question, thus tying European security to German unity (as it was to do again in the 1980s). In March 1959, the SPD put forward its “Deutschlandplan” with three main stages all based on the equality of the two German states, from an all-German conference via an all-German parliamentary council eventually to a new constitution and an all-German parliament and government. Given its publication at the time of the Berlin crisis, it was widely rejected.44

In 1959, the SPD drew up a new programme - the Godesberg Programme - as the basis for its aspirations to become a “Volkspartei”. On 30 June 1960, in the now famous speech to the Bundestag, Herbert Wehner accepted the Western ties of the Federal Republic as the basis for the framework of West German foreign policy.45 This represented the most important break in the post-war history of the SPD. It had realised that to gain power it needed the support of the political centre.

With the building of the Berlin Wall, it became clear that the protection guarantee of the allies only included West Germany and West Berlin, but not the German national aspirations for unity. At this stage, the Berlin SPD began to play a major role in determining Deutschlandpolitik, through Willy Brandt, the embodiment of the new SPD, and his advisors Bahr, Albertz and Schütz. They began to take their own initiatives and positions on détente towards the East, encouraged by the US President Kennedy. Bahr’s speech in Tutzing in 1963 was the programmatic definition of the SPD’s new Ostpolitik, a policy of “change through rapprochement”, of small steps, of accepting the status quo in order to change it.46

The question of how to create a modus vivendi with East European states without giving up the concept of security and détente in Europe as preconditions for a solution to the German question was then addressed. It was achieved by the social-liberal coalition on the basis of renunciation of force treaties. The Basic Treaty signed with the GDR in 1972 was at once the central point of SPD Deutschlandpolitik and its pivot. The right of self-determination and how to implement it was the key issue rather than speculation on what the outcome of its realisation would be. For the Social Democrats, a policy that maintained peace and a political order in the Federal Republic that guaranteed freedom for the people had priority as the only practical policy that would

44 Hacker op. cit. pp. 47 - 51
45 Ibid. pp. 52 - 53

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bring additional freedoms to the people of East Germany.87

The three key concepts of SPD Deutschlandpolitik were freedom, peace and the nation. These were based on the peace commitment in Article 26 of the Basic Law and the aim of unity of the nation in its preamble, with freedom guaranteed as one of the basic rights. In practical terms, this meant that the SPD accepted the reality of Germany divided into two states and that its Deutschlandpolitik contributed to maintaining the unity of the nation by easing the consequences of the division.88 This was the position of the SPD throughout its period in office despite some setbacks. It was regarded as an important part of an active peace policy working towards creating a condition of peace in Europe where self-determination of all nations would be possible.89

In opposition after 1982, in the final stage of its Deutschlandpolitik, the SPD began to formulate a new Ost- and Deutschlandpolitik which regarded disarmament and environmental issues as its chief postulates. The aim of the SPD was to create a framework where further détente in Europe was possible. It saw Deutschlandpolitik as a part of this peace policy, with the two German states searching for common interests and balancing different positions. The new Ostpolitik was based on a security partnership with the Soviet Union and the East, rather than on confrontation and deterrence, and on continued adherence to the Western alliance. The SPD’s new thinking in this area was the result of its own assessment of

“where and why the détente and Ostpolitik initiated in the early 1970s went wrong. ...(It) was essentially a diplomatic offensive aimed at normalising the FRG’s ties with its Eastern neighbors, above all the GDR. At the same time, it was tied up with a set of expectations that this process of normalisation, coupled with significant arms control progress, above all in the conventional sphere, would spur a gradual process of internal liberalisation and reform in Eastern Europe. This in turn was supposed to create the preconditions for what Brandt termed a new European peace structure.”90

Many members of the SPD concluded that it was a major mistake to have excluded security policy from the Ostpolitik of the 1970s, making the transition from political to military détente virtually impossible. Thus security thinking had to be reformed to create a more permanent and flexible basis for a cooperative East-West relationship.91

The basic thrust of the SPD’s second phase of détente was threefold, calling for European self-assertion, more European joint actions in arms control and the expansion

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87 Dolezal, Joseph: "Die Deutschlandpolitik der SPD", in Blumenwitz and Zieger op. cit. pp. 67 - 70. Here pp. 67 - 68
88 ibid. p. 68
90 Asmus 1989 op. cit. pp. 80 - 81
91 ibid. p. 81

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of co-operation in other spheres between Eastern and Western Europe." This was based on the understanding that détente could not be maintained when security policy was based on confrontation and that security could no longer be based on more and more weapons, but rather on structures for common security in an all-European partnership, with the aim of creating a European peace order, a new position adopted at the party conference in Nuremberg in August 1986. Common security was a concept based on the perception of the negative sum dynamics of the security dilemma and of the impossibility in the nuclear era of settling an East-West conflict by "victory". The idea had first been postulated by Egon Bahr, but it came to international attention as a result of the Independent Commission on Disarmament and Security Issues: Common security - a blueprint for survival in 1982. Under the leadership of Olaf Palme, this report concluded that:

"states can no longer seek security at each other’s expense; it can be attained only through cooperative undertakings. Security in the nuclear age means common security. Even ideological opponents and political rivals have a shared interest in survival. There must be a partnership in the struggle against war itself. The search for arms control and disarmament is the pursuit of common gains, not unilateral advantage. A doctrine of common security must replace the present expedient of deterrence through armaments. International peace must rest on a commitment to joint survival rather than a threat of mutual destruction.”

In terms of Deutschlandpolitik, the necessity of such a peace order in which the division of Germany would be overcome peacefully was the overriding priority. The two German states had a special responsibility for peace which they could fulfil through a positive contribution to co-operation and security in their alliances. In the protocol of the election party conference from October 1986, it was stated that an SPD-government would use all possible opportunities to remove the divisive character of the border between the two German states, to contribute to the realisation of human rights and to maintain the nation as a community of history, culture, language and feeling.

To this extent, the SPD was in line with the other parties represented in the Bundestag. However, on other issues, the SPD appeared to be willing to give up legal and political positions agreed upon by treaty in the 1970s. For example, acceding to Honecker's Gera demands (see chapters 4 and 5) was seen as accepting the status quo and creating

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82 Asmus, Ronald D.: "The SPD's second Ostpolitik - with perspectives from the USA", in Außenpolitik Volume 38 No. 1 1987 pp. 40 - 55. Here p. 44


86 *Verantwortungsgemeinschaft der beiden deutschen Staaten*, Protokoll vom Wahlparteitag der SPD (Oktober 1988). p. 147

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the precondition for a further improvement in German-German relations and in the conditions of the East German population.

The SPD represented the position that security was only possible through dialogue and agreements, thus the two German states had to work together to serve the “security partnership” between East and West which meant more than shared concern for disarmament. Daily practical efforts had to work towards making the borders lose their divisive character without calling into question any of those borders. It was within this framework that the SPD pursued its initiatives with the SED to force the pace of the second phase of Ostpolitik.

It is apparent that the SPD had moved to the left and had virtually decimated its more moderate wing. It was feared that this would put the SPD back in a similar position to the 1950s, when it had appeared too extreme for the majority of the electorate, and indeed, the SPD would appear to have been in need of bringing the centre of the electorate more to its way of thinking. Nevertheless, some members of the SPD even went so far as to declare that the German question had been closed legally and politically for many years. In doing so, they directly contradicted the Basic Treaty and were regarded by some as having a lack of understanding of history. Thus even the “fathers” of Deutschlandpolitik, the SPD, seemed to be moving away from the heart of the policy they had begun with such expectation in the early 1970s.

SPD Deutschlandpolitik developed through many clearly defined stages from one of rejection of the integration of the Federal Republic into the Western community to one where it embraced this integration as the overriding prerequisite and basis for the improvement of relations with Eastern Europe and the GDR in particular, in the form of a modus vivendi as the precondition for the eventual reunification of the two parts of the German nation. In the second half of the 1980s, the SPD embarked on a major rethink of its Deutschlandpolitik in the hope of once again regaining the initiative in this area. With the more left-wing of the party coming to the fore, the SPD seemed to have come full circle and had sparked off a debate within the Atlantic Alliance with regard to the commitment of the SPD to its policy of nuclear deterrence and to the alliance in general. There was a small minority within the SPD who did consider neutrality as the possible course for the future, with both German states leaving their alliances, but this was a minority.

Though the SPD was undoubtedly committed to its policy of reconciliation with the

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87 Dolezal, op. cit. p. 68
88 cf. the election results of the 1987 (and 1990) general elections.
89 For example Apel and Schmüde.
100 Hacker, op. cit. pp. 62-63
East, it had to be innovative in foreign and security policy in order to win an election. This played a role in 1966 and was perhaps the most persuasive reason for the second phase of Ostpolitik supported by the SPD in the second half of the 1980s. In theory and in practice, however, it would have been difficult to implement some of its proposed policies. Similarly, the CDU/CSU was vehemently opposed to the Eastern treaties when in opposition, but had reconciled itself to their necessity when it came to power. It was within this general sphere and within these constraints that the two German states pursued their relations with each other.
CHAPTER TWO

THE EASTERN TREATIES AS THE BASIS FOR RELATIONS BETWEEN THE TWO GERMAN STATES

Having examined the factors which affected the development of Deutschlandpolitik for the individual parties which formed the governments in the two German states, the international context has to be examined in order to delineate the framework of and foundation for relations between the Federal Republic and the GDR. This chapter concentrates on the period of office of the SPD-FDP coalition and the series of treaties it negotiated and implemented in the early 1970s. Of necessity, emphasis will be on the Federal German position, although the East German position will be considered where relevant. After a brief introductory section on the period 1949 - 1969, the chapter focuses on the reconciliation of West Germany with Eastern Europe in six stages as identified by Griffith: a non-use of force declaration between the Federal Republic and the Soviet Union; a treaty between the Federal Republic and Poland on the recognition of the Oder-Neisse line; treaties between the Federal Republic and other Eastern European states; an agreement on the status of Berlin as a whole, between the four powers; a treaty between the Federal Republic and the GDR; and finally, participation by both German states in a European security conference.\(^1\)

The analysis concentrates on the actual treaties rather than on the process of negotiations, and the relevance of the treaties with regard to the positions of the two German states is ascertained prior to a section on the significance of the treaty process taken as a whole. The final part of the chapter deals with the C.S.C.E. process and the importance this had for the two German states in particular.

1 German-German relations to 1969 and the Hallstein Doctrine

As far as the two German states were concerned, the period 1949 - 1969 was dominated by the non-recognition of the GDR by the Federal Republic and the latter's insistence on the implementation of the Hallstein Doctrine and its claim to sole representation of all Germans. All East German proposals for a confederation and even for talks were rejected outright by the Federal government under Adenauer. However, in the early 1960s, the Federal Republic became increasingly isolated within the Western alliance because of its intransigence towards the GDR and Eastern Europe in general. As a result of the Cuban missile crisis and the fear of nuclear war this inspired, the United States and France, in particular, embarked on a policy of better relations with the Soviet Union in order to minimise the chances of a recurrence of the

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threat posed by the Cuban crisis and also the Berlin crisis. When Adenauer retired in 1963 under pressure from the FDP, Erhard replaced him as Chancellor with Schröder becoming Foreign Minister, and the policy he began towards Eastern Europe can be regarded as the first step in the adjustment of West German policy to the global tendency towards détente.²

The new Erhard government had two aims - to improve the situation of the population in the GDR and to try to reach normalisation with the East European states. Schröder concentrated on the latter and was successful within the limits defined by parliament and government. Trade relations were improved as the first step, with trade missions being established in Warsaw, Bucharest, Budapest and Sofia, to be used as the basis for a new political relationship. They were regarded as a compromise between the diplomatic relations desired by the East European leaders and maintenance of the Hallstein doctrine necessary to pacify the hardliners in the CDU / CSU.³ Schröder's policy failed in its long-term aim because it overestimated the potential freedom of manoeuvre of the East European states, because it excluded the Soviet Union and worked against the GDR, and because the Federal Republic was unwilling to recognise the Oder-Neiße line as Poland's Western border.

In March 1966, the Erhard government made its last initiative in terms of its Eastern policy, fully supported by the SPD opposition. It sent a “note on German peace policy” to all states including Eastern Europe (except the GDR), offering to exchange renunciation of force declarations, making the renunciation of force a recognised instrument of Ostpolitik.⁴ In 1969, Foreign Minister Scheel described this policy as follows:

"The renunciation of force...starts from the geographic status quo and offers a political modus vivendi within the limits of this status quo. It respects and accepts reality. It does not undertake to recognise it in international law and thereby to legalise it. These realities include the present course of frontiers in Europe, the actual territorial possessions of the European states.""}

Thus the ice had been broken with Eastern Europe, and the CDU / CSU had begun to modify its position, albeit within specific limits, simplifying the task of the successor government when it came to power in late 1966. It was apparent to the Grand Coalition’s leaders, Chancellor Kiesinger (CDU) and Foreign Minister Brandt (SPD), that a new policy with regard to Eastern Europe had to be undertaken. In the govern-

³ Bender (1) op. cit. pp. 105 - 106
⁴ ibid. p. 113
ment declaration, Kiesinger offered renunciation of force agreements and diplomatic relations with all East European states and offered to include the unsolved problem of the German division within this process. On 31 January 1967, diplomatic relations were established with Rumania, mostly due to SPD pressure. Bulgaria and Hungary were prevented from doing the same by a veto from Moscow and after February 1967, by the Ulbricht Doctrine. The Grand Coalition failed to achieve any major successes which pushed Kiesinger onto the defensive, but inspired Brandt to push further in an attempt to find success. This was a major cause of the breakdown of the coalition in 1969 - the Grand Coalition had been unable to make use of the opportunities afforded it in the East, but the SPD had gained valuable experience as a government party.

The end of the 1960s heralded a change in attitudes which was to prove conducive to more flexible and wide-ranging détente in Europe. A reflection of this change was the formation of the first SPD-FDP coalition in the Federal Republic in the autumn of 1969. Both parties had reached the conclusion that the process of regulating relations with Eastern Europe had to begin with the Soviet Union, and that a relaxation of tensions in Europe in general and a gradual increase in co-operation and security for each side were the preconditions for normalising relations and for improved co-operation between the two German states. Thereafter, West Germany's Ostpolitik, along with the desire of the United States to improve relations with the Soviet Union to facilitate disarmament agreements, produced a willingness on the part of the West to consider compromises that would ease the overall situation in Europe, and also in Berlin. In addition, the Soviet Union had long looked for ways to legitimise the division of Europe as a result of World War II, and thereby consolidate its position in Eastern Europe.

The SPD and the FDP had realised that West Germany had to accept the status quo in post-war Europe, and, through this, give de facto recognition to the second German state, if relations between East and West, especially those between East and West Germany, were to improve. To overcome the hurdle of the previous policy of the non-recognition of the GDR, in his first government declaration, Brandt proposed the idea

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6 Bender (1) op. cit. pp. 137 - 138
8 McAdams, A. James: East Germany and Détente (CUP, Cambridge, 1985). p. 74
Ulbricht was trying to assert the GDR's strength and make demands on the socialist alliance. In what became known as the Ulbricht doctrine, Ulbricht stipulated that "henceforth no socialist state should establish diplomatic ties with Bonn until the West Germans had finally recognised" the GDR de jure - ie under international law. Initially in the late 1960s, this inverted version of the Hallstein Doctrine was successful. However, the move towards de facto recognition in Brandt's speech to the Bundestag in October 1969 was seen as sufficient grounds for beginning negotiations.
9 Bender (1) op. cit. pp. 150 - 151

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of "two German states in one German nation", thus tacitly accepting the viability of the GDR as a separate state without giving it full de jure recognition. The Federal government did not renounce its long-term aim of achieving the reunification of all Germans through self-determination in a condition of peace in Europe, but it did acknowledge that the two German states would exist for the foreseeable future, and this had to be accepted in order to improve the situation. The key to Brandt’s Ostpolitik was his willingness to accept the results of history as the basis for the policy of “change through rapprochement”. In other words, the Brandt / Scheel government was willing to confirm the status quo in order to be in a position to change it.

Brandt continued:

"Twenty years after the establishment of the Federal Republic of Germany and the GDR, we must prevent any further drifting apart of the two parts of the German nation, that is, arrive at a regular modus vivendi and from there proceed to co-operation... International recognition of the GDR by the Federal Republic is out of the question. Even if there exist two states in Germany, they are not foreign countries to each other; their relations with each other can only be of a special nature..."

The recognition of the two German states, implicit in the renunciation of the Hallstein doctrine, was the most important aspect as far as the Soviet Union was concerned - the key to the subsequent improvement in relations between Eastern Europe and the Federal Republic and the series of treaties concluded. Helmut Schmidt, as Defence Minister, ensured, however, that loyalty to the West was never questioned. The social-liberal coalition government stated from the outset that

"without a firm foundation in NATO, there can be no sensible policy of détente in Europe. It would be sheer folly if one attempted to conduct one’s policy in the East from any other basis than that of firm Western solidarity."

The GDR had welcomed the position of the new Federal government, but was not ready to make compromises at that stage. This East German intransigence can probably be explained by the GDR’s need for international recognition from potential opponents, to exercise free control over its domestic policies and to guarantee indefinite Communist rule. The Bonn government showed a new willingness to compromise with the GDR on the basis of equality and non-discrimination. It was, however, also aware that the Soviet Union could not be by-passed.

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11 Government declaration, 28 October 1969. See Keesing op. cit. pp. 229 - 231
12 Brandt, in Keesing op. cit. p. 230
13 Uschner op. cit. p. 83
14 Wheaton op. cit. p. 181
15 ibid. pp. 122 - 123
Declarations on the non-use of force were, therefore, used as the legal instrument to regulate problems with the East. However, the renunciation of force agreements were not a replacement for a peace treaty. The Federal Republic was not in a position to give full de jure recognition of the borders in Europe as a result of the rights and responsibilities of the four powers pending a final peace settlement, assigned to them in the Potsdam Agreement - rights that the Soviet Union had no intention of surrendering. The Soviet Union conceded the former point as it was more concerned with securing a commitment to uphold the existing political realities than with the technical implications of international law. To avoid the problems encountered by Schröder and the Grand Coalition, the social-liberal coalition began the process of reconciliation with the Soviet Union.

2 The Eastern treaties

2.1 The Moscow Treaty, 12 August 1970

The Soviet Union had a list of demands which had to be fulfilled before a treaty could be signed, the most important of which was the renunciation of nuclear weapons by the Federal Republic. Thus on 28 November 1969, the social-liberal government had signed the Non-Proliferation Treaty. This indication of goodwill satisfied the Soviet leadership, and Egon Bahr began negotiations with Gromyko in January 1970. A mutual renunciation of force agreement not only settled the residual effects of World War II, but it was also beneficial to both states; for the Federal Republic, it reduced the Soviet threat whilst increasing Soviet pressure on the GDR to reach accommodation with West Germany; and for the Soviet Union, it meant acceptance by the Federal Republic of the post-war territorial status quo and in economic terms more West German credits and technology for the already ailing Soviet economy.

The Treaty between the Federal Republic of Germany and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics was signed in Moscow on 12 August 1970, and a West German letter with

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14 Bender (1) op. cit. p. 168
17 The Potsdam Agreement was a document signed by the four victorious Allies - the US, the Soviet Union, Britain and later France - of the second world war in August 1945 which stated that Germany should be treated as a whole and that the post-war order would be temporary pending a final peace settlement. It is also on the basis of this agreement that the four powers continue to maintain their rights and responsibilities for Berlin and Germany as a whole.
18 See here particularly Whetton op. cit. pp. 138 - 139 and Griffith op. cit. p. 190
19 Bender (1) op. cit. p. 171

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respect to unification was handed to the Soviet delegation. The first article of the Moscow Treaty considered maintaining international peace and achieving détente as important objectives of the two countries' policies. They agreed to work towards the normalisation of relations among European states on the basis of the existing situation in the region. In article three, both states agreed to respect the territorial integrity of all states in Europe within their present frontiers; to respect the inviolability of these frontiers, including the Oder-Neisse line which formed Poland's Western border, and the border between the two German states; and to renounce all territorial claims.

Certain provisions were common to all the bilateral Eastern treaties that the Federal Republic concluded in the early 1970s (the Moscow, Warsaw and Prague treaties and the Basic Treaty). They all included an article in which the two sides agreed to be guided by the principles of the UN-Charter in their mutual relations, thus agreeing to settle disputes by peaceful means and renouncing the use or threat of force. None of the treaties impaired any previous bi- or multilateral commitments of the signatory states (thus avoiding problems arising with the Western allies), and the treaties would enter into force only after ratification.

Both states saw the treaty as an important milestone in their relations. It strengthened security in Europe and contributed to the realisation of peaceful cooperation between European states irrespective of their social orders. Both sides had declared their readiness to normalise their relations in an attempt to create a modus vivendi in the interests of peace in Europe. Part of the modus vivendi was the commitment to respect the post-war realities in Europe that had previously been contested: the existence of the GDR, and the postwar borders of Europe as well as the integration of West Berlin into the Federal Republic. As Brandt put it: "Nothing is lost with this treaty that was not gambled away long ago" by Hitler. It became the precedent for West Germany to conclude similar accords with other East European states, creating a network of non-aggression treaties as the first step towards convening a European security conference.

West Germany had made some considerable gains, politically and symbolically, despite CDU-CSU criticism that the West German position had been compromised and that, by reaching an agreement with the Soviet Union, the Federal Republic had tacitly endorsed

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21 A similar letter was handed over to the East German authorities during the signing of the Basic Treaty in December 1972. The wording of the letter is as follows:

"Dear Minister,
In connection with the signing of today's Treaty between the Federal Republic of Germany and ..., the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany has the honour to state that this Treaty does not conflict with the political objective of the Federal Republic of Germany to work for a state of peace in Europe in which the German nation will recover its unity in free self-determination."

Doeker op. cit. p. 73

22 Hanrieder, Wolfram H.: Deutschland, Europa, Amerika. Die Außenpolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (Ferdinand Schöningh, Paderborn, 1991 German version of English original, 1989 Yale University Press). p. 239
the status quo in central Europe, including the Brezhnev Doctrine of limited socialist sovereignty,\textsuperscript{23} thus surrendering the initiative on remaining critical issues to the East. The Soviet Union had accepted the respectability of the Federal government and could no longer charge that a revisionist Bonn was the main source of European tensions. Four power rights had remained intact, and these formed a plausible basis for a Berlin settlement, to which the Soviet Union was now committed,\textsuperscript{24} because Bonn made the ratification of the Moscow Treaty conditional on a satisfactory conclusion of the four-power negotiations on Berlin and on a treaty with the GDR. The interests of the Soviet Union and its allies were acutely tied to the future of the SPD's Ostpolitik, thus the Soviet Union had little choice but to agree to the linkage introduced by Bonn.\textsuperscript{25}

The treaty represented an important gain for Soviet requirements of both security and stability, but the Soviet Union had paid little in terms of sacrificing its national interests.\textsuperscript{26} For East Germany, the treaty confirmed the results of World War II and strengthened the position of the GDR as a sovereign state. West Germany had agreed to conclude an agreement with East Germany on the basis of international law, to support moves by both states to join the UN and for the convening of a European security conference.\textsuperscript{27} This East German perspective, however, failed to take into account the more detrimental aspects of the treaty. The main loser from this treaty was the GDR as a state (although in the longer term, it was not a loss to the East German people) with its position weakened as a result of it. The pressure from Moscow on East Berlin to adopt a more flexible position towards West German demands was increased. The treaty had shocked the East Germans' view of East-West relations as it

"violated the key axiom of East German policy that no move towards normalisation of relations with the Federal Republic would be made without reciprocal concessions by Bonn towards recognition of East Berlin."\textsuperscript{28}

\textsuperscript{23} "... every Communist Party is responsible not only to its own people but also to all the socialist countries and to the entire Communist movement. ... The sovereignty of individual socialist states cannot be counterposed to the interests of world socialism and the world revolutionary movement."


It was a doctrine of limited socialist sovereignty, known as the Brezhnev Doctrine in the West, and saw a fundamental redefinition of the limits of autonomy in Eastern Europe, embodying the concept of socialist internationalism. National interests had to be subordinated to the interests of socialism and Moscow reserved the right to take military measures whenever developments in a socialist country might damage either its own socialism or the basic interests of other socialist states. Hence it was used to justify the invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968.

cf. also Dawisha op. cit. p. 74 and p. 159

\textsuperscript{24} Hanrieder op. cit. p. 240

\textsuperscript{25} Uscherner op. cit. p. 97

\textsuperscript{26} Whetton op. cit. p. 150


\textsuperscript{28} Roberts, Geoffrey K.: "The Ostpolitik and relations between the two Germanies," in Tilford, Roger (ed.): The Ostpolitik and Political Change in Germany (Saxon House / Lexington Books 1975). pp. 77 - 93. Here p. 82.
The Soviet Union had abandoned its support of the GDR in favour of agreement with Bonn, and although publicly rejecting it, the Soviet Union accepted the link between the Bundestag ratification of the treaty and a Berlin agreement, thus threatening the GDR's position on Berlin, forcing it to negotiate a treaty with Bonn. It was the first in a series of steps which would eventually lead to the undoing of the GDR. The Soviet Union needed good relations with the Federal Republic and began to leave the GDR behind, although it was not in the interests of the Soviet Union to weaken the position of the GDR even then. (A similar process occurred in 1989/90 although at greater costs to both states).

Thus it can be seen that the Moscow Treaty was the first instance of pressure on the East German leadership to moderate its intransigence towards West Germany to avoid being isolated by the process of détente. Though West Germany's Ostpolitik was reducing tensions with Eastern Europe, it unintentionally increased tensions with East Germany.

2.2 The Warsaw Treaty, 7 December 1970

Those in West Germany in favour of coming to terms with Moscow increasingly realised that this would be impossible without the recognition of the Oder-Neisse line. The Federal Republic's interests were served by the conclusion of a treaty with Poland since it put additional pressure on the GDR to come into line with the Eastern bloc position of reaching accommodation with the Federal Republic. Because of Poland's geographic vulnerability and traditional isolation between the two dominant powers of Central and Eastern Europe, the necessity of improving Poland's relations with West Germany intensified with the conclusion of the Moscow Treaty. Poland had interpreted the Moscow Treaty as a manifestation of Bonn's increasing willingness to reach an accommodation with Eastern Europe and as a result, it stiffened its bargaining position. Warsaw regarded any border agreement with the Federal Republic as a substitute peace treaty and had no interest in perpetuating the commitments of the Potsdam Agreement, causing scepticism among the right-wing opposition in Bonn.

The Treaty between the Federal Republic and the People's Republic of Poland concerning the Basis for Normalising their Mutual Relations was signed in Warsaw on 7

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"It is ... clear that the whole power of the Soviet Union and the East European states stands behind the Oder boundary and that there is no prospect of this changing.... An agreement with Poland would also be a move of self-declaration and reflection. To abandon historical claims which can no longer be fulfilled can be an act of liberation for a state and a people.... But one should guard against illusions and too great hopes. The step which Bonn now intends to take will be basically a unilateral act of farewell and of one's own separation from the past. It will not be accompanied by significant concessions by the other side...."
December 1970. In article one, the two states recognised the Oder-Neiße line as the Western border of Poland, reaffirmed the inviolability of the existing frontiers and respected the territorial integrity of the other, renouncing all territorial claims - thus elevating the treaty to a border agreement rather than a renunciation of force agreement. According to article three, the Warsaw Treaty would form the basis for the further normalisation of relations and full development of these relations. A joint communiqué presented by the West German and Polish governments on 8 December 1970 pronounced that, directly after the treaty came into force, the two states would establish full diplomatic relations with one another. Brandt also established the linkage policy for the Warsaw Treaty, reaffirming that efforts to normalise relations with Poland and Eastern Europe would be incomplete unless agreement was reached on improving the situation in and around Berlin.

The CDU / CSU opposition's reaction to the Warsaw Treaty was hostile, but the Federal government had only extended de facto rather than de jure recognition of the Polish frontier and had not ceded to the abandonment its legal claim to the Eastern territories, though it did renounce any desire for their restitution. Although the border formula was not the final recognition the Polish authorities had hoped to gain, certain pressure from Moscow and the economic compensations afforded by a trade agreement with the Federal Republic compelled the Polish government to accept it. For the GDR, one of the main barriers that had blocked the development of normal relations between the GDR and the Federal Republic for more than two decades, had been overcome as a result of this treaty, and the negotiations between the Federal Republic and Poland had indirectly strengthened the GDR's claims for equal status for both German states.

The compromise reached between the Federal Republic and Poland was a milestone in both German and Polish history. The normalisation of relations between these traditional enemies played a significant role in bringing about a rapport between Eastern and Western Europe in general and between the two German states in particular. Bonn had been in

"an increasingly unrealistic and isolated position on the issue. Morally and politically, therefore, Bonn gained by making the concession just as Warsaw did by obtaining it".

With each West German concession on East European terms, the questions of East Germany and Berlin loomed proportionally larger. Ostpolitik contributed little to the solution of the German question. Indeed, by the end of 1971, it was possible to argue that "the limited success of the Ostpolitik has been diluted by the continuing failure of

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30 Doeker op. cit. pp. 75 - 76
31 Geschichte der Außenpolitik der DDR op. cit. p. 254
32 Griffith op. cit. p. 196
Bonn's Deutschlandpolitik." This would perhaps partly explain the linkage policy adopted by the Brandt-Scheel coalition.

2.3 The Prague Treaty, 11 December 1973

The Prague Treaty was a further example of the bilateral agreements the Federal Republic signed with East European states in the process of normalising their mutual relations. Negotiations had begun in early 1970, but the legal and political legacies of the 1938 Munich Agreement proved complex obstacles. The treaty was of symbolic importance to the Federal Republic as it was evidence that West Germany was prepared to cope with probably "the most intractable legacy" of the Second World War.

The Treaty on Mutual Relations between the Federal Republic of Germany and the Socialist Republic of Czechoslovakia was signed on 11 December 1973 in Prague. In article one of the treaty, the Federal Republic and Czechoslovakia declared the Munich Agreement of 29 September 1938 void with regard to their mutual relations. Article two was concerned with the legal positions between the two states. This treaty did not affect any legal decisions made between 30 September 1938 and 9 May 1945 with the exception of measures that both sides regarded as invalid. It did not affect the nationality of any persons in these states, and it did not constitute the legal basis for any material claims by the Czechoslovakian government nor by individuals. Diplomatic relations between the two states were established on 11 December 1973.

The Prague Treaty was the last major step in the Ostpolitik of the Federal Republic. East Germany had supported Czech efforts to normalise its relations with West Germany and regarded the outcome as proof that the Munich Agreement had been forced on Czechoslovakia by Hitler's Germany and, as a result, had no validity for present relations.

On 21 December 1973, the Federal Republic established diplomatic relations with both Bulgaria and Hungary. There was no need for formal treaties to be concluded because there were no unresolved political questions in their relations.

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33 Whetton op. cit. p. 7
34 Haftendorn op. cit. p. 209
35 Whetton op. cit. pp. 168 - 171
37 Geschichte der Außenpolitik der DDR op. cit. p. 285
38 Haftendorn op. cit. p. 209
2.4 The Berlin Agreement, 3 September 1971

The legal and political status of Berlin had been a matter of controversy since 1945. Berlin played a key role in international relations and in internal German politics, as a symbol of the hope that both parts of Germany and of Berlin might be reunited, and as the barometer of events in the East-West confrontation. The building of the Berlin Wall in 1961 had consolidated the position of the GDR and contributed to the fundamental change in the international political climate.

On the Western side, there was a growing readiness to take the status quo as the starting point and thus to reduce the symbolic importance of Berlin, while the Soviets increasingly acknowledged the Western powers' resolve to maintain their position there.

The sacrifices made in the Moscow and Warsaw Treaties afforded the Germans a real measure of "international rehabilitation and restoration of self-respect that (were) indispensable for a durable solution to the German problem." By placing ratification within the context of a favourable Berlin solution, the entire normalisation process had been refined down to this single frame of reference. Although Brandt had firmly linked the fruition of his government's Ostpolitik to this question, only the four powers were in a position to solve the problem, negotiations having begun in late 1969.

Initially, the three Western powers had made it clear that they disapproved of the Federal government placing the responsibility for the success or failure of its Ostpolitik into their hands. During negotiations with the Soviet Union, however, they realised the significance of the Berlin question as the testing ground of the seriousness of Soviet interest in a real détente in Europe, and they established their own linkage. In communiqués of the NATO council of ministers, it was made clear that the convocation of a European security conference, as desired by the Soviet Union, would only be taken into consideration when or if the Berlin negotiations were successfully concluded.

On 3 September 1971, the Quadripartite Agreement on Berlin was signed by the four powers. The Agreement stabilised the situation in and around Berlin legally and politically, on a basis acceptable to both East and West. Brezhnev introduced a reverse linkage policy, whereby the Four-Power Agreement would only come into effect after the ratification of the Moscow and Warsaw Treaties by the Bundestag.

The preamble to the agreement was significant because it confirmed that the quadri-

39 Whetten op. cit. p. 179
41 Doeker op. cit. pp. 267 - 269
42 Bender (1) op. cit. p. 185
partite rights and responsibilities and corresponding agreements and decisions were not affected, which in practice meant that the Soviet Union had accepted the Western position. It took "into account the existing situation in the relevant area", implying de facto recognition of the existence and status of West Berlin. Only agreement to disagree could be reached on the legal status of Berlin, the compromise being that the whole of Berlin was referred to as the "relevant area", West Berlin as the "Western sectors of Berlin" and East Berlin as the "areas bordering on these sectors".

The first part of the agreement dealt with general provisions agreed by all four powers for the relevant area. They would strive to promote the elimination of tensions in the area, would neither use nor threaten the use of force and would solve disputes through peaceful means, without changing the situation unilaterally. Part two made provisions relating to the Western sectors of Berlin, expanded by annexes. The Soviet Union guaranteed the unimpeded transit of civilian persons and goods through the GDR by road, rail and waterways, with an annual lump sum to be paid to the GDR by the Federal Republic for the maintenance of these routes. The Western allies declared that West Berlin was not a constituent part of West Germany but that ties between those sectors of Berlin and the Federal Republic would be maintained and developed.43

No Federal government action was to take place in the Western sectors of Berlin. The Soviet Union declared that communications and travel between the Western sectors of Berlin and the GDR and East Berlin would be improved. Permission to travel would be granted for compassionate, family, religious, cultural or commercial reasons and for tourism, with detailed arrangements to be worked out by the relevant German authorities. The Federal Republic would represent the Western sectors of Berlin abroad, and in conferences and international organisations, except for on matters of security and status, for which the allies retained their rights and responsibilities, and treaties concluded by the Federal government would be extended to include West Berlin. The three allies also authorised the establishment of a Soviet consulate general in the Western sectors.44

The Quadripartite Agreement increased and legitimised the influence of the two German states on the day-to-day administration of Berlin. Although the four powers maintained their competence on status and security questions, the two German states were to deal with the lesser problems, effectively making it a six-power regime for Berlin.45 The GDR, the Federal Republic and West Berlin negotiated the finer details of the transit traffic, and a treaty was concluded on 17 December, ratified in April 1972. The Bundestag ratified the Moscow and Warsaw Treaties in May 1972, although not with-
out controversy, and on 3 June 1972, the Quadripartite Agreement came into force.

A report published by the West German government in 1971 evaluated the Berlin Agreement positively. It acknowledged that not all hopes and expectations were fulfilled, but everything that was reasonably possible had been achieved. That the Berlin Agreement would be as successful as it was, was by no means clear when negotiations began, but both sides realised that Berlin really had become the testing ground for the success of the overall policy of détente.

Indeed, from the Western point of view, there were three main results from the Berlin Agreement: confirmation of the three Western powers' presence in West Berlin on the basis of their original rights and responsibilities; recognition of the essential unity of West Berlin; and a guarantee of unimpeded access to and from the city. It decisively increased the economic viability of the city, improved the quality of life for its inhabitants and secured access and transit to West Berlin, thus defusing an area where Bonn and the West were most vulnerable to Soviet and East German pressure. It facilitated the ratification and / or conclusion of the treaties between the Federal Republic and the Soviet Union, Poland, East Germany and Czechoslovakia.

The East European states regarded the Berlin Agreement as positive, although they interpreted it differently to the West. It symbolically favoured the Eastern position that East Berlin was a part of and capital of the GDR. Indeed, the GDR referred to the agreement as the Quadripartite Agreement on West Berlin and indicated that the clauses were not binding on the GDR or East Berlin, its capital. The core of the agreement for East Berlin was the fact that West Berlin was not a constituent part of the Federal Republic nor was it governed by it. For the GDR, the Quadripartite Agreement meant recognition as a sovereign state by the Western powers. The position of East Germany in international law had undoubtedly been strengthened by this, as Erich Honecker said in an interview to Neues Deutschland on 4 September 1971 on the agreement and its consequences. Honecker argued that on the basis of accepting the reality that West Berlin was a city with a special status and had never belonged to West Germany, then it was possible to conduct talks in the interest of securing European peace and in the interests of the West Berlin population to a successful conclusion, though many more

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44 The CDU / CSU were, on the whole, vehemently opposed to the treaties because they regarded them as strengthening the position of the East in many ways. The Soviet Union played a significant role in bringing the parties to a position where they abstained rather than voted against the treaties, by making concessions to the Brandt government and accepting the joint (SPD / FDP and CDU / CSU) preamble to the treaties.

45 Vier-Mächte Abkommen über Berlin (Hrsg. Bundesministerium für Information.1971) pp.112 - 114

46 Hanrieder op. cit. p. 245


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steps would be needed to continue the positive change evolving in Europe.51

By being given a key position in the West's Ostpolitik, the Berlin Agreement created a modus vivendi based on the realities of the existing situation in Berlin and Europe.

"The aim was not set higher, and it would have been unrealistic from the start to expect more. The limited objective has brought limited results; but without a limitation of the objective no results would have been achieved." 52

The practical effects of the Agreement remained directly dependent on the overall status of East-West relations, primarily Soviet-American relations.

"No agreement covering one segment of this relationship can contain sufficient intrinsic protection and assurance to continue unaffected in the event of a general worsening of the overall relationship." 53

Thus, Berlin continued to be a seismograph registering the state of East-West détente, although the potential for applying pressure on and with Berlin had been substantially reduced.

"To this extent the Berlin settlement was typical of the settlement of the German question as a whole: for the sake of a pragmatic policy of conciliation and understanding, one set aside legal positions that were not to be realised anyway, without however fully abandoning them. This policy helped clear the way for détente in Europe...A satisfactory Berlin settlement had been the prerequisite for the West's agreement to undertake more far-reaching talks on East-West relations in Europe." 54

2.5 The Basic Treaty, 21 December 1972

The path was then open for an improvement in German-German relations, and the necessity of this to guarantee the convocation of a European security conference (the Soviet aim) was reiterated by the Federal government. Indeed, a positive German-German relationship was the heart of any process of reconciliation in Europe. Just as the normalisation between the two German states was a function of a modus vivendi with the Soviet Union and the other Eastern European states, so too this process stood in a symbiotic relationship to general East-West détente, depending on and, in turn, reacting to it.55 The negotiation process between the two German states warrants discussion because of its relevance to the overall theme of the dissertation.

By early 1970, there was an agreement in principle to talk, but the form and location of such talks were disputed. The Soviet desire to see reconciliation between the two

51 Interview in Neues Deutschland op. cit. pp. 5 - 15
52 Mahncke in World Today op. cit. p. 521
54 Hallendorn op. cit. p. 218
55 Ibid. p. 245.
German states to achieve a further guarantee of the existing territorial status quo in Europe, however, prompted Gromyko's intervention to break the stalemate. Eventually it was agreed that Erfurt in the GDR would be the first meeting place for Brandt and Stoph (East German Prime Minister) on 19 March 1970. The support for Brandt in Erfurt highlighted the importance of the idea of the German nation in the GDR - despite its leaders' efforts to negate this.⁵⁴

Although this meeting was the most important "first" registered by Ostpolitik, at that stage there were still insufficient grounds for a rapprochement, and the most significant result of this meeting was the agreement to meet again in Kassel, West Germany, on 21 May 1970.⁵⁷ By then, negotiations had begun on the status of Berlin between the four powers, and West German talks with Poland and the Soviet Union were progressing. The cumulative effect of these new moves emphasised the lack of progress in West Germany's contacts with the GDR.

At the meeting in Kassel, the Federal Republic accepted the GDR as an equal negotiating partner. Brandt proposed twenty points as the basis for negotiations, but the talks were suspended

"by the GDR because it still hoped to get Bonn to recognise it de jure and by the Federal Republic because it believed, with reason, that Moscow would not support East Berlin in this respect."⁵⁸

As negotiations between the Federal Republic and other Eastern European states progressed and the perceived threat from the West diminished, so the GDR could no longer rely on the unequivocal support of its Warsaw Pact allies for its main demand of de jure recognition. East Germany's allies reached compromises with the Federal Republic on issues of vital importance to the GDR rather than sacrifice matters each regarded as important to its own national interests. Soviet pressure and a tactical realignment within the SED leadership meant dialogue was continued between the two German states after October 1970, but no real progress was made before the conclusion of the Quadripartite Agreement.

The conservative Ulbricht pursued a course of self-imposed isolation from West Germany, in direct contrast to the Soviet policy (compare with the situation in the 1980s). It came as no surprise in May 1971 when, at the SED Central Committee Plenum, Ulbricht announced that he was retiring because of ill health, and Honecker replaced him as First Secretary. Given the timing and circumstances, the fall of Ulbricht, though old and ailing, was almost certainly due to pressure

⁵⁴ Bender, Peter: "Neue Ostpolitik und Versuche innerer Reformen", in Deutschland. Deutschland 40 Jahre. Eine Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und der DDR in Bild und Text (Bertelsmann Lexikon Verlag, Gütersloh 1989). pp. 186 - 197. Here p. 192
⁵⁷ Borowsky op. cit. p. 26
⁵⁸ Griffith op. cit. pp. 189 - 190

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from the Soviet Union. Brezhnev had sacrificed an ally to détente with Washington and Bonn, for the more amenable Honecker. In contrast to Ulbricht, Honecker

"was willing to pay the price of increased Western influence within the GDR in exchange for the international recognition and the increased legitimacy which the agreements with the Federal Republic permitted." 59

"The Berlin Agreement had set out the framework for détente between Bonn and East Berlin, but its avoidance of the key issues and the continuing political and ideological confrontation between East and West Germany made its implementation difficult." 60

Under Soviet pressure, the GDR had agreed to negotiate with West Germany on transit to and from West Berlin only, and with West Berlin on visits by West Berliners to East Berlin and the GDR in general. On 11 December 1971, the two sides initialled a transit agreement and one on visits, travel and exchange of small enclaves in Berlin. 61 The GDR had succeeded in treating West Germany and West Berlin differently, and, to some extent, in emphasising the independence of West Berlin. In reality, however, the agreements did not measure up to East Berlin's expectations and were of benefit to both West Berlin and the Federal Republic. The agreements were substantially in line with the Quadripartite Agreement, thus implementing the latter's assurances of improved access and increased travel, and the GDR leadership had to recognise that Bonn could negotiate for West Berlin on most issues including that of transit to and from the city. 62 On the other hand, the GDR regarded the agreements as the first time that a Federal government had recognised the existence of the GDR, its sovereignty and borders in a binding way under international law. 63

Relations continued to improve throughout the early months of 1972, with the GDR under Honecker willing to negotiate an agreement on the overall normalisation of relations with the Federal Republic. 64 Negotiations continued between Egon Bahr and Michael Kohl for the Federal Republic and the GDR respectively, and on 26 May 1972, the Treaty between the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic on Traffic Questions 65 was signed. This first full state treaty regulated questions of "the cross-border traffic of persons and goods of the two States...into and

59 Frey op. cit. p. 9
60 Griffith op. cit. p. 209
61 ibid. p. 211
62 Borowsky op. cit. p. 32
63 Geschichte der Außenpolitik der DDR, op. cit. p. 281
65 Docker Vol. 1 op. cit. pp. 389 - 392
through their respective territories," in terms of rail, inland waterway, motor and sea traffic. It was not only important for its intrinsic effects, but it also had a significant influence on the development of political relations between the GDR and the Federal Republic. After the treaty had been signed, the parties represented in the Bundestag issued a joint declaration, approving the "normalisation of relations" between the two German states. The GDR, too, viewed this treaty very positively and as an important contribution to the process of détente. It created favourable political conditions to place the overall relations between the two states on a basis of international law in the interest of further safeguarding détente in Europe.

Negotiations between the Federal Republic and the GDR were taken up again on 15 June 1972. Pressure on both states to conclude successfully a treaty was growing from their respective allies. East Berlin agreed to abandon its calls for de jure recognition and to accept four power responsibility for Germany, and the three Western powers agreed to talk with Moscow on the admission to the UN of the two German states, which began in October 1972. Bonn and East Berlin were working under a twofold time limit. Bundestag elections were to be held on 19 November 1972 and preliminary C.S.C.E. talks were scheduled to begin in Helsinki on 22 November. Both Moscow and Washington wanted negotiations to have been concluded before then, to help the SPD and to have the issue out of the way before the C.S.C.E. began. In early November, the two German states had reached a compromise on the "national issue" and the four powers on the formulation of their responsibilities. On 21 December, the Treaty on the Basis of Relations between the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic was signed in Berlin. It was ratified by both states in June 1973.

The preamble of the treaty acknowledged the responsibility of the two German states for the preservation of peace and their need to contribute to détente and security in Europe, as well as the differing positions on the national question and other matters of principle. In article one, the two states agreed to develop normal good neighbourly relations on the basis of equal rights. Neither state would represent the other internationally according to article four. In article five, the two German states agreed to "promote peaceful relations between the European states and contribute to security and co-operation in Europe...support the efforts to reduce armed forces in Europe...and support efforts serving international security to achieve armaments limitations and disarmament, especially with regard to nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction."

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44 Decker Vol. 1 op. cit. p. 389
45 Roberts op. cit. p. 83
46 Geschichte der Außenpolitik der DDR op. cit. p. 218
47 Borowsky op. cit. p. 36 and Hanrieder op. cit. p. 245
48 Decker Vol. 1 op. cit. pp. 395 - 396

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The development and implementation of these aims is particularly important in terms of this thesis.

Article six confirmed that the jurisdiction of each of the two states was confined to its own territory. In article seven, the GDR and the Federal Republic stated their readiness to regulate practical and humanitarian questions in terms of co-operation in all spheres of bilateral relations, with precise details for how the relations were to develop in the Supplementary Protocol. Article eight foresaw the exchange of permanent missions.

When the treaty was signed, the GDR was presented with a copy of the letter on German unity, which safeguarded the Federal Republic's right to pursue the aim laid down in the Basic Law. The two states also exchanged letters on the reuniting of families, the facilitation of travel and the improvement of non-commercial goods traffic on 21 December 1972. On the occasion of the initialling of the treaty on 8 November 1972, the GDR and the Federal Republic had exchanged letters concerning the working conditions of journalists, in which they agreed that their respective journalists would work under the same circumstances and with the same rights as other foreign journalists working in the respective other state. The two states had agreed to disagree on matters such as citizenship and the "national question". The treaty confirmed that the latter existed, but referred to neither Bonn's formulation of "one German nation" nor to the GDR's sovereignty. They agreed to apply simultaneously for admission to the United Nations. In 1974, the new representatives took up their positions in the respective permanent missions. The West German mission, which would also represent the interests of West Berlin, was accredited to the East German Foreign Ministry and the East German mission to the West German Chancellery, emphasising the "special" nature of these relations.

The Basic Treaty was not a definitive statement on the nature of relations between the two German states, although it included several specific principles of international law that prescribed minimum conditions for co-operation. Brandt referred to the Basic Treaty as "the instrument for organising co-operation under prevailing circumstances." It was a compromise for both sides with neither side achieving the full aims of its Deutschlandpolitik. A closer examination of the consequences of the treaty for both states is thus necessary to estimate the full value of the treaty.

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71 Doeker Vol. 1 op. cit. pp. 403 - 404
72 Roberts op. cit. p. 83
2.5.1 The East German Perspective

"Today one can no longer speak of a single German nation." 73

On 7 November 1974, Paul Verner, a member of the SED-Politbüro, illustrated the East German position on the treaty, in *Neues Deutschland*:

"The Basic Treaty between the socialist GDR and the capitalist Federal Republic creates the necessary condition for the GDR to reach equal relations of good neighbourliness and co-operation with the Federal Republic on the same basis as with other capitalist states." 74

For the GDR, the heart of the treaty was the recognition under international law of the post-war order in central Europe and of the existence of two independent sovereign German states with different social orders. All East German newspapers published the ADN commentary on the treaty which judged it to be a "fair result, that took into account the interests of both states and was based on the principles of peaceful coexistence." 75

It was an important development that went beyond the bilateral relationship between the two German states. The treaty embodied an important contribution to European détente and a decisive step towards a security conference in Europe. It was an expression of the failure of the aggressive revanchist policy of West Germany and the ultimate defeat of the West German claim to represent all Germans. 76 The post-war order had been recognised by West Germany and the West in general. The international position of the GDR won a new quality with this world-wide recognition and equal membership of the UN. These fundamental changes aligned themselves with the main tendencies of international relations in the 1970s. They were the expression of the change from Cold War to détente in Europe.

However, despite the GDR's attainment of one of its main goals - entry into the UN - it only partially achieved the other. The GDR had not been granted full de jure recognition under international law. Relations with the Federal Republic were not described as normal international relations; the special nature of the situation and the four power rights for Berlin and Germany as a whole were unaffected by the treaty. The SED leadership faced a grave challenge as a result of the Basic Treaty. It wanted to create an East German nation separate from the idea of one German nation, but it fostered the "special relationship" carefully in questions of trade. The dilemma was that the accommodation with the Federal Republic, desired by the GDR to achieve recognition,

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73 This comment was made by Kurt Hager in 1972. Quoted in Roberts *op. cit.* p. 85
75 Kupper *op. cit.* p. 442
76 *Geschichte der Außenpolitik der DDR* *op. cit.* pp. 283 - 285
threatened its isolation, its policy of restricted contacts with the West (regarded as vital to the development of its sense of identity), and its security. Despite the potential dangers, the SED leadership implied that nothing had been conceded by the Basic Treaty and that the relationship with West Germany was identical to relationships with all capitalist countries.

2.5.2 The West German Perspective

"The treaty does not solve the German question; rather it leaves it more open than before." 77

For the Federal Republic, the Basic Treaty served to reduce the burdens of the division of Germany not only by safeguarding the Federal Republic’s position in Berlin, but also by leaving open the option of peacefully pursuing the goal of reunification. By granting de facto rather than de jure recognition to the GDR, the German question had been left open for the future both legally and politically. The Federal Republic had made the significant concession of recognising the GDR as an equal state, but neither German state could feasibly classify their relations either as solely domestic or as foreign policy. There was a “special” relationship, but the general consensus remained that "in the foreseeable future there can be no alternative but a Germany composed of two Germanies." 78

For the Federal Republic,79 its position within the Western alliance was consolidated; trade with the East increased; and in the domestic arena, the CDU began to realise that there was no real alternative to Ostpolitik and détente, creating the consensus which was to prove so fruitful in the early 1980s. The conclusion of the Basic Treaty allowed the two German states to make a German contribution to general détente for the first time. Specific German problems had been overcome in line with international efforts towards détente and co-operation.

3 The significance of the Eastern Treaties

For the Federal Republic, the Moscow Treaty was the gateway to Eastern Europe, facilitating the conclusion of the other Eastern treaties. A real political relationship had developed out of the diplomatic relations in existence since 1955, and it was reflected in

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77 Roberts op. cit. p. 85
79 In July 1973, the CSU government of the state (Land) of Bavaria took the Federal Republic to court arguing that the Basic Treaty was not compatible with the Basic Law of the Federal Republic. After long deliberations, the Federal Constitutional Court judged the Basic Treaty to be valid and compatible with the Basic Law, but this judgement also severely limited the interpretation of certain articles of the Treaty. See Borowsky op. cit. p. 42

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the increased number of visits between the leaders. It was the first step on the political path towards making Europe a peaceful region. Indeed, Brandt’s own comments reflect this analysis:

"History must never be allowed to become a millstone, preventing us from overcoming the past. In a certain sense, I understand this treaty as a final stroke and as a new beginning, which allows our states to look forward to a better future."

The Warsaw Treaty was a significant gesture both symbolically and in reality, but both sides were somewhat disappointed with its outcome. The West Germans had expected more people of German ethnic origin to be allowed to emigrate from Poland, and the Poles had expected more economic aid. Nevertheless, the importance of the reconciliation between the Germans and the Poles cannot be overestimated.

Berlin proved to be the key to the success of Ostpolitik. Moscow acknowledged that without a treaty regulating the situation in Berlin, then its own policy would fail. In Berlin, the Soviet Union had to pay for what it had gained in the Moscow Treaty. Not only did the Quadripartite Agreement ensure ratification of the other treaties, it linked Bonn’s détente policy with that of its Western allies, and it created a successful “test run” for Washington and Moscow, thus facilitating the negotiations leading to the SALT agreement in 1972.

The Basic Treaty between the two German states was the logical consequence of the preceding treaties. It laid the foundations for the further development of German-German relations. Thereafter, the Schmidt government aimed to create a network of mutual dependencies by reaching agreements on apparently minor issues - as Egon Bahr put it in 1972:

"Previously we had no relations with the GDR, now at least we have bad relations."

By recognising the division of Germany, the Federal Republic lay down the preconditions for overcoming it, and by recognising the GDR, it had reached full maturity in foreign policy. Conversely, through this recognition, the GDR had the ability to determine its own interests and move forwards towards becoming a German and a European state. That the West Germans reached an understanding with the East, and that the German-German enmity was eased, allowed a continental policy to develop - exemplified in the C.S.C.E. process.

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80 Bender (1) op. cit. p. 175 and p. 208
81 As quoted in Uschner op. cit. p. 90
82 Bender (1) op. cit. p. 208
83 ibid. p. 190
84 ibid. p. 195
4 The Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, Helsinki, 1 August 1975

The final link in the chain of events, triggered by the Ostpolitik concept of Brandt and Bahr, was the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (C.S.C.E.). The Helsinki process took over the concept of this Ostpolitik, but at a multilateral level. Moreover, without the preceding treaties, the Helsinki conference would never have taken place.

The idea for such a conference came from the East in the mid-1960s, with the aim of it serving as a substitute peace treaty, fostering economic cooperation and weakening the American role in Europe. Initially rejected by the West, their attitude became more flexible as Ostpolitik developed, although the West always insisted on one fundamental condition - the participation of the United States and Canada.

"The Western decision to seek normative commitments on the freer movement of people, ideas, and information opened the way for the central political trade-off of the CSCE: the Warsaw Pact’s interest in a recognition of the status quo against the Western desire for assurances for peaceful change toward greater freedom."

The other Western conditions were fulfilled in the autumn of 1972, the four-power agreement on Berlin and an agreed date on the opening of the talks on mutual and balanced force reductions (MBFR). Indeed, the latter began in Vienna on 30 October 1974 as the military parallel to the C.S.C.E. process. Both German states were participants in these negotiations because they were directly affected by them. It was the first time in the post-war history of Europe that negotiations on the dismantling of the direct military confrontation between the two most powerful military powers had taken place. They contributed to the strengthening of trust and to the extension of the political to military détente. However, these negotiations never achieved their potential, although conventional disarmament was discussed more successfully at other international forums.

Preparatory negotiations for the C.S.C.E. began in November 1972 and resulted in agreements on the agenda of the conference, its organisational structure and its rules of procedure. The thirty-five participating states were all the European states (except Albania), the USA and Canada. After two years of at times arduous negotiations, the
Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe took place. The Soviet aim of convening this conference had been achieved but on the West's terms.

The two German states contributed actively to the convening and successful conclusion of the C.S.C.E., although the GDR played a more active role earlier. Both German states supported the C.S.C.E. process in order to maintain the momentum of détente in Europe, but they also had different motives. The GDR was interested because of its desire to consolidate its own system and power, and to improve its relations with and its security vis-à-vis the Federal Republic. It was an important means for the Eastern bloc to have the post-war order in Europe recognised, and the GDR conducted many bilateral consultations in order to clarify issues in the run-up to the conference. The Federal Republic's linkage policy from the early 1970s meant it had to support the conference, and it recognised the potential of the human rights issues. The C.S.C.E. process was not a bloc-to-bloc forum, but rather a platform for individual initiatives by all member states. The states took part independently of alliance membership, and indeed coalitions of interest developed which went beyond East-West classification.

The Helsinki Final Act of the C.S.C.E. was signed on 1 August 1975 by the Foreign Ministers of the participating countries. It was not a legally binding treaty, but rather a political document that was binding insofar as the participating states stated their determination to implement fully its provisions. It had a certain ambivalence because of the different East and West attitudes. For the East, it basically confirmed the existing geopolitical situation in Europe, whereas for the West, it constituted "a set of normative commitments with which the situation in Europe should be brought into conformity."

The Final Act can be broadly divided into three areas, commonly known as baskets. The first one related to questions of security in Europe and was constantly emphasised by the East European states. It laid down certain principles as the basis for relations between the member states. Within this sphere, the member states also agreed to work towards confidence-building measures as a step towards achieving security and disarmament. The second basket was concerned with co-operation in the spheres of the economy, science, technology and the environment. This proved to be relatively satisfactory to all states. Basket three referred to co-operation in humanitarian and other

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91 Bruns, Wilhelm (ed.): Die Ost-West Beziehungen am Wendepunkt? Bilanz und Perspektiven (Verlag Neue Gesellschaft, Bonn 1988). p. 17
92 Lehne op. cit. p. 3

The ten basic principles were: sovereign equality; renunciation of the use or threat of force; inviolability of borders; respect for territorial integrity of all states; peaceful resolution of disputes; non-interference in domestic affairs of other states; respect for human rights and basic freedoms; equality and self-determination for all peoples; co-operation between states; fulfilment of commitments under international law in good faith.

See Schlußakte der Konferenz über Sicherheit und Zusammenarbeit in Europa (Ed. Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, Bonn 1975). pp. 4 - 6

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areas, referring specifically to increased human contacts, freer exchange of information, and co-operation and exchange in the spheres of culture and education. This final basket was always the frame of reference for the West as far as the East's violations of the Act were concerned. It was probably accepted in the East on the understanding that each state was responsible for its own internal affairs.

This reflected the dual nature of the Final Act. It was an instrument of détente to reduce tensions and increase co-operation, whilst at the same time, it could be used to challenge the status quo in the East and to promote far-reaching systemic change.

"It was precisely this duality that kept the CSCE process relevant and important in times of high tension between East and West as well as in periods of détente."  

The GDR took a positive view of the Conference because in terms of the increasing independence in East German foreign and security policy, the C.S.C.E. process played a vital role. It was the first major international conference in which it participated on the basis of equality. It confirmed the status quo in Europe and thus the boundaries of the GDR, ending an uncertain post-war period for East Germany. The GDR regarded the Final Act as the codex of "peaceful coexistence", but this limited its significance for the GDR. It meant that the principles were only valid in the relationship between states with different social orders, and they were thus limited to inter-state relations - in other words, to delineate its relationship with the Federal Republic. In 1983, the East German leadership made a provisional appraisal of the C.S.C.E. process, concluding that a considerable amount of progress had been achieved, with emphasis on basket one. With regard to basket two, trade had increased significantly between East Germany and capitalist states. Progress had been made in improving the working conditions of foreign journalists in the GDR and in the bringing together of families, but, on the whole, the GDR benefited more from the West than vice versa in the realm of basket three. Perhaps the most important aspect for the GDR was the fact that the C.S.C.E. process was not a bloc-to-bloc forum, therefore participants had the right in principle to take their own initiatives.

As far as the Federal Republic was concerned, the Helsinki Final Act and the C.S.C.E. process, in general, were of great significance, and the overall impact of the process on European security was assessed positively. The Final Act offered additional standards for the shaping of German-German relations, because in the course of the realisation of the C.S.C.E. agreements, there would be a gradual development towards a condition of

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64 Note that the comparative was used, indicating that the situation should improve rather than change radically overnight. Schlußakte der Konferenz über Sicherheit und Zusammenarbeit in Europa, op. cit. p. 27  
65 Lehne, op. cit, pp. 5 - 6  
peace in Europe, in which the Germans would be free to come together.⁷⁷

A wave of dissidence demanding the implementation of the human rights provisions spread throughout the Eastern bloc, and in the GDR, there was a fear of creeping subversion from the West. In 1976, signs of elite and mass discontent began to appear in the GDR. On the elite level, Wolf Biermann, a balladeer, had his citizenship revoked; Robert Havemann, a Communist intellectual, was placed under house arrest; and several other intellectuals were deported to West Berlin. On the mass level, discontent was apparent in the huge numbers applying to emigrate, probably up to one hundred thousand people, because of the declining fear of the regime implied by the frequent popular citation of the Final Act to justify calls for emigration.⁷⁸

Though this proliferation of discontent was in part attributable to the C.S.C.E. process, the role of the Basic Treaty and of Ostpolitik played a significant part. By 1975, up to eight million West Germans and West Berliners had visited the GDR and East Berlin, and up to 80% of the GDR population had access to West German television. By the end of 1976, however, the GDR leadership had succeeded in suppressing public expressions of discontent within the population, although the GDR political elite had become aware of the potentially destabilising results of Ostpolitik and the Basic Treaty.

By 1975, West Germany was moving towards the right, thus Ostpolitik was not a priority for the new West German Chancellor, Helmut Schmidt, given the developing domestic problems. Rapid systemic change in the GDR as a result of Ostpolitik was not developing, thus the FDP-SPD government chose to concentrate on a slower, more limited policy of achieving whatever was possible. Though in comparison to the early 1970s, the German-German relationship stagnated after 1975, it still functioned on a routine basis, and progress, albeit limited, was made in some areas.⁹⁹

Deteriorating East-West relations overshadowed the first follow-up meeting to the conference. A significant aspect of the Final Act was the agreement to hold further meetings in the C.S.C.E. forum, without which the Final Act's importance would have been significantly reduced. The Belgrade follow-up meeting (October 1977 to March 1978) was dominated by the two superpowers, although neither wanted substantive results from the meeting. The Soviet Union concentrated on preventing further development of the human rights' dimension of the C.S.C.E., whilst the US used the meeting to criticise the implementation record of the Warsaw Pact countries in this sphere. Thus, the concluding document merely reaffirmed the commitment to implement the Final Act and made provisions for a second follow-up meeting. The

⁷⁷ Bundesministerium für Innerdeutsche Beziehungen (ed.): A - Z der Deutschlandpolitik (Bonn 1982). p. 69
⁹⁹ Frey op. cit. p. 64
meeting revealed that in the short-term, the C.S.C.E. process would have little effect. Procedurally, however, it did have more importance. It established the pattern (in organisation and structure) for the main follow-up meetings and turned the debate on the implementation of the Final Act into a key element of the C.S.C.E. process.\textsuperscript{100}

The C.S.C.E. Final Act was the central frame of reference for the political, economic, humanitarian-communicative détente in Europe. It was the minimum standard of what détente in the East-West relationship meant - an expression of a new thinking in Europe, a victory for collective reason. The Helsinki Final Act standardised the understanding of détente in Europe. It constituted a Europe of 35 states that had committed themselves to a foreign policy of dialogue and good neighbourliness, and to a domestic policy that maintained human rights. It standardised a Europe, in which the existing borders between the states would lose their divisive character.\textsuperscript{101} This was the European perspective that was of importance to both German states.

The C.S.C.E. process was important for two reasons. Firstly, all European states, including the Federal Republic, had confirmed the existing borders in Europe, which made the Soviet Union's charges of revanchism against the latter no longer credible.\textsuperscript{102} Secondly, and more significantly, however, the C.S.C.E. process had introduced the question of human rights onto the international agenda for the first time. In this sphere, the East had conceded more than it wanted to and more than it could afford domestically. The West used the sphere of human rights as a measure for the whole process, and the US, in particular, used follow-up meetings as a tribunal, disregarding the other two baskets as pure ideology.\textsuperscript{103}

This said, it must be acknowledged that human rights only played a significant role in German-German relations after 1987, when the GDR deficit became more apparent. In this sense, it was part of the policy of "change through rapprochement". In the long-term, it created the preconditions for the events of 1989 / 1990, because by securing the status quo in Europe, it opened the socialist states to more Western influences. The C.S.C.E. meeting was also of significance for the two German states because Honecker and Schmidt met for the first time and discussed how relations between their two states would continue.\textsuperscript{104}

The Helsinki Accords of 1975 marked the peak and the beginning of the decline of East-West détente and also of German-German relations in the 1970s. Though Ost-\textsuperscript{105} Lehne op. cit. pp. 13 - 16
\textsuperscript{106} Bruns op. cit. pp. 37 - 38
\textsuperscript{107} It has been argued that the Final Act was also a recognition by all the participating states that the German question remained open. Interview with Bacher in June 1991.
\textsuperscript{108} Interview with Prof. Albrecht and Bender (1) op. cit. p. 204
\textsuperscript{109} Interviews with Herr Meyer and Prof. Prokop.
politik had defused East-West tensions in the German sphere and had been a major motor of détente, the strains in other areas of the world overwhelmed Europe at the end of the 1970s. Ostpolitik remained, however, a part of East-West competition, including by and in the two German states, and was determined by the capabilities, resolution and leadership of the two competing sides. In the early 1970s, Ostpolitik probably achieved the maximum that could realistically have been hoped for, particularly in terms of improving relations between the GDR and the Federal Republic. At that stage, however, changes in relations between the two German states depended largely on the attitudes of other states, particularly of the two superpowers, the Soviet Union and the United States.

The rest of the thesis puts forward an argument that in the 1980s the two German states fulfilled the obligations enshrined in these treaties but under vastly changed circumstances.

\[105\] Griffith op. cit. p. 234
\[106\] Roberts op. cit. p. 92
CHAPTER THREE

THE INTERNATIONAL CONTEXT FOR THE DEVELOPMENT OF GERMAN-GERMAN RELATIONS AFTER 1975

In order to assess the development of German-German relations in the 1980s, the changing international background to these relations at the beginning of the new decade must be explored in some detail. This will also facilitate a discussion of the consequences of these events in terms of a change in security policy. A brief analysis of the positions of the two alliance leaders with regard to German-German relations puts into perspective the room for manoeuvre the two German states had on the threshold of the 1980s.

1 The international situation at the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s

The Helsinki Final Act proved to be the zenith of the period of détente. Thereafter the situation deteriorated mainly due to the worsening relationship between the two leading powers, the United States and the Soviet Union. By the end of the 1970s, these relations had once again begun to flounder on the thorny issue of parity and rearmament. The increasingly tense situation was exacerbated by political conflicts of interest particularly in the developing world, which heightened the rivalry between the Soviet Union and the United States. The Soviet Union had not been prepared to accept the American definition of détente - military inferiority and third world abstention for the Soviet Union -, and the US reacted to the challenges of the 1970s by creating the conditions for a new Cold War. It has been argued that

"Cold War II was above all else a US programme for waging the globalised social conflict, the Great Contest, a programme decided upon in the light of the failure of earlier strategies pursued with the same ends in sight."¹

Watergate and the continuing effects of Vietnam almost certainly postponed the onslaught of the new Cold War, but under Carter there was a marked transition to more militancy in US politics, a shift which prepared the way for the policy of the Reagan administration. The cause of the deterioration of relations did not, however, lie solely with the United States. The Soviet Union was also partly responsible because of its rearmament policy and its involvement in countries in the developing world. In order to assess the relative contribution of both superpowers to the new Cold War, the issues will be considered thematically, and then I will attempt to reach a conclusion on the degree of responsibility of each state.

¹ Halliday, Fred: The making of the Second Cold War (Verso, London 1983). p. 204
1.1 The parity and rearmament issue.

1.1.1 SS-20s

Soviet expectations had not been realised in the period of détente. The Soviet Union had not gained the commitment to the territorial status quo in Europe that it had envisaged because although borders had been recognised as inviolable, the provisions of the C.S.C.E. Final Act left open the possibility of peaceful change of frontiers. Nor had détente led to the expected upswing in the Soviet economy or to its modernisation. However, it wanted to maintain the benefits of détente, defensively to maintain the territorial status quo and to build economic relations, and offensively perhaps to expand its political influence in the developing world, to weaken the West European defence willingness and to increase tensions between West Europe and the US. It has been argued that to do this, the Soviet Union had to adjust the military advantage to its benefit. The weakness of the Soviet economy compounded its feeling of inferiority vis-à-vis the United States, for which it attempted to compensate by building up its military might. It is certainly true that throughout the period of détente, the Soviet Union continued to build up its military strength, modernising its nuclear capability. Indeed, in October 1977, NATO sources detected the deployment of SS-20s in the West of the Soviet Union, and it was assumed that the Soviet Union was striving for nuclear superiority.

However, the background to the deployment of SS-20s must be considered in greater detail to ascertain their exact military role. Despite the first Strategic Arms Limitation Talks agreement (SALT-I), both the Soviet Union and the United States had continued to upgrade and modernise their nuclear capabilities. In the early 1970s, the US had begun to consider improvements to its land-based missiles in terms of greater mobility and accuracy, and had developed plans for the deployment of Cruise and Pershing II missiles. This was to offset the advantages the Warsaw Pact states had in conventional and geographic terms, and perhaps to implement a new strategic doctrine of “counter-force”. To justify its position, it argued that the Soviet Union had superiority in delivery systems and in the number of warheads targeted for use in Europe. In fact, the Soviet Union had a marked inferiority in theatre nuclear force (TNF) delivery systems and an overall inferiority in the number of warheads, despite superiority in certain...
categories. Any imbalance in land-based missiles was not a major factor because it had been created by American withdrawal of Thor and Jupiter missiles as part of its modernisation proposal.4

The West refused to negotiate on British and French missiles and to include TNFs in SALT talks, prompting the Soviet Union to attempt to redress the imbalance by deploying SS-20s. These missiles were, however, no more accurate than the Pershing 1 and did not have absolute mobility. Their real advantage was that they increased Soviet fire power in the European theatre, with fewer missiles but more warheads. Their basic function was to serve as retaliatory weapons, and they did not reverse the balance in Europe.6

1.1.2 The NATO twin-track decision

Despite the situation delineated above, the NATO contention of an underlying inferiority in TNFs was used to legitimise its calls for modernisation and greater confrontation with the Soviet Union. As pointed out, the Americans refused to discuss European theatre weapons in the SALT-II negotiations despite Soviet and West German pressure to do this, and Carter’s refusal to do so led to the Soviets’ decision to deploy SS-20s in October 1977, an attempt by the Soviet Union to improve its position by introducing changes NATO had introduced years earlier. The Soviet Union’s position was that their new missiles re-established the nuclear parity against the Poseidons and other strategic land-based missiles (SLBMs) in the NATO armoury. This was a mistake on the part of the Soviet leaders, since the military advantage could not compensate for the political damage deployment caused. The European members of NATO felt directly threatened by the new Soviet missiles, and Schmidt in particular called for the modernisation of NATO weapons, if negotiations did not successfully redress the situation.7 It is perhaps also possible to argue that it was a mistake to introduce SS-20s because without reference to them, the US would never have been able to gain support for its decision to deploy Pershing IIs. It led to a loss of trust, time and national wealth for the Soviet Union which took many years to overcome.8

By the mid-1970s, a serious deficiency had developed in the NATO strategy of flexible response. In June 1977, President Carter had taken the decision to go ahead with the production of Cruise missiles. As these missiles were launched from modified B-52 bombers, they were judged to be a far cheaper and more invulnerable strategic nuclear deterrent than the B-1 bomber which was cancelled. The need to maintain a psycho-
logical reassurance from the US was the principal reason for the NATO modernisation decision, although the deployment of the Soviet SS-20s imparted a sense of urgency to the debate and gave NATO the ideal pretext for deploying these Cruise and Pershing II missiles in Europe as an apparent reply to Soviet action. This move was initially decided by the US in 1978, and in January 1979, at the Guadalupe Conference, the four main NATO countries had accepted it. 9

On 12 December 1979, after a delay of a purely cosmetic nature, the NATO Council of Ministers passed what was to become known as the twin-track decision. This was a twin strategy (to some extent building on the Harmel Report of 1967) adopted by NATO whereby it would modernise its nuclear arsenal (several hundred Pershing II and Cruise missiles were to be stationed in Western Europe at the end of 1983) at the same time as taking up disarmament negotiations with the Soviet Union with the aim of achieving parity at the lowest possible level. Should an agreement be forthcoming before the end of 1983, then the US would halt deployment - on the condition that the Soviet Union had begun to withdraw its SS-20 missiles by then. This move had long been prepared by NATO and Congressional forces, but it was made easier by the deployment of SS-20s in 1977 and the developing cold war atmosphere. The discrepancy of Soviet superiority in delivery systems with the US superiority in warheads pointed to an underlying American advantage10 which did not need to be redressed.

"The possibility of deploying the new generation of intermediate range weapons (Cruise and Pershing II) in Western Europe was designed to enhance US superiority....This change in the strategic military balance thus (left) the USSR on the defensive."11

The decision that NATO reached in December 1979 also demonstrated to the Warsaw Pact the solidarity among the NATO partners and the stability of the alliance. Through the combined effect of this stability and solidarity, the Soviet Union and its allies were forced to acknowledge that they would be dealing with a more stable NATO and had to take seriously the threat coupled with the Western willingness to negotiate that it would deploy medium-range missiles in Europe if the negotiations came to nothing.12

1.1.3 The neutron bomb

Though not entirely comparable, it is appropriate to deal with the neutron bomb issue within this section. The question of the neutron bomb - enhanced radiation weapons -

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10 Halliday op. cit. p. 71


12 Schulz-Vobach, Klaus-Dieter: Mittelmacht als Dolmetscher: Die Entspannung der Bundesrepublik Deutschland an der Schwelle der 80er Jahre (Europäische Hochschulschriften. Reihe XXXI Politikwissenschaft Bd. 133. Verlag Peter Lang, Frankfurt am Main, New York, 1989). p. 332
was raised by President Carter in July 1977. This weapon was described as the
"first nuclear battlefield weapon specially designed to kill people
through the release of neutrons rather than to destroy military instal-
lations through heat and blast," and as
"the "supercapitalist weapon", preserving property while killing and
sickening people." It is an artillery shell with enhanced radiation to be used against enemy tank formations.
It was not needed to restore any balance on the European front, but its purpose was
rather to give NATO even greater superiority in Europe. This sparked a very fierce and
emotional debate throughout NATO on the neutron bomb's overall implications for
NATO doctrine, and on the morality of such a weapon.

The controversy was particularly strong in the Federal Republic, where Egon Bahr
asked "is mankind on the verge of madness?" He regarded the neutron bomb as "a
symbol of the perversion of human thinking", a weapon which did little or no material
damage, but "cleanly" killed people. The official government position was that such
weapons could only be introduced after thorough consultation in the alliance, as long as
they were deployed elsewhere in Western Europe too, and that following a decision on
production every effort should be made to continue arms control negotiations. In the
event, Carter unilaterally decided to defer the decision on production of the neutron
bomb in April 1978, amidst much publicity, although he did order launchers for the
bomb to be prepared and certain components of the new bomb to be made ready.

The debate over the neutron bomb had several consequences. It intensified discussion
on the rationality of deterrence and defence in the nuclear age. The controversy was an
example of the breakdown in alliance nuclear relations which went far beyond the
importance of the weapon in question. It had more symbolic significance in terms of
alliance strategy, technology and politics. It precipitated a doctrinal debate that broke
the intellectual ice in alliance nuclear relations. It encouraged the feeling within the
alliance that the next modernisation debate had to project the political cohesion of the
alliance. Hence it helped to create the political will in Europe to support the decision to
deploy Cruise and Pershing II missiles in December 1979, when doctrinal issues were
avoided in order to achieve agreement. Indeed the willingness of the allies to endorse
the deployment decision of December 1979 was a direct result of their enhanced role in

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15 Ibid. p. 65
16 Bahr, Egon: "Ist die Manschheit dabei, verrückt zu werden?", in Vorwärts 21 July 1977. In
Borowsky op. cit. p. 174
17 Ibid.
18 Halliday op. cit. p. 216
decision-making within the alliance, as a result of the inadequacy of the consultative mechanisms in NATO revealed in 1978. The neutron bomb controversy served to institutionalise the role of arms control in allied decisions on the modernisation of nuclear weapons in Europe. The debate also had an effect on the relationship between Chancellor Schmidt and Carter. Schmidt had gone to great lengths to prepare the domestic ground for the new weapon, and felt let down by Carter, which increased his contempt for the US President. This aroused doubts and suspicions on both sides that the two leaders were never able to resolve.

1.2 Political conflicts in the developing world.

In the late 1970s, the changing world role of the United States and the Soviet Union increased the tension between them. Between 1974 and 1980 there had been fourteen revolutionary upheavals in the developing world, and most Western commentators attributed responsibility for this new wave of revolutions to the Soviet Union, seeing in the upheaval a violation of détente on the part of the Soviet Union. The charge of Soviet adventurism served both to explain the various upheavals which confronted US policy-makers, and to provide the second part of the indictment whose first element was the charge that the Soviet Union had military superiority. Whilst it is true that the Soviet Union was drawn into support for some of the liberation movements in Africa, Central America and South East Asia, it did not play an instigatory role in these states.

1.2.1 Ethiopia

The first revolution of this period began in Ethiopia in February 1974. In September of that year, Haile Selassie was deposed, and in 1977, military ties with the United States were severed. Soviet aid to Ethiopia in the summer of 1977 after the Somali attack meant that the developing world came to play a significant part in the gathering Cold War during the Carter presidency, because although

"the Horn of Africa was an area of little intrinsic importance to the USA, it became an important constituent of the charge-sheet against Soviet policy."

This was despite the facts that the US helped to precipitate the Ethiopian crisis by suspending military aid in early 1977, and that the Soviet Union acted legally in assisting a sovereign state to repel invasion, having tried to mediate first.

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18 Wassermann op. cit. pp. 133 - 137
20 Haftendorn op. cit. p. 138 - 139
21 Halliday op. cit. p. 97
22 ibid. p. 87
23 Ashton op. cit. p. 151
1.2.2 Iran

The dethroning of the Shah in Iran by revolutionary forces in January 1979 was a blow to the prestige and influence of the US in the Middle East area because Iran was a rapidly developing oil state with a special place in US regional strategy. The situation was compounded for the West when the American embassy in Teheran was seized by militant students on 4 November 1979, and the US appeared unable to resolve the situation, exacerbating the image of Carter as weak-kneed and incompetent.

The international consequences of the revolution in Iran seemed to be moving against the American position, and the Soviet Union was apparently consolidating its position in the area. The US administration deemed it necessary to build a stronger military position in the region,

"partly as a means of meeting new emergencies but, above all, as a demonstration to the Soviets and to the local states that America was not in retreat and intended to defend its friends and its interests."

The hostages affair was also an "instrument by which chauvinistic sentiment could be mobilised by the US right in favour of intervention in the third world." These military and political tasks were just developing when, in the final week of 1979, the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan - a development which appeared to confirm the impression of a concerted Soviet drive through the third world designed to weaken America.

1.2.3 Afghanistan

In April 1978, the Communists had seized power in Kabul, but there had been little Western reaction because they conceded that Afghanistan was in the Soviet sphere of influence. However, when the Soviet Union invaded Afghanistan on 26 December 1979, to support the Communist government there, some in the West feared that it was the first manoeuvre in a series of steps whereby the Soviet Union aimed to increase its sphere of influence in the third world in general and in the Middle East in particular - an area of confrontation between Russia and the West for centuries, but with higher stakes in the twentieth century because of the West's critical dependence on its oil reserves. These accusations were denied by the Soviets and indeed proved to be exaggerated, but the invasion did contribute to a major change in the relationship between the Soviet Union and the United States, bringing an end to the already eroded period of détente, because it provoked President Carter in the US, against the background of US humiliation over the Teheran hostage crisis, into declaring an end to détente officially.

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25 Halliday op. cit. p. 224

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The invasion of Afghanistan represented an important watershed in Soviet foreign policy insofar as it marked the first instance in which Moscow was willing to deploy ground forces on a large scale in a developing country.

"The move reflected Moscow’s disillusionment with détente and a lack of regard for Western opinion, as well as an increased determination of the Soviet leadership to retain as much control as possible over the politics of its third world allies."\(^26\)

The degree of Soviet influence in these states has been exaggerated, however.

"In most countries the revolutionary movements had originated because of domestic factors rather than Soviet intervention, and where the USSR was drawn in to provide support, this was not always in favour of liberation movements or progressive governments."\(^27\)

In both Ethiopia and Afghanistan, pro-Soviet regimes were in place, but in neither had the Soviet military role played a decisive part in initiating revolutionary change.

The overall balance sheet of third world politics remained favourable to the West,\(^28\) but neither side realised the repercussions the intervention would have for the overall East-West situation. In the United States, détente policy was being drawn into the play of domestic interests. The US assessment of the possibilities of cooperation with the Soviet Union had changed significantly, without Europe fully registering the magnitude of that change. After 1980, the Reagan administration followed a course of strong rhetoric to restore national pride and self-respect, and its foreign policy was directed almost exclusively to the East-West conflict, a policy its European allies could not and would not follow.

1.3 Crises in Europe

The situation between the Soviet Union and the United States was exacerbated by political upheaval in areas associated with the East-West conflict itself. Although other East European states were undertaking change within the socialist system, for example Hungary, these states were not as important to the Soviet Union as Poland and the GDR. Poland had been relatively unstable for the whole of the 1970s and had massive state debts in the West, acquired because of its drive to modernise industry rapidly. The events in 1980 aggravated the tense development of relations.

\(^{26}\) Becker, Abraham S. and Fukuyama, Francis: "The USSR and the Middle East", In Legum op. cit. pp. 81 - 90. Here p. 62
\(^{27}\) Lovenduski and Woodall op. cit. p. 392
\(^{28}\) Halliday op. cit. p. 101
1.3.1 The Polish crisis

In July 1980, as a result of rises in food prices throughout Poland, there were serious workers' protests, although no violence was used. The protests spread throughout the country, with each individual strike being settled by economic means, for example promised wage increases and greater availability of meat. The gravity of the situation became clear on 14 August 1980, when a strike began at the Lenin Shipyard in Gdansk, scene of the most serious protests in 1970 and 1976. The strikes of July and August 1980 culminated in the regime's tactical surrender. Rather than use force, risking civil war and eventually Soviet intervention, Edward Gierek, the Party leader, agreed to the signing of the agreements at Gdansk, Szczecin, Jastrzebie and elsewhere in late August and early September 1980. The agreements permitted the creation of free trade unions, promised wage rises and a five day week, and - among the many other concessions - guaranteed a reduction in and legal limitation of censorship. This did not, however, stabilise the situation. On 17 September 1980, representatives of thirty-five independent trade unions agreed to apply jointly for legal registration as the nationwide Independent Self-Governing Trades Union “Solidarity”.

On 5 September 1980, Gierek had been replaced by Kania. Solidarity feared that by overthrowing the party, they would provoke a Soviet intervention and the destruction of all liberties gained in the preceding years, although this was perhaps doubtful given the weakness of the Soviet Union. Indeed, it was no longer clear whether the Soviet Union had either the strength or the will to guarantee the positions of its allies - the “umbrella theory”.

Perhaps Solidarity aimed to take much of the substance of power away from the party and the state bureaucracy but to leave them with the form. Two crises in November made the situation worse. The “registration crisis” was an attempt, by blatant misuse of the judiciary, to force Solidarity to include an endorsement of the party's leading role in its statutes, but it had to be dropped when the unions threatened widespread strikes, and Solidarity was officially registered by the Supreme Court on 10 November 1980. In the “Narozniak affair”, the police seized a Solidarity supporter in Warsaw for possessing a confidential document, but were forced to back down and release him as workers throughout the Warsaw industrial region began to stop work. These episodes had three consequences: the party had not reaffirmed its authority and the fear of intervention was ever present; workers' mistrust of the party was confirmed; the Solidarity leaders, under intense pressure from the church, began to revise their strategy.

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The leader of the Solidarity movement had to work tentatively with the Party leader, Kania, in order to maintain the fragile peace. On 5 December 1980, after Soviet armoured divisions had been moved up to all of Poland’s frontiers, the Polish leadership had been summoned to attend an emergency summit meeting of the Warsaw Pact in Moscow, and had been left in no doubt that the revolutionary process in Poland had to slow down, and in some areas stop, if military intervention were to be avoided.

Kania and Walesa, both moderate leaders, were leading a provisional alliance against more militant followers. The Church retained its critical distance from the regime, but it urged support for Kania’s policy of “renewal”, thus going further towards active support for a Communist government than at any moment since 1945. However, the situation remained tense, and the government often had to retreat. On 9 February 1981 it was agreed that General Jaruzelski would become the new Prime Minister, his appointment regarded as the last chance for the Solidarity movement to achieve the demands it had made in the Gdansk agreements that had yet to be fulfilled. On 30 March, despite opposition from the militant members of Solidarity, Walesa reached agreement with the Kania government, and as a consequence, Rural Solidarity was registered, and the movement began to publish its own weekly journal. A general strike was avoided, but this proved to be the most important single turning-point between August 1980 and December 1981.34

The situation continued to smoulder until the autumn, when a fresh crisis arose. There were no more strikes, but occupation protests continued. On 2 December 1981, the police stormed the occupied buildings in Warsaw, evicting the occupiers - the first use of force since March of that year. Confrontation seemed inevitable. Solidarity called a strike alert - provisionally a general strike was planned, should the authorities apply emergency powers. On 13 December 1981, however, Jaruzelski, who had been named first secretary of the PUWP on 18 October, launched a military coup on a scale and with an efficiency that no-one had anticipated. Solidarity’s leaders were arrested and trade unions were suspended. Jaruzelski proclaimed the formation of a Military Council of National Salvation and the existence of a “state of war”. Civil liberties were suspended, and all Solidarity offices were occupied by the security forces. Gierek and his senior political colleagues were arrested. Jaruzelski soon faced desperate and widespread opposition from the workers, who occupied factories, shipyards and coal mines and were supported in their opposition by students who attempted to hold strikes in colleges and universities. There was fighting between workers and military-police units, and several people were killed - the first time Poles had shed Polish blood since December 1970.35

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34 Ash op. cit. pp. 134 - 163
35 Ascherson op. cit. pp. 278 - 280
The military coup had obviously been planned for many months, although the real motives for its launch may never be known. Perhaps it was to preempt a Soviet intervention, or perhaps threats from the hard line wing of the Party to unseat Jaruzelski also forced his hand. There was a certain amount of Soviet responsibility. In blindly refusing to permit the PUWP to share power and attempt a quite new interpretation of its leading role, Brezhnev and his colleagues had cut off the Party’s retreat and made collision inevitable.\textsuperscript{34}

1.4 The consequences of these events

As a result of these developments, the situation between the two leading powers of the alliances was one of mutual suspicion and hostility. The deterioration of international relations by the beginning of the 1980s imposed severe strains on the network of détente agreements constructed in Europe in the 1970s. These confrontations were symptomatic of the new or second Cold War. It is perhaps possible to argue that changes in American domestic policies played an “instigatory” role in the development of the second Cold War, that those of the Soviet Union played an enabling role, and that those of the other developed capitalist states played a supportive role, reinforcing the trend dominant in the US.\textsuperscript{35} The West exaggerated the Soviet role. It had not attained military superiority; and in the third world, it had become more active in the 1970s but had not achieved superiority in the region. However, the Soviet Union did make a significant contribution to world conflicts and the beginning of the new Cold War by its systemic opposition to the US and its willingness to engage in a process begun by the West.\textsuperscript{36} The instability in Poland threatened the cohesion of the entire Soviet bloc by developing into a major crisis of legitimacy.

As a consequence, all the states that had been involved in the détente process of the 1970s had to reassess their positions and weigh up the pros and cons of pursuing a similar policy into the 1980s. The comparatively short period of détente had brought most European states more benefits than disadvantages. Until the 1970s, security in Europe had always meant security against a potential attack by the “other side”. In the 1980s, however, European security became security against a superpower conflict elsewhere in the world that could potentially have serious ramifications in Europe, with both East and West European states willing to work together to avoid this. This did not mean that conflicts would not arise in or over Europe, but the possibilities had been reduced through a growing reciprocal dependency.

The C.S.C.E. process played a crucial role in this development. From economic,

\textsuperscript{34} Ascherson op. cit. pp. 281
\textsuperscript{35} Halliday op. cit. p. 133
\textsuperscript{36} ibid. pp. 133 - 135
cultural and political relations, a broad network had been created linking the two parts of Europe more closely together than had been thought possible, and more strongly than many were aware. Although this was occasionally regarded as a superficial change only, it was to prove its ability to sustain a strong relationship in the 1980s. Despite the Soviet-US confrontation as a result of the issues of the late 1970s, the European states were united through growing trust, and the suspicion that, given their deteriorating relations, the world powers could use the conflict in Asia to provoke a confrontation in Europe. Détente still functioned between European states which meant that the main aim of the C.S.C.E. had been implemented: to stabilise Europe through co-operation and arms control to make it less dependent on the vagaries of the superpowers.37

This was indicative of the fact that the nature of European security was beginning to change. In 1980, for the first time since 1945, the maintenance of East-West contacts was left to the medium rank powers in Europe, because of the apparent inability of the two world powers to manage the crisis in the aftermath of the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan - a situation caused by mutual misconceptions, and by domestic trouble in the US and the Soviet Union, rather than by the sudden emergence of unbridgeable contradictions in the objective national interests of the two superpowers.38 The European allies of both the US and the Soviet Union were no longer prepared to go all the way with their alliance leaders in the 1980s. Indeed, it may be argued that the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was the trigger for the destabilisation of the Eastern bloc in the mid-1980s. This was the background in terms of international developments and the beginning of the new Cold War against which the two German states pursued their relations in the 1980s.

2. US and Soviet positions on German-German relations

The positions of the two superpowers with regard to German-German relations played an important role, however, to some extent circumscribing, and on other occasions, forcing the limits of German-German co-operation and détente.

2.1 The US position

The United States, and indeed most other NATO members, feared the Federal Republic’s vulnerability to the Soviet Union because of its intensifying relationship with the GDR. This was an inflated fear of the Soviet Union’s ability to influence

37 Bender (1) op. cit. p. 205
public trends in the Federal Republic.

Indeed their fears of West Germany becoming too dependent on the Soviet Union reflected an unrealistically low opinion of the common sense of the German public and political leadership and an unrealistically high opinion of the Soviet capacity to play on German psychology.39

There was also an exaggerated assessment of the possibilities of a West German drift away from the NATO alliance, and even towards neutralism. The fact that in 1986, the US assistant secretary of defence, Richard Perle, argued that West Germany should reduce its subsidies to East Germany because they drained money which ought to be used for the West German defence budget, was illustrative of the widespread ignorance of the significance of these West German expenses for Western security. Or perhaps it reflected the view that a more militant German attitude, combined with the higher risks of military confrontation, was preferable to the trend of closer co-operation between the two German states. It would be unfortunate if the timid and limited West German security dialogue with East Germany was to elicit so much suspicion from its allies as to impede the operation of the long-standing “humanitarian” aspects of the East-West German relationship.40

Whilst the US did not try to force the Federal Republic to relinquish its ties with the GDR, it did, however, fail to recognise the security value and implication of these relations. It argued that an independent German-German dialogue outside the official negotiations (for example Stockholm Conference on security-building measures and disarmament in Europe [CDE]) would weaken the unity of the Western negotiating position. However, there was great support from the German public for the idea of a security dialogue between the two German states, and indeed it was to West Germany’s allies’ advantage to maximise the gains of the German-German relationship and to minimise the losses from intra-alliance friction over East-West policy. West German policy towards the GDR contributed to the suppression of any East-West tension which could have resulted from continual friction and overt hostility between the two German states at such a sensitive border. It also promoted Soviet and East German restraint with regard to West Berlin - still a potential cause of friction despite the Quadripartite Agreement of 1971. And it also stabilised the situation in East Germany and promoted gradual change there (any unrest there could have triggered panicky Soviet actions potentially leading to East-West conflict).

The West German Deutschlandpolitik was a signal contribution to Western security because it decreased public dissatisfaction and improved the situation of the average

40 Dean, Jonathan: “Will the two German states solve the problem of European security?”, in SAI\S review 1988 Vol. 8 Part 7. pp. 173 - 190. Here p. 189
East German citizen, whilst influencing the East German government to undertake gradual change. It was an instructive paradox that the existence of the West German system had a destabilising effect on the East German population and particularly on the political leadership, whilst West German policy sought to mitigate some of the same discontents by reducing economic hardships and broadening the possibilities for travel and communication.41 West Germany had taken on a major share of the responsibility in attempting, on a long-term basis, to bring Western influence to bear in East Germany and Eastern Europe. West Germany provided sustained interest and detailed activity towards fulfilling this objective. It was a constructive contribution to Western policy towards the Warsaw Pact.42 This role performed by the Federal Republic’s Deutschlandpolitik was often ignored by analysts and politicians alike.

In the 1980s, the US consistently pursued a much less flexible position towards East European states than did the West Europeans, in particular West Germany. At least until 1985, the United States regarded German-German relations and Ostpolitik in general as undermining a united Western punitive approach to the East. US malaise with regard to all aspects of détente had become apparent by 1981 because its expectations that détente would lead to international stability had not borne fruit.43 To reassert its leadership in Europe, the US had to act in concert with its allies, rather than in isolation from them, to consult with them rather than issuing commands and to adapt itself to a diversity of specific interests among them within the general purposes of NATO.44

2.2 The Soviet position

The Soviet position was influenced by the developing leadership crisis which revealed three fundamental liabilities for the Soviet Union: that Soviet economic power was insufficient with respect to its status as a global power; that the Soviet Union did not have strong allies or friends; and thirdly that Soviet political elites were totally insensitive to the fact that many Soviet actions (for example rearmament) had serious negative repercussions by enhancing the threat perceptions in the West. The second recessionary wave in the world economy in the late 1970s and early 1980s had a significant impact in the Eastern bloc. As a result of its own economic weakness, the Soviet Union endeavoured to sell more to the West and thus gain hard currency. It, therefore, had to reduce financial support to its allies (by rationing the supply and increasing the prices of energy and raw materials) and had to allow them more leeway

41 Dean 1988 op. cit. p. 189
42 Dean 1987 op. cit. pp. 254 - 255
43 Griffith, William E.: The superpowers and regional tensions: the USSR, the United States and Europe (Lexington Books, Lexington, Massachusetts, 1982). p. 11
in terms of a free hand in the economic sphere lest it caused destabilisation or further unrest in the bloc - to allow them to make up resulting shortages through purchases on the capitalist world market.  

The GDR was particularly hard hit in this respect with the overnight curtailment of 10% of its oil supplies from the Soviet Union. This move aggravated the GDR’s balance of payments deficit, and reduced its creditworthiness in the West where it had a mounting debt problem (approximately $12 billion in 1982). This left the SED leadership with little choice but to cultivate better relations with the West and particularly with the Federal Republic in order to win more economic concessions from them. The Soviet Union still had high expectations of its alliance partners in the economic sphere where its own economy needed continued support and technological expertise. In the early 1980s, at CMEA meetings, the Soviet Union demanded more deliveries of high quality goods from Eastern Europe, which aggravated the problems of exporting to the West. Moscow also emphasised the need for more internal economic integration as compared to extensions of trade relations with the West.

It is often assumed that this occurrence in 1982 was what triggered the policy of dialogue and its concomitant aspects that caused the friction with the Soviet Union which developed into the outright dissent in the summer of 1984 when the foreign policy consensus of the Soviet leadership fell apart and there was a perceived “Communist encirclement” of the Soviet Union. As Charles Gati pointed out, rifts between Moscow and its European allies occurred

❝when East Europeans sense division and drift in Moscow; when they believe that they can get away with ‘more’ - usually more independence - than they might be able to do when the Soviet leadership appears less preoccupied with the struggle for power.”

Indeed, it became apparent that East German commentators regarded the curtailment of Soviet supplies to the GDR as the background to the conflict which developed in the mid-1980s. It can be argued that the Federal Republic recognised the difficulty that this put the GDR in and used the credit of 1983 to gain more influence within the GDR.

The Soviet Union also had to allow its allies more room to manoeuvre in foreign policy.

❝To preserve the calm and the stability of its empire the Kremlin is prepared to let the various nomenclatures play their cards themselves.”

45 Meyer op. cit. p. 147
46 Frey 1987 op. cit. p. 143
47 Gati, Charles: “The Soviet empire; Alive but not well”, in Problems of Communism March-April 1985 Vol. 34 pp. 73 - 86
48 Interviews in January 1992
49 Unger, Leopold: “Plot against Moscow or a ginger ‘de-satellization’?”, in International Herald Tribune 3 September 1984 p. 4
Because the stability of the GDR depended to a large degree on the German-German connection, the East German leadership had also to be granted a limited leeway in this regard. This was granted because the Soviet Union was able to use any improvement in German-German relations to service its own political-economic needs. For the Soviet Union, and the East German leadership, the German-German security dialogue presented little risk. Moreover it gave the GDR an important role and function of its own in the Warsaw Pact which no other state could assume. The Soviet Union was interested in the contribution of the German-German dialogue to the long-term Soviet security goals in Western Europe and to its shorter term goals of mobilising the peace sentiment in the Federal Republic and causing friction between the US and its allies in Western Europe. The Soviet Union regarded the Federal Republic as the most influential political factor in Western Europe and thus pursued a carrot and stick policy with regards to influencing West German security policy. The failure of the Soviet Union to prevent the stationing of new US missiles in Western Europe (and the collapse of the Communist party in Poland) were heavy political defeats for the Soviet leadership in this sense.

It was always understood in both German states and in Europe in general that the Soviet Union held the key to the German question in so far as it played a major role in the development of the GDR and could use its influence in this sphere. It has been argued that the Soviet Union had played the German card because it, the Soviet Union, had mobilised the fears and the illusions of the Germans against the NATO twin track decision, and through its attempts to turn the German desire for peace against the SDI programme. Despite its efforts, the Soviet Union was unsuccessful and the NATO plans were not deterred - a major disappointment to the Soviet Union which meant that it had forsaken its control of the German card. This was perhaps exaggerated, but nevertheless, East Germany appeared to have more flexible control over its policy towards the Federal Republic.

The positive aspects of German-German relations warranted US and Soviet support for their further development. However, both German states were too apprehensive about the mistrust of their allies to undertake this role without encouragement. Since neither the Soviet Union nor the US had a monopoly on ingenuity and common sense, benefits for both alliances arose from the intensification of the German-German dialogue. The two German states’ allies had a choice between continuing to indulge their suspicions about the German-German dialogue on security issues - at some cost to relations with the German states, inhibiting but not blocking dialogue - or benefiting from that dialogue - hence their, at times, benevolent, at others, more suspicious, approach to dialogue.

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50 Dean 1987 op. cit. p. 253
51 Stürmer, Michael: *Deutsche Frage oder die Suche nach der Staatsräson* (Serie Piper, München, 1988).
52 Based on Dean 1988 op. cit. p. 190
the development of German-German relations.

It was against this background that the two German states developed their relations in the 1980s taking into account the fears and suspicions of their respective allies, without necessarily undermining their own national and mutual interests.
CHAPTER 4

GERMAN-GERMAN RELATIONS IN THE EARLY 1980s

PART ONE: MAINTAINING DETENTE

Having outlined the interests of the two German states in terms of détente and their basic positions with regard to the international situation in the early 1980s, this chapter will analyse to show analysis of German-German relations up to 1985, which, drawing on the events in their bilateral relationship and in the individual states, offers a reassessment of their roles in the international context. The emphasis is, of necessity, on things German which may mean that the international context is neglected at times.

1 Interests and perceptions of the two German states

Both the GDR and the Federal Republic had a vested interest in détente and therefore had no desire to pursue the confrontational policy of their respective superpowers nor to leave their security to them, given their already highly militarised territories. Indeed, the interests in and expectations from détente of the two German states were to a certain degree similar. Their survival depended on the avoidance of conflict in any form, hence both gave the highest priority to the objective of preventing a war. However, they had different means for achieving the same aim, although in practice the approaches were perhaps not so different. The Federal Republic supported the concept of deterrence based on nuclear arms, and highlighted the necessity of creating the appropriate political conditions to achieve arms reductions. It also renounced the use of force in the pursuit of political goals. For the GDR, however, the prevention of war was to be achieved through the adoption of the policy of peaceful co-existence, because war was no longer a rational means of politics. Honecker indicated the priorities in GDR policy in November 1983:

"The primary aim of the foreign and security policy of the GDR continues to be making its contribution to preventing a nuclear inferno and securing world peace. As before, there is no reasonable alternative to the policy of peaceful coexistence between states with differing social orders. More than ever before it is necessary to mobilise the forces to implement this."

Moreover, both German states were in favour of all political communications and negotiations between East and West that contributed potentially to the lessening of tensions in the world. For West Germany,

"the decisive threshold is not located between conventional and nuclear war but between war and non-war. We want neither a nuclear war nor a conventional war".

1 Erich Honecker in November 1983. In Geschichte der Außenpolitik der DDR op. cit. p. 426
2 Presse- und Informationsamt der Bundesregierung: Strategie (Bonn, 1983). p. 5
As Wolfgang Pfeiler has argued

"West Germany's security policy is built around the notion that only a combination of military and diplomatic means will best serve its interests. In this sense, 'co-operative security' and 'preventive security' are inseparable: We safeguard peace in freedom with the alliances against the Soviet Union. This is the sense of NATO. We safeguard peace with the Soviet Union against common dangers. This is the sense of disarmament, co-operation, confidence building."

This was a reaffirmation of the Harmel report which NATO had agreed on in 1967, namely that defence and détente through co-operation should be the two sides of NATO strategy towards the East.

Since the 1960s, the pursuit of an improved relationship with the GDR had been an integral part of the West German identity which combined the elements of strong Atlantic and West European ties with an enduring interest in the countries of Central and Eastern Europe. The Federal Republic continued to follow the dual approach of dialogue and defence towards the Soviet Union and its allies, because it was always aware that Soviet agreement or at least acquiescence was necessary for the development of German-German relations in any sphere. West German behaviour was dependent on the balance of party political forces within the Federal Republic, with West German public opinion and opposition party opinion ahead of the government in stressing European concerns. This influenced government positions in the long-term. Externally it was sensitive to pressure from the US. However, it was able to fall back on the EC and diverse positions within NATO to guarantee a greater degree of autonomy in the conduct of its foreign policy since the 1960s.

In the early 1980s, the relationship between the two German states was given new direction with the focus on East-West security as a result of several converging developments:

• There had been a revival of national feeling in West Germany as the post-war sense of guilt and humiliation gradually dissipated. A healthy national pride was accepted as respectable in West Germany, and this inspired the development of German interests that were not necessarily those of the US.

• There was a certain amount of disillusionment and lack of respect with regard to the leadership of the US and the Soviet Union. German scepticism was high and there was a strong trend towards seeing the two superpowers in an equally negative light. This was particularly the case within the anti-nuclear movement in the Federal Republic where activists placed the blame for nuclear worries equally on both superpowers. This was also true of the independent peace groups in the GDR. Younger Germans were adopting the view that the continuing division of Germany was not a consequence

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of earlier German actions or even of Soviet policy alone, but rather of superpower confrontation.

- The tendency to blame the superpowers equally and that of feeling powerless, in decisions over their own political and economic future, in the face of superpower confrontation provided further motivation to pursue interests considered purely German.  

The position of the GDR had until the 1970s been somewhat equivocal. The Eastern Treaties and the Basic Treaty guaranteed the continued existence of the GDR and allowed the leaders of the GDR to begin to adopt their own policies. Prior to then, all GDR foreign policy had been subordinated to that of the Soviet Union. Their security policy emphasised the maintenance of the status quo in Europe through military strength (though not necessarily military force). A fair representation of the GDR as a Soviet satellite was:

"The GDR followed the foreign and security policy of the Soviet Union to the letter, by paraphrasing exclusively Soviet positions in the speeches of its leading politicians, and by representing these positions as the only constructive ones at international conferences."

This begs the question of whether this conformity was due to the lack of freedom of the GDR, or whether it was an expression of the "coordinated foreign policy of the socialist community of states" and therefore of GDR interests, as the GDR proclaimed? Perhaps the answer is that working within the framework of overall Soviet aims, the GDR had a certain amount of freedom to pursue its own interests. And that it was only as a result of the deterioration of the international climate at the beginning of the 1980s, that the GDR acknowledged that it had more at stake than the Soviet Union and, more importantly, that its system could withstand the potential risks inherent in a more far-reaching foreign and security policy, should external conditions remain stable.

Though the GDR remained ultimately dependent on the Soviet Union, as a result of its improved role in the Eastern bloc and the world since 1970, and therefore, of a changed perception of its vulnerability, it was able to articulate its own national interests and thus was able to increase its weight in foreign and security affairs vis-à-vis both the Soviet Union and the West in the 1980s. Mushaben argued that Erich Honecker's freedom of manoeuvre was a function of and a reflex reaction to international political developments. This was reflected most clearly in the mid-1980s. It is possible to argue that the GDR’s determination to safeguard and maintain its own policies, when superpower relations deteriorated, was a reflex reaction to international developments.

\[\text{Dean 1987 op. cit. pp. 250 - 251}\]

\[\text{Bruns 1985 op. cit. p. 40 \textit{Geschichte zur Außenpolitik der DDR} op. cit. p. 380}\]

Soviet policy. This was perhaps applicable after 1982. However, Honecker’s room for manoeuvre grew when US-Soviet relations were stable and/or improving - in other words when Honecker’s policy of dialogue with the West fitted in with Soviet foreign and security policy - as in the period immediately after the accession of Gorbachev. In this sense, his policy was a function of the international political climate.

Key factors among the pressures for détente for the GDR were the growing economic and political costs of the arms’ race and the question as to whether more weapons did mean greater security. The financial and political burdens of the continuing arms spiral strongly influenced European leaders to pursue a policy of détente and international agreements. A significant economic motive was the need to reduce the defence budget in order to release much needed money for its ambitious social and housing programmes, a policy on which it could not conceivably renege. Max Schmidt argued that though economic relations ranked highly, they were neither the crux nor the prime mover of East German relations with West Germany. He acknowledged, however, that they were an element of stability which must not be underestimated. To a certain extent, I would rank the economic motive more highly, although this does not negate the genuine desire for peace of the GDR leadership. Indeed, Hans-Hendrik Kasper argued that economic relations with the West were a main factor in the realisation of détente. He acknowledged that they had an important political dimension, but regarded too heavy a political load on economic relations as counterproductive.

“The GDR failed effectively to utilise the opportunity provided by German-German trade for making substantial improvements in its industrial equipment with an orientation to technoscientific progress.”

German-German relations were part of East German security policy in two senses because they affected both internal and external security. Only full recognition by the West of the GDR would have reduced some of the GDR’s security needs and would have removed the need for internal security measures such as the lack of freedom of movement. The GDR was thus more aware of its own national interests, and, in its political attitudes, the GDR became increasingly outspoken in the early years of the 1980s. As a result, a significant gap grew between the Soviet and East German positions prior to the advent of Gorbachev. The GDR could not pursue either Westpolitik or arms control policy without the Federal Republic, and widespread public anxieties in the Federal Republic predisposed it to act as a partner within the security sphere.

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8 Hans-Hendrik Kasper in a chapter to be published in a forthcoming book by the RIIA. Both Kasper and Schmidt were political scientists at the IPW, a foreign policy thinktank, in East Berlin.
2 German-German reactions to the international developments

2.1 The NATO twin-track decision and Afghanistan

The reactions of the two German states to the East-West hostilities were indicative of a change in the structure of their relationship to the benefit of the GDR. All those involved were made aware of Bonn’s dependency on détente, which left it in the position of having to try to cultivate better relations with both East Berlin and Moscow against the policy of the US. The increasingly tense international East-West relations would, only a few years earlier, have given the GDR-leadership the perfect opportunity to reject West German advances and follow the Soviets’ lead. So what had changed?

By 1980, Honecker and the SED-leadership had experienced and survived ten years of détente and knew how to extract benefits to their own advantage. As long as détente served the GDR's interests and did not challenge its social order, then the SED did not want to forego the economic and other benefits it brought with it; nor indeed did it need to. The leadership in East Germany had found new strength, as a result of the Federal Republic’s dependency on a continuation of détente and of the German-German dialogue. It could to some extent control the outcome of contacts and determine how far and how quickly relations would develop, and as a result of its increased international standing it played more of a role in the broader East-West sphere, within the Warsaw Pact.

“At a time when East German relations with Bonn might have been expected to deteriorate seriously as a result of rising East-West hostility, East Berlin…turned out to be a frequent advocate of détente, sometimes even arguing that German-German interests should be separated from Great Power squabbles.”

This did not mean that the East Germans pursued “a policy of détente at any price, but only that the SED-leadership…recognised the value of pursuing its interests through heightened contacts with the FRG and (was) ready to take advantage of the strengths” that it had acquired during the 1970s.

Given the broad spectrum of relations that had developed between the two German states since the Basic Treaty of 1972, they both had considerable interest in the maintenance of good relations within the spirit of détente. In October 1979, Honecker had reminded Schmidt that the two German states had a duty to ensure that war never again began on German soil, mentioning their responsibility to make concrete contributions to arms limitation and disarmament. On 28 November 1979, in a telephone

12 McAdams 1983 op. cit. p. 350
conversation with Schmidt, Honecker had reiterated warnings that a decision to deploy new US nuclear missiles in West Germany would have negative consequences on relations between the two German states, and would endanger peace and détente.\textsuperscript{13} Despite such harsh tones emanating from the GDR and the other Warsaw Pact states in the weeks prior to the NATO decision, at a Central Committee meeting on 13 December 1979 (that is the day after the NATO twin-track decision had been taken), Honecker drew a comparatively optimistic picture of German-German relations. He warned that relations would deteriorate were deployment ever carried out, but said that, in the meantime, it was important to continue exchanging opinions with Bonn. He also announced that Schmidt intended to visit the GDR in early 1980.\textsuperscript{14}

This was the first instance on which Honecker employed the strategy of issuing harsh warnings prior to a Western security decision, but then acting in a more conciliatory manner in the aftermath of the decision, to maintain the GDR’s best interests. They were usually occasions where the GDR leaders realised that the rhetoric would not bring about a change in West German policy and that any deterioration in relations would be to the detriment of the GDR itself, and might damage German-German ties just when they contributed to “peace, security, co-operation and good neighbourliness.”\textsuperscript{15} The GDR was apparently acting in conflict with the Soviets’ preferred policy because, at that time, the Soviet press was attacking Bonn for its part in the NATO decision and hence in heightening world tensions. The difference in East German and Soviet rhetoric may perhaps be explained by the GDR’s regional concerns and the fact that it was undoubtedly fulfilling a major function for the Soviet Union - that of keeping open a channel of communication to Bonn and the West in general, although this supposition cannot be confirmed.

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan was a watershed in East-West relations, confirming the move towards the second Cold War. Despite the hostile American response, the West Europeans advocated a firm but measured response that was tempered by their desire to preserve stability on the continent and not to sacrifice the gains from détente.\textsuperscript{16} The East Europeans, too, were not prepared to cause their relations with the West to deteriorate. As a result, the two German states downplayed the invasion of Afghanistan. The Federal Republic continued its economic co-operation with Central and Eastern Europe in an effort to preserve détente, in direct contradiction to US policy. The latter continued to use economic sanctions as political levers with regard to the Eastern bloc. The GDR’s reaction to the invasion reinforced its position of not wanting to pursue the confrontation course adopted by the Soviet Union. It was part of the

\textsuperscript{13} \textit{Geschichte der Außenpolitik der DDR} op. cit. p. 382

\textsuperscript{14} McAdams 1983 op. cit. p. 351

\textsuperscript{15} \textit{Neues Deutschland} 26 / 27 January 1980

\textsuperscript{16} Zinner op. cit. pp. 78 - 79
process which pushed the SED leadership towards the Western states, not merely the Federal Republic, but also France and Austria among others.

The deterioration of the world political climate and the arms race of the superpowers served to increase the fear of war among the Germans and in the rest of Europe. In the GDR, autonomous peace groups grew up, tolerated to a certain degree by the SED leadership and allowed to gain a certain amount of political credibility. Likewise in the Federal Republic, recent world developments increased the threat perceptions which were the psychological basis for the much stronger peace movement which grew up there and throughout Western Europe. These Western European movements were more of a threat to their governments, particularly in the Federal Republic where the Greens, born of the peace movement, achieved representation in the Bundestag in 1983. The NATO twin-track decision jeopardised the popular consensus in the Federal Republic on defence because West Germany had to accept a stationing of missiles on its territory that, in many people's views, served US interests alone.

2.1.1 Funeral diplomacy

In early 1980, Erich Honecker reiterated his position on the need to maintain good German-German relations. This was a perfectly legitimate desire, although it was probably also motivated by the need to encourage West Germany to put pressure on the USA to urge them back to the negotiating table. When it became apparent that this would not occur, then the Soviet Union stepped in and forced the GDR to cancel the proposed meeting with Schmidt for the end of February, as a result of the tense East-West atmosphere. Despite this, both sides indicated that they were still interested in a meeting and agreed to find a more suitable date later in the year, although at the end of February, the Federal Republic cancelled two potentially valuable projects - electrification of rail routes to West Berlin and participation in a brown coal power-plant near Leipzig - officially because of lack of finance, but perhaps adherence to alliance policies played a role.

The repercussions from the rising East-West hostilities were to some extent overcome later in the spring of 1980 which saw a succession of meetings between East and West German officials culminating in meetings at the Leipzig Trade Fair and a visit by Günter Mittag, SED Economics Minister, on April 17 to Bonn, where he met Chancellor Schmidt for talks on the political and economic relations between the two states. On 30 April 1980, an agreement on improvements to the transit routes to West Berlin was signed - the first major agreement since the events of late 1979. The two sides also

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18 ibid. pp. 34 - 35

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agreed to discuss individual questions relating to environmental protection.

Of more significance was the way the two German leaders used the occasion of the funeral of Yugoslavia's President Tito, in May 1980, as an opportunity to meet each other informally for the first time since the signing of the Helsinki Final Act in 1975. At that meeting, the atmosphere had been cold and difficult, but in 1980 the talks were conducted in a more cordial, friendly atmosphere.¹⁹ Both men confirmed their interest in continuing good stable relations between their countries and agreed to use their influence on the superpowers in an effort to improve their relations. Honecker emphasised the special responsibility of the two German states to maintain peace and urged Schmidt to visit Moscow and to attend the Moscow Olympic Games. Schmidt suggested that Honecker might intervene in Soviet arms policy and was disappointed that the latter made no reference to the INF issue.²⁰ Still, the fact that the two leaders had met and undertaken such cordial exchanges was important and revealed their willingness to maintain good relations. (President Carter did not even attend the funeral).

Tito's funeral was the first occasion on which both Western and Eastern mourners congregated at the funeral of a leading politician in the East-West confrontation. It ushered in a new era, where "working" funerals were established as the norm, for example those of Indira Gandhi, Olaf Palme and the successive Soviet leaders, Brezhnev, Andropov and Chernenko. Although often dismissed as being of only minor import, it is my opinion that the meetings that leaders were able to have under these circumstances were of great significance to the future development of relations between the states in question. Particularly for the two German states, the opportunities to meet afforded by funerals meant that there were neither protocol problems, nor the need to have full recognition. Throughout the 1980s, funerals were used as opportunities to meet the leaders of the other German state when external relations would otherwise not permit such meetings. Of particular significance was Kohl and Honecker's meeting in Moscow in March 1985 on the occasion of Chernenko's funeral - which will be discussed in more detail.

2.2 The Polish crisis

Relatively good relations continued throughout the summer of 1980, although nothing more concrete was achieved until August, when Schmidt accepted an invitation to visit the GDR at the end of the month. Thus the two states were able to give the appearance that they were successfully shielding their relations from international developments. However, by that stage, a change in tone within the East German media had taken

¹⁹ This was in part due to the change in attitude of Schmidt. By all accounts, his negative attitude to Honecker, at the Helsinki conference, had changed to one of respect by 1980, presumably because of the East German stance on German-German relations and security issues. See Frey op. cit. p. 89

²⁰ ibid.
place, with it becoming more hesitant in its espousal of the treaties of the 1970s. The tenseness of the situation was heightened by the onset of the Polish crisis. By mid-August 1980, the GDR rhetoric against the Federal Republic had increased to such a point that Schmidt saw no alternative but to cancel the proposed visit on 22 August in a telephone call to Honecker, in which he cited the “most recent developments in Europe” as the reason. Another reason for the cancellation may well have been Schmidt’s disinclination to be in the GDR should the Warsaw Pact invade Poland. Within NATO, there were always doubts about the Federal Republic’s reliability within the Western alliance, and he did not wish to fan the flames of his opponents, and their accusations of German separatism.21

Relations thus seemed to have settled again, although Honecker’s reaction to Schmidt’s cancellation was unclear. It has been argued that he was relieved to have avoided the issue himself, whereas the alternative argument was put forward that it had offended Honecker22 and thus contributed to the ensuing change of direction in East German policy, first indicated in unofficial SED editorial in Neues Deutschland at the beginning of September 1980 on the Polish events, which proved to be the signal for a rapid deterioration in German-German relations. The article on 4 September 1980 accused the Federal Republic of revanchist “greater German” ideas and of interfering in Poland’s internal affairs.23 On 6 September 1980, the East German news agency ADN finally indicated Honecker’s reaction to Schmidt’s cancellation - he was no longer interested in finding a more suitable date for the visit, ostensibly for lack of time in his calendar.24

2.2.1 The increase of the minimum exchange rate requirement

October 1980 saw the hostile stance confirmed. On 7 October, Honecker suggested that although war would not emanate from the GDR, the same could no longer be said of the Federal Republic, because of its role in the NATO rearmament decision and its interference in the internal affairs of Poland and the GDR.25 Two days later, on 9 October 1980, the East German finance minister announced that as from 13 October 1980 the minimum exchange requirement for visitors from “non-socialist countries” (ie. West Germany) and from West Berlin would be increased to 25 DM a day per visitor. It had therefore been doubled for extended stays and quadrupled for day-long visits to East Berlin; previously exempted children and senior citizens were also now required to pay this. East Germany could afford a reduction of over 50% in the number of visitors and still receive more Western currency than it had in 1979, thus

21 McAdams 1983 op. cit. p. 354; Winters op. cit. p. 36; Frey op. cit. pp. 90 - 91
22 See Frey op. cit. p. 91 and Winters op. cit. pp. 36 - 37
23 McAdams 1983 op. cit. p. 355
24 Winters op. cit. p. 37
achieving the aim of significantly reducing the number of visitors to East Berlin and the
GDR. The reasons given by the GDR were purely financial in nature - to protect the
East German mark against the artificially high exchange rate of the West. 

This measure was immediately condemned by the Federal Republic for contravening
the aim of the Basic Treaty and therefore of German-German détente, as well as
contradicting the Helsinki Final Act's principles, to improve co-operation and human
contacts. It showed the extent of East Germany's leverage over West Germany in
terms of how open the border was. The new exchange requirement was almost pro­
hibitively high. The demand for a change of this measure was thereafter a permanent
part of West German statements on relations between the two German states.

2.2.2 The Gera demands

Four days later, on 13 October 1980, Honecker further exacerbated the situation in the
speech he made in Gera to party secretaries. Not only did Honecker link German­
German relations with the problems of bloc politics, but he also made future progress
in these relations contingent on a solution to the status problems which had plagued the
relations since 1972.

"No-one should seriously believe that one can actively represent the
policy of the Western alliance, boycott the Olympic Games in Moscow
out of solidarity with the US, stand as inventor and enforcer of the
Brussels missile decision and at the same time act as though one only
needs to discuss the 'easing of travel restrictions' with the GDR."

Honecker specified and reiterated four issues which had constantly been demands of
the GDR leadership; however on this occasion he made them preconditions for the
further development of German-German relations:
1. recognition of a separate GDR citizenship.
2. closure of the monitoring station in Salzgitter.
3. exchange of fully accredited ambassadors rather than permanent representatives.
4. solution to the disputed border on the river Elbe.

Significant in these Gera demands was the fact that they provoked the question of
whether the GDR had ever really accepted the Basic Treaty as the basis for the normal­
isation of relations between the two German states.

The Federal government had to temper its reactions and could not use economic
sanctions as demanded by the opposition CDU/CSU because

26 McAdams 1985 op. cit. p. 170 and p. 217
27 Winters op. cit. p. 38 (Neues Deutschland 14 October 1980)
28 This was used to observe and record human rights violations occurring in the GDR and on its
borders.
29 Geschichte der Außenpolitik der DDR op. cit. p. 383
"a cutback in inter-German trade would have destroyed the last functioning area in inter-German relations and would have hurt West German economic interests."

The GDR claimed, however, that West Germany misused the legitimate increase in the minimum exchange rate by the GDR to attack it and to interfere in its internal affairs.

Honecker had introduced these demands into the German-German sphere for a variety of reasons, but they were not the only signs of nervousness on the part of the East German authorities. In early 1981 an unusually high number of East Germans were given official exit permits, perhaps in order to rid the GDR of potential troublemakers. Many analysts argued that the Polish crisis was the most important factor in this process of change within the GDR leadership. However, I intend to question this contention and look at the extent of damage or otherwise the demands had on the German-German relations. Indeed, their significance can be gauged by the role they played throughout the 1980s. Before the Polish crisis began, two significant developments had come about. Firstly, the GDR had become a force important enough to be taken seriously on the international stage, even by its chief rivals, and secondly, both German states had been successful in shielding their relations from the deteriorating situation around them. These facts beg the question: why then did the Polish crisis pose such a significant challenge to this German-German détente? I will then attempt to answer the question: was the Polish crisis the only motive for East Germany's actions?

It has been argued that the measures taken in the autumn of 1980 made it painfully clear that both German states had good reasons to continue the German-German détente, but that the East German commitment to it was not and never could be considered absolute. The events in Poland "threatened to undermine the fundamental precondition on which détente rested: East German domestic stability." Despite the higher standard of living in the GDR, compared to Poland, its leadership feared the consequences of exposing itself to close and regular contacts with the Federal Republic at a time when the Poles were questioning the fundamental principles of the socialist order. The SED's actions in October 1980 revealed its anxiety. In other words, East Germany's principal response to the unrest in Poland was a reassertion of orthodoxy and control on the domestic front.

This argument is apparently backed up by the measures that the SED took within the GDR to protect the East German population against the threats from outside (a victory for Solidarity in Poland and democratisation would have cut off the GDR from its Soviet protectors and would also have challenged the SED's monopoly of power). In

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30 Frey op. cit. p. 92
31 Geschichte der Außenpolitik der DDR op. cit. p. 383
32 McAdams 1985 op. cit. p. 167

For example Frey and Winters
measures that were reminiscent of the delimitation of the 1970s, the SED restricted the privileges granted to the Protestant Church and reduced the contacts between East and West German artists in late 1980. Measures were also taken against the Polish workers in East Germany - 22,000 guest workers were returned to Poland, some for purportedly undertaking activities in support of Polish Solidarity. Articles in *Neues Deutschland* made it clear that the regime would not countenance such activities in the GDR.

For those who support this argument, the proximity to Poland and the very real threats it posed to the SED leadership explain why the Polish crisis provoked the reaction it did, and why the deterioration of German-German relations came so late in the day compared to other East-West relations. A sharp decline in relations had been predicted in late 1979, but this had not arisen, because the deployment of missiles would not take place for almost four years, and because Afghanistan was a small country in Central Asia and had little direct bearing on the situation in Europe. The Polish problem, however, had to be confronted immediately and it could not be separated from its European setting.

"Given the GDR’s geographical setting and its historical origins, anything that weakened the legitimacy of Communist rule in Eastern Europe posed a latent threat to the legitimacy of the East German state....East Berlin had enough trouble coping with...liberalising influences from the West without having to worry about equally threatening, if qualitatively different, liberalising influences from the East."  

Perhaps the East German leaders took the actions they did because they sensed that,  

"notwithstanding the anti-Polish proclivities of the populace, there was a potential fervent beneath the surface of East German society that could never be eliminated as a result of the fundamental lack of legitimacy of a regime imposed as a consequence of Soviet occupation after World War II."  

Thus as the tensions escalated, it became increasingly difficult for the two German states, particularly for the GDR, to decouple their relations from the overall scenario. The East German regime made no conciliatory moves towards its own population, perhaps because of the comparatively high standard of living and the successful economy in the GDR. However, these conditions were totally reliant on the West German economic aid to the GDR.

There has been speculation about other motives for the GDR’s actions, although they in

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33 Frey op. cit. p. 93
35 ibid.
36 See for example McAdams 1983 op. cit. p. 354
themselves would not have provoked such a response, being of only relatively minor importance. The measures taken by the GDR can be explained away neither by Honecker's supposed or real irritation with the way Schmidt cancelled his proposed visit; nor by the idea that East Germany was using a kind of 'blackmail' to ensure an extension of the Swing credit. The former reason would be too preposterous alone and as for the second, an extension of the credit arrangement had virtually been assured, rendering any 'blackmail' unnecessary.

Although the Polish crisis increased the process of delimitation against the Federal Republic, it does not explain the change in East Germany's Deutschlandpolitik entirely. Perhaps the most significant reason must be seen in the efforts by the Soviet Union to prevent the GDR from continuing détente with the Federal Republic, once it was obvious that this policy would not cause the Federal Republic to loosen its ties with the United States. As unrest increased in Poland, so too did Soviet opposition to the German-German thaw with the media attacking both the West German revanchists and the East German "doves".

"The enemy enters the house at night and sits at the fireplace. And many let him willingly in."³⁸

Isolating the GDR from Western influence was, therefore, regarded as a crucial step towards restoring order in Poland. This argument is backed up by the actions of the Soviet and East German leaders at that time. Although the measures introduced by the GDR served its needs in the limited sense, they also supported the idea that German-German relations could only flourish with explicit Soviet consent, that is when relations between the Soviet Union and the United States were good. As Hans-Günter Hoppe, an FDP member of the Bundestag, said of the increase in the minimum exchange requirement:

"This measure was no autonomous decision by the GDR, but a contribution to the demarcation of the whole bloc demanded by Moscow."³⁹

The GDR had to end its German-German détente and come back to the socialist fold because, given the inevitable change of President in the US and the dangers inherent in the Soviet bloc as exemplified by the problems in Poland, the Soviet Union no longer permitted a German-German special relationship. Moscow still feared that German-German understanding and joint actions could call into question the SED's loyalty to Marxism-Leninism, and therefore to the Soviet Union's leadership.⁴⁰ Indeed, that Moscow was no longer willing to accept good relations between Bonn and East Berlin had been revealed by a Pravda editorial as early as August 1980:

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³⁷ An interest free overdraft facility to the GDR for the settlement of payments in German-German trade.
³⁹ Frey op. cit. p. 93
⁴⁰ Winters op. cit. p. 37
“Relations between the GDR and the FRG cannot be governed by nonexistent inner-German interests, but represent a co-ordinated course of the Warsaw Pact.”

Honecker thus had to steer a middle course, trying to protect the benefits of détente and good relations with Bonn, maintaining internal stability and following the Soviets' lead. By pursuing a demarcation policy then, the SED contributed to the stabilisation of the East. Thus, his measures of October 1980 were a strong signal to Bonn, satisfying Soviet demands and SED hardliners, but not totally precluding future co-operation with Bonn, which safeguarded the support of his own population.

It is by no means clear whether Honecker postulated these demands with the expectation that they would be fulfilled or rather because he knew that they would never be realised. They were an expression of internal repression as a result of external events. Whilst being intended to make up the deficit caused by the Basic Treaty in 1972, they were the maximum position of the GDR. Honecker was demanding the maximum in order to achieve the minimum. Their role became similar to that of the question of reunification in West Germany. The latter was never pursued at practical policy level, but was always mentioned in major speeches. The Gera demands were certainly of a tactical nature, though the form and reasoning behind the tactics are questioned across the political spectrum.

Honecker knew that the demands could never achieve majority support in the Federal Republic, but he used them to break off negotiations with the latter, or rather to justify the breakdown in talks to his own population. Those on the right of the political spectrum in the Federal Republic see the tactic used by Honecker differently. They argue that the demands were made because Honecker expected that they would be fulfilled because there was a social-liberal coalition in power. However, a more realistic position would seem to be that both these reasons played a role. Not only did the Gera demands prove to the Soviet Union that the GDR was not considering neutrality through reunification, it also brought it back into line with the Warsaw Pact, whilst simultaneously laying the blame for the cooling down of relations squarely on the shoulders of the Federal government.

There were no long-term consequences for German-German relations because the demands were never discussed at state-state level. Throughout the 1980s, however, these four demands were used as a tactical manoeuvre by the GDR as a stop signal or a brake whenever the relations appeared to be moving too quickly or contrary to East German aims. However, they also had an opportunist use, for example, in 1983 when the press was, probably officially, told not to raise these issues at all during the summer.

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41 Frey op. cit. p. 93
at the critical time of negotiations on the credit and because of the missile crisis.\textsuperscript{42} The question of citizenship was also used to the GDR's advantage in the latter years of the 1980s. The GDR leadership was fully aware that the Federal government would never acknowledge the existence of a separate GDR-citizenship, and precisely because of this, it used this as a welcome barrier to the granting of freedom of movement in travel.

It can be seen that the GDR's environment had changed, rather than Honecker's own position. By stepping temporarily back into line with the rest of the Soviet bloc, further steps towards the normalisation of relations between the two German states had not been ruled out completely. It was down to the GDR to return to the foundation of relations, when the overall situation permitted it as far as the Eastern bloc was concerned. The Federal Republic too could only realise its aims and follow its national interests within its alliance with the West - within NATO, the EC and with close relations with the United States. The change of direction in East German policy did not mean the end of the series of treaties with the Federal Republic, but rather a pause, as events of the following months and years were to confirm.

Until the middle of 1980, it had been possible to maintain a distinction between global trends between East and West and the developments in Europe. The inter-twining of global and European developments, however, later in the year meant that the combined forces of the Afghanistan and Polish crises did ultimately indicate that it was difficult to maintain détente in Europe, when relations between the superpowers deteriorated drastically. The GDR was forced, perhaps against its better judgement, to reduce its contacts with the West for a time, even with those states interested in the divisibility of détente. However, this did not mean that they had to forego their own interests.

"Given the inflexible attitudes of the two superpowers in the wake of the Afghanistan crisis, demands were increasingly raised that the Germans should explore the scope for negotiation on their own and without necessarily being tied to their respective alliances."\textsuperscript{43}

The fact that it had been external conditions which had dictated Honecker's policy in the autumn of 1980 was confirmed at the end of the year. By early December 1980, the Polish crisis was no longer perceived as such a threat to the stability of the Eastern bloc as it had been, and East Germany's stance too began to shift. Indeed, it was acknowledged that the major threat to East German stability was its own internal economic situation. At the Central Committee meeting on 11 - 12 December 1980, Mittag reverted to the Party's former line that war should never again break out from German ground - East or West. In February 1981, Honecker stated that German-German relations contributed to détente in Europe, although he also lamented that, at that stage, they were not as good as they could be.
At the 26th Congress of the CPSU (February 1981), Brezhnev tacitly seconded Honecker's revised position and expressed his interest in renewing better relations with West Germany. This move was probably designed to remind West Germany of its interests in and benefits from détente, and at the tenth Party Congress of the SED in April 1981, Honecker made a direct connection between West Germany's alliance politics and East Germany's ability to continue German-German détente. He also stressed that East Germany's highest priority in foreign policy was to secure peace and prevent a nuclear inferno by beginning disarmament and by pursuing relations of peaceful coexistence with the West. Honecker also spoke in conciliatory tones at the Leipzig trade fair, and then he met Klaus Bölting, the West German permanent representative in East Berlin, twice in March - such meetings had previously indicated that new negotiations were on the horizon.

German-German reactions to the events of December 1979 were the first instance of the two German states going against the general parameters of superpower policy. In other words, they were divorcing themselves from American and Soviet policy, allowing their relations to improve despite growing confrontation in the broader international sphere. As shown above, this situation continued throughout 1980 and into 1981. The Gera demands, presented by Honecker in October 1980, were part of a process of protecting the GDR from the effects of the Polish crisis, but with regard to the development of German-German relations they had little effect. They were of a tactical nature to assuage Soviet fears of too close a German-German rapprochement, but in fact were used to delay rather than to sever relations entirely. They contributed perhaps to a short-term deterioration in German-German relations, but were not detrimental to those relations in the long-term. Thus by mid-1981, despite the Cold War between the superpowers, the two German states had to a certain extent been able to shield their relations from the deteriorating international arena.

3 The Schmidt visit to the GDR, 11 - 13 December 1981

By mid-1981, the conditions in both the German-German context and the international environment had begun to improve, with perhaps the most important German factor being the emergence of a large and strong peace movement in the Federal Republic. This was evidence that a vocal minority of the West German people was against the new missiles, a position which the Eastern bloc hoped to exploit to its benefit. As the INF debate intensified within the Western alliance, it was logical for Moscow and East Berlin to try to use German-German relations as a lever on West German policies. In the international arena, the United States announced that it was willing to begin

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44 Geschichte der Außenpolitik der DDR op. cit. pp. 387 - 389
45 Bruns 1989 op. cit. p. 142
46 McAdams 1983 op. cit. pp. 360 - 361
negotiations with the Soviet Union on intermediate range nuclear missiles which ended the Soviet propaganda monopoly on negotiations.

In August 1981, Honecker and Brezhnev had announced that present world tensions made “broad international exchanges as well as regular political contacts between leaders of countries with differing social systems” both valuable and necessary. Schmidt too was interested in revitalising German-German contacts, but he rejected any links with West Germany’s deployment decision as interference in West Germany’s internal affairs. Friedrich Ruth, the West German arms control expert, met his East German counterpart, Ernst Krabatsch, in East Berlin on 3 July 1981. Several other meetings followed, culminating in the visit by Egon Bahr to East Berlin in September 1981 when he met Honecker for discussions. Though nothing concrete developed from these meetings, they did help to improve relations.

“Bonn valued the meetings as the potential beginning of a new thaw” [it helped Schmidt reconcile the left-wing of his own party] “and for the East Germans, it gave them an opportunity to demonstrate the usefulness to the Soviet Union of inter-German relations”.

On 6 September 1981, Honecker used the Leipzig Trade Fair as the platform to announce a breakthrough - that he and Schmidt would conduct talks at some unspecified point in the future, on “the securing of peace and the normalisation of relations” between their states.

The meeting between Chancellor Helmut Schmidt and General Secretary Erich Honecker eventually took place from 11-13 December 1981 at Werbellinsee in the GDR. An improvement in the relations between the Soviet Union and the Federal Republic in the autumn facilitated the improvement in German-German relations, although they were getting better despite continued US-Soviet hostility. Schmidt and Honecker met for fifteen hours of negotiations at Werbellinsee, and relations between the two men were cordial and friendly as they had been at Tito’s funeral in May 1980. The SED’s willingness to accord a positive spirit of co-operation and understanding to the proceedings was apparent in the publication in full of the joint communique and of many of Schmidt’s proposals in Neues Deutschland. However, the limits of the SED’s willingness to take risks with the visit were clearly demonstrated when Schmidt travelled to Güstrow, in the north of the GDR, on the last day of his stay. The town centre there was sealed off by police and other security officials, and only members of these organisations and of the SED were able to stay on the streets to greet Schmidt. Although the events in Güstrow indicated that the East German leaders still feared the

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47 Neues Deutschland 4 August 1981
48 Frey op. cit. pp. 96 - 97
49 Neues Deutschland 7 September 1981
internal consequences of the détente process, the fact that the visit took place proved that they were prepared to return to a search for a balance between the benefits of exposure to the West and the requisites of internal security.\textsuperscript{31}

The other significant development during the visit was the introduction of martial law in Poland in response to the Solidarity movement. Despite calls to do so by the opposition CDU / CSU, Schmidt did not prematurely end his visit, as a “gesture to emphasise the special ties between the two German states in the face of outside turmoil.”\textsuperscript{32} This move provoked severe criticism in Bonn and also in other Western countries. There was, however, some support for Schmidt’s decision from within the opposition CDU. The CDU-ruling Mayor of West Berlin, Richard von Weizsäcker, amongst others, spoke in favour of Schmidt’s actions. To have left at that point of the visit would have severely limited any chance of the visit bearing fruit.\textsuperscript{33}

A “feeling of common experience, which reflected the popular notion of a German-German ‘community of fate’, undoubtedly influenced Schmidt’s decision not to interrupt his visit.”\textsuperscript{34}

In after-dinner speeches,\textsuperscript{35} the positions of the two leaders reflected their alliance affiliations and ideological rhetoric. Honecker stated that “good neighbourly relations cannot continue in the shadow of new US-nuclear missiles”\textsuperscript{36} - an affirmation that relations could not continue as before, should the NATO missiles be deployed. Both sides accepted that good relations between the two German states were important for maintaining and securing peace. As they could not be decoupled from the international situation, then they had to make considerable contributions towards improving the international climate. Inevitably, the positions differed with regard to German-German relations, again for ideological reasons, for example in references to the “nation”. Whereas Honecker referred to the Basic Treaty, the principles of peaceful coexistence and the Helsinki Final Act only in passing, Schmidt argued that it was the duty of both German states

“to facilitate more and new common ground and more meetings...under the twin roof of the Basic Treaty and the Helsinki Final Act.”\textsuperscript{37}

The Joint Communiqué,\textsuperscript{38} signed and published on 13 December 1981, was a very significant document and cannot be overestimated. No concrete agreements were

\textsuperscript{31} McAdams 1985 op. cit. p. 181
\textsuperscript{32} Frey op. cit. p. 99
\textsuperscript{33} von Weizsäcker in Winters 1982 op. cit. p. 80
\textsuperscript{34} Frey op. cit. p. 99
\textsuperscript{35} Bundesministerium für innerdeutsche Beziehungen (ed.): Innerdeutsche Beziehungen: Die Entwicklung der Beziehungen zwischen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und der Deutschen Demokratische Republik 1990 - 1986 Eine Dokumentation (Bonn, August 1986). pp. 91 - 95
\textsuperscript{36} ibid. p. 94
\textsuperscript{37} ibid. p. 92
\textsuperscript{38} ibid. pp. 89 - 90
specified nor had any new treaties been signed during the three day visit. However, realistically, none had been expected. The value of the visit itself and of the Joint Communiqué were intrinsic in the fact that they had come about at all. The first significant affirmation made in the Communiqué was that “war should never again start from German soil”, echoing statements made previously by Adenauer and East German leaders. Although both Honecker and Schmidt had made this statement independently some two years earlier, this was the first occasion on which a statement of such magnitude had been jointly delivered. They acknowledged their responsibility towards securing peace in Europe, and agreed that their relationship should cause no further tensions in the East-West relationship. As a contribution to securing peace and détente, the two leaders emphasised the importance of the dialogue between states belonging to different social and military orders, particularly given the international climate.

The Joint Communiqué made reference to all matters, even those nationally and internationally sensitive ones - such as the Afghanistan problem and disarmament - in such a way that both sides could sign the statement. The two leaders expressed their willingness to continue the C.S.C.E. process and give it new impulses, and to push for concrete progress in the negotiations on disarmament towards creating a stable balance of forces at the lowest possible level. Honecker and Schmidt agreed that such an exchange of opinions was both necessary and useful, that such high-level contacts should continue, and that further development of their relations was an important element in securing peace and détente in Europe. The Communiqué became a particularly important document in terms of Deutschlandpolitik for the Federal Republic, as it was regarded as the new basis for the development of German-German relations building on the Basic Treaty.⁵⁹

A new element had been introduced into German-German relations - arms control and disarmament. It gave the talks a much broader dimension in terms of world politics and was particularly important to the GDR. Securing peace was a political matter and one which ranked highly in the GDR's priorities in discussions with the Federal Republic. East Germany's policy towards West Germany until then had been an instrument of Soviet peace policy, the main aim being to prevent NATO deployment of the new US missiles in Western Europe. By late 1981, it was beginning to acquire a certain degree of autonomy. Questions of security, arms control and disarmament occupied a large amount of the fifteen hour long exchanges.

⁵⁹ The Swing credit was a major point of discussion during the visit. The Federal Republic hoped to induce the GDR to reduce the exchange requirement by stressing the psychological-political connection between its reduction and an extension of the Swing credit, due to be renewed at the end of 1981. During discussions between the West German economics minister, Graf Lambsdorff, and his East German counterpart, Mittag, it was extended to the end of June 1982, by which time it was hoped that an agreement could be reached. It was extended in June 1982 for three more years with a limit of 600 million DM, and the GDR made minor humanitarian concessions, but did not acknowledge the link.
Honecker's opinion of the visit was revealed in an interview with Neues Deutschland on 16 December 1981. According to this, the core of the discussions was devoted to what the two German states could do to secure peace and disarmament, to extend political détente through military measures. Honecker listed a series of activities where the two German governments could act in parallel to fulfil their responsibility for peace and disarmament, for example banning of neutron weapons and preparations for a second UNO special conference on disarmament. Thus Honecker argued that it was possible to achieve a constructive contribution to remove the nuclear threat for the people of Europe.

In this interview, Honecker pointed out that the relations between the two states were “better than their reputation”, and that the GDR was willing to talk on matters of interest to the other side - this was taken, in particular, to mean improvements in human contacts. It was also significant that Honecker had not made the fulfilment of the four Gera demands a precondition for the further normalisation of relations. The Federal Republic was expected to respect - not recognise - the citizenship of the GDR unreservedly. This matter, along with the other Gera demands, needed to be discussed but not at the expense of other treaty policy.

Helmut Schmidt's appraisal of his visit to Werbellinsee in a speech to the Bundestag on 18 December 1981 included the role of the two German states in securing peace and détente for Europe, though not as much emphasis was placed on this aspect. Schmidt too wanted to see strategic parity at the lowest possible level and hoped that negotiations between the two German states would continue on international questions. He acknowledged that such activities were important and, like Honecker, stated that the international situation was not decided in the two German capitals, nor could relations between the two states be decoupled from the overall climate of world politics. Hence he too emphasised that war should never again start from German soil. Schmidt also explained his decision to continue his visit despite the implementation of martial law in Poland. Indeed, the Federal Republic played down the Polish crisis as a domestic political affair to be dealt with by Poland only.

Ironically, the Polish crackdown proved to be in the interests of both German states. Although many West Germans saw it as a violation of human rights, it in fact lowered Soviet anxieties over Western influence in the East, thus permitting better relations between West Germany and Eastern Europe. It also confirmed the political status quo.

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60 Bundesministerium für innerdeutsche Beziehungen (ed.): Das deutsch-deutsche Treffen am Werbellinsee - Dokumentation (Bonn, 1982). p. 56
61 ibid. pp. 61 - 62
62 ibid. p. 84
63 Winters 1982 op. cit. p. 82
64 Speech to Bundestag, in Innerdeutsche Beziehungen 1980 - 1986 op. cit. pp. 95 - 98
in Europe, the prerequisite for détente. Moscow's decision not to intervene directly in Poland strengthened the position of all other Eastern European governments vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. A Soviet intervention would have jeopardised the fruits of détente for the Soviets and the economic 'stability' of the Eastern bloc. The GDR benefited most from the lessons and results of the Polish crisis.

"The Soviets gave the SED the freedom to take appropriate measures in the interest of domestic stability, as long as the dominance of the Communist Party and the loyalty to the WTO were not called into question."65

The SED realised that this could best be achieved through closer relations with the Federal Republic because of the financial and economic benefits and perhaps more importantly because the regime's popularity depended to a large extent on the state of relations with the Federal Republic. Also in the wake of the Polish crisis, the GDR's weight in political and economic terms increased within the Warsaw Pact and it became Moscow's chief ally, being accorded the attendant privileges. The implementation of martial law in Poland assuaged East German fears and indeed, made it more accommodating towards the West. Honecker realised that the key to his survival no longer lay solely in loyalty to Moscow but also in the economic well-being of the GDR, and the latter needed West Germany to maintain the viability of its industry. Bonn was prepared to shoulder the financial burden while East Berlin paid the ideological price.66

From the end of 1981, the "internationalisation" of German-German relations, whereby they gained an importance that went beyond their bilateralism, gave the GDR the opportunity to introduce international questions into the German-German dialogue (and indeed it proceeded to do this). The interdependence of their bilateral and international relations was to prove particularly important for the GDR. However, it also indicated that the GDR had very little room for manoeuvre in terms of shaping its Deutschlandpolitik, and that, at that stage, improvements in relations between the GDR and the Federal Republic would be in direct contradiction of Soviet policy.

At the beginning of 1982, the outlook for German-German relations was not as bleak as it had been twelve months earlier. Indeed, from then on, the relationship began to improve. However, a willingness to co-operate could not guarantee success in the long-term. That would depend far more on developments in the international arena.67 As Honecker correctly pointed out at the end of his interview with Neues Deutschland:

"In a situation, in which the international position is deteriorating, relations between the German Democratic Republic and the Federal Republic of Germany are gaining importance as a factor for peace and stability in Europe. As long as we are aware of this and act accordingly, then it is possible to move forwards step by step. We are ready to do

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65 Der Deutsche Osten. 1980 - 1986 op. cit. p. 101
66 Frey op. cit. p. 102
67 Ashton op. cit. pp. 202 - 203
Winters 1982 op. cit. pp. 83 - 84
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Events in the following months both confirmed and contradicted the expectations of the Joint Communiqué. At the end of January 1982, the GDR refused permission for West German correspondents to cover the synod of the GDR's evangelical church, which was in direct contradiction to the commitment to improving working conditions for journalists. However, on 11 February 1982, the GDR announced an extension of the categories for urgent family business in the Federal Republic which in theory translated the agreements of the Joint Communiqué into practice.

Ultimately, Honecker had gained most from the meeting. Although Helmut Schmidt had been able to reconcile his alliance policy and relations with Eastern Europe with his leftist critics at home, he had not achieved any major concessions from the GDR. However, for Honecker, the meeting with one of the world's most respected statesmen and the agenda dominated by international issues vastly increased his reputation abroad and at home. He too had been able to balance his loyalty to the Soviet Union with progress in German-German relations.

Although the Schmidt visit had the tacit consent of the Soviet Union, it must still be seen against the background of hostile superpower relations (despite the fact that they had begun arms control negotiations in the recent past at the behest of the German government). In their after-dinner speeches, both Schmidt and Honecker had referred to the fact that German-German relations could not be decoupled from the international situation and that therefore they had to contribute to the improvement of that international climate. I would argue, however, that in theory the two German states could not decouple their relations from the overall situation, but that in practice they successfully divorced their relations from the background of continuing bleak East-West relations and maintained, and even improved, their own relations.

4 The Europeanisation of Europe

The fact that the two German states, in early 1980, were able verbally to defy their allies and to insulate their relations to some extent from the overall international East-West climate was part of a broader European development that has been termed by Peter Bender the "Europeanisation of Europe" or even the "normalisation of Europe". This process represented an attempt by the states of both East and West Europe to maintain détente in Europe. Europeans on both sides of the East-West divide recog-

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"Dass deutsch-deutsche Treffen op. cit. p. 66
Bender, Peter: "Die Europäisierung Europas", in Deutschland - Porträt einer Nation Band 10: Deutschland, Europa und die Welt (Bertelsmann Lexikothek Verlag GmbH, Gütersloh 1986). pp. 118 - 123. It must be pointed out, however, that Bender first used this term in 1981 in his book Das Ende des ideologischen Zeitalters - Die Europäisierung Europas (Severin and Siedler, Berlin, 1981).
nised that it was in their interests to sustain the process of dialogue and exchange. In other words, they endeavoured to highlight the divisibility of détente because of the benefits it had brought them. The growing divergence of superpower interests from those of their European allies became ever more apparent as did their lack of interest in détente. Indeed, the East-West conflict had changed from an ideological one to a purely political conflict, in which the interests of the European nations no longer coincided with those of the superpowers. It was no longer the ideological gap between the East and West, but the global aspirations of the two superpowers and their rivalries which constituted the principal threat to the peace and stability of Europe. Hence, it was in the interests of both East and West Europeans to join forces to prevent conflicts on their continent and to save their common cultural heritage. By the early 1980s, détente was constantly undercut by the rhetoric and policies of the two superpowers, although it still served as an operational framework for East-West relations.

Throughout the 1980s, both the world powers regarded moves by their allies to improve inter-European links with suspicion. The Soviet Union brought pressure to bear on the GDR, when it felt that the pace and scope of German-German relations were proving detrimental to its own interests, and thus prevented the planned visit to the Federal Republic by Honecker in 1984. This and other instances will be dealt with in greater detail at a later stage. Given its reliance on foreign trade, the Federal Republic was never in a position whereby it could use trade as a tactical means of policy towards the states of Eastern Europe, and it never employed economic sanctions against the Soviet Union and its allies, beyond adhering to the Cocom list - a circumstance which brought it into conflict with the United States throughout the 1980s. This situation became most clear over the gas pipeline deal the Western European states arranged with the Soviet Union, in the early 1980s. Whereas the United States issued an embargo on the supply of capital goods to the Soviet Union, and argued that the West Europeans were holding themselves hostage to the Soviet Union, whilst providing the latter with foreign currency, West European firms, led by the West Germans and with the active support of their governments, ignored the restriction decreed by Washington, causing strain within the alliance. The West European states "viewed the gas pipeline - besides the salutary impact on employment and trade - as an effective way of enhancing their economic security by diversifying their supply of energy and thus making it less vulnerable to crises." It can be argued that the Soviet Union was no more reliable than the Middle East as a source of energy. The deal, however, strengthened general confidence in a stable development of trade with the East, helping to prevent a breakdown, in the short-term,

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71 Frey op. cit. p. 80
72 Ashton op. cit. p. 201
73 Haftendorn op. cit. p. 255
of economic relations with the Soviet Union due to political circumstances.

West European countries regarded economic ties with Eastern Europe as important for stabilising crises and promoting peace. The United States, on the other hand, regarded trade with the Eastern bloc as a foreign policy instrument rather than as an economic value per se. Hence the gas pipeline deal, and the dispute it engendered between the US and Western Europe, were followed by a

"comprehensive intellectual and political dispute between the various Western concepts concerning trade with the East that resulted in a reconciliation of the differing views, primarily in line with the European standpoint."\(^{74}\)

This was not the only economic aspect to the redefining of European interests. The Soviet Union’s economic difficulties and ensuing policy changes were discussed in chapter three. These Soviet actions forced the GDR to turn to the Federal Republic for economic support, and within the Soviet bloc as a whole, the economic difficulties, that the Soviet Union’s policy compounded, were speeding up the tendencies towards political disintegration in these countries, where national interests were coming to the fore as a result.\(^{75}\)

It was also possible to relate an economic aspect to the problems within the NATO alliance. The US had different priorities than its European allies. For the US, East-West relations in Europe were only part of its global confrontation with the Soviet Union. Most West Europeans had their own interests based in Europe. It was partly because of this that they regarded the results of détente differently too. Both had hoped that it would strengthen the co-operative element of Soviet foreign policy and that the Soviet Union would thus abandon its expansionist policy. Though the West Europeans too feared the consequences of Soviet aggression in Afghanistan and its rearmament, they did not see the solution in a policy of strength and the indivisibility of détente. The United States considered détente to have failed globally, whereas most European expectations had been fulfilled, in terms of closer ties between East and West Europe and the developing economic relations. Hence, the West European states were not prepared to call them into question because of Soviet gains elsewhere in the world, nor would they follow the US lead and begin another policy of confrontation (with the exception of Britain). The open differences in opinion over strategy and tactics towards the Eastern bloc were the expression of differing interests which resulted from the various geopolitical positions and historical experience.\(^{76}\) It may be assumed that European détente was different to superpower détente and to some extent independent from it, although it was at times generally affected by the climate of superpower


\(^{75}\) Kupper 1983 op. cit. p. 1049

\(^{76}\) ibid. p. 1050
This argument has been refuted by other leading commentators on this period. Helga Haftendorn, for example, argued in 1986 that the lesson from the Afghanistan and Polish crises was that precisely such a development was not possible. Although these two crises had increased the standing of the GDR in the Eastern bloc, its increased room for manoeuvre had reached the limits of the latent distrust of not only the Moscow leadership but also of other East European leaders by the mid-1980s. They also feared that the leadership of the SED were putting German interests above those of the socialist community, and that the GDR was pursuing a tight-rope walk between its own interests and bloc discipline.

For West Germany, the Polish crisis posed a particular dilemma. The US advocated and indeed pursued a policy of confrontation, isolating Poland and imposing economic sanctions on the whole of the Soviet bloc. Recognising the burden this placed on East-West relations in general, and recognising also that a solution to the crisis was only possible through the economic and political stabilisation of the repressive regime, the Federal Republic adopted the more moderate line of politically condemning the military regime in Poland but continuing with limited economic co-operation, despite the problems this caused with regard to alliance cohesion and within the Federal Republic itself. Haftendorn regarded this as a negative result, rather than seeing it in terms of the Federal Republic safeguarding its own interests in Europe. In fact the social-liberal coalition was following a pragmatic policy, reminiscent of the roots of the Ostpolitik of the late 1960s, emphasising those European interests despite the risk of conflict with the United States.

It also revealed how much the Ostpolitik and détente policy of the social-liberal coalition had changed. Brandt's long-term goal had been a European peace order in which the German question would be solved. By the mid-1970s, the priority had become the stabilisation of existing security structures with the idea of parity in nuclear arms as the main method of achieving this aim. This was not only due to the continued presence of the world powers in Europe. It also reflected the reduced expectations in terms of the development of East-West relations which would continue to be shaped by the opposing social and political systems. It was the expression of the political perspective of Helmut Schmidt in which the concept of parity played an important role. Hence it limited itself to emphasising the responsibility that the two German states had in terms of guaranteeing that no war would again begin on German soil.

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77 Zinner op. cit. p. 66
Dietrich Stobbe regarded the “Europeanisation of Europe”, defined by him as European détente made possible by circumventing the superpowers, as ahistorical and failing to assess Europe’s historic importance for the United States and the Soviet Union. He argued that the two German states had to use their existing alliance ties and support the principles of parity and co-operation among the superpowers. This did not imply an “equidistance” between the two world powers, although a stronger European consensus would be needed, but the Europeans, including the East and West Germans, had to achieve this without losing the support of the superpowers. In this sense, the two German states posed a certain challenge to the two alliance leaders. This challenge also derived from the superpowers’ own symbiosis with the two German states. A dissolution of this symbiosis would be impossible in the foreseeable future, therefore patience was needed and each side had to take into account the interest of the other. This would also improve intra-alliance relations on both sides.

Haftendorn argued that the immediate expectation that the “community of responsibility” between the two German states would survive the worsening international situation after the invasion of Afghanistan, and that Bonn and East Berlin would succeed in acting as a balance in their respective alliances was not realistic under the pressure of the Polish crisis. To avoid giving the impression of being a wanderer between two worlds, in times of crisis the two states had to show loyalty to their respective superpowers and not search for a German “special way”. She concluded that a “Europeanisation of Europe”, or even the temporary decoupling of the Europeans from the behaviour of the world powers was not and never had been possible. The real lesson of the double crisis of Afghanistan and Poland for the Federal Republic and the GDR was a clearer insight into their limited room for manoeuvre.

It is my opinion, however, that a certain harmonisation of European interests had taken place, given the events of the late 1970s and the early 1980s. Europe had become one of the most stable regions in the world, and both East and West European states wanted to be insulated from the global crisis and US-Soviet confrontations. A decisive factor for European security was that the United States unilaterally gave up the formula from the Harmel Report (military parity plus détente) at the end of the Carter presidency. This meant that the American domestic position had changed even before Reagan took over, despite the consequences it had on the US’ European partners. As a result of the egocentrism of the United States, Western Europe had to redefine its own policy and push it through more strongly. When there was conflict in other strategically

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79 Stobbe, Dietrich: “Germany - a challenge for the superpowers”, in *West Germany, East Germany and the German question* op cit. This lecture was given on Oct. 3rd 1984. pp. 13 - 22. Here p. 20
80 *ibid.* p. 21
81 Haftendorn 1986 op. cit. p. 162
important areas of the world between the two superpowers, the Europeans were united in the conviction that these hostilities should not be carried into Europe at their own expense.

The degree of European détente which characterised the situation at the beginning of the 1980s (except perhaps in the case of the UK) was exemplified by the development of relations between the two German states - the construction of an intricate network of political and economic co-operation - and complemented the growing role of West Germany within the Western European community. That the Europeans, and the Germans in particular, used the opportunity to strengthen their own positions was not a betrayal of their alliance positions nor did it mean that they were moving towards a position of equidistance between the two superpowers, nor towards a "self-Finlandisation" as the Reagan administration assumed. As Günter Gaus pointed out, the alternative to the divisibility of détente was not indivisible détente in the world but rather indivisible tensions. In 1980, the impasse in Soviet diplomacy after the invasion of Afghanistan coincided with a similar immobility in Washington's foreign policy as a result of the Iranian crisis. The efforts of the Europeans to maintain regional détente in Central Europe were positive phenomena in the context of East-West relations, in the pursuit of East European independence from Moscow, and in the unparalleled influence they won on their respective leading powers, leaving subtle changes in the atmosphere for the rest of the decade. The two German states were realising their own potential and national interests, and were beginning to develop them to their logical consequence.

Bender had concluded in 1986, that the imagined consequence of this process, the reunification of the two German states, had been proved wrong. Although he argued that the German question remained the key question in Europe, he no longer regarded a solution in the form of reunification as possible. The German-German community of responsibility (see later section) did not merely contribute to the securing of peace, it was also significant for the future development of Europe. The Soviet Union and the United States remained the leading powers in Europe and the world but they were no longer regarded as models. Europe, he argued, had to press the two superpowers to disarm and to prevent new military steps from being taken, even should this prove to be against Soviet and American wishes.

With the benefit of hindsight, it is perhaps possible to argue that the increasing affinity of interests between the two German states, particularly with regard to, and expressed in statements on, security issues, within the context of a "Europeanisation of Europe",

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84 "Introduction", in Dawisha and Hanson op. cit. p. 4

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did indeed contribute to the process which culminated in the German reunification in October 1990. However, this does not take into account other vital preconditions, without which the reunification would have been inconceivable. Here, the role of Gorbachev and the reforms he introduced in the USSR, and the unwillingness or inability of the SED leadership to follow his lead, would have to be discussed in depth to establish a balanced argument. It can be argued that it was not the ideological gap between East and West which constituted the principal threat to peace and security in Europe, but rather the global aspirations and rivalry of the United States and the Soviet Union. Since the mid-1970s, as argued earlier, the European states had bridged their ideological differences and linked the continent with a growing net of economic and human interdependencies, which they were not willing to jeopardise because of superpower confrontation.

The development of German-German relations must be seen within the context of the Europeanisation of Europe and of détente. There was a clear difference of opinion between the superpowers’ views on détente and those of their European allies on both the political and economic level. The leaders of both the German states defied their allies at some stage in order to maintain the détente between their states. This defiance was integrated into a larger European movement which indirectly advocated the divisibility of détente, and not only a definite divorce between German-German relations and the global East-West climate, but between European relations as a whole and the superpower conflict. To a certain extent, it is valid to talk about a Germanisation of détente because the two German states did adopt almost a vanguard role in maintaining détente in Europe. However, the European context of these developments must not be underestimated.
PART TWO: DEVELOPING BETTER RELATIONS

1 “The only show in town”

Throughout 1982, though relations between the GDR and the Federal Republic did not deteriorate, progress was slow, as a result of a difficult domestic situation in the Federal Republic, where the economy was the chief concern of the social-liberal coalition. Similarly, the GDR was faced with enormous economic burdens within the CMEA. Nevertheless, the two German states conducted their relations against the deteriorating international situation, thus divorcing themselves from the East-West conflict. The GDR extended the length of time that West Berliners were allowed to stay in East Berlin on a day visit by 2 hours to 2a.m., and acknowledged that the private transfer of money between the two German states would, in future, be made easier, although the linkage between this and the extension of the Swing credit was not recognised by the SED leaders.

The rise in the status of the GDR in the Warsaw Pact was accompanied by a growing reputation in the West. Honecker began a diplomatic offensive to establish closer relations with other Western states, including leading NATO countries, not just the Federal Republic. As the GDR’s confidence in the West increased, the Federal Republic had to reconsider its approach to German-German relations. Bonn had frequently negotiated important questions with the Soviet Union rather than with the GDR. However, as the GDR gained a more vocal and independent voice in foreign policy in the early 1980s, the Federal Republic shifted its emphasis from Moscow. Although Moscow maintained considerable influence over GDR foreign policy and had a de facto veto over German-German relations,

“the level of co-operation and the atmosphere between the two German states was... determined as much in East Berlin as in Moscow.”

An important development in 1982 was essentially a domestic issue in the Federal Republic, which had far-reaching implications for the German-German relationship. The change of government in the Federal Republic, orchestrated by the withdrawal of FDP support from the social-liberal coalition because of irreconcilable differences over economic and domestic policies in general, caused alarm within the ruling elite of the GDR. In opposition, the CDU / CSU had been vehemently opposed to the Ost- and Deutschlandpolitik pursued by its predecessor. However, the new government, under Dr. Helmut Kohl, made its position quite clear - that it wanted to continue the development of the relations (“pacta sunt servanda”), and even intensify them if possible. There was a distinct change in the rhetorical style, with more emphasis placed on the long-term goal of reunification and talk about Germany within the borders of 1937, but

1 Frey op. cit. p. 103
in practice, the Deutschlandpolitik of the CDU-led coalition was a model of continuity - influenced not only by the domination of moderates in the CDU, but more importantly by the role of the FDP as partner in the new coalition, and the continued influence of Hans-Dietrich Genscher as Foreign Minister.²

1.1 Brezhnev’s funeral, November 1982

President Carstens of the Federal Republic met Honecker on 14 November 1982 at Brezhnev’s funeral and the relations were conciliatory. The substance of the talks was that the existing treaties were a good foundation on which to solve bi- and multi-lateral problems. The funeral enabled leading politicians of the two German states to meet within the sphere of the funeral diplomacy introduced by Tito’s funeral.

The first few months of 1983 were characterised by a continuing wariness between the two German states until the elections in March which confirmed the CDU / CSU - FDP majority in the Bundestag. The elections were turned into a vote over the INF debate and were watched anxiously in both East and West. The Soviet Union overtly attempted to aid the SPD and support the peace campaign in the Federal Republic, but in the event, this may well have contributed to the defeat of the SPD. The Soviet Union’s policy failed because it had misread West German public opinion - as indeed did the US. They overestimated the intensity of anti-nuclear and anti-American sentiment. Though hundreds of thousands of West Germans demonstrated against the proposed deployment, the election results showed that they had not represented the majority view in West Germany. The missile issue was not regarded primarily as a military doctrine, but rather as a question of NATO unity, and in the final analysis, the vast majority of West Germans were on the side of the West.

Thus the Soviet strategy failed to detach the Federal Republic from NATO, and the Soviet Union began to encourage closer German-German relations, even suggesting a German-German confederation, in a bid to persuade the Federal Republic not to accept deployment. However, this policy began to acquire a momentum of its own and Moscow’s control over the GDR was weakened as the latter began to emphasise the special responsibility of the two German states for maintaining peace in Europe. In his New Year speech in January 1983, Honecker had stated:

“We proceed from the assumption that both German states are obliged to a special degree to make constructive contributions to peace and security. Corresponding good-neighbourly relations between the GDR and the FRG serve the transformation of Europe from a continent of tensions and wars to an area of peaceful co-operation to the benefit of all parties involved.”³

² Compare to chapter one.
³ Neues Deutschland, 31 December 1982
As a result of the election, the Soviet Union abandoned its policy of trying to influence West German public opinion and instead turned its attention to the arms control talks in Geneva. With less overt Soviet pressure on either German state, relations between them developed more fruitfully. At the Leipzig trade fair in March 1983, several high-ranking West German visitors had created new hopes for German-German relations, but an incident the following month revealed the apparent limits of this rapprochement. In April 1983, the deaths of two transit passengers in East German custody sparked controversy and a heated press campaign about the alleged mishandling of people by the East German border guards on the part of the right-wing opponents of any level of relations in the German-German sphere. Franz Josef Strauß was instrumental in the criticism of the GDR, denouncing the border guards as “murderers”. Honecker cited this anti-GDR campaign in the cancellation of his plans to visit the Federal Republic that month, although relations were soon to take another new turn, as neither side was interested in a serious deterioration of relations.

1.2 The Strauß credit, June 1983

At the end of June, a 1 billion DM credit was organised with the GDR and in early July came the surprising revelation that Strauß had singlehandedly engineered the credit. It was guaranteed by the Federal government but otherwise the latter was not involved, as a number of banks had made up the credit and, as a result, the risks for the West German taxpayers were virtually non-existent. No conditions had been attached to the loan, although it was claimed that the GDR had committed itself to relax border control on the transit routes. In other words,

“the CDU / CSU did just what it had accused the SPD of doing for more than a decade: it made a unilateral concession in the hope of future rewards.”

The general judgement was

“that Chancellor Helmut Kohl pulled off a cunning coup by enlisting the services of Mr. Strauß at a crucial moment and at the same time permitting his potentially troublesome coalition partner to bask in the lime-light that he loves.”

Strauß defended his action at the end of a meeting of the leaders of the CSU on 11 July 1983. According to Strauß, the East German desire for a loan was made known to him in the autumn of 1982. He had discussed the matter with Kohl and had agreed to follow it up. Thus he had conceived and negotiated the loan himself, keeping the

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McAdams 1986 op. cit. p. 186

Finkenzeller op. cit. p. 4

Frey op. cit. pp. 113 - 114

Tanner, Henry: “Strauß set up loan for East Germany”, in International Herald Tribune 16 - 17 July 1983
Chancellor constantly informed.

The reasoning behind the credit and Strauss' involvement in it is complicated and a definitive answer is difficult to give. But, whatever the reasons behind the credit, the inclusion of Strauss put the conciliatory policy toward the GDR on a wider political footing. It has been argued that the GDR's acceptance of the credit was an acknowledgement that the planned economy had failed in the competition with the social market economy. The credit meant that only the party functionaries were aware of the scale of the problems within the GDR economy, but in a sense, the GDR could no longer afford to loosen its ties with the Federal Republic.

Not only did it improve the economic situation in the GDR, but it also represented a positive signal to the GDR that the Federal Republic, despite the change in government, continued to be interested in the development of German-German relations and was willing to illustrate this in unprecedented ways. Indeed, throughout the summer of 1983, West German politicians from all parties visited the GDR; negotiations began on various ecological and cultural issues; the minimum exchange rate for children was abolished and the dismantling of automatic shooting devices along the German-German border was accelerated. Thus, it helped to create an atmosphere that allowed German-German relations to prosper despite the looming INF question. In other words, the fact that the Federal Republic was the only Western state willing to guarantee a loan to the GDR at that stage (only in part due to the general decline in East European economies) was indicative of the two German states attempting to isolate their relations from the deteriorating international situation. Moreover, by the autumn of 1983, with the INF issue dominating international relations, neither German state signalled a willingness to change its policy approach, despite fears that the international crisis might create consequences to their detriment.

2 The security dimension of German-German relations

In 1983, the two German states committed themselves to

"undertake in stages new, effective and concrete actions designed to make progress in strengthening confidence and security and in achieving disarmament so as to give effect to the duty of states to refrain from the threat or use of force in their mutual relations." 

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* Frey op. cit. p. 114
* Obst, Werner: Der rote Stern vergilbt: Moskau Abstieg (Wirtschaftsverlag Langen-Müller / Herbig, München 1985). pp. 63 - 65. Werner Obst was, until 1989, an economic planner in the GDR. He left when his reforms were no longer being implemented.

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The interests of the two German states in continuing to reduce East-West military confrontation in Europe seemed stronger and more persistent than that of any other participants in the confrontation. Through dialogue on an official government-to-government level, the GDR and the Federal Republic could bring added dimensions to the fragmentary episodic discussion of European military confrontation in the CDE, MBFR and INF forums; they could discuss confrontation more comprehensively and consistently. They could treat issues in an informal and exploratory way, and could then give the results of their discussions to the two alliances for consideration. The two German states could also identify aspects of confrontation (as the SPD and SED did) that were not being discussed, and do some advance exploratory work on them. Viewed on a long-term basis, the German-German security dialogue was in a position to make an important contribution to making European confrontation less dangerous. But that contribution was circumscribed. German-German relations mitigated the risks of confrontation, but they alone could not change the political map of Europe.11

For the first decade after the signing of the Basic Treaty, German-German discussions of security issues were formal and limited to the contacts between Friedrich Ruth and Ernst Krabatsch. They held biannual reviews where they exchanged already widely known information on the ongoing US-Soviet strategic nuclear weapons negotiations and on the Vienna MBFR talks, where the two German states were active participants. By mutual agreement, the alliance status of each government was never discussed.12

In a letter in December 1981, Genscher suggested that the two German states should exchange opinions on disarmament questions. In January 1982, Oskar Fischer replied to this, considering that the representatives of the two states at the Vienna and Geneva negotiations should pursue talks on these issues. Indeed the talks took place at the beginning of February 1982. Though limited in scope, these talks were a significant first step along the path towards placing security issues on the agenda of talks between the two German states.13

2.1 “Karl Marx and our time - the struggle for peace and social progress”

The Federal Republic was a natural partner for the GDR because of the commitment in the Basic Treaty from 1972. As the superpower relations became cooler in the early 1980s, the GDR reactivated a policy of détente towards the Federal Republic, emphasising dialogue, compromise and efforts for disarmament. The Karl Marx Conference,

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11 Dean 1987 op. cit. pp. 255 - 257
12 Dean 1988 op. cit. p. 176

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held in East Berlin from 11 - 16 April 1983, was an international conference in a period of acrimonious East-West confrontation which brought together heterogeneous political forces from all over the world, including communists, social democrats and liberals.\textsuperscript{14}

This Conference was the first occasion on which the GDR played a strategic role in its own right. Differences of opinion were already apparent with the Soviet Union even before this conference took place. It was a conference at which Communists tried to develop an honest dialogue with other left-wing parties, rather than a conference in the old style among communists where no new ideas were discussed. And the consequences were far-reaching. The differences, compared to previous conferences, even went as far as the seating arrangements at the conference itself. Normally Communist dominance was supreme, with the Soviet Union and the GDR speaking the longest from the platform. In 1983, a different tactic was employed. All participants at the conference sat around one table and each had equal rights in terms of length of speaking time and position round the table.\textsuperscript{15}

Honecker argued that the “imperative of our time” was to secure and stabilise peace. He said:

\textquoteleft\textquoteleft...the needs of the moment” were such “that all political and social powers, who wanted to maintain peace, must work together despite different political programmes, ideological positions and religious beliefs, and across class barriers and divisive issues, in order to protect the peoples from the catastrophe of a nuclear war. This does not mean that the differences will be ignored. The defence of peace as the greatest good of humanity is the primary, common and uniting interest....Thus the historical chance consists in the most different groups coming together in the struggle for peace, and this struggle demands a range such has never existed before.”\textquoteright\textquoteright

Honecker referred to the idea of a coalition of reason and realism at the Karl Marx conference of April 1983, but it was only in the November in his damage limitation speech that he used the actual term. However, it has been argued that this speech in April was perhaps the first document of “new thinking” in foreign policy. This began with the willingness to negotiate with any group, on the basis of equality, the concept of peace and how that could be achieved through a policy of dialogue. The positions represented in this speech in terms of a dialogue with all those interested in peace and its maintenance, among others, was a clear break from the old ideas. Whereas the idea of broad alliances was not unknown in Communist strategy (for example the popular front policy of the 1930s and 1940s had essentially the same goal), the 1983 variation was new because it aimed to encompass a much broader base from communists and social

\textsuperscript{14}Hans-Hendrik Kasper in a previewed chapter from a forthcoming book.

\textsuperscript{15}Interview with Professor Hahn in January 1992.


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democrats to Christians and pacifists, even to the military-industrial complex. Many did not want to accept what was said, but those who wanted to understand clearly saw the new elements of the policy, and the opportunities they afforded.

The foundations of the 'coalition of reason' were expounded by Max Schmidt in 1985: the top priority was attributed to the assurance of peace and in particular to the prevention of a nuclear war. War was no longer to be a rational instrument of politics and the role of the military factor in international politics had to be reduced. Peace ought to be safeguarded without the threat of war. "Common security" had to become the dominant principle among states and to this end, disarmament, particularly in the nuclear field, had to take place. Not only the reduction of the arms build up, but also a freeze on arms spending and military budgets in general would contribute positively to international relations being governed by co-operation, not confrontation.

The coalition of common sense meant an active commitment to, and a positive intervention in, politics. Its purpose was to prevent the militarisation of outer space, to find confidence and security building measures at political and military levels within the context of international law. Although in his speech, Honecker had left the question of participants in this coalition open, Schmidt identified a list of political forces potentially interested in such a concept. He included socialist states and non-aligned countries, Western political parties - including the conservative ones in government - the working class in all countries, pacifists, scholars, and leading business circles in Western countries. Whilst the coalition was indeed open to all these groups, it was highly unlikely that many of them would have been prepared to participate and co-operate.

On 18 April 1983, Honecker and Kohl conducted a telephone conversation, which was reported in Neues Deutschland on 3 May 1983. In it, Honecker stated:

"Above all it is about agreement that at present there is nothing more important than securing peace and that both German states have a special responsibility from which no-one can relieve them."  

The development of the debate on the deployment of Cruise and Pershing II missiles in Western Europe overshadowed the international situation throughout 1983. Against the background of the Soviet Union's hard line towards the West and the collapse of Poland as a viable partner for the West within the Warsaw Pact, the SED's policy demonstrated a flexibility and willingness to negotiate. The GDR's coalition of common sense illustrated its developing independent position and was in direct contra-

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17 Interview with Professor Hahn in January 1992.
16 Schmidt, Max: "Conditions and requirements for a policy of peaceful coexistence in Europe and a coalition of common sense", in 13th World Congress of the IPSA, 1985. Paper 17. pp. 13 - 24
18 Geschichte der Außenpolitik der DDR op. cit. p. 418
diction to superpower policy at that stage, illustrated by its attitude at conferences.

2.2 The seventh plenum of the SED central committee, 24 - 25.11.1983

In November 1983, it became clear that good German-German relations below the level of a global deterioration of relations did not automatically concur with the security interests of the Soviet Union. The GDR, by pursuing better relations with the Federal Republic, was not simply fulfilling an objective of Soviet security policy, but also had its own national interests in this process.

It is possible to identify the pursuit of German-German relations with progress towards peace and security. This focussed the idea that there was a special contribution that the two German states and no-one else could make to secure peace - to some extent independent of the great powers and whether they had their support or not. The first time the two German leaders referred to the common responsibility of their countries for securing peace in Europe was in the communiqué after the visit by Helmut Schmidt to the GDR in December 1981. An example of precisely this were the efforts to salvage and intensify German-German relations at the time of the missile crisis. To this extent, the developing German-German dialogue on security issues was pursued under joint German initiative.

On 5 October 1983, in a letter to Helmut Kohl, Honecker detailed his state’s commitment to achieving peace in Europe:

"In full responsibility for the welfare and lives of the citizens of the GDR and in consideration of Europe’s fate, I declare the unreserved willingness of the GDR to support every step, to follow any path and to check constructively every idea which will bring us closer to a secure peace in Europe and which will serve world peace."

He urged the Federal government to reconsider its position on the deployment of Cruise and Pershing II missiles, to move away from a “deployment automatism”. Using the language first introduced at the Karl Marx Conference, he referred to a “coalition of reason” - this time in concrete terms - and expressed his expectation that the arms spiral could be reversed even at the eleventh hour. Honecker concluded the letter “in the name of the German people” (“Volk”), hoping to influence the Federal government away from the deployment issue. It was also indirect criticism of the proposed Soviet reaction to the pending NATO deployment, although this was not explicit. This letter

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22 Neues Deutschland 10 October 1983
was printed in the SED’s official newspaper, *Neues Deutschland*, although Kohl’s reply was not. Perhaps more surprising, however, was the publication in the same newspaper of a letter from a Lutheran parish in Dresden. Addressed to Honecker, it openly criticised the armaments of the Warsaw Pact states.

“The idea fills us with horror, that the stationing of American nuclear missiles in Western Europe, which we all condemn, would be followed by reciprocal countermeasures on our territory and we and our children would have to live directly alongside nuclear missiles. We would like to offer you our support and at the same time beg you most strongly to continue the dialogue between the two German states and to widen it, so that trust can grow as the basis for a partnership of peace and security: in your own words, ‘a coalition of reason’.”

What has become known as the “damage limitation” speech in November 1983, at the seventh plenum of the SED, was probably the height of Honecker’s sovereignty and independence as General Secretary. The meeting took place immediately in the aftermath of the Bundestag decision to accept the deployment of new US missiles on their territory, despite the SPD vote against the move. The Soviet Union had walked out of the Geneva arms negotiations as a result and many people feared an escalation of the crisis. Even members of the Central Committee’s Academy had no idea how the GDR would react to the decision of the Bundestag to accept deployment, many expecting a deterioration of the situation through counterdeployment. Honecker said that the new deployment meant that the people of Europe had to face “one of the most difficult endurance tests of the post-war period”, created by the policies of the US and the Federal Republic.

This situation demanded a positive response from the Soviet Union and its allies, which involved unavoidable military measures, to remove the military and strategic superiority of the US, and to secure the fundaments of détente. It was also important to continue the political offensive, to continue “now more than ever” the “struggle to avert a nuclear world war, to end the arms race”. It was the latter postulation that caused particular concern and misunderstanding in Moscow. The counter measures, to which Honecker had alluded, were, however, not greeted with enthusiasm in the GDR.

“We were never supporters of the arms race and never will be. But because it is necessary to secure peace, we will do whatever has to be done consistently.”

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22 As quoted in *Neues Deutschland* 10 November 1983. From Fritsch-Bournazel op. cit. p. 45
24 An indication of the changing position of the SPD was its decision, taken at the Cologne party congress in November 1983, to vote against deployment, regarding further negotiations as necessary to prevent a new escalation of the arms race. This began the erosion of the consensus on defence issues which had existed in the Federal Republic since the late 1950s.
25 Erich Honecker in *Aus der Diskussionsrede* 1983 op. cit. p. 15
26 ibid. p.16
27 ibid. p. 7
Whilst calling for all efforts to be made to prevent the further escalation of the arms race, he called for the limitation as far as possible of the damages caused by the deployment and for all possibilities to be used to continue détente and the C.S.C.E. process, and to normalise the relations between the two German states according to the existing treaty system.\textsuperscript{28} The whole mood of this plenum was positive as far as the development of German-German relations was concerned, despite the general despondency in the world. There were few dissenting voices, and those which existed were within the military rather than the political leadership. It must be pointed out too, that Honecker did not specify the damage caused by the deployment of new NATO missiles in the Federal Republic, as would have been expected in former years. Instead the phraseology used implied criticism of the Soviets’ countermeasures - in other words this was in direct contradiction of Soviet policy.

Christiane Rix argued that the situation created by the rearmament in East and West could be regarded as the starting point for the articulation of the GDR’s own security interests, independent of the Soviet Union.\textsuperscript{29} It was also significant for the development of the Federal Republic’s policy. Despite the change of government, the Eastern treaties were confirmed as constants in West German foreign policy, and, in Deutschlandpolitik, the new government acknowledged the common interests to avoid the tensions of the new Cold War and to maintain as much as possible of what détente had brought the two states, despite the continuing deterioration of US-Soviet Union relations. Their common concern gave rise to their common security interests, and the community of responsibility began to develop positively after 1983 in areas of security and peace. This meant that the meetings between the two German delegates at the international conferences on disarmament took place within a prescribed framework and they made some progress. A very important aspect of this situation was the immediate threat to the two German states: “The shorter the range, the more German the effect.” Indeed at the end of October in 1983, there were new consultations in Bonn on disarmament questions between representatives of the Federal government and the SED leadership.\textsuperscript{30}

The GDR regarded the two German states as having a specific responsibility for the improvement of the international situation, because as far as it was concerned, the absolute priority governing German-German relations was the securing of peace. The GDR’s policy of damage limitation towards the West highlighted the differences between Soviet and East German policy with regards to the importance of preserving peace. This orientation, caused by specific security interests, was not entirely new; for

\textsuperscript{28} Geschichtede der Außenpolitik der DDR op. cit. p. 426. The speech was reported in Neues Deutschland, 26 - 27 November 1983.

\textsuperscript{29} Rix op. cit. p. 133

\textsuperscript{30} Geschichtede der Außenpolitik der DDR op. cit. p. 419
example, the GDR had always placed more emphasis on the importance of preserving peace and avoiding war than the Soviet Union did, and in late 1982, it had made it clear that it did not want more missiles on its territory. This was a courageous step and the first time the GDR had taken this stance and stepped out of line with the alliance security policy dictated by the Soviet Union. Despite the apparently inseparable linkage of German-German relations with East-West relations in general as advocated in official statements by the GDR, I contend that German-German relations maintained a degree of compromise and willingness to negotiate against the background of very hostile superpower relations at that stage.

It is difficult to say whether the motives for this new direction in foreign policy were genuine, rather than opportunist, but leading analysts of this period believe that they were. Many hopes were attached to this policy in the GDR, but it soon became apparent that the liberal position with regard to foreign policy was not going to be duplicated in internal domestic relations. It was compensated for by increased pressure internally and a complete lack of openness in the GDR.\textsuperscript{31}

These developments were a direct result of the NATO implementation of the policy it had decided upon in December 1979. However, the influence exerted by the credit to the GDR in the early summer of 1983 ought not to be ignored. The credit had indicated that the Federal Republic was not about to embark on a policy of denial, but that it was interested in maintaining good relations with the GDR. Whilst the economic motive must not be overestimated nor seen in isolation, it did constitute a certain strategic value in the process of decision-making in the critical months of 1983. It was in these months that it became apparent that Honecker was the only active Socialist leader at that time. He took advantage of the weakness of the Soviet leadership and exploited the divisions within other socialist states, developing for himself the role of sole interlocutor between East and West from the socialist bloc. Faced with the much more real threat of nuclear war under Reagan, the GDR leader articulated what many others throughout the world felt - namely that given the military dangers to humanity in the nuclear age, all other differences of opinion were secondary. Hence the idea of a coalition of reason was widely accepted and only arch conservatives rejected it because of its origins rather than its significance.

German-German relations were directly affected by international relations, but significantly, the relationship was inverse. The deteriorating international situation demonstrated to the two German states the benefits of maintaining good relations, and German-German relations improved over the following months. In other words, as international relations deteriorated, so German-German relations improved as the Germans became convinced that some thing would have to change if a nuclear war

\textsuperscript{31} Interview with Professor Hocke in January 1992.
were to be avoided— and the policy of the GDR contributed to this change. However, it was not necessarily the case that as international relations improved, then German-German relations would deteriorate.

Because the international situation had changed causing clear divisions between and within the alliances, there was some concern about the future of détente. Whilst it was true that superpower détente had facilitated a relaxation of tensions in Central Europe, it did not necessarily follow that deterioration of East-West relations would create more tensions in Central Europe because of the factors of continuity. Indeed, once the basic features of a co-operative German-German relationship had been established in the 1970s, it was, to a certain extent, able to survive worsening international relations in general. That the deterioration of the US-Soviet relationship and the growing intensity of the East-West conflict did not have as detrimental an effect on German-German relations as had been supposed was dubbed by Wolfgang Pfeiler, a West German political analyst, the theory of leeway (Windschattentheorie). He argued that important factors of continuity - political geography, national interests and basic values - remained constant and outweighed the significant changes in the international context.

Following Pfeiler’s analogy, German-German relations could only be maintained independently of the general East-West climate, if the wind strength did not go beyond a certain limit. Pfeiler argued that it was never, at any stage, clear what this was, nor how the two German states could overcome this situation. Perhaps this argument is itself limited. The events of 1984 illustrate this point - despite the severe deterioration of US-Soviet relations after the INF deployment, relations between the two German states continued to flourish for many months, and it may be assumed that Honecker only came into line with Soviet strategy in order to save the long-term advantages from his policy of continuing détente with Western Europe, and with the Federal Republic in particular.

These episodes revealed the tenacity of German-German relations in the face of pressures to show loyalty to their respective superpowers. They also caused anxiety on the part of the alliances that the two German states were moving towards neutralism and eventually reunification. As already pointed out, this was never the position of either the GDR or the Federal Republic. What was actually being witnessed was, as Dean argued, “the addition of a security dimension to the existing inner-German relationship.” German-German relations had been reshaped in a way which proved to be of substantial benefit to the security of Europe (and to the everyday life of the citizens of

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32 Interview with Professor Hahn in January 1992.
33 Pfeiler op. cit. p. 2
34 Dean 1988 op. cit. p. 178
the two German states).  

Prior to the 1980s, the Federal Republic had been motivated by the desire to improve the situation of the East German population until such a time when reunification could be achieved. The East German interest was mainly economic. Although this is perhaps a simplification of the overriding motivations, it is nevertheless valid that they were of significance. By the beginning of the 1980s, the durability of these motives was being questioned by some observers, and the new element of a security dialogue being added to German-German relations provided a sustaining motivation.

2.3 Why was the security dimension necessary?

As a result of the geostrategic and sociopolitical positions of the two German states, and the necessity of reducing dependence on their respective military alliances, given the events of the preceding years, a need for a security dimension to be added to the existing German-German relations had developed. The partial consensus that existed between the two German states in terms of their desire for peace, for reducing the dangers of the division of Europe, and their responsibility for peace because of their history, were also good reasons for the security dimension to be added. It had been enshrined in international law. The Basic Treaty signed in 1972 provided for a certain amount of co-operation in this field in Article 5: the two German states would contribute to security and co-operation in Europe, support efforts to reduce armed forces and arsenals in Europe (a reference to the then pending negotiations on Mutual and Balanced Force Reductions [MBFR]), and support efforts aimed at arms control and disarmament, especially as regards nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction. A further part of the treaty was an oral agreement that

"both governments have agreed, in the course of normalising the relations between the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic, to consult on issues of mutual interest, especially those which are important for securing peace in Europe."  

These positions were further cemented in the joint communiqués after the visit by Schmidt to the GDR in 1981 and after the return visit by Honecker to the Federal Republic in 1987.

In 1983, when the INF talks broke down, the already tense international situation deteriorated still further. The public in both East and West Germany found themselves confronted with a possible end to arms control in general and the potential that the
tensions could culminate in a conflict on German soil. These apprehensions were only diminished as it became apparent that the leaders of the two German states were willing to join together in an effort to protect the post-1972 achievements against external shock with the pledge that not war but peace would emanate from German soil. National German interests were broadened to include the pursuit of peace; measures to strengthen the German-German relationship were also regarded as German contributions to peace. The Federal government propagated this impression. “Improved inner-German relations are at the same time a contribution to peace.”

“Tapping the peace dimension broadened and deepened the sustaining motivation of the inner-German relationship on the part of the public and political leaders in both German states in an enduring way. In that sense, it is probably the most important development in inner-German relations since conclusion of the Grundlagenvertrag.”

The crux of the German-German security policy had to be a contribution to the degradation of the military threat potentials - in other words to initiate or support partial solutions at regional level through which arms reduction could be achieved together with the alteration of the structures and doctrines of military capacities in the direction of genuine non-offensive defence. It had also to contribute to the parallel establishment of non-military security guarantees and structures. This required security through an all-embracing co-operation between states and peoples, dialogue, formal agreements, mechanisms for the peaceful settlement of conflicts, confidence, familiarity at all levels and reciprocal predictability. The two German states could not pass the buck to the two alliances on all issues, although they only had partial responsibility for military measures relating to their own territory and armed forces. German-German security policy could only be formulated and enforced within the two alliances, although they did have a certain amount of leeway within the alliances because of their own specific security interests. Security was not a zero sum game; stability had to be maintained and the interests of the other side had to be taken into account. German-German security policy had to be oriented to the debates on those issues in which both sides were jointly and directly involved within the limits of the established coordinates.

Sound objective reasons and strong motivations existed in the two German states, among both the political elites and the public, for extending the already complex relationship to include more security and arms control issues. These motivations were increased by the political dynamic that pressed even conservative opinion in the Federal Republic towards intensifying the dialogue. The strong feeling of parallel security interests had brought increasing overlap in the arms control policies of the two states. Some of these reasons have been discussed before, such as their geostrategic positions.

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39 Dean 1988 op. cit. p. 179
40 Basler op. cit. pp. 15 - 16
and the military power on their territories. They also both had a direct interest in acting to prevent war, given their experience under the Nazi dictatorship, as well as their vulnerability to military threats of a singular nature. They not only had a common interest in promoting good, or better, relations between the Soviet Union and the United States, but also in reducing their excessive dependence on the state of these relations. Although successful for a number of years in shielding German-German relations from the general East-West climate, ultimately they remained dependent on the superpowers for their security and existence. Neither German state was capable of defending itself on its own, hence it needed the support of its military alliance. The parallelism of their interests was intensified by official government-to-government discussions which went beyond the exchange of information on arms control developments and explored alternative solutions to the stalemated problems, whilst not negotiating for the alliances. On the whole, the broad security interests of the two German states could be defined very similarly, if not identically.

The common, or parallel, security policy interests of the two German states were: the prevention of war due to vulnerability and military threats of a singular nature; the dismantling of concrete military potentials seen as a threat by the other side; economic relief from armament burdens; good and peaceful relations between the superpowers and the two alliances; and leeway in security policy and involvement in alliance-related decision-making. In addition, bilateral relations had to be clear of suspicion and threat, to promote good co-operation, and regional conflicts had to be prevented from having adverse effects on East-West relations in general. A particularly pertinent issue for the two German states was the elimination of the ecological danger from Central Europe and of the dangers from high technology because the geographic proximity, population density and concentration of industries had specific economic and ecological implications for the two German states, and pollution or the misuse of high technology had disastrous consequences on both sides of the border. Ecological responsibility was also an important aspect of the “community of responsibility” between the two German states, although this was very expensive and challenged the economic structures of the states involved. The two German states had other specific reasons for a bilateral security policy. Changes in the international environment called for new thinking in security policy. German-German relations also had specific politico-ideological implications (due to common language, contacts, mass media etc) which made for greater possibilities for mutual interference in internal stability and hence the internal security of the other side. 41

It must, however, be pointed out that there were drawbacks to a German-German security dialogue. The CDU questioned the standing of the GDR as a valid partner to discuss security issues. Proponents of this argument stated that the GDR would not

41 Basler op. cit. p. 6 - 8
have much latitude from Moscow and could be considered as a second channel of negotiation for the Soviet Union. The second aspect to be questioned was the fact that German-German agreements would not be binding on the Soviet Union and would therefore only serve the purpose of sounding out the Federal Republic on a proposal without achieving a commitment from the Soviet Union. The latter argument is not only fatuous in that it has already been pointed out that the two states would only be discussing issues between themselves in order to propose them to the alliances, but also because the Warsaw Pact states had been developing a degree of national independence in their foreign policy positions. Thus it was in the West’s interests to encourage this. And whilst it was true that the East German consultations with the Federal Republic would be to the East’s advantage, so too would these contacts provide West Germany and NATO with an additional voice in Moscow. A similar case was put against the SPD-SED initiatives but was rejected for the same reasons.

At the same time, there was strong antipathy among the allies of the two German states to the developments having the potential to disrupt the post-war status quo, and allied suspicions regarding the possible consequences of the German-German collaboration inhibited security and arms control dialogue between the two German states. Because the East German government was more dependent than its counterpart on its great power protector and was more likely to present views that closely parallelled those of the Soviet Union, the major weight of inhibitions fell on West Germany. Yet, the analysis presented here has shown that these doubts and suspicions were without real foundation - neither German state wanted to disturb the status quo and neither had any practical possibilities of doing so. The German-German security dialogue produced modest results. However, it was highly likely that, despite obstacles, the dialogue would not only have continued but would have broadened and intensified, had the reunification not come about when it did.

A more balanced view would be that both these arguments have substance and importance depending on the individual issue. Intensified German-German contacts did cause suspicions on the part of the allies of the German states, but the statements made by the leaders of the latter that neither German state had the intention of leaving the respective alliance were based on rational security interests. Indeed, the growing mutual understanding and acceptance of the contribution made by East and West Germany at multilateral negotiations on European security issues was acknowledged by outsiders who regarded the new useful working relationship as close and contributing to the positive outcome of the Stockholm conference 1984 - 1986, for example.43

43 Dean 1988 op. cit. p. 181.
Security policy was traditionally the core of the sovereignty and power of a state. Its inclusion in the mutual relations between the two German states placed them on an equal footing on the international scene. This was accepted by the GDR but questioned by the Federal Republic because of its use of the more specific term "inner-German relations". This definition caused some in the Federal Republic to be reluctant to include a more strongly pronounced security policy dimension to the relations.

An important impetus for a German-German dialogue on security issues was doubtless the slow progress of arms control at a multilateral level which could not keep pace with the desires of the German populations. Hence the two German states also placed strong pressure on their respective allies for more progress in negotiations at this level. Because of the strong public support, it was hoped that the focus of serious initiative would shift from the political parties to a more significant dialogue between the two governments. As pointed out, until the second half of the 1980s, such a dialogue, begun by West German initiative, was limited to a stylised discussion of the arms control position on both sides. There was pressure on the governments to expand the security dialogue from many groups, including the SPD-SED initiatives. In the long term, the German-German security dialogue may have increasingly appeared as a supplement to or even a substitute for the bogged-down East-West arms control process.\(^4\) Events, however, overtook this prospect both with respect to the German states themselves and the positions of the two world powers. The unilateral moves initiated by the Soviet Union in recent years would never have been predicted without the presence of Gorbachev and his attempts to reform the economy and society in general in the Soviet Union.

Thus the need for a German-German security dialogue resulted from the existence of specific GDR and Federal Republic security interests due to the situation which had evolved by the mid-1980s. There were many instances where this need was delineated in German-German documents and agreements, and this active commitment had to be translated into action. Past experience and the mechanisms already in existence had to be built on to accomplish this. World politics were no longer so monolithic that individual European states could not pursue their own activities within the alliance, but a specific contribution by the two German states to European security had to take into consideration the sensibilities of their neighbours.

The deepening of relations between the GDR and the Federal Republic went beyond the bilateral dimension and contributed to the strengthening of East-West relations in general, as well as to the widening of co-operation to fields other than disarmament, emphasising transparency, communication, credibility, and common gains. German-German initiatives at the CDE on testing confidence-building measures, for example,

\(^4\) Dean 1987 *op. cit.* p. 252
would have been useful, acting as stepping stones for the alliances. They could also have worked towards the prevention of militarisation of the developing world; the reduction of defence budgets and the diversion of this money to aid in the developing world; the dedramatisation of the East-West conflict; the removal of enemy images and prejudices from school books, press and armed forces; support for Soviet-US disarmament negotiations; and the removal of chemical weapons at least from the two German states (on the basis of the SPD-SED proposal).

The normative level (opposition of the two systems and ideologies etc) and the pragmatic level (co-operation between system borders) had to be kept separate. The Basic Treaty explained the principle and status of equality between the two German states with the aim of developing good neighbourly relations, although it was not always successful. There was a need to develop and expand the elements of existing consensus, based on bilateral and multilateral treaties already signed in order to see how relations could be developed in terms of economic co-operation, better travel possibilities, co-operation in science and technology, and in sport and culture because security is also a product of political and social relations.

According to Bruns, these areas were ideal for German-German consultations because the two German states were directly affected, and were participants in the multilateral discussions in similar areas. Their role was to identify the relevant themes that were important for the two German states and then to bring their influence to bear within the two alliances to achieve their aims. The priority initially had to be given to the removal of medium range missiles from the territories of the two German states. The CDU/CSU suggested that this would weaken the West’s positions for the sake of a few humanitarian concessions on the part of the GDR, but this was refuted because in the nuclear age, Deutschlandpolitik and security policy could no longer be pursued in isolation.  

That talks took place whenever the two German delegations attended multilateral events would have been unthinkable in the 1970s. The initial West German reluctance in these contacts meant that the mutual briefing was not achievement-oriented dialogue. By the late 1980s, however, the Federal government attributed more importance to security policy issues in German-German relations, and this was reflected in various discussions between the two German states. The value of these talks must not be underestimated. Though they could not contribute to military reductions, through their influence on the political atmosphere, they were essential for progress in political détente and perhaps did more for Europe’s security than the most effective disarmament

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measures, by diffusing the situation at the border between the two alliance systems. The increasing number of economic and political contacts between Eastern and Western Europe, particularly East and West Germany, made the prospect of a conflict there increasingly unlikely. In the process of building interdependence and confidence, the two German states played a central role.

3 The “community of responsibility” between the two German states

Whilst it is true to argue that neither German state could have divorced totally questions of national security and the issues of their post-war “half-identity” from the dialectics of international relations, it is important to be aware that in effect neither state ever actually tried to separate these parallel areas of their relations. Rather, the breakdown in relations between the superpowers appeared to strengthen German-German determination to maintain the long-sought and painstakingly negotiated gains of détente. It is possible to trace significant changes in the positions of the two German states with regard to détente since the 1960s. This was partly explored in the second chapter on the Eastern treaties. As a result of global and regional developments in the 1970s, national interests were accorded a higher priority than alliance interests. The expanse of ties between the two German states was so immense that they could not afford to return to political confrontation at the beginning of the 1980s when it looked like there would be no alternative at superpower level.

The crisis years of the early 1980s, followed by the change of government in Bonn, illustrated this point. The missile crisis, begun in the 1970s and exacerbated in the aftermath of the NATO twin-track decision of 1979, created the parameters for the second Cold War. Though it may be argued that German-German relations stagnated to some extent during this period, they remained on the whole unharmed, and it is perhaps more appropriate to see the cause of the stagnation in the domestic problems in Bonn, the ensuing change of government and the period of time it takes for a new government to find its feet. Indeed, in comparison to East-West relations in general, German-German relations flourished.

The process of change in terms of détente in the two German states was never parallel. For West Germany, the crucial period was the 1960s when there was pressure to come into line with the rest of the Western alliance and reconcile relations with the East. This process occurred in the GDR in the 1970s as a result of the international recognition afforded to it in the early years of the decade. In the early 1980s, East Germany took over the role of pioneer in these relations to some extent due to the change of government in Bonn and the hesitancy on the part of this more conservative government. The GDR introduced the need to negotiate on security issues and was also in a position to

45 Mushaben op. cit. pp. 2-6

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dictate the pace of German-German relations as a result of the Federal Republic’s dependency on humanitarian gains to justify its policy. In the period since 1984, it is possible to argue that both German states have been willing to conduct a more open relationship with each other to the benefit of European peace.

In December 1983, leading politicians in both East and West Germany were coming to terms with the idea of having to work together, and put this into concrete terms. Honecker spoke of the “community of responsibility” that existed between the two states. Helmut Kohl referred to a “partnership of reason”, thus echoing Honecker’s coalition of reason, and the SPD, although in opposition at the time, called for a “security partnership”. (The latter’s ideas are discussed further in chapter six). Indeed Genscher defined the position of the Federal government as follows:

“We wish that substance be added to the partnership of responsibility to which the Federal Republic of Germany and the GDR have committed themselves. Included in that growing substance are economic cooperation, political dialogue - also on issues of confidence building, arms control and disarmament - and the development of human contacts. An example should be set by the two German states at all levels of the Helsinki Final Act, so that war never again be unleashed from German soil but inspirations generated for peace. That will be in the interest of all our neighbours.”

The “community of responsibility” had existed between the two German states since the 1970s because of their acknowledged special role in ensuring peace and security in Europe under the threat of international conflict. It was, however, not articulated very often before the INF crisis. In the context of the debate on this issue, “the concept of a community of responsibility became a key phrase in statements by politicians in both German states, together with the expression...‘coalition of reason’.”

On 9 February 1984 the Bundestag adopted a resolution on Deutschlandpolitik (with the exception of the Greens), which meant that the concept of a shared German “community of responsibility” for peace and security in Europe became part of official policy in Bonn. Given the circumstances under which this resolution was adopted, “this document signalled the fact that polarisation between the main West German political camps was decreasing and that the Kohl-Genscher government was trying to maintain continuity with the Deutschlandpolitik of its predecessors, in substance as well as in style.”

The more the two German states came together within the context of the “community of responsibility” without uniting, the more they worked together without becoming too close for the comfort of the other states involved. And the more normal the relationship
became not only between the two states but also between the German people, then a condition of peace prevailed with which both the Germans and the rest of Europe could live, despite their differing aims - that is the Germans hoped thereby to see an end to the division of their nation and the rest of Europe wanted a permanent division with no additional tensions in Europe.  

It has been argued that in 1983, Kohl recognised that deployment posed a grave threat to what had been achieved in East-West German relations, hence the more conciliatory tones to the leadership of the GDR, but that as the crisis dragged on, the West German government reverted to "business as usual", and no further compromises would be reached with the GDR. However, perhaps a more coherent argument is that the so-called change of heart in CDU/CSU policy towards a more conciliatory stance with regard to the GDR was already complete when it entered office in October 1982, as chapter one details. The CDU-led government was able to move towards the GDR on security and other issues and pursue the cause of a German-German détente because, as it saw it, it was totally and unquestionably loyal to the NATO alliance and supported the deployment decision, and thus felt that there was less chance of its allies being suspicious about its aims. The apparent change of heart in the latter half of the 1980s was mainly one of semantics. Whilst it was true that the extreme right wing were mounting a more successful electoral campaign (although they never gained representation at national level), and indeed the right wing of the government parties had to be pacified to some extent, it must be acknowledged that the Federal Republic maintained and extended its relations with the GDR at all levels, including security issues - as will be illustrated in the next sections.

Indeed, Pfeiler wrote in 1985, that

"only from within the alliance will the Federal Republic further its security interests. But this does not exclude efforts to use the intra-German connection as an additional channel of communication for the purpose of safeguarding peace in Europe. That is what the West German government has in mind when it speaks about a community of responsibility of the two German states."  

This specified quite clearly that the Federal government acknowledged that the two German states had a role to play in security issues and that they should discuss these issues between themselves.

For Erich Honecker, 1983 was a critical and conceptual turning point. The GDR was

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50 Mushaben op. cit. p. 15  
61 Pfeiler op. cit. pp. 10 - 11
fully aware of its increased vulnerability, but also of the increased opportunities afforded by the weak Soviet Union suffering from the leadership crisis which was to dominate Soviet politics for a further two years. The GDR continued to regard the division of Germany as a barrier against resurgent fascism, but espoused closer German-German relations in an effort to appease its population, to reduce its dependence on the Soviet Union, and also to promote peace in Europe. Therefore, Honecker cultivated the emergent

“fundamental understanding, if not consensus, a respect for and a feeling of not yet clearly definable, but nonetheless common interests”

between the two German states.32

For the leaders of the GDR, the key to the further improvement of German-German relations was seen to rest in the concept of the “community of responsibility”.

Implicit in this concept was the belief that the answers to the German national question and the search for effective peace-keeping mechanisms throughout Europe were inexorably linked, and that the best approach to normalisation was a multifaceted one. Negotiations have a cumulative effect on the willingness to co-operate further. According to Bruns, the stronger the emphasis on mutual interests and the larger the number of reciprocal benefits that were built into the mechanisms for co-operation, then the more effective the implementation of treaties, accords and exchanges became.33

Honecker’s support for and promotion of the idea of the “community of responsibility” was surprising because the idea of a community implied something closer than a set of international relations, although Honecker eschewed the existence of special relations between the two German states and insisted on the sovereignty of the GDR as a nation. Through the idea of a “community of responsibility”, the GDR was effectively seeking international and regional recognition of such a “special relationship”.34

The “community of responsibility” was accepted by peace activists in both states. In the early 1980s, the fear of war in any form and the feeling of vulnerability among the German states were at their greatest, heightened by the Reagan administration’s references to the possibility of a limited nuclear war. “Community” implied an active pursuit of co-operative relations. However, it must be pointed out that a community of responsibility in terms of the desire to prevent the outbreak of war on German soil and to promote peace was based on a relatively easy consensus. The dissent increased when these statements had to be turned into concrete practical political steps. Mutual recriminations coloured any argument and these had to be overcome before progress could be made. The Federal Republic wanted to achieve peace so that the German

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32 Mushabon op. cit. p. 16
33 Wilhelm Bruns as quoted in ibid. p. 17
34 ibid. p. 18
people would have the right of self-determination in freedom. The GDR wanted a situation in Europe where co-operation between states in the interests of the people was the political norm rather than confrontation. These two positions were seen as the antithesis of each other, but the two states had to work together to find a connection between the two to create peace with secure borders.  

The “community of responsibility” between the two German states was based on their geostrategic and political positions and on their shared history which obliged them to ensure that additional tensions for Europe did not emanate from German soil. This “community”, however, had its limits. It had not to call into question vital alliance interests, nor give the impression that the two German states could go their own way in defence policy. Although the unlikelihood of this developing has been stressed throughout, von Weizsäcker, President of the Federal Republic, preferred to speak about the Germans’ “responsibility for the climate” of the East-West relationship. Whilst acknowledging the linkage between German-German relations and the overall climate, he stressed that it was thus  

“very greatly in the interests of relations between the Germans themselves that they do not make inappropriate attempts to pursue some special avenue of their own. So then, at bottom we always come back to recognising the same thing: we form part of this overall climatic situation ourselves.”  

It was within this context that a German-German contribution to security in Europe was made. Perhaps a clear indication of the benefits of this “community of responsibility” became apparent in 1986 in an incident that was not fully publicised. Throughout the post-war period, the four military allies of World War II had military missions in Germany and the right to travel throughout both parts of Germany within the scope of their responsibilities as victors. In the spring of 1986, a member of the American military mission photographed a Soviet military object without permission. The Russians shot him. This was a very dangerous development and an escalation was avoided by the downplaying of the incident and the calming effects of the two German states on their respective allies. In this sense, the “community of responsibility” between the two German states was observed.  

Thus identification of security questions with the common fate of all Germans re-emerged as a prominent aspect of East German policy in 1983. Honecker’s advocacy of the special German-German role was representative of the recognition of the obvious vulnerabilities of the two German states in the military face-off between East and West.

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66 Bruns 1985 (2) op. cit. p. 34
68 Interview with Professor Prokop in January 1992.
The surfacing of pan-German attitudes must be seen as essentially reactive in nature, a response to the failure of US-Soviet arms control talks to bear tangible fruit, rather than a concerted programme for overcoming the division of Germany, certainly on the part of the GDR.

The "community of responsibility" had validity because neither German state could sanguinely face the consequences of a deterioration in East-West relations, and both were trying to escape the ill-effects of each side's military preparations. As previously noted, the popular feeling of despair following the outcome of US-Soviet strategic and nuclear weapons talks and the general decline of détente was common to both German states. The shared sense of obligation that war must be prevented, inherent to the "community of responsibility", was one of the most positive developments of the post-Basic Treaty era. Hence the driving force behind German-German relations was the practical recognition of the need to defuse East-West conflicts and maintain economic co-operation - hence the "community of responsibility".  

The "community of responsibility" had always existed between the two German states, but its significance was revealed most clearly as a result of the deteriorating international situation due to the INF crisis. Because of their feeling of mutual responsibility, the two German states were prepared to act against the policies of their respective superpower where necessary to preserve their relations from the hostile climate.

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PART THREE: CONSOLIDATING DETENTE

1 The cementing of the new relationship

Despite the rhetoric and the confrontational course advocated by the Soviet Union, it became clear, in the weeks following the Bundestag decision to accept deployment and Honecker’s moderate response, that there was to be no freeze in German-German relations, and that the Germans, like most Europeans, were not prepared to forego the advantages of détente simply to maintain the favour of their respective alliance leaders. That the two German states were able successfully to shield their relations from the consequences of the INF decision was symptomatic of their newly-found autonomy in this sphere.

“As both sides made significant concessions, the inter-German relationship assumed a new quality and raised both hopes and fears about the prospects of a German-German rapprochement.”

East Germany’s first move was to relax its emigration rules and to allow an unprecedented number of East Germans, including political prisoners and dissidents, leave for the Federal Republic permanently. Thirty one thousand East Germans were allowed to move in the first six months of 1984 and by December this had increased to 40,000, with the height of the emigration wave in mid-March 1984; as many as 300 East Germans were arriving at the reception centre in Gießen daily. The reasons behind this move can only be assumed. Honecker no doubt regarded it as a contribution to better German-German relations as well as a means to acquire economic concessions. It was also a means of getting rid of “anti-social elements” and dissidents from the population, causing the least disturbance.2

On 20 January 1984, six East Germans sought refuge in the US embassy in East Berlin, refusing to leave until they had been granted exit permits. Previously when similar incidents had occurred, the matter had been dealt with quietly, but on this occasion, the group had contacted a West German television station, so the incident was reported in both German states. It also coincided with preparations for visits to the GDR by the French Foreign Minister, Claude Cheysson, and the Canadian Prime Minister, Pierre Trudeau. In order that the “embassy situation” did not overshadow these two prestigious diplomatic events, within two days the six East Germans were deported to West Berlin.1

Two days later, twelve more East German citizens entered the Federal German mission in East Berlin requesting asylum, and they too were allowed to leave within a few days.

1 Frey op. cit. p. 118
2 McAdams 1986 op. cit. p. 191
3 Frey op. cit. p. 119
This sparked a debate within the Politburo, members of which may not have been aware of the vast numbers who had applied for exit permits. As a result of its deliberations, the emigration wave to the Federal Republic began in early February. However, it did not solve East Germany’s problems in this respect. Stability had not been created, because more people were then eligible to move to the West under the family reunification scheme, and there was a rush for emigration permits before the tight restrictions were re-imposed in May 1984. More East Germans entered embassies, but not all were successful in their aim, and by June the East German authorities reconstructed the West German mission to deter asylum seekers. Although the West German government was embarrassed about enabling the GDR to tighten its borders, it was aware that a continuation of the incidents would damage German-German relations in the long-term, and would make it more difficult for people to leave the GDR legally.  

1.1 Andropov’s funeral, February 1984

On 9 February 1984, Yuri Andropov, the Soviet leader, died, and his funeral provided the first opportunity for a meeting between Honecker and Kohl - in the tradition of making important contacts at working funerals. At that time there were mutual recriminations between the two superpowers for sabotaging the INF talks, so their relations were confrontational and hostile. The two German leaders affirmed their commitment to their states’ special responsibility to nurture peace and East-West understanding in such times of international tension. They acknowledged that the question of securing peace could not be separated from the development of German-German relations based on the Basic Treaty. This was a further instance of funeral diplomacy at work. An official visit between the two German leaders would not have been possible, but they were able to conduct friendly discussions in Moscow.

Despite the incidents in the embassies (the emphasis had moved to Prague by the mid-summer), the German-German rapprochement continued. Volkswagen concluded a large economic joint venture to build a car engine factory in the GDR at a cost of $200 million. Talks continued on a cultural and an environmental agreement and both gained momentum. In July, the GDR even attended the International Environmental Protection Conference held in Munich. The Federal Republic too showed commitment to the improved relations. Several leading politicians from all parties went to the Leipzig spring trade fair - an accurate barometer of the state of German-German relations - and met Honecker. As a result, Lufthansa announced an agreement with the GDR to establish regular flights to the autumn fair in Leipzig.

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*McAdams 1986 op. cit. pp. 192 - 194
Neues Deutschland 14 February 1984
In July 1984, a 950 million DM loan was guaranteed to the GDR, and a number of travel concessions were announced simultaneously, but any connection was eschewed. The minimum exchange requirement for pensioners was reduced from 25 to 15 DM a day and they were permitted to stay for 45 days rather than 30 in the GDR. East German pensioners were permitted to visit the Federal Republic for up to 60 days annually (previously only 30), and “limited cross-border traffic” stays were extended from one to two days - although this latter concession caused the Federal Republic some embarrassment because the GDR later specified that West Berlin - where the large majority of border tourists lived - was not covered by the provision, thus violating German-German agreements since 1969. Whether these concessions were a consequence of the loan cannot be ascertained positively, although it is undoubtedly true that the credit was to the benefit of the East German economy. Political interest to advance German-German relations also played a role. Perhaps the reasoning behind the emigration wave allowed by the GDR was to create the necessary political conditions for the second credit in the summer 1984, because it had been denied in the autumn of 1983.

As mentioned earlier, Honecker had several meetings with leading Western politicians throughout this period, including Prime Ministers Trudeau (Canada), Palme (Sweden), Papandreou (Greece) and Craxi (Italy). The highlight of the year, in terms of Western diplomacy, was to have been Honecker's scheduled visit to the Federal Republic in September. However, as a result of extensive opposition and pressure from the Soviet Union, the meeting was cancelled at short notice. This was a consequence of a debate that had been raging throughout the Warsaw Pact since the previous autumn, gaining momentum in the late summer months of 1984.

2 Conflict in the Warsaw Pact

2.1 The background

The immediate issue at stake in the ideological shadow boxing within the Soviet bloc which began in the early 1980s, but which escalated in 1984, was relations between the Federal Republic and the GDR, with the focal point of discord being the East German policy towards the Federal Republic and the planned Honecker visit to West Germany. However, the debate transcended the bilateral German-German relationship and questioned the future of Soviet and Warsaw Pact policy towards the West. In other words, the differences were not just on a question of tactics, but rather were symptomatic of a more underlying friction between the Soviet Union and its allies, resulting from diverging perceptions of the fruits of the past ‘detente’ policies, the benefit of ‘political dialogue’ with the West and the proper fashion in which to deal with the implementation of NATO’s ‘dual track’

\[\text{McAdams 1986 op. cit. p. 194}\]
decision and the start of intermediate nuclear forces (INF) deployment in Western Europe."

In Moscow, the decision was taken to put a freeze on the relations in order to punish the US and West Germany for deploying the new missiles. Some East European states, however, were no longer willing to follow the Soviet lead and pursue a confrontational line towards the West - as advocated by Gromyko and other hardliners in the Soviet Union. This was particularly the case for the GDR and Hungary (also for Rumania and Bulgaria), countries with significant economic interests in the West, and an increasing reputation on the international scene. Indeed those members of the Warsaw Pact interested in continuing a policy of détente were able to advocate their line at bloc meetings which would not have been possible without some support from the Soviet Union, indicating that the moderates in the Soviet Union were powerful enough to grant this support.

That the deployment of missiles in Western Europe became the focus of dissent was an irony of the Eastern bloc's own making because, for years, they had, through their propaganda, linked the future of East-West German relations directly to Bonn's position on INF, in other words that German-German relations could not flourish "in the shadow of American missiles", and that a new "ice-age" between the two German states would develop. As it became clear that the new CDU-led government, having embraced Deutschland- and Ostpolitik wholeheartedly, would sanction deployment, the dilemma for the GDR and the Soviet Union appeared to be how to punish the Federal Republic.

"The broader political landscape that facilitated the emergence of the Soviet-East Germany controversy was also shaped by another factor of primary importance largely independent of the INF issue, namely the relative decline of Soviet authority in Eastern Europe resulting from a drawn-out succession crisis spanning the final days of Brezhnev, the brief interregnum of Yuri Andropov, and the onset of a colorless (sic) leadership provided by Konstantin Chernenko."

Added to this were the crippling economic effects of Soviet adventures in the third world, particularly Afghanistan, the effects of the Polish crisis, and Soviet concentration on the United States in the West. Almost imperceptibly the East European states were able to increase their room for manoeuvre within this sphere, because Moscow's ability to implement or enforce a coherent strategy had been weakened, despite its continued absolute power in Eastern Europe.

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8 Spittmann, Ilse: "Unter Brüdern", in Deutschland Archiv Heft 9 September 1984 17. Jg. pp. 897 - 899. Here pp. 897 - 898 (1)
9 Asmus 1985 op. cit. p. 9
10 Interview with Professor Schulz in May 1991.
Though some feared a "Communist encirclement" of the Soviet Union, the core of the problem was actually within the CPSU itself. After the 1983 walk out from the arms control talks and the death of Andropov, the foreign policy consensus in the Soviet leadership fell apart - particularly with regard to German policy. It was to be restored - albeit not completely - only after Gorbachev succeeded in systematically installing his own people in the decisive posts. In the early 1980s, the Soviet leadership was deeply split

"not only in different factions and clienteles but also with respect to perceptions of the West and, accordingly, to the appropriate way of action in its Westpolitik."\(^1\)

There were 3 different perceptions in the Soviet Union's leadership as to how to deal with the West in the mid-1980s:\(^2\)

1. the neo-Stalinist view: This was a conspiracy theory that translated Western declarations and actions into a consistent picture of a growing Western threat of an anti-Communist coalition under United States hegemony; hence the attacks against Western, particularly West German, revanchism. These hardliners, Gromyko, Ustinov and Romanov, rejected dialogue with the West, were not prepared to make concessions, and concentrated on creating more discipline within the Soviet bloc.

2. the heritage of the Brezhnev era: The proponents of this view regarded the contradictions between capitalist states as more acute than ever, and therefore open to exploitation to Soviet advantage. It was believed that US rhetoric with regard to the Soviet threat was not directed at the Soviet Union itself, but was used to try to intimidate the US' own allies and to bring them into line with US policy.

3. the moderate position: The main objective of those who supported this position, Andropov, Gorbachev, and probably Chernenko, was to use every opportunity to continue East-West dialogue and to improve the relationship, through a more moderate, flexible policy of co-operation and communication, hence it favoured an improved relationship between the two German states. It was, therefore, in favour of economic co-operation through East-West trade and technology transfer, and hoped that disarmament talks would be resumed.

Up to 1985, Soviet foreign policy was dominated by the first and second perceptions, but in the long-term, it was the third which prevailed. The conflicting signals from Moscow and the associated leadership struggle afforded the East European leaders the opportunity to expand their own room for manoeuvre and to articulate and demand more forcefully what they perceived as their own national interests.


\(^{12}\) Pfeiler 1985 op. cit. pp. 17 - 23
Throughout 1983 Honecker had made use of the more moderate position of Andropov who was willing to give the GDR more room to manoeuvre as long as this did not call into question Soviet security interests. This meant that the GDR had more freedom to act as a sovereign independent state, particularly with regard to its relations with the Federal Republic. Andropov had also agreed, at Honecker’s request, to replace the Soviet ambassador to East Berlin, Abrassimov, with Kotschemassov, a more flexible man - thus the Soviet Union was taking into account the needs of its ally and granting it limited autonomy. As Andropov became ill and was away from the helm of power, Honecker began to increase East Germany’s room for manoeuvre with regard to both the East and the West.

An important development in this process was his damage limitation speech in November 1983, which was probably used to put the SED’s Deutschlandpolitik on a firm footing and to test its room for manoeuvre in this sphere. Andropov had probably hoped that closer German-German ties would increase the differences between the Federal Republic and the US, thus ultimately working in the interests of the Soviet Union. That in this process the GDR would acquire more independence from the Soviet Union was underestimated by Andropov, probably because of the unquestioned loyalty of the GDR to the Soviet Union at that stage. After the death of Andropov, the Soviet leaders began to question this new GDR sovereignty, but Honecker continued to use his newly-found freedom to his advantage.

2.2 National and international interests, and the pursuit of dialogue

It was in Hungary that the theoretical parameters of the dispute were defined. In October 1983, Matyas Szuros, CC secretary responsible for foreign relations (and former ambassador to the GDR [1975 - 1978] and to the Soviet Union [1978 - 1982]), delivered a lecture on the reciprocal relationship between the “national” and the “international” in the development of socialism in Hungary. This argument was published in the January 1984 edition of Tarsadalmi Szemle. Acknowledging that, in the past, individual interests of communist states had been subordinated to the Soviet will, Szuros stated that this was no longer the case because

“the present interpretation of the international interest and the method of formulating it changed the hierarchical order of national and international interests....The historical traditions and certain current factors make it possible for relations between individual socialist and capitalist countries

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to develop even though a deterioration in East-West relations... is the general trend."\(^{15}\)

This led to the second key issue of Szuros' speech - that of a "two-directional process: the great powers have the determining impact on events, and, simultaneously, the role of small countries in bridging differences of views and developing rational and mutually acceptable compromises - altogether, in fostering the continuity of East-West dialogue - is increasing, which is of vital importance to mankind."\(^{17}\)

Any such special interests did not represent weakness, but advanced the interests of the socialist community as a whole.

Given the GDR's position of "limiting the damage" in the German-German context, and the lack of a clear Soviet position on this issue, it was left to the international departments of some of the other central committees of other communist parties to develop the counterposition to East Germany and Hungary. On 30 March 1984, the Czech daily, *Rude Pravo*, in an apparent response to Szuros' article, harshly criticised "independent" courses in foreign policy that differ

"from the line agreed upon within the framework of the community, as well as discussions about the 'role of small states' which should allegedly assist the achievement of compromises between 'great powers'."\(^{18}\)

The article continued by criticising the change in the hierarchical order of national and international interests and the overestimation of a state's "own model" to overcome difficulties and rejection of the "Soviet model" to do this.\(^{19}\)

The aim of the Czech, and implicitly therefore Soviet, attack against the small and medium-sized states, who put their national interests ahead of international ones, was to discipline such states before the CMEA summit in June. It was ideological shadow boxing in various publications, although it was clear that the central committees of the parties concerned were behind the articles. On 24 March 1984, *Neues Deutschland* printed an article written by Honecker for the April edition of the Czech journal *Problems of Peace and Socialism*. The main thrust of the article was a call to go back to all the international negotiating tables because only there would problems be solved.\(^{20}\)

The Hungarian press responded with an interview with Szuros in *Magyar Hirlap* on 4

\(^{15}\) ibid. p. 23

\(^{17}\) ibid. p. 21


\(^{19}\) Oldenburg, Fred: "Werden Moskaus Schatten länger?", in *Deutschland Archiv* Heft 8 August 1984 17. Jg. pp. 834 - 843. Here p. 839 (2)

\(^{20}\) ibid. pp. 838 - 839
April 1984 under the title "Common goals, national interests". Szuros defended his views and reiterated his case for international questions to be solved by political means. The Szuros interview was reprinted in full on 12 April in Neues Deutschland, whereas the Soviet foreign affairs weekly, Novoe Vremja, reprinted a slightly edited and shortened version of the Rude Pravo article. An article in the April edition of the Soviet theoretical journal, Voprosy Istorii KPSS, indicated more clearly that the Soviet Union was in opposition to the views advocated by the GDR and Hungary. In this article, "A new type of union", penned by O.V. Borisov (assumed to be the pseudonym of Oleg Borisovich Rakhmanin - the first deputy head of the CPSU CC department for liaison with communist and workers’ parties of the socialist countries), unnamed East European countries were criticised for letting national interests rather than "the principles of socialist internationalism" determine their foreign policies. The concept of a state’s "own model" meant a dangerous overestimation of the particular over the general, the national over the international interest. Aimed at Hungary (and implicitly at the GDR), it argued that all attempts to define the role of small and medium-sized states outside the fundamental contradictions between socialism and imperialism were bankrupt.

However, even at that stage, the voice of the dogmatic hardliners did not dominate totally the ideological scenery. At the same time as orthodox contributions appeared in the Czech and, parts of, the Soviet press, Voprosy Istorii printed an article which revealed the misuse of terms by Soviet communists, emphasising the need to take into account the individual interests rather than to accept rule by fixed principles and terror. This article revealed that the hard line view was not totally dominant.

Thus the debate within the Eastern bloc was on the importance of continued dialogue with the West, the role of autonomous foreign policy initiatives and the priorities of bloc unanimity and discipline. The Soviet leaders failed to acknowledge that the GDR and Hungary had a different understanding of what a continued policy of limited co-operation and détente meant under these conditions. It was an issue of whether "East-West relations were primarily at the disposal of the big powers and should be frozen by Soviet decree until the American follow-up deployment was withdrawn, or whether détente is the achievement of all European nations and should be revived by a network of bilateral contracts and national initiatives demanded and pursued by the GDR and Hungary."
The Soviet Union maintained its stance, and on 9 April 1984 in an interview with *Pravda*, Chernenko demanded a return to the status quo ante - in other words before the INF deployment in Western Europe. Despite the Soviet's confrontational position, the communiqué issued at the end of the Warsaw Pact Foreign Ministers' Conference on 20 April 1984 was considered moderate in tone and somewhat imprecise, perhaps reflecting the lack of consensus within the bloc.26

2.3 Intensification of the dispute

The pre-eminence of the dogmatic Soviet stance became totally clear in early May 1984 when a massive anti-West German “revanchism” campaign began in the Soviet press, coinciding with the 39th anniversary of the defeat of Nazi Germany. Such a campaign was meant to intimidate Bonn in order to weaken the latter’s ties with the US deployment process, and to

“revive the time-honored weapon in Moscow’s arsenal of political-psychological warfare in the postwar period...to enforce bloc discipline and unity.”27

It was also hoped thereby to reduce Bonn’s ties with the East, or at least put them on ice, in other words as a delayed form of “punishment” for the INF. There were no more distinctions between “realistic” elements in the Federal German leadership and the more “aggressive” American position. The Soviet Union was also concerned that neofascist groups within the Federal Republic had grown in numbers, public exposure and influence.28 The Soviet press began to criticise calls in the Federal Republic for a “Greater Germany” and the “restoration of the German Reich within its historical borders”, and argued that

“the revanchists have their own lobby in the Bundestag - more than 40 deputies elected from the conservative CDU and CSU parties. It is an open secret that the aggressive aspirations of the ‘diehards committed to the past’ rely on the direct or thinly veiled support of the ruling circles of the FRG.”29

Whilst the propagandistic charges do not warrant serious consideration, the campaign did reflect some genuine fears of the Soviet Union and its East European allies of a reunited Germany in the heart of Europe.

As a result of the 8th SED CC plenum in late May 1984, the differences between the Soviet Union and the GDR were vividly apparent. East Berlin avoided directly accusing the Kohl government of “revanchism” by limiting its accusations to the so-

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26 Asmus 1985 op. cit. p. 33
27 Ibid. p. 11
28 Meyer op. cit. p. 136

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called “Ultras” in West Germany. In the Politburo’s report, presented by Kurt Hager, the policy of “damage limitation” and dialogue with the West was defended, and the significance of the “community of responsibility” between the two German states was reconfirmed, particularly given the international situation.30 The differences over the benefit of dialogue with the West might have remained theoretical had it not been for the pace with which German-German relations were developing. A tentative date was set for Honecker to visit the Federal Republic in late September and preparations went ahead. In an interview with the Italian newspaper, Il Messaggero, which was reprinted in Neues Deutschland on 9 July 1984, Honecker confirmed his commitment to continue a “constructive dialogue directed toward the securement of peace” and regarded his visit to the Federal Republic as “one of the GDR’s initiatives to achieve a certain security partnership between East and West.”31

The second major loan to the GDR in July 1984, guaranteed by the Federal government, provoked the onslaught of the Soviet-East German dispute. On 27 July in an article in Pravda, Lev Bezymensky, an expert on German affairs, launched an attack against German-German relations.32 It was ostensibly an attack against Bonn’s policies towards the East, with relations with East Berlin seen as particularly dangerous. Much of the article was, however, indirect criticism of Honecker’s policy. It referred to old Honecker quotations in which he had adopted a much harsher line towards the Federal Republic. Bezymensky warned that

“relations between the two German states cannot be viewed in isolation from the entire international situation...characterised by...a ‘crusade’ against socialism...(which is) directed first and foremost against the GDR.”

Differences of opinion were still to be heard within the Soviet press, however. In July 1984, the chief commentator of the government newspaper, Isvestiya, Alexander Bovin, gave a press conference in East Berlin in which he explained that the development of the German-German relationship had become even more important given the tense international situation.33 Thus it was clear that the ideological struggle within the Soviet leadership had still not been resolved with the moderates defining the interests of the socialist community differently than the hardliners.34 Moreover, Honecker was not cowed by the harsh attack. Although Neues Deutschland reprinted the Pravda article the following day, on 30 July it reprinted a Hungarian article which fully backed the

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32 Bezymensky, Lev: “In the shadow of American missiles”, in Pravda 27 July 1984
East German position. On 1 August 1984, the GDR made its position unambiguously clear in an editorial in *Neues Deutschland*. Signed A.Z., it is assumed that the editorial represented the authoritative views of the SED Politburo. It reconfirmed the SED’s position on the importance of East-West dialogue and of “seeking paths to return to détente”. An article was also published in the foreign affairs monthly, *Horizont*, which appeared to be a response to the article in *Rude Pravo* from March. It defended the right of a communist party to develop policies based on its own historical experience and condition. Differences would arise, but “unity of action and new combat experiences, collective theoretical efforts and comradely discussions are the most important means to develop the movement under these conditions and to mobilise it for the common task.”

The next move came from the Soviet Union, when on 2 August 1984 it escalated its polemics in *Pravda* over German-German relations. It criticised the credit arrangement between the two German states:

“Those solicitations are based in many respects on calculations of using economic relations with the GDR as a means of interfering in the sovereign affairs of the republic and gradually eroding the foundations of the socialist system there. They have repeatedly resorted to economic levers in an attempt to break up the peaceful post-war arrangement in Europe, and in particular, to disturb the stability of the GDR. ...(in) an attempt to obtain new channels for exerting political and ideological influence.”

The article continued by referring to the “pharisaical logic” of a cynical West German policy of “limiting the damage” in German-German affairs, which would further complicate the European situation. It was in fact Honecker who had adopted the phrase “limiting the damage”, and by openly attacking political phrases associated with him personally, Moscow was issuing a very serious threat. The *Pravda* authors apparently ignored the fact that by their writing they were giving the impression that the sovereignty of the GDR was not being called into question by the Federal Republic, but by the Soviet Union itself.

*Neues Deutschland* made no mention of this second *Pravda* attack, preferring to report a TASS commentary on the Helsinki anniversary which implicitly supported the East German position by stressing the need to talk with “realistically-minded circles” in the

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37 Asmus 1985 op. cit. p. 13
38 Neubert, Herbert: “The actual tasks of communists”, in *Horizont* No. 8 / 1984
39 Ibid.
40 “On the wrong track”. Unsigned editorial in *Pravda* 2 August 1984
41 Spittmann (1) op. cit. p. 898
West and concluding:

"the policy of détente is not part of the past. It belongs to the future. The outcome of Helsinki has deeply influenced the vital problems of our time and will continue to influence them in the future."42

The latter article increased the speculation over differences within the Soviet leadership over both German-German dialogue and the broader question of general East-West ties. The debate continued to rage throughout the Eastern bloc in August, with reciprocal support between Hungary and the GDR.43

The real reason for the propaganda campaign was the fact that German-German cooperation was contrary to the Soviet strategy of breaking off relations. This was, however, only the tip of the iceberg so to speak. There were real doubts within the Soviet bloc as to the wisdom of the Soviets' arms policy. The Soviet Union was as dogmatic on this issue as it accused the US of being over deployment. Beyond this matter, there were differences with regard to the economic/sociopolitical reforms in the bloc. The Hungarian leadership, particularly, spoke of the need for free international exchange and co-operation with the West if the communist states were to modernise. It was apparent from the positions represented by the leaders of the GDR and Hungary that they were relying on the success of the moderates in the Soviet Union, at least by the next change of leader. On the other hand, the hardliners in the Soviet Union were trying to use the threat of German revanchism to discipline their own bloc members.44

On 18-19 August, Neues Deutschland carried a lengthy interview with Honecker - East Berlin's highest level commentary in the dispute with the Soviet Union.45 In this interview, Honecker appeared to be moving towards the Soviet position without giving anything away. He openly discussed "revanchist" tendencies in the Federal Republic, but he was careful to distinguish between West German "extremists" and the Bonn

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42 Tolkunov, Lev: "The spirit of Helsinki is still alive". From Sovetskaya Kultura and reprinted in Neues Deutschland 4-5 August 1984

43 For example, Bochkar, Jeno: "East German foreign relations: a multilateral dialogue", in Magyarorozog 5 August 1984. East German censorship of Soviet articles it found out of step with its own policy was not an entirely new phenomenon. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Ulbricht had used his control of the press to emphasise his differences of opinion with the Soviet Union. Honecker had begun to use this tactic in late 1983. Neues Deutschland had only published a shortened version of Andropov's speech at the CPSU's plenum in December 1983. When Andropov died in February 1984, only a brief article was dedicated to his leadership, but an article signed A.Z. (hence from the Politburo) on German-German relations and the West German government's declaration of 9 February 1984 was published. Later in February, Neues Deutschland failed to reprint the Pravda article of 16 February in which the key issues of Soviet foreign and domestic policy had been sketched. At the end of the month, Neues Deutschland cut Gromyko's speech of 27 February in such a way as to give the impression that the Soviet Union had a greater interest in and willingness to conduct dialogue with the West than was actually the case. Thus the GDR had set a precedent for its actions of August 1984 earlier in the year. Oldenburg (1) op. cit. pp. 493 - 494

44 Spittmann (2) op. cit. p. 451

government. And whilst he mentioned the Gera demands, he did not make their fulfilment a precondition for further progress in German-German relations. Indeed, he used the interview to defend his policy of “limiting the damage” in German-German affairs, to emphasise the importance of political dialogue and the special “community of responsibility” between the two German states for preserving peace and having a positive influence on the broader European climate. The interview was confirmation of the official line and the continued authority of Honecker as General Secretary. It was an apparent compromise to give the impression of unity in the bloc to the watching Western media, although it was decisively used to the GDR’s advantage.

The lack of cohesion in the Soviet Union at this time was revealed by the TASS reporting of this interview. The initial report on August 18 was in English and carried Honecker’s remarks on the three key issues of political dialogue, East-West German “common responsibilities” and the role of German-German relations within the broader East-West context. The Russian version on 19 August significantly eliminated these key issues, focussing instead on Honecker’s comments about the alliance with the USSR, the rejection of national reunification, and criticism of American foreign policy. On 20 August, Neues Deutschland reprinted the Russian version, thus revealing to the East German population those sections that Moscow had deleted as inappropriate for Soviet domestic consumption.

East Berlin also continued to publish an array of articles from different newspapers and press agencies in both East and West, supporting both the Soviet and East German positions, thus exposing the breadth of the intra-bloc dispute. The most significant support continued to come from Hungary - once more in the person of Matyas Szuros, who continued to laud the importance of good relations between the two German states for the maintenance of peace in Europe and the world. A more provocative ally for Honecker was, however, Nicolae Ceausescu, the Rumanian party and state leader. Indeed, Honecker was the only high-ranking Eastern bloc leader who attended the 40th anniversary celebrations of Rumania’s “liberation” from fascism in Bucharest. His “presence alone at a staged celebration with overt nationalistic overtones could hardly have pleased Moscow.”

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46 Spittmann (2) op. cit. p. 453
47 Asmus 1985 op. cit. pp. 58 - 59
49 Asmus 1985 op. cit. p. 59

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2.4 The cancellation of the visit

On 4 September 1984, Ewald Moldt, the East German permanent representative in West Germany, announced that Honecker's visit was "postponed" for an indefinite period. Moldt, and later Neues Deutschland, linked the decision to the fact that some West German politicians and the conservative Springer press had made declarations that were "unseemly", "detrimental" to the visit and "absolutely unusual in relations between sovereign states." The accusations seemed of secondary importance, and indeed served only as a diplomatic pretext. Until early September, there had been no signs that the visit would be postponed. However, at the Leipzig autumn trade fair, Honecker did not make his customary lengthy stay at the West German stands and the whole manner of his visit there indicated that the situation had changed.

There were a number of reasons for the postponement of the visit. The predominant factor was pressure on the GDR by the Soviet Union. Relations between the superpowers were still at a very low point and the Soviet Union, in confrontational mode, was opposed to the unco-ordinated, undisciplined overtures of its allies to the West. Its de facto veto of the Honecker visit meant that the GDR had to give first priority to the global interests of the Soviet Union in contrast to the national ones of the GDR. The Soviet position was that the GDR should only play a secondary role in conflict resolution and was, therefore, not permitted to pursue a détente policy, when it was not under the control of the Soviet Union and when it did not appear to be weakening the Federal Republic's allegiance to the West. The Soviet Union also feared the risks of a growing political and economic autonomy in the GDR and was concerned that it was about to manoeuvre itself into a dangerous political and economic situation by means of its special relationship with the Federal Republic. The unprecedented Soviet press campaign indicated to the GDR that it regarded closer economic ties with the Federal Republic as a threat to East German sovereignty and to its internal stability. The second credit of July 1984 solicited particular criticism for having such an invidious purpose.

Thus the message to the GDR was clear. The Soviet Union sought to reassert its superpower prerogative to determine the overall character of East-West relations in accordance with its own interests, insisting it had a decisive role and the final say in defining the amount of room for manoeuvre its allies had - in other words determining the degree of autonomy in intra- and interbloc relations. Hence Zhivkov too had to cancel his proposed visit to the Federal Republic - he did not use the Federal Republic as his excuse, but blamed the changed East-West relationship (although it had not changed since the visit had been arranged). The Soviet Union would apparently only tolerate a policy of détente of its own timing and design.

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55 Meyer op. cit. p. 133
This Soviet intervention represented an important message to West Germany and NATO. For the Soviet Union, further rapprochement between the two German states was contingent on greater West German sensitivity to Soviet security interests and on less support for US policies especially in offensive security policy and disarmament negotiations. Strained West German-Soviet relations contributed to the German-German tensions of late 1984. The Soviet Union thus wanted to demonstrate that there was only a limited space for the smaller allies of the US to pursue an independent foreign policy towards Eastern Europe through economic rewards and sanctions, or through the appeal to national sentiments. However, it must be pointed out that the hardliners in Moscow had not succeeded totally. Honecker, and Zhivkov, had only postponed, rather than cancelled, their visits. Indeed Honecker’s comments thereafter made it clear that he regarded it as a tactical move in order to save his overall policy.

The leadership struggles in the Soviet Politburo at that time probably meant that the veto of Honecker’s visit to the Federal Republic represented some sort of uneasy compromise in the unstable balance of power within the Soviet Politburo. The compromise served to halt the process of East-West German or central European détente, ensure bloc discipline on the eve of the forthcoming renewal of the Warsaw Pact in 1985, and provide a more solid basis for the carefully co-ordinated resumption of disarmament negotiations after the presidential elections in the US. The compromise did, however, allow for controllable and prudent contacts between the central European states, particularly the two German states.

The postponement of the visit by Honecker was also due to internal East German factors, not least of which was the fact that the search for more autonomy may have been based on an inaccurate assessment of the attitude of the Soviet leadership. Perhaps the East Germans had neither anticipated such strong resistance, nor fully understood the configuration in Moscow. Honecker had conducted talks with Chernenko in June 1984 and, feeling that he had the Kremlin’s backing or at least tacit consent, had gone on with the preparations. As Chernenko became ill, Gromyko’s more hard line gained influence in the decision-making process. Although it has been argued that Honecker did not go to Moscow for a final approval of his plans to travel to the Federal Republic for fear of a veto by Gromyko, there is speculation that Honecker was summoned to Moscow in late August 1984 to a secret meeting with Chernenko, who made his scepticism of the proposed visit clear and indicated that if the GDR wanted closer contacts with the Federal Republic, then it ought to approach the SPD.

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81 Meyer op. cit. p. 135
82 Seiffert op. cit. p. 1044
83 Meyer op. cit. p. 137
84 Interview with Professor Prokop in January 1992.
Honecker could not be sure that the gains from a visit to the West would be worth the risk of serious conflict with Moscow. This weakened his position and so when pressure from the Soviet Union increased later in the summer of 1984, Honecker had to postpone the visit. An open clash with the Soviet Union, or at the very least the strong displeasure of an important faction in the Soviet Politburo, was too risky. It is clear that the GDR underestimated the restraints on its search for more political autonomy, because in 1984, there were more clearly defined limits on its political and economic autonomy in its relations with the West.

Other internal East German factors played an important role in the decision to postpone the visit, especially Honecker’s desire to achieve an upgrading of the relationship and to promote a dialogue on arms control issues. Once it was clear that Bonn was unwilling to accommodate these interests, the proposed visit lost much of its appeal, and this contributed to Honecker’s decision to postpone the meeting. It is, however, not possible to make a final judgement on the veracity of these reasons until all the evidence becomes available from the former Soviet Union and the GDR.

The Federal Republic too had its share of the responsibility for the postponement of the visit. The West German government offered too little too late in the areas of primary importance to the GDR, thus giving the GDR little chance of presenting the visit as desirable to the Soviet Union. The West German government contributed in its public statements to the fears about its long-term intentions, and its preparations for the visit lacked professionalism and effective leadership. East Germany’s leaders wanted to use the opportunity of the visit to discuss issues of European security, such as weapon free zones within the framework of the “community of responsibility” of the two German states. The West German position was, however, that these issues could most effectively be negotiated between the superpowers, as they had responsibility for such matters. Genscher did propose that an initiative by the two German states for a pledge of the renunciation of force by NATO and the Warsaw Pact be discussed, but this was too little for the GDR.

The Federal Republic’s former stance on détente and securing peace in Europe, and the clear East German position against escalating East-West tensions were the perfect opportunity to develop the German-German “community of responsibility” to its full potential. However, the Federal Republic chose to ignore this issue, indicating a lack of vision for Europe, and an unwillingness to contradict the leading Western power beyond token gestures. In addition, Helmut Kohl had made it clear in a statement in the early summer of 1984 that while he was ready to discuss the four major and long-standing demands of the GDR, he expected no serious results. Other issues such as

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environmental protection and cultural exchange, whilst important to both sides, did not represent substantial gains to the GDR and would not convince the Soviet Union of the necessity of a visit. 

Kohl had not opposed two of his ministers, Zimmermann and Windelen, as well as other right-wing conservatives, when they explicitly called for the revision of borders in Europe earlier in the summer. 

The CDU / CSU hardliners discussed delicate aspects of protocol in a way which significantly irritated the GDR on the sensitive issue of its prestige and position in the international arena. In particular, Alfred Dregger’s comment that “West Germany’s future does not depend on whether Mr. Honecker pays us the honour of a visit” offended the GDR. These comments were subsequently construed by the GDR leadership as a conscious West German attempt to sabotage relations with East Berlin; similarly Kohl’s intention to speak at a rally of West German expellee organisations was portrayed as West German provocation. It must also be pointed out that Dregger’s comments caused an outcry in West Germany, partly because it was assumed that Dregger was speaking for a powerful minority in the CDU uneasy over the Honecker visit. 

It is fair to say that Kohl and other CDU leaders probably underestimated the amount of resistance to German-German rapprochement from the ideologically-oriented national-conservative wing of the CDU / CSU who were opposed to the policy of compromise with the GDR. The CDU did not have enough support for its policy and therefore could not ensure discipline. Other protocol issues, such as the fact that Kohl would not meet Honecker in Bonn, and that the visit would not be honoured with the official protocol of a state visit, also influenced the GDR’s decision, given the high political, symbolic and psychological importance of these issues for the GDR. 

The CDU / FDP coalition did not have a systematic long-range concept of Ost- and Deutschlandpolitik defining the future role of the two German states in European, East-West or global international relations. Its long-term goals were also unclear, and it made too few efforts to convey that the principles of the peaceful and co-operative Ost- and Deutschlandpolitik of the 1970s remained unchanged, and that the concerns of the Soviet Union and its allies were still being taken into consideration. The real goals of West Germany were questioned, particularly given the US’ comments questioning Yalta and the “illegitimate division of Europe”. The Federal government should have made it

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56 Meyer op. cit. pp. 140-142
57 They had contended that the obligations of the 1970 Warsaw Treaty were only valid for the Federal Republic, and that once Germany was reunited, it would also be permitted to reclaim its eastern territories. In Frey op. cit. p. 137
58 Dregger was the floor leader of the governing CDU at the time. His comments were given in an interview with Die Welt on 21 August 1984
59 Asmus 1985 op. cit. p. 71
60 Meyer op. cit. p. 143
clear that the policy of improved contacts with the GDR would not endanger the stability of the GDR nor the balance of power in Europe. However, the shortcomings of the West German government were not the primary cause of the postponement, as the roles of the Soviet Union and the GDR revealed.

2.5 Evaluation

The postponement of the visit and the events of September 1984 appeared to restore harmony to the Eastern bloc. It was surprising, however, that the postponement had not taken place earlier. The factors contributing to the duration of the dispute were several:

1. The unsettled leadership situation in the Kremlin, and the generally disordered nature of Soviet policy in this period significantly enhanced the potential for miscalculation on the part of East European elites groping to find the fine line of tolerable autonomy. But the discord was not solely a serious breakdown in communication.

2. Perhaps more significant was the fact that East German perceptions on what Szuros termed the “national” and the “international” had themselves changed, hence the GDR laid claim to a new role within the Warsaw Pact concomitant with its growing economic and political weight.

3. Honecker’s position was further strengthened by the fact that his leadership position at home was uncontested and the SED appeared to be a model of political stability. East Berlin used its acquired leverage to articulate more forcefully what it perceived as its own interests. The replacement of Abrassimov by Kotschemassov was an important step in East Berlin’s efforts to enhance its own leverage within the bloc.

The discord was over the means, not the ends, of policy. It did not imply that East Germany was to become another Rumania, or break loose from the Warsaw Pact. Unlike other conflicts in the Eastern bloc, there were no differences between the Soviet Union and the GDR in terms of the internal socialist order (at that stage). The conflict was solely about the concept of world policy of the socialist states and in particular its effects and shape in relation to Europe. Honecker was not about to sacrifice bloc membership on the altar of German-German détente, any more than West Germany was likely to cut its ties with the West in pursuit of Ostpolitik. Their primary allegiance was to the blocs. However, it did highlight East Germany’s stake in détente with the Federal Republic and the dilemmas this posed for the Soviet Union’s ability to manage its relations with Bonn. Despite the postponement of the visit which led to only a brief cooling of relations, they maintained a strong interest in improved relations, and

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61 Meyer op. cit. p. 144
62 Asmus 1985 op. cit. p. 15
63 Seiffert op. cit. p. 1044

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the GDR indicated this by allowing Jo Leinen, a prominent peace activist, to visit East Berlin, in late September 1984.

Nevertheless, there was a stiffening in the East German line and an obvious staged attempt to restore fraternal harmony at the end of September 1984. Pressure from Moscow on the SED leaders to use Soviet security interests as the major criteria in their relations with the Federal Republic increased, and this led to an intensification of SED propaganda towards the Federal Republic. Anti-West German rhetoric began to emanate from East Berlin, allowing the Soviet Union the opportunity to use the GDR’s 35th anniversary celebrations to portray East Berlin as the type of model ally it had been so often in the past. In October 1984, despite continuing friction and the need for “more effective coordination” of the GDR’s and the Soviet Union’s foreign policies, the East German leaders put the citizenship question back on the agenda under Soviet instructions. It did not, however, use this issue as the basis for discussions with the Federal Republic so as not to preclude progress in the relationship.65

It has been argued that the conflict did not start with the polemics of 1984, but rather with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan. The events of 1984 merely brought the conflict into the open, as a consequence of long-term trends in the Eastern bloc. It was clear from the early 1980s that there were differences, particularly between the Soviet Union and the GDR, with regard to détente and the continuation of political and economic relations between East and West, and particularly with the Federal Republic. There had been debates on the value of “hard” and “soft” policies for many years among theorists and political leaders. The INF issue merely intensified the debate, although it had been carried on in Soviet and East German journals since 1979. The GDR adopted a more or less positive position towards the Federal Republic, usually in direct contradiction of the Soviet line. Thus the 1984 conflict was as much a national conflict as an ideological one.66

The SED leaders judged the existing balance of power in East-West relations more realistically than the Soviet Union did, basing their assessment on the fact that the West had huge economic, technical and military potential, and therefore could not be forced to succumb to Soviet demands. The conflict was played out at party level and in discussions between the foreign ministers, rather than being allowed to impinge on state-state relations. Throughout the year Honecker had hoped for a personnel and conceptual change in the Soviet Union which would mean support for his policies.67 However, when this did in fact occur, it created unforeseen ideological problems in the domestic arena for Honecker.

65 Jung op. cit. p. 394
66 Frey op. cit. pp. 129 - 130
67 Saiffert op. cit. p. 1053 - 1059
The conspicuousness of the visit to West Germany had to be sacrificed in order to keep the basic political line unchanged. Since the Geneva summit changed at least some negative trends in the US-USSR relations, Honecker's policy found some justification. After 1983, there was more room for manoeuvre in foreign policy not because of weakness in the Soviet leadership, but because it allowed its allies extra room as long as they did not come into conflict with the global strategy of the Soviet Union. Indeed, the Soviet Union hoped that East Germany would win gains for its own global policy from German-German relations. Hence there was a kind of linkage in these relations. The SED Politburo had demonstrated “excellent hibernating abilities during the East-West winter.” The GDR leaders successfully used this time for the improvement of their international standing, with a series of visits to leading Western countries and return visits to the GDR. This, however, was not the only reason for the increased diplomatic activity. From East Berlin’s point of view, this also served as a contribution to the lessening of tensions between East and West, and thus consolidated the whole socialist bloc.

The core of the dispute in 1984 was the sovereignty of the GDR in its relations with the Soviet Union, with the visit to West Germany the symbolic central issue of the dispute. Up to 1983, the GDR regarded it as essential to keep differences away from public view in order to gain more room for manoeuvre in German-German relations. That these differences in 1984 were made public throughout the Eastern bloc, and the GDR’s particular role, were signs that Honecker no longer believed that his political survival was solely dependent on the Soviet Union, but that his legitimacy had increased within the GDR. Indeed, Honecker’s Deutschlandpolitik, whereby the GDR had evolved from a passive to an active player capable of taking its own initiatives, was believed to be popular domestically, and incremental changes in elite perceptions of both the dangers and the fruits of détente had occurred. Had the party leaders wanted to conceal their differences, their control of the media would have made this possible. That they chose not to do so was very significant. Some argued that it was proof that Moscow had no alternative but to pursue this path because the diplomatic channels were closed. That such real contradictions between East Berlin and Moscow existed was almost sacrilege, and must have gone deeper than actually became apparent. The Soviet bloc was no longer monolithic (if it ever had been), and it was not by chance that the two states who had given most support to the GDR were Hungary and Poland who

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**Footnotes:**


69 Pfeiler 1989 op. cit. p. 42


also played the leading roles in the reform process at the end of the 1980s.72

The GDR was neither trying to diminish its ties with the Soviet Union, nor to introduce far-reaching economic and political change in the GDR. Rather it strove to complement its relations with Moscow with a more open Western orientation to become a partner in a broader process of European détente. Bloc loyalty remained the absolute condition for the policy. The SED was redefining its traditional role within the parameters set by Soviet hegemony. In 1984,

“Honecker’s primary goal ... remained the preservation and, if possible, improvement of the inter-German dialogue in the hope that good relations between Bonn and East Berlin would facilitate the resumption of the East-West dialogue, the de facto practising of Szuros’ theory on the role of small- and medium-sized countries during times of superpower tensions.”73

“The Kremlin had, however, paid a price for its attempts to impose an isolationist approach and to enforce bloc discipline throughout the year. It had of course ultimately succeeded in enforcing its will, but the fashion in which this dispute was handled was hardly a testimony to a far-sighted management of Soviet-East European affairs. Speaking at the 9th SED CC plenum one year after his ‘damage limitation’ speech that proved the harbinger of discord between East Berlin and Moscow, Honecker’s restrained language hardly concealed his ongoing commitment to dialogue with the West, including the FRG. The rift had been papered over, but not yet resolved.”74

Indeed, the ideological debate within the Soviet bloc continued, though less fervently, throughout 1985. The line that the new Soviet leadership under Gorbachev would take was still unclear, but the GDR and Hungary resumed their former ideological positions and cultivated better relations with the Federal Republic in the summer of 1985 after several months of poor relations.

The whole issue of the conflict within the Warsaw Pact must be seen within the context of not only the deteriorating superpower relations but also with regards to the divisibility of détente and the Europeanisation of Europe. Soviet relations with the US and the West in general were very poor due to the INF crisis etc., and the weakness of the Soviet Union given its leadership crisis was exploited by the GDR (and Hungary etc) in order to improve their relationship with the West, particularly the Federal Republic. There were real doubts within the Eastern bloc as to the wisdom of Soviet strategy at that time. These differences illustrated the extent to which the GDR was driving for improved German-German relations despite continued superpower hostility.

72 Interviews with Dr. Zimmer, Profs. Prokop, Hahn and Hocke.
73 Asmus 1985 op. cit. p. 16
74 Ibid. pp. 17 - 18
2.6 The consequences on German-German relations

An important consequence of the events of the autumn of 1984 was the breakdown of the West German consensus on Ostpolitik. The SPD abandoned support for and began to criticise the government's policy, and indeed, it began to develop its own policy towards the GDR. This "second wave of Ostpolitik" (or "Nebenaußenpolitik" as its critics preferred to call it) was characterised by the agreements on security issues reached with the SED. The rise of a new SPD policy coincided with a resurgence of right-wing rhetoric within the CDU/CSU coalition. Dregger, Hupka and Czaja continued to call into question Eastern borders which endangered relations not only with the GDR, but also with the rest of the Soviet bloc. This was because Kohl's pragmatic policy to the East had suffered from its first severe setback, allowing the hardliners in the CDU to become more assertive. This caused suspicion in both East and West. Kohl's own actions also compromised the situation. He agreed to speak at the annual convention of expellees from Silesia in April 1985, although their slogan was the provocative "Silesia remains ours". Though the slogan was revised, there were still doubts over the government's commitment to Ostpolitik.  

Against this background, however, German-German relations maintained their stability (despite Honecker's concessions to the Soviet position mentioned above). Indeed, there was a significant continuity at a practical level. Negotiations on some issues did stagnate, but progress was made in questions of traffic - for example a new border checkpoint was opened, and an agreement on potassium mining was signed in December 1984. An improvement in US-Soviet relations, after Reagan's re-election, and particularly the resumption of US-Soviet arms control talks in Geneva were welcomed by the two German states. The East German policy of more contacts with the West initially bypassed the Federal Republic because of the continued right-wing rhetoric emanating from there and because of the continuing propaganda against Bonn from Moscow. Honecker met senior members of the Austrian, British, Italian and French governments.

When the GDR leaders turned to the Federal Republic, it was initially the SPD that they approached. This served as the catalyst for inter-governmental relations between the two German states and in March 1985, Hermann Axen met Genscher and Schäuble in Bonn - the first time a West German foreign minister had received a leading member of the SED Politburo in Bonn. The spring trade fair in Leipzig once again proved an accurate gauge of German-German relations. Honecker visited West German stands, commended Kohl for his state of the nation speech and expressed optimism about the future of German-German relations. Bangemann, West German trade minister, then became the first government official to meet Honecker for more than a year.

\[74\text{Frey op. cit. p. 137}\]
3 Chernenko’s funeral, March 1985

In open contradiction to Soviet propaganda, on 28 February 1985, Neues Deutschland reported Chancellor Kohl’s state of the nation speech from the previous day in which he confirmed

“the inviolability of borders and respect for territorial integrity and sovereignty of all states in Europe in their present borders as a basic condition for peace”.

Not only had Kohl recognised the post-war borders, but he had also used the term “Poland’s Western border” for the Oder-Neisse line for the first time, which contributed to the end of the “quarantine” that the Soviet Union had imposed on its allies’ relations with the Federal Republic.

This gradual “rehabilitation” of the Federal Republic meant that Chernenko’s funeral provided an opportunity for Honecker and Kohl to conduct a noticeably friendly conversation over a period of two hours on 12 March 1985 and release a communiqué that was both commendatory of the past and optimistic about the future of German-German relations, despite the less than warm reception Kohl received from Gorbachev, the new Soviet leader. The declaration was joint affirmation of the status quo, building on what Kohl had said in February. The two leaders agreed that with the resumption of the arms control dialogue between the US and the Soviet Union a new phase in East-West relations could be introduced, in which relations would improve. The importance of political dialogue and co-operation between East and West was not to be underestimated. Progress to the benefit of the people would contribute to improving the political climate and confidence building in East-West relations. Kohl’s comments on the inviolability of borders were repeated exactly and it was stressed that peace, not war, should emanate from German soil. The two leaders agreed to develop normal neighbourly relations between the two German states on the basis of the Basic Treaty in the interests of peace and stability in Europe.

The declaration was seen in the GDR as a step towards the acceptance of the GDR by the Federal Republic. Kohl had accepted the borders in Europe, including implicitly that between the two German states, and the formulation of this declaration played a major part in discussions between representatives of the two German states. Although fears of a change in policy under the CDU-led government had been mitigated with the

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76 “Bericht der Bundesregierung zur Lage der Nation im geteilten Deutschland von Bundeskanzler Dr. Helmut Kohl”, in Innerdeutsche Beziehungen op cit pp. 206 - 212. Here p. 208. Also reprinted as “Kohl für Unverletzlichkeit der Grenzen in Europa”. Neues Deutschland 28 February 1985

77 Frey op. cit. p. 140


79 Interview with Professor Hahn in January 1992.
developments of 1983 and 1984, the Kohl-Honecker declaration of March 1985 removed lingering fears by indicating that continuity in Deutschlandpolitik was permanent.\(^8^0\) It was important because of the increasing frequency of soapbox speeches in the Federal Republic about the unity of Germany, and Germany within the borders of 1937. With some justification, such observations by members of the Federal government had caused irritation not just in the GDR but throughout Eastern Europe. Hence the declaration by Kohl on the inviolability of borders was enormously important.\(^8^1\) It was basically a confirmation of the status quo in Europe expressed for the first time by the Kohl government in concrete terms.

From the Federal Republic’s point of view, the joint declaration of March 1985 was very important because it was the basis for the GDR policy of allowing more young people to travel to West Germany. This was regarded as a very important development which eventually contributed to the collapse of the GDR. This human dimension of the declaration was significant for the Federal Republic because it kept alive the links between the young people in East and West Germany, and most importantly it allowed the young East Germans to gain a more realistic picture of the Federal Republic. The increasing number of visitors below pension age was also a major contributory factor in the process of preparing Honecker’s visit to the Federal Republic in September 1987 - part of the *quid pro quo* policy.\(^8^2\)

The meeting between the two German leaders at Chemenko’s funeral highlighted their continued desire to improve German-German relations despite the unclear situation between the superpowers. Gorbachev had been named successor to Chernenko but it was not clear how he would approach the problems facing the Soviet Union. Until his policies were implemented, the GDR continued to pursue relations with the West to its advantage.

4 Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to ascertain how far the two German states were able to insulate their relations from the general East-West climate around them. Indeed, the deteriorating international situation at the beginning of the 1980s had an observable impact on the development of German-German relations. There was an awareness that unless a new direction was undertaken in international politics then a war would perhaps become unavoidable and that the two German states would be the first affected by any such war. As a result of the emerging European commonalities at the beginning of the last decade, the two German states were able to manipulate a certain amount of

\(^{80}\) Interview with Professor Prokop in January 1992.  
\(^{81}\) Interview with Herr Meyer in January 1992.  
\(^{82}\) Interview with Dr. Dobiey in January 1992.
独立的行动空间，从而在它们的联盟中各自发展，这使得它们能够将国际关系与周边超级大国之间的对抗在安全政策领域分离出来，使它们在数年中发展自己的关系，即使冒着破坏与各自盟国关系的风险。对此，德意志联邦共和国和德意志民主共和国两国务实政策证明了成为一种在一定程度上与和平政策等价的积极支持从它们的盟友那获得，并减少了在中央欧洲的紧张局势，从而在分界线处两套体系中造成的紧张局势。

在1980年代初，由于前十年的缓和政策，欧洲各国之间已建立了一个合作基础设施，其中包括德国和欧洲各国之间的合作。这些欧洲国家的共同努力以保持缓和政策的成果，反对超级大国的动荡，形成了两个德国国家可以发展对话政策的框架，尽管这导致了联盟内部的摩擦。这两个德国国家对军事威慑下的共同经历和不安全，为缓和政策的德国-德国关系提供了新质量的机会。

在1983年至1985年间，德国民主共和国不得不接受部署在自己领土上的SS-20导弹和短程导弹，但它认为这些导弹是欧洲和平的不稳定因素，而不是相反。对于东德人来说，获得作为一个独立国家的承认并对自己的合作伙伴进行对话以加强这种承认是至关重要的。在某种意义上，它被迫进行对话以保持独立，但政策完全被SED领导人接受，并导致了联盟内部的摩擦。同样地，联邦共和国也希望和期望它的新角色会加强其在EC和NATO中的地位，尤其是相对美国。它也面临着来自自身人口和盟友的强烈压力。

从1980年代初开始，似乎随着超级大国关系的恶化，德国和德国的关系改善。这种逆相关性持续到1985年，尽管这给这两个德国国家带来了压力。通过克服对抗的倾向，可以认为这两个德国国家确实扮演了欧洲缓和过程的先驱角色。在这个过程中，德国和德国关系的一个新维度增加了，即安全。

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Though this was limited, it was hoped that the situation would change under the new Soviet leader.

Thus up to the mid-1980s, the two German states had been able to counter the prevalent confrontation in East-West relations and maintain German-German détente on the whole, despite the conflicts this embroiled them in within their own alliances.
CHAPTER FIVE

GERMAN-GERMAN RELATIONS IN THE GORBACHEV ERA, 1985 - 1989

In March 1985, Mikhail Gorbachev became the youngest Soviet leader since World War II. Although the domestic conditions in the Soviet Union were his immediate concern, it was apparent that his accession also signalled a new era in international relations. It is the purpose of this chapter to consider how far the two German states were able to maintain their policy of German-German détente under the changing circumstances in the second half of the 1980s, and whether their relationship had any influence, whether direct or indirect, on the development of East-West relations in general. The nature of the relationship between German-German relations and the superpower climate will also be considered.

1 The impact of Gorbachev

When Gorbachev first came to power, it was not clear whether the Eastern Europeans would have more room for manoeuvre or not. Gorbachev’s Westpolitik appeared at that time not to allow the other Warsaw Pact states as much leeway in their foreign affairs as in their domestic economic policies. Much in fact appeared to speak for a stronger link with Soviet interests in this field.1 The Warsaw Pact was renewed on 26 April 1985 for twenty years, despite fears that some states would oppose wholesale re-adoption of the terms of the original agreement. Gromyko remained as foreign secretary for the first few months and reiterated that continuing INF deployment in the Federal Republic as well as West German participation in SDI were major obstacles to improving German-German relations. Indeed, even though Gromyko had, by then, been made state president (primarily a representative position), on 21 June 1985, an article in Pravda, written under the pseudonym “O. Vladimirov”, sharply attacked national economic experiments and the détente policies of unnamed East European states. It called for increased bloc solidarity and was the strongest affirmation of Soviet dominance in the Eastern bloc since the attacks against the GDR of 1984;2

Thus, even in 1985, there were real worries as to how far the Soviet Union would be willing to let the GDR move in terms of its Westpolitik, given the threat that the new American policies posed to the Soviet Union. It was feared that there would be stalemate until the Soviet Union had appraised American policy and made the necessary responses. However, the position of the GDR had been indicated at Chernenko’s

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2 Frey op. cit. p. 143
funeral by the joint declaration with Kohl, demonstrating that the GDR’s policy was not going to change significantly in the short-term. The Rumanian leader, Ceaucescu, visited East Berlin in May 1985, demonstrating that the East Berlin-Bucharest axis, which had developed in the summer of 1984, had become a permanent feature of Eastern European politics and had the potential to strengthen the GDR’s position vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, although there is no evidence that it was ever used for this purpose. The GDR’s position was also strengthened by the Soviet Union’s need for new high technology to overcome the problems of the Soviet economy.

“Since inter-German trade constitutes one of the main windows for Western technology and is a major factor for the GDR’s economic stability, it was difficult for the Kremlin to call for advances in technology while at the same time discouraging inter-German ties.”

Despite initial hesitations, the rise to power of Gorbachev in the Soviet Union was greeted with cautious optimism, by the GDR leadership because, after the first few months, his foreign policies seemed to be more in line with the SED’s policy of dialogue with the West. As Gorbachev began to make his mark on the international scene, to some extent the GDR was vindicated in its espousal of dialogue with the West in order to make a positive contribution to the stabilisation of the world. However, Gorbachev posed the greatest international and domestic challenge to the aging GDR leaders that they had ever faced. The new thinking and new policies seemed initially in complete harmony with the views of the SED leadership, especially in security and disarmament matters. The most serious challenge was in human rights and freedoms. The citizens of the GDR were made aware of their isolation from the rest of the world, and pressure began to mount within the GDR. East Germany had to open up more to the West in accordance with the final document of the Vienna review conference of the C.S.C.E. This led to periods of tough restriction and moments of benevolence in the GDR’s policy on travel to the West, making the GDR population aware of the lack of regulations in this sphere. The post-1985 détente, to which the GDR had contributed, had other serious repercussions on the GDR. The idea of common security for East and West in view of the growing interdependence of states and societies was eagerly taken up by the SED, but it had unforeseen consequences.

In the early 1980s, the West German government had been accused of declaring its own interest in peace whilst stationing missiles against the East, supporting SDI and maintaining revanchist dreams with the idea of an open German question. However, after Gorbachev had come to power, the Soviet Union was willing to improve its relations with the Federal Republic if Bonn’s policy actually corresponded to the interests of peace and security. This position was supported by Honecker who had argued that because West Germany supported the US’ destructive policy, then it

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3 Frey op. cit. p. 144
4 See Lehne 1991 op. cit.
damaged its own relations with the East, and went against the interests of peace in Europe. In terms of the future of the two German states, Gorbachev argued that only history could decide.

The significance of Gorbachev’s reassessment of the situation in Eastern Europe after 1985 was most clearly revealed in 1989, when Gorbachev’s renunciation of the Brezhnev doctrine of limited sovereignty provided the other East European states with the opportunity at last to take care of their own internal and external affairs. Hungary opened its borders on 2 May 1989, and this led eventually to the mass flood of East Germans to West Germany, leaving the regime helpless, an emperor without clothes. The non-violent nature of the revolution was partly attributable to another effect of détente, for the leadership knew that in the prevailing international climate, a “Chinese solution” would have pushed them into total isolation. (that is, the use of force to suppress the demonstrations, as in Tiananmen Square).

2 The SDI controversy

The situation in 1985 must be seen in the context of the SDI debate. There had been the same initial response to the question of SDI as to the NATO twin-track decision of 1979 and its implementation in 1983, from the Eastern bloc. There were Soviet and East German declarations and indications that West Germany’s participation in the SDI programme would seriously affect the state of German-German relations and their future. In March 1985, at Chernenko’s funeral, Gorbachev had made it clear to Kohl that progress in both West German-Soviet relations and in German-German relations was dependent on West German abstention from the SDI programme. This point was reiterated in Pravda a few days later:

“Of decisive importance will be what policy the Federal Republic will conduct in respect to the security interests of the USSR and its allies.”

The concept of an arms race in space and the expenses involved would have crippled still further the Soviet economy, the predicament of which had already forced the Soviets to return to the nuclear bargaining table in Geneva. In a letter to Kohl in June 1985, Honecker confirmed this stance; he too noted that West German participation in Star Wars (the popular name for the initiative) would inevitably have a negative effect on German-German relations.³

Despite the fact that the SDI programme was highly emotive among the European public, especially in the Federal Republic, Kohl vacillated for months. After Reagan’s visit to the military cemetery in Bitburg during his trip to Europe to commemorate the 40th anniversary of the defeat of Nazi Germany, Kohl announced West German cooperation in SDI, although, in May, he partly reversed his position, acknowledging that

³ Frey op. cit. p. 141
³ See “Willy Brandt bei Erich Honecker” in Der Spiegel Nr. 39 September 23 1985 pp. 22 - 23

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SDI offered both chances and risks. Access to advanced high technology eventually swung the decision for the Federal Republic by 1986, despite the opposition of the SPD and more significantly of the FDP under Genscher, the latter opposing participation in the SDI programme precisely because of the damage it could cause to relations with Eastern Europe. Throughout 1985, the Soviet Union turned to other Western European states in its efforts to reach accommodation with the West, and even when it turned to the Federal Republic, like the GDR, it initially supported contacts with the SPD.

The GDR acknowledged that the Federal Republic had taken on another heavy responsibility to the detriment of world peace, but it, the GDR, was still interested in dialogue with the Federal government - as it had been in the autumn of 1983. Thus the GDR leadership was continuing its efforts to improve the relations, in other words to maintain damage limitation, despite the Federal government’s decision. Thus German-German relations continued to develop positively despite the confrontation the SDI proposal caused between the superpowers. However, both the US and Soviet leaders acknowledged that the situation could not continue as it was and considered more seriously a policy of dialogue and disarmament. The results of the Geneva and subsequent summits between the two world powers revealed the foundation for an improved superpower relationship, removing some of the deep-seated German worries as to whether the German-German achievements could continue to be safeguarded should another period of confrontation in Soviet-US relations have developed.

The SDI question also had less effect on German-German relations than the NATO twin-track decision because the GDR’s security interests were less directly affected by SDI. There were, however, other differences, not least the question of implementation, between the situation in 1985 and that as a result of the NATO twin-track decision of 1979. The latter decision and its implementation four years later were steps in the rearmament process between East and West, but they did not signal a qualitative change in the global security situation. The element of a “qualitative leap” highlighted the controversy over SDI. This initiative posed a greater challenge to the Soviet Union than the Pershing II and Cruise missiles ever had. The experience of the GDR in 1983 when it pursued its policy of damage limitation against Soviet interests could not necessarily, therefore, be repeated as a consequence of the SDI decision.

3 How were German-German relations affected by these events?

In early 1985, Chernenko’s lengthy absence from the helm of power and the inconsistency of members of the Federal government, for example participation at the Silesian expellees’ congress, which led to accusations of revanchism from the GDR,
meant that relations between the two German states only progressed slowly. The limited youth exchange programme was resumed, and visits by East Germans on urgent family business to the Federal Republic increased by 20% in the first half of 1985. Economic experts reached agreement on an extension to the swing credit in July (it was increased to DM 800 million annually). In return, the GDR agreed to curb the flow of Asian refugees from East Berlin to the West. This was an apparent solution to a problem for West Berlin, but it was a relatively small concession on the part of the GDR, reflecting its bargaining strength, and it was later realised that the agreement did not in fact cover West Berlin.

An important development was made in the field of cultural relations in 1985, when the two states were able to agree on the inclusion of West Berlin in their negotiations. German-German cultural events flourished, and, in December 1985, the two states presented a framework for a cultural agreement which was signed in May 1986. Economic co-operation continued too, but ideological disputes disrupted relations. Kohl gave his speech to the Silesian expellees, and the GDR re-introduced the issue of the Elbe border, questioning the West German interpretation of the border controversy. There was also increasing domestic pressure on the Federal government to reach compromise on this issue, as it was believed this would pave the way for a visit by Honecker to the Federal Republic.

In August 1985, the East-West relationship was rocked by the defection of the chief of West German counter-intelligence, Hans Joachim Tiedge, to the GDR, having been revealed as a spy. Indeed, this had severe consequences for Western security, but the two German states were able to shield their bilateral relations. During the autumn trade fair in Leipzig, Strauß met Honecker for discussions on the state of the relations. This reflected the stability of German-German relations and the ability of the two German states to isolate themselves from the constraints created by membership of hostile military alliances. The improvement in the superpower relationship also contributed to this process. Moreover

"with the summit meeting between Reagan and Gorbachev in Geneva on November 19 and 20 1985, East-West relations seemed to have come full circle since 1979. The United States and the Soviet Union had returned to a state of affairs similar to the one before Afghanistan and Poland. Each was again in basic agreement with its allies over the correct policy toward the other bloc."

8 Frey op. cit. p. 144. The GDR had been allowing Asian refugees, particularly Tamils, to fly to East Berlin and from there enter West Berlin without visas.
10 Frey op. cit. p. 146

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Whilst this augured well for the development of German-German relations because they remained sensitive to fluctuations in superpower relations (this was confirmed in an interview with Honecker in *Die Zeit* where Honecker regarded it as encouraging and positive for the future development of relations), they had developed an independence which transcended the uncertainties of superpower relations. At that stage, superpower relations had not actually begun to improve in substance, whereas German-German initiatives were occurring in all spheres. The question of whether there was a danger for the two German states of the superpowers getting on too well was not pertinent then. However, even after the summit, when Gorbachev would have accepted a visit by Honecker to the Federal Republic, he chose not to go and saw no great sense of urgency despite his age. The Soviet Union was exerting some pressure on the GDR. In the autumn of 1985, Herbert Häber, a Deutschlandpolitik expert and Honecker protégé, who was instrumental in the policy of 1984, was forced out of the Politburo only eighteen months after having joined it. This must be regarded as a way of getting rid of the cause of the failed Deutschlandpolitik in the eyes of the Soviet Union, particularly with regard to the question of a Honecker visit to the Federal Republic, but an interest in an active German policy (Westpolitik) remained strong within the SED leadership.

On 31 January 1986, *Die Zeit* published an interview with Honecker, conducted by Theo Sommer. They were basically five main points in the interview. Firstly, there were many unused opportunities to develop political relations. Secondly, economic cooperation could be expanded. Honecker warned that there were too many illusions about the importance of town-twinings and did not mention the possibility of a general relaxation in travel restrictions. Fourthly, the GDR was willing to allow on-site inspections for disarmament and arms control measures, but it was up to the Federal Republic to discuss these issues with the GDR. And finally, he acknowledged that should the Pershing and SS-20 missiles be removed from the two parts of Europe by the US and the Soviet Union, then the GDR would also be willing to have the short-range missiles removed from its territory. Honecker did not speculate on the possibility of a visit to the Federal Republic that year. This was almost certainly because of problems with the Soviet Union, the scheduling of the Soviet party conference and that of the SED, as well as regional elections in the Federal Republic.13

During the interview with *Die Zeit*, Honecker had announced that Horst Sindermann, the president of the Volkskammer, would be visiting the Federal Republic on 19 February for four days. He had been invited by the SPD in 1984, but the sudden

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announcement of a firm date took the West Germans by surprise. During the visit, Sindermann met the president of the Bundestag, Jenninger (although not in his office in the Bundestag) and Chancellor Kohl for two hours (the meeting had been scheduled for 45 minutes). He also had conversations with the leaders of the party groups in the Bundestag. Several journalists accompanied Sindermann which meant that there were detailed reports in GDR newspapers of the issues discussed. The significance of this visit was that it tested the protocol as well as the proposed route for a visit by Erich Honecker. (Sindermann visited Trier and Saarbücken as well as Bonn).

In 1986, German-German relations continued to maintain a healthy balance, for a variety of reasons. The GDR's economy had apparently been growing at a comfortable rate of 2.5 - 5% annually throughout the 1980s, whilst reducing its foreign debt. Relations between the GDR and the Soviet Union had changed significantly as the GDR had become Moscow's most important ideological, economic and strategic ally. Although the Soviet Union at times questioned the pace of developments in the German-German field, Moscow was reluctant to imperil relations too much because of the economic advantages and channel of communication to the West these relations offered. Indeed, East Germany had a new-found bargaining strength and could influence German-German relations as a result.

Moreover, some in the Federal Republic were prepared to reassess certain issues in order to promote German-German relations. It was in 1985 and 1986 that the question of acceding to the Gera demands was raised once again. The Salzgitter monitoring station was regarded by many as superfluous and a remnant of the Cold War. SPD-run Länder no longer contributed to its upkeep, and even Ottfried Hennig, State Secretary for Inter-German Relations, proposed the abolition of the monitoring station in 1986 in exchange for East German guarantees not to shoot "border crossers". This led to controversy within the Federal government, and was never implemented, but it is significant that such issues were considered within the ruling elite. A solution to the Elbe border issue would have facilitated environmental protection agreements, and it was rumoured to have support among CDU politicians at Land-level. Perhaps the most controversial question was raised by Oskar Lafontaine who, in November 1985, stated that East German citizenship would have to be recognised in the long run in the interest of improving inter-German travel. However, none of the demands would have gained majority support even under an SPD-led government (because of the braking role the

16 McAdams 1986 op. cit. pp. 149 - 150
17 Ibid. p. 151
18 Ibid.
FDP would have played in the coalition)."

Other than the Sindermann visit, the most significant events of 1986 were the first town-twinning agreement signed between Saarlouis and Eisenhüttenstadt on 25 April, which triggered a whole series of further town-twinning, and on 6 May, the Cultural Agreement was signed by the two German states. The purpose of the agreement was to increase cultural activity between the two German states, but in practice it afforded writers etc. in the GDR, who were interested in relations with West Germany, an instrument that could be called upon vis-à-vis their own authorities.20 In terms of travel between East and West, numbers continued to rise of East Germans below pension age who were allowed to visit the Federal Republic. This development was almost certainly related to the credits guaranteed by the West German government and the March 1985 declaration.21

Relations between the two German states in 1986 and 1987 were influenced by the Soviet Union to the extent that it conducted a propaganda campaign against the Federal Republic in order to try to influence US policy. Gorbachev had not rejected dialogue policy per se but intended it to be used as an instrument of Soviet security policy. The GDR felt restrained in its relations with the Federal Republic as the dynamic of Gorbachev’s policy highlighted the first signs of ideological stagnation in the GDR. Though German-German relations did not stagnate, neither did they advance significantly. Improving Soviet-West German relations, as a result of Genscher’s visit to Moscow in July 1986, experienced another setback in early 1987 when Kohl tactlessly compared Gorbachev to Goebbels, Hitler’s propaganda minister. It took a visit by President von Weizsäcker to the Soviet Union in July 1987 to ease the situation. Whilst this had no direct bearing on German-German relations, it did overshadow the situation. Thus at that stage, an improvement in the general East-West climate was of benefit to the micro-climate of German-German relations.22 The Reykjavik summit meeting between Reagan and Gorbachev, which ushered in a new détente in global politics, and where a consensus was reached between the two leaders on the goal of nuclear disarmament, was instrumental in this process.

Throughout 1987, the GDR pursued a fairly liberal policy of allowing many thousands of East Germans to travel to the Federal Republic. Indeed, by the end of the year, it was estimated that over a million GDR citizens below pension age had visited the West

21 Interview with Dr. Zimmer in June 1991.
(compared with 543,000 in 1986). Travel arrangements between the two German states had never been formally agreed and were often used by the GDR to release mounting pressure among the East German population. Thus they were apt to fluctuate, but the development was positive in 1987. However, on 1 July 1987, the amount of money East Germans were allowed to exchange before travelling West was drastically reduced from 10 Marks daily (at a ratio of 1:1 [one Ostmark to one Deutschmark]), to a maximum sum of 15DM for the trip. This was for travellers of any age and was justified by the East German authorities by reference to the hard currency problems the GDR was facing.22 This did not, however, reduce the number of East Germans who wanted to travel to West Germany, but it did serve to make them more beholden to their West German friends and relatives.

4 The debate on the role of the GDR in the development of “new thinking”

In order to be able to assess the role of the GDR in the development of “new thinking”, it is first necessary briefly to explain what Soviet “new thinking” was and then to extrapolate the basis of the changes. “New thinking” was a different approach to foreign policy adopted by the Soviet Union after 1985 given the exigencies of the nuclear age, whereby it was more willing to co-operate with the West, and the UN, in order to offset the economic difficulties in the Soviet Union. Policy was no longer defined by the conditions of the class war, but by the “logic of the nuclear age” with the aim of preventing a “nuclear inferno”.24 The main aim was worldwide denuclearisation - in other words, all nuclear weapons and other weapons of mass destruction were to be removed gradually and totally by the year 2000. Gorbachev was the first Soviet leader to acknowledge that not only was a nuclear war impossible to win, but that a continuation of the arms race would ruin the Soviet Union financially. In the age of mutually assured destruction, the concept of security had to be extended. Only common security, where security was reciprocal, was possible, making superiority the clear fallacy it had always been in the nuclear age, because all states were inter-dependent in their need to survive. Competition between the two systems had to be peaceful, based on economic strength, political persuasiveness and morality; that is, it was no longer to be measured in military terms. Any conflict had to be solved by legal political means. “New thinking” was developed in the face of the US’ determination to continue with SDI which might have made a nuclear war winnable.

The concept of peaceful coexistence was revised by Gorbachev. Khrushchev had used the term to mean relaxed relations between the two systems, but he still regarded it as a

22 Zieger 1988 op. cit. p. 231
specific form of the class struggle and did not exclude sharp ideological confrontation. For Gorbachev, coexistence was determined by the dialectics between state and class interests which were not identical. Human values had priority in the nuclear age, although the necessity of the co-operation of the whole of humanity did not reduce the problems of the struggle between socialism and capitalism. The class struggle had, however, to be used to maintain peace. A key role was played by the right to make a free choice. The Brezhnev doctrine was sacrificed to “new thinking”, although there was no clear renunciation of the right of intervention until the late 1980s.

In other words, the accent moved away from militarisation to a peace strategy in foreign policy. Maintaining peace was defined as a political task to end the cycle of wars and conflicts. There could be no alternative to co-operation between all states. The most important aspect of the new interpretation was that new conditions had to be created which would allow discussions between capitalism and socialism to be undertaken in the forms of peaceful competition and peaceful rivalry. By replacing Gromyko with Schewardnadse, Gorbachev was in a much stronger position to implement this policy as Schewardnadse too acknowledged the need to change old philosophies and doctrines with regard to the West.

The next stage in the analysis is to ascertain how far the GDR had developed such premises in its own policy. The theory behind the GDR’s policy of dialogue and of a “coalition of reason” has been discussed earlier, but will be summed up here. According to most GDR analysts in this field, there were a number of major factors which called for new thinking and action in security policy. Primary among these was the much discussed military threat to mankind’s survival emanating from weapons of mass destruction, and the persistent concept that war/force was a viable means of policy. The ecological threat to the world was immense, and co-ordinated efforts were needed to protect and regenerate the environment. Similarly, the underdevelopment of the majority of the world and the resulting impoverishment of the people in these areas could increase tensions, were nothing to be done by the developed world. The continuing development and human command of the techno-scientific revolution would also play a key role in the future security policy of the world. In other words, the world was unified not only by the increasing internationalisation of economic life but also by exposure to the equal danger of nuclear death, ecological disaster and a global flare-up of the antagonisms between poverty and wealth in the world.

In the nuclear-cosmic age, the differences between the two social systems did not rule out co-operation, rather they made it an indispensable condition for maintaining and safeguarding peace. Thus security had to be regarded as a political problem to be solved through political co-operation (dialogue, negotiation and agreements) to reduce excessive militarisation, although the military realm would not immediately be made redundant as each side had to recognise the legitimate security interests of the other. Global crises revealed the interdependence of all sub-aspects of security and the need to take primarily political approaches to these issues through the instrument of an all-embracing system of international security.27

It was possible to see in official political and scientific statements that the principal ideas of common security had been accepted in the GDR and had been made a focus of its security policy. This implied a rejection of superiority and of the theory of “justified wars”. Thus “new thinking” in the GDR contained acceptance of and continuation of Soviet disarmament and arms control suggestions, whilst taking into account its own security interests. Throughout the 1980s, security political interests gained importance in German-German relations alongside the idea of co-operation to maintain détente. And by the late 1980s, this had become the central premise of those German-German relations. For the two German states, bilateral problems were solved more easily by formulating their own initiatives within the sphere of common security interests for their respective alliances. The formulation of common interests in the area of European security offered the German states a unique opportunity to extend political détente through military disarmament.28

This theory was put into practice in the form of a coalition of reason and realism with all those interested in safeguarding peace - mainly directed at Western states - a policy which took the GDR further than other East European states in cultivating relations with the West. In this regard, Honecker was working within the bounds of the concept of common security, at that stage not accepted in the Soviet Union, and on the basis of peaceful coexistence used to define the framework of international relations, where nuclear weapons would be unnecessary.

After late 1985, the GDR could no longer maintain its position as favoured dialogue partner in the East. The improving superpower relations meant that the global situation in which Erich Honecker had reigned supreme as proponent of dialogue and arms control in the socialist bloc had changed qualitatively. Gorbachev introduced his “new thinking” into international politics, taking over the initiative in security policy and

27 Schmidt, Max: New demands on security thinking and security policies - comprehensive international security, a call of our time (Contribution to the international symposium of the Polish Institute of International Affairs on its 40th anniversary, May 30 / 31 1987. IPW, Berlin 1987). pp. 1 - 34
28 Rix op. cit. pp. 137 - 138
raising the profile of Poland once again as spokesperson for security issues in the Warsaw Pact. That Honecker had succeeded in an area that was the prerogative of the Soviet Union must be seen as a reaction to the period of interregnum in the Soviet Union. The GDR used the opportunity to link its own specific interests, based on its geostrategic and existential position, with those of the Soviet Union. Propaganda against the NATO twin-track decision and the SDI development in the US and Western Europe gave the GDR the opportunity to demonstrate its alliance loyalty, but also to develop its own innovative position.

However, the policy that Gorbachev developed did to some extent articulate the tendencies and discussions first raised in the GDR. Honecker felt that his efforts had been vindicated. Yet Gorbachev was in a position to develop this “new thinking” to its full potential. Gorbachev was the leader of a world power with control over nuclear arsenals. His view of the future was global, whereas Honecker had not been in a position to pursue the policy to such lengths, being the leader of only a minor state in the international framework. Honecker saw his duty restricted to safeguarding peace in the area of central Europe rather than to developing an all-encompassing peace policy for the globe. But also the “new thinking” under Gorbachev had a greater element of democracy than could ever have been the case under the SED-leadership.

The GDR lost much of its support from abroad because of its hostile stance on reforms in the Soviet Union. Though Gorbachev was to some extent pursuing a similar foreign policy to that cultivated by the GDR, their domestic policies were diametrically opposed. The foreign policy profile, that the GDR had developed within the Soviet bloc and towards Western states, had been shaped by West Germany’s policies and German-German relations to a great extent. The policy embraced by Gorbachev was inspired by different causes – mainly domestic. Hence, the approval of the new approaches to security was tempered by the reservations about the internal aspects of this policy, namely glasnost and perestroika.

In order to ascertain an answer, perhaps it is necessary to ask how far did the GDR contribute to the development of “new thinking”, rather than did the GDR introduce “new thinking” in foreign policy? It is impossible to give a definitive answer because there were undoubtedly discussions within the CPSU heading in this general direction in the early 1980s, given the factionalism within the Soviet leadership at that time. Although it is to a large extent unknown exactly what was being deliberated in Moscow, the GDR-leadership would have known that it had some support, even though these moderate tones would not come to the fore as long as Gromyko was

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31 Weitemann and Veen op. cit. pp. 327 - 331

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foreign minister. Without some support, given the uncertainty of the period, the policy initiated by Honecker would not have been possible.

Honecker's speeches at the Karl Marx Conference in April and the SED's 7th party plenum in November 1983 contained the essentials of the policy Gorbachev postulated as "new thinking". In 1983, the leading political thinkers in the GDR had begun to consider what was necessary to stabilise security in Europe at the end of the twentieth century, under the conceptual title "new thinking". They realised that in an effort to prevent a "nuclear inferno", then the dividing issues between the two systems should no longer be emphasised, but rather they should search for common ways of maintaining peace. At the height of the missile crisis, the policy of dialogue espoused by Honecker was rejected by the Soviet leadership. In his recognition of the need for more East-West détente in 1983, however, Honecker was to some extent out in front of the USSR regarding the need for "new thinking" in foreign policy.

The imperative for circumspection in an evaluation of the role of the GDR in the development of "new thinking" does not, however, negate the contribution made by the GDR's policy, whether direct or indirect, to the development of a new direction in international politics. Indeed, whatever the conclusion reached on the exact role of the GDR in the development of "new thinking", Honecker's efforts to maintain a constructive policy of dialogue against the express desires and aims of the Soviet Union brought him respect and recognition throughout the Western alliance and must not be underestimated. To a certain extent, the SED under Honecker exemplified, in practice and in difficult times of East-West conflict, the Soviet line after 1985 of international conflict reduction and the demilitarisation of thinking in foreign policy. This was in part because the GDR had divorced itself from the policies of the Soviet Union to maintain the benefits of German-German relations and détente.

However, if the policies developed in the GDR in 1983 were the beginnings of "new thinking", then they stagnated there and were not developed to their full potential - particularly in the domestic arena. It was limited to minor unilateral reductions and strict control of dialogue with the West, thus failing to encompass all fields. If these developments were "new thinking" in its infancy, then they were too little too soon, given the weakness of leadership in the Soviet Union. Gorbachev's aim was to change socialism in the Soviet Union in order to assure its continued existence, hence his...
foreign policy had to be changed accordingly, but the GDR was unwilling to accept what this really meant and was unwilling to pursue its own limited policy further. The “new thinking” in the foreign policy arena was part of the whole process of perestroika and glasnost - of opening up the Soviet Union and improving its economy.

In East Germany, “new thinking” was clearly limited. It was discussed in the context of securing peace and preventing war and was, above all, limited to relations between states, in other words, to foreign policy. As far as East German political scientists etc were concerned, “new thinking” did not affect the social order, or domestic and economic policies. This revealed the biggest difference with the Soviet concept. In January 1987, at a plenary session of the Central Committee of the CPSU, Gorbachev included in “new thinking” not only economic and domestic policies, but also relationships within the Communist party.

Honecker continued to regard changes in the GDR as unnecessary. Indeed he rejected wholesale any suggestions for reform in the GDR, though he acknowledged their necessity in the Soviet Union, while giving wholehearted support to Gorbachev in the framework of foreign and security policy. Perhaps the main reason for the lack of change in the GDR was the fear that change would lead to instability which could be exploited by the West. The GDR led the way in the Warsaw Pact, introducing the debate on a new defensive military doctrine for the Warsaw Pact. It began the unilateral reduction and withdrawal of weapons - in particular tanks and aircraft. The East German defence minister, Heinz Kessler, even suggested he conduct discussions with the Federal German defence minister, Rupert Scholz. This was rejected by the Federal Republic as were the proposals for negotiations on chemical and nuclear weapons free zones.

“New thinking” in the GDR opened up new opportunities for German-German relations. The search for more areas of co-operation within the framework of a coalition of reason meant less delimitation from the Federal Republic and greater willingness to co-operate. As the two German states worked together on problems spanning their borders, then they contributed to stability in Europe and to fruitful results in German-German relations themselves.

Thus, whilst a clear judgement of the GDR’s role in the development of “new thinking” is not possible, an assessment must acknowledge that the policy introduced by Honecker was a forerunner of Gorbachev’s “new thinking” to some extent and certainly laid the basic foundations for the ensuing debate. Honecker’s visit to the Federal Republic, therefore, must be seen in this context.

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36 Bruns 1987 op. cit. pp. 12-13
38 Bruns 1987 op. cit. p. 14

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Negotiations on various issues were conducted between the two German states during 1987, but undoubtedly the most significant event of 1987 came in September, when Erich Honecker became the first East German leader to visit the Federal Republic. The visit was often considered to be the most important event in German-German relations since the conclusion of the Basic Treaty in 1972. It was made possible by a series of events which improved the climate between the two German states. On 17 July 1987, when the possibility of a Honecker visit was the cause of much speculation, the GDR announced a series of measures which came into effect on 7 October of that year: a general amnesty for prisoners, the abolition of the death penalty and the release of some 22,000 prisoners by 12 December 1987. Whilst it can be argued that these were merely symbolic gestures, there were more concrete developments which indicated that both sides were prepared to make concessions in order to facilitate a visit. The increased number of East Germans travelling West should be seen in this light (as a result of the March 1985 joint declaration by Kohl and Honecker).

Perhaps the most striking move in the process must be attributed to Chancellor Kohl - more striking because it was known how much Honecker wanted to visit the Federal Republic. West Germany was the site of the last dramatic controversy of the INF negotiations - regarding the elimination of ground-based missiles between 1000 and 500 km range and specifically the Pershing 1A missiles held by the German airforce. In August 1987, without consultation with other coalition leaders or warning to alliance members, Kohl announced that the Federal Republic would destroy its Pershing 1As on completion of the destruction of US and Soviet INF missiles. This cleared the last hurdle from the path of the US-Soviet negotiations, leading to the INF Treaty being signed in late 1987. At the same time, it made a visit by Honecker to the Federal Republic a more likely consideration. Kohl’s decision has to be seen within the context of the role of the two German states in the sphere of security policy. A major contribution the two German states could make was to clear the path for negotiations between the two leading powers in the world. By taking this decision, not only did Kohl reveal the extent of his commitment to securing peace, but also the influence German decisions could exert on superpower issues. Another significant West German concession was the decision to treat Honecker like all other visiting heads of state in practical terms, although the visit was officially termed a “working visit”.

The visit was well-prepared on both sides and the smooth, unemotional course seemed to summarise and symbolise the state of German-German relations rather than produce

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39 Zieger 1988 op. cit. p. 233
40 Dean 1989 op. cit. p. 174
dramatic new breakthroughs in any aspect of the relationship.41 The two German states had differing aims with regard to the visit. For the GDR, the visit was an important means to underline the equality and sovereignty of the two German states, to make clear the finality of the division of Germany and of the status quo, and to present itself as a necessary factor of peace in Europe. A further, though less existential, aim was to mobilise those groups in the Federal Republic who could serve East German interests. At a bilateral level, it was hoped that the visit would intensify economic and technical co-operation.42 Perhaps the most important objective of the visit was to make an active contribution to the safeguarding of peace and détente in the heart of Europe.43 For the Federal Republic, the visit had different connotations. The political credibility of basic positions on Deutschlandpolitik was not to be diminished by the visit - in other words, the visit was not intended to secure the status quo, nor to weaken West German commitment to the Western alliance. The visit had to serve the people in divided Germany through positive developments in terms of travel and a new impulse for co-operation in all bilateral areas.44

Honecker arrived in Bonn on 7 September 1987, and was greeted with full ceremony according to protocol - the GDR flag was raised and the national anthem was played. Honecker and Kohl met for twelve hours of discussions and a joint communique was issued on 8 September, the end of the official visit. During this stage of the visit, three agreements were signed on environmental protection, scientific-technical co-operation and protection from radiation.45 Honecker used the remaining days of his visit to travel to Trier, Dusseldorf and Saarbrücken, meeting politicians and industrialists. The visit to Saarbrücken was part of what could be described as the Saarland component. Honecker’s obvious emotional ties with the area effectively weakened the delimitation policy of the GDR. Meetings between East German and Saarland politicians created a dynamic of their own in German-German relations.46

The joint communique revealed a fairly broad spectrum of agreement on arms control issues. In it, the two leaders agreed that the relationship had to continue to be a stabilising factor for constructive East-West relations and that the relationship should provide positive momentum for peaceful co-operation and dialogue in Europe and

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41 Dean 1989 op. cit. p. 174
42 Hoppe op. cit. pp. 19-20
44 Hoppe op. cit. p. 20
46 Interview with Professor Schulz in May 1991.
Consensus was reached that despite differing positions on many issues, this must not be allowed to create obstacles to co-operation given the danger of nuclear war. Because security of one presupposes the security of the other, then the value of negotiations on effective measures of arms control and disarmament at all levels was stressed in the joint communiqué. This consensus was one of the striking results of the talks in Bonn as far as the GDR was concerned.  

It was agreed that arms control negotiations should produce a stable balance of forces at the lowest possible level, accompanied by the elimination of disparities and by effectively verifiable reductions "on the basis of equality and parity". They agreed to seek constructive influence on the bilateral negotiations between the US and the Soviet Union, supporting the January 1985 formula negotiated by Schultz and Gromyko that US-Soviet arms control talks be conducted on the basis of preventing an arms race in space and terminating it on earth. The joint communiqué indicated that both German states backed a 50% reduction of strategic nuclear weapons, expressed support for the ABM treaty, for the earliest possible agreement on an adequately verifiable nuclear test ban and on a mandate for conventional disarmament in Europe from the Atlantic to the Urals, although they had divergent opinions on regional agreements in the field of nuclear and chemical weapons. The joint communiqué closed with the statement that consultations between the disarmament commissioners of the two governments had become a firm part of the political dialogue between the two states and that both states welcomed the continuation of this process.  

This part of the joint communiqué has been emphasised to highlight the fact that the policies of the two German states on arms control overlapped on an increasing number of issues.

In addition, on 8 September the two German Foreign Ministers met and discussed combined German initiatives in the arms control sphere - although these were not referred to in the joint communiqué. Other issues mentioned, but not recorded, were Honecker's proposals for chemical and nuclear weapons free zones in the two German states, and Kohl's demand that the Berlin Wall come down. The two leaders independently criticised the Reagan administration for holding back on the conclusion of a treaty prohibiting the production and storage of chemical weapons. In fact, it was fair to say that by 1987 on the issues of maintaining the ABM treaty, the reduction of short-range nuclear weapons and the willingness in principle to reduce NATO as well as Warsaw Pact conventional armaments in the Atlantic to the Urals talks, the West German position was somewhat closer to that of the GDR than to those of its allies.  

Thus, the two German states used the occasion of Honecker's visit to reiterate the parallels in their policies rather than to achieve some progress on security and arms control,

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"Schmidt 1989 op. cit. p. 127"
"Dean 1989 op. cit. p. 178"
because this would have aroused suspicion and even fear in the international community. Together with the Basic Treaty and the joint declaration of March 1985, the joint communiqué actually provided a platform for strengthening relations between the two German states.  

In terms of content, the first two thirds of the joint communiqué repeated what had been said in the Basic Treaty and in the communiqué at the end of the Schmidt visit to the GDR in 1981, namely a catalogue for regulating bilateral relations.  

In terms of bilateral commitments, economic co-operation was the overriding issue for the GDR, with East German commentaries emphasising the progress made in this sphere. For the Federal Republic, the East German confirmation of the increased levels of visitors in the East-West direction was the most important result of the visit, because it contributed to the maintenance of the idea of one German nation, although there was always the danger that the East German leaders would reverse this process, given increasing frustration in the GDR. The joint communiqué was a compromise, more of a declaration of intent in the long-term than a binding agreement. Divisive issues, such as the Gera demands, were totally excluded. This was in line with the overall development in German-German relations away from reunification. Re-association had become the central issue - of maintaining links between the two German states. There had been a major shift in the old German-German balance as further progress between the two German states became more and more contingent on the interests and goodwill not only of Bonn but also of the policy-makers in East Berlin. This realignment was of historical significance for the development of relations. 

Both German states consciously sought to keep expectations of the visit low in order not to burden the relationship unnecessarily and not to generate false hopes and fears. The visit led to a significant upgrading of the GDR's status, but it also gave impetus to Kohl's domestic political fortunes.  

It is difficult to assess which state paid more for the visit's successful outcome. Both made concessions, but neither wanted to concede it had paid the most because of the need to satisfy large domestic constituencies suspicious that German-German rapprochement had gone too far. It is perhaps fair to say that the GDR was the greater beneficiary. As a result of the visit, East Berlin's confidence in its own abilities, and particularly in its ability to drive hard bargains with any negotiating partner, had been bolstered immeasurably.

Kohl used the visit to lecture Honecker about German-German commonalities and the

50 Schmidt 1989 op. cit. p. 127
51 "Gemeinames Kommuniqué" op. cit. pp. 39 - 41
52 Hoppe op. cit. pp. 21 - 22
54 Larrabee op. cit. p. 118
need to address human rights issues in the GDR, whereas Honecker used the visit to demonstrate to the world, but particularly to the GDR population, the equal sovereignty of the second German state, the independence and equal status of both German states and that relations between them were based on international law. Joint agreements on security and disarmament policy were also highlighted. Thus to an extent the aims of the GDR had been achieved. Although the hymns and flags did not change the legal quality of the bilateral relations, they had an undoubted effect on the consciousness of Germans in both states. The division of Germany was not described as permanent in the joint communique, although the differing positions with regard to the Basic Treaty were reflected. Thus the visit reinvigorated German-German relations, but it did not put them on a qualitatively new level, although it was the first meeting of the leaders of the two German states at the highest level in a German capital city. For the GDR, it was the penultimate step to full international recognition (the last step would be visits to the capital cities of the three Western powers). It did provide perspectives for the future intensification of German-German relations and contributed to the strengthening of the feeling of belonging together of all Germans. Some argued that the visit was recognition by West Germany that the division was final, but it probably reflected the latter’s willingness to accept the existing situation in Germany as an integral part of the reality in East-West relations. These views were developed on both sides of the divide.

An important aspect of the Honecker visit, not yet discussed, were the after-dinner speeches given by Honecker and Kohl at the Redoute on 7 September 1987. In a very harsh speech, Kohl had effectively accused Honecker of being a dictator and said that he would be treated as such until conditions in the GDR changed. He used the basic question of freedom in East and West as a criticism of East Germany and the lack of freedoms there. He referred to the open German question and the West German aim of achieving freedom and unity for Germany as a whole.

Honecker responded to this (although it had not been in his prepared speech) by stating that socialism and capitalism could no more be united than fire and water. This

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55 McAdams 1989 op. cit. pp. 65 - 66
56 Fricke op. cit. p. 689
57 Honecker op. cit. pp 22 - 24
59 Hoppe op. cit. p. 24
60 Kohl's speech as recorded in Der Besuch von Generalsekretär Honecker op. cit. pp. 26 - 31.
was a very feeble response, although the official East German reaction to it was that Honecker went on the offensive. He had simply not answered the question, and it revealed how weak East Germany and Honecker really were and how strong Kohl was on this point. The redundancy of Honecker’s answer was made clear by Honecker himself when he directly contradicted himself at Neunkirchen, where he again wandered from his prepared script and stated that one day the border between the two German states would unite not divide them, and that the Berlin Wall would stand only for as long as conditions made it necessary. Honecker’s response to Kohl revealed that he no longer had an eye for political chances. He was no longer as flexible as he had been in the early 1980s, even in the foreign policy sphere because his role on the international stage had to some extent been taken over by Gorbachev. A significant point to note was the fact that the speeches were shown live on television in both East and West Germany, and were reported in full in the printed media in both states.

An important consequence of the Honecker visit was that the hopes and expectations of the East German population had been raised, especially in the economic sphere and with regard to more human rights and freedoms. The internal opposition groups had been given new impetus (a continuation of the process begun in the early 1970s by Brandt’s Ostpolitik). However, no further humanitarian improvements had been agreed during the visit, for example no more freedom to travel, and although more East Germans had been allowed to travel to the West in 1987, expectations built up which were not fulfilled. The East German leaders were accused of pursuing dialogue in foreign policy, but not with their own population. Perhaps the intensification of relations, particularly human relations, increased domestic pressures in East Germany, by creating more dissatisfaction.

The domestic difficulties in the GDR created a certain amount of unrest which broke out in November 1987 - on 25 November, several members of the Zionskirche and the Umweltbibliothek in Berlin were arrested, and their premises were searched. The situation escalated in January 1988 when many more people were arrested during a counter-demonstration on the Rosa Luxemburg march. In an effort to defuse the situation, the ringleaders were expelled to the Federal Republic, although some insisted on the right to return to the GDR after six months. The leadership’s growing resistance to reform was countered by the increasing activity among the civil and human rights groups. After January 1988, the tide of political opposition in the GDR could no
longer be stemmed. But the GDR leadership still resisted the call for reforms.

In conclusion, Erich Honecker's visit was neither a "historic event", nor confirmation of the division of Germany. It was a further step on the way to reducing the consequences of the division for Germans, to maintain what united Germans and to create new commonalities. It was also a further step towards the recognition of the GDR by the Federal Republic. In that sense, it had to be regarded as a success for the GDR. The visit was a clear manifestation of the co-operative line the GDR was pursuing with the Federal Republic. For some commentators, the most important aspects of Erich Honecker's visit to the Federal Republic were the events which led up to the visit - in other words a positive climate had been created for the visit before it took place. East Germany had to take initiatives to sell the visit to both its Eastern allies and its Western foes. Hence the road to the visit was the end of a development to the benefit of West Germany rather than the instigator of a new one.

When the Honecker visit to the Federal Republic took place, German-German relations appeared to be virtually synchronised with superpower relations for the first time in the 1980s. Relations between the Soviet Union and the United States were improving at that stage and German-German relations were maintaining the momentum they had acquired during the earlier years of the decade.

5.1 The beginning of the end?

Conservative analysts regarded the development of relations after the Honecker visit as being of negligible significance. They argued that the possibilities of conducting Deutschlandpolitik with the GDR were exhausted and that the GDR was no longer capable of acting on its own. Hence developments were discussed with the Soviet Union. Others argued that although there was no important progress in relations after the visit, nevertheless there was slow progress in some areas. Perhaps an explanation of the lack of any further concrete improvements in German-German relations was that the time was too short for any agreements to come into fruition. German-German relations only deteriorated in the last few months before the collapse of the GDR, which was when the Federal Republic discussed Deutschlandpolitik with the Soviet Union for the first time. However, it was argued that West Germany did not conduct its Deutschlandpolitik through the Soviet Union because, although Genscher had accepted Gorbachev on his word as early as 1986, the rest of the Kohl government was more sceptical. Another important factor was that for Gorbachev the main dialogue partner to

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Fricke op. cit. p. 690

Interview with Dr. Dobley in January 1992.

Interviews with members of the DGAP in June 1991.

Interview conducted in 1991.
be cultivated was the United States.\textsuperscript{71} Human contacts between the two states continued to increase after the visit, but Honecker proved incapable of dealing with the opposition movement in the GDR. He did continue his policy of dialogue with the West, but because Gorbachev had come to the fore and negotiated directly with the United States, issues such as the INF Treaty pushed German-German relations into the background. After 1987, the SED apparently limited its own policy. In 1988, it introduced the concept of “socialism in East German colours” - a concept the SED had criticised in the French CP context - “socialism in French colours”. As a result, the GDR was effectively pursuing a two-front war in ideological terms - against the West and simultaneously against the Soviet Union, which considerably weakened its position.\textsuperscript{72} Perhaps there was a correlation between the rate at which German-German relations slowed between the autumn of 1987 and that of 1989, and the rate at which the GDR’s opposition to the Soviet reforms increased. The latter engendered the need to increase internal security which implicitly meant that contacts with the Federal Republic had to be limited.

The INF Treaty was signed by the Soviet Union and the United States in December 1987. Later that same month, Honecker again wrote to Kohl (an increasingly common form of communication) expressing delight that the two German states had contributed so positively to the conclusion of the INF treaty\textsuperscript{73} and arguing that such disarmament measures should be continued. He specifically mentioned short-range missiles, chemical and conventional weapons. If NATO agreed not to modernise its nuclear weapons, then the Warsaw Pact would agree to remove asymmetries through disarmament. This letter received a positive response in the Federal Republic, and the SPD regarded it as an expression of the common interest in achieving nuclear and conventional disarmament in Europe, necessitating a constructive reply.\textsuperscript{74}

In December 1987, Josef Holik, the West German commissioner for arms control, was received by Oskar Fischer in East Berlin, a meeting which hailed a demonstrative raising of the level of discussions. (Previously, Kurt Nier, the deputy foreign minister, had been the discussion partner for Holik). There were still some differences between the two sides, for example, the GDR wanted to eliminate totally short-range nuclear weapons, whereas the Federal Republic merely sought to reduce their numbers. It has also been argued that the East Germans with the backing of the Soviet Union were

\textsuperscript{71} Interview with Dr. Zimmer in June 1991.

\textsuperscript{72} Interview with Professor Prokop in January 1992.

\textsuperscript{73} The two German states obviously had a role to play in the conclusion of the INF Treaty because of the fact that the missiles in question were stationed on their territories. They thus had to agree to the control mechanisms etc foreseen in the treaty.

\textsuperscript{74} Rix, Christiane: "Zur Entwicklung der deutsch-deutschen Beziehungen", in Schubert, Klaus von, Bahr, Egon and Kroll, Gert (eds.), Friedensgutachten 1988 (FEST / HSFK / IFSH Frankfurt am Main, 1988), pp. 61 - 70. Here p. 66
merely trying to maintain the post-INF appetite for getting rid of all nuclear weapons that existed among segments of the West German public. Although this may well have been true to a certain extent, a desire to achieve total disarmament was perhaps also a motivating factor.

These developments were reflected in the security policies of the two German states and in their bilateral relations. There was a decline in West German (and West European in general) perceptions of the Soviet Union and its allies as an immediate threat to the security of the Federal Republic. This became apparent once again through the person of Franz Josef Strauss. In late 1987, Strauss,

"the most conservative of West German political leaders, (stated) after talks with General Secretary Gorbachev, that nothing was further from Gorbachev's mind than war."

The GDR responded to these developments in a positive way. In his New Year speech, Honecker again called for the complete elimination of short-range nuclear weapons. This suggestion was publicly welcomed in the Federal Republic, by Dregger and by Kohl, although they reiterated their own position. Also at the beginning of 1988, the GDR's leaders decided to increase the defence budget for that year by only 3.4% (15.7 billion DDR Marks) - as compared to 7 - 8% in the previous year. The budget for securing the state border was also reduced. This was positive proof that the GDR was translating its rhetoric into concrete policy, that it was committed to its proclaimed aims in terms of security policy, and that despite a repressive domestic policy, it was still open to change in foreign and security policy.

Indeed, the GDR began to discuss the possibility of a new military doctrine (with the support of Czechoslovakia), based on the 1987 common doctrine of the Warsaw Pact. The discussions had Soviet approval but no further support. The move by the Warsaw Pact to a defensive doctrine in the mid-1970s (once nuclear parity had been achieved), although a positive move in the right direction, did not ultimately solve the problem of preventing military conflicts. The term military security effectively meant mutual insecurity because one side's security was based on the insecurity of the other. It was a question of the method of the realisation of security rather than security itself. A military solution is, true to Clausewitz, a political solution by specific means, in other words a political instrument. The GDR rejected the word "deterrence" on principle, although it had to acknowledge that de facto deterrence relations existed. The rejection was based on the fact that deterrence was fostering and promoting confrontation and the arms race. Hence in the mid-1970s, GDR researchers began to ask what would be the consequences of nuclear war, below the level of human annihilation. The conclusion

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75 Dean 1988 op. cit. p. 188
76 Rix 1988 op. cit. p. 66
77 Interview with Professor Hocke in January 1992.
77a For example, Prof. Hocke's research group. 174
was that military force would never result in positive political solutions. This idea of the senselessness of military force may have contributed to the peaceful development of events in 1989. The consequences of this debate were never realised because of the increasingly repressive regime adopted by the GDR leadership and because of the eventual collapse of the GDR as a state at the end of 1989.

Throughout 1988, the number of East Germans allowed to travel West continued to increase. As many as a million and a half East Germans travelled to the Federal Republic on urgent family business in 1988. The Federal Republic also introduced some measures to facilitate travel. The amount of “welcome money” each East German visitor received on their first trip to the Federal Republic each year was increased to 100DM, and they were given concessionary rates on the Federal railway system. Youth travel between the two states increased as did sporting contacts, though the increases were not very large. The number of people who left the GDR permanently peaked at 40,000 annually, although it was unknown how many had actually applied to leave permanently. West Berlin also reached several agreements with the GDR on transit travel and new crossing points were envisaged.

Cultural exchange continued apace with many exhibitions and theatre performances. In the scientific sphere, a limited amount of information was exchanged, and scientists and students from the two German states created links between various universities. There were also advances made in the area of environmental protection, including new negotiations and compromises from both sides. The German-German trade balance fell back from the highpoint of 1985 (16.7 billion DM) to 14.2 billion DM in 1988. Throughout 1988, the GDR also indicated a willingness to co-operate over the question of West Berlin and quoted the Quadripartite Agreement correctly for the first time in years to justify its policy. Indeed, there was even agreement between the GDR and the Soviet Union on how the Berlin question should be approached. Thus it can be seen that relations between the two German states did continue to improve although there were no major gains for either side. It is difficult to predict what might have happened had not the reunification process come about.

In the summer of 1989, the debate in West Germany had a new perspective - to preserve détente and to continue to improve relations with the other German state, but also to pursue the development of better relations with the Soviet Union and East European states in order to create new conditions for a European solution to the


German question. The main interpretation of the German-German relationship during the summer of 1989 was that the prospect for co-operation with the East German government was good. The main emphasis was on evolving modalities of German-German détente and their implications for European security.\(^9\) The events of the late summer and early autumn of 1989 took all actors in the European sphere by surprise.

7 The role of the two German states in the C.S.C.E.

The C.S.C.E. process after 1975 played a significant role in the 1980s by becoming an institutional forum for continuing dialogue and consultation between East and West. Indeed, it had several important effects on the development of a European security system in the 1970s and 1980s. Firstly, by acting as a de facto peace treaty, it reduced some of the tensions in terms of territorial and political disputes arising from post-war development. Secondly, it gave small and medium-sized states a larger voice in the discussion on European security (cf Szuros in 1984) and encouraged them to articulate their own specific national interests. The third effect of the C.S.C.E. process was to allow neutral and non-aligned states in Europe a more prominent and constructive role in the security system, through their positions as mediators between East and West. The fourth significant development was that it contributed to the growing body of international law, regulating East-West relations in Europe, including human rights. Fifthly, it helped reinforce a sense of a common European identity, despite existing differences. And finally, throughout the 1980s, it remained a powerful symbol of the commitment of all 35 participating states to the lowering of tensions and the promotion of co-operation across the ideological and political divide.\(^8\) It was also significant because it linked the US and Canada with Europe, although the United States was always suspicious that it served only European interests and, as a result, was often half-hearted in its approach in the early 1980s. Likewise, the Soviet Union apparently lost interest to a certain extent when the process no longer served its purposes as it had intended. The European states recognised the limited but nonetheless real progress of the C.S.C.E. and wanted to preserve and build on its gains.

It was a forum where alliance members could press on their respective alliance leaders the need for restraint and moderation, and which provided opportunities for maintaining intra-European dialogue at a time when superpower relations were at a nadir. The role of the two German states within the process was exemplary of what can be achieved. They had the greatest stake in East-West relations, and were therefore most interested in stabilising Europe by lowering tensions, improving co-operation, preserving the bene-

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\(^9\) Buzan, Barry; Kelstrup, Morten; Lemaitre, Pierre; Tromer, Elzbieta; and Waever, Ola: *The European security order recast. Scenarios for the post-cold war era* (Pinter Publishers, London, 1990). p. 120

fits of détente and gaining the support of the superpowers for their policies. The active participation of the two German states in the C.S.C.E. process must be seen in the light of their efforts to place their special relationship in the framework of a renewed pan-European détente policy.\textsuperscript{52} The military aspects of the C.S.C.E. remained, on the whole, non-controversial for the GDR and the Federal Republic. Where problems arose was in the sphere of humanitarian issues. For West Germany, they were a means to open up communist society, whereas for the GDR, they implied a considerable risk of internal destabilisation. Hence the two German states were often at loggerheads in this sphere, eg. over the minimum exchange requirement rate for West German visitors to the East.\textsuperscript{63} During the crises of the early 1980s,

"it became a principle concern of both German states to maintain the CSCE process in order to promote the expansion of East-West cooperation in Europe as well as to utilise the process for preserving the security dialogue and bringing their respective superpower back to the road of détente."\textsuperscript{64}

However, they did have to reflect superpower policies when solidarity was demanded.

The Madrid follow-up conference began in November 1980 and spanned the height of the East-West crisis until 1983, but still produced a significant concluding document. This negated the image that the C.S.C.E. process merely mirrored the East-West climate, proving that it could preserve dialogue and co-operation in times of tension. Both German states, amongst others, wanted to maintain a viable modus vivendi between East and West to protect détente against the actions of the two superpowers. Despite the bleak outlook, however, there was a significant difference between the start of the Madrid conference and the beginning of the Belgrade conference, in that the Soviet Union was interested in convening a new European disarmament conference. This also ran parallel to a French proposal, thus gaining Western support. The Eastern bloc appeared ready to accept Western requirements for the conference when martial law was declared in Poland, casting a pall over the negotiations.

The meeting was suspended until October 1982, when the West made new humanitarian demands. Some of these were accepted by the Soviet Union and its allies, and the Final Document was signed in September 1983. Had it not been for the persistent pressure of West Germany, particularly Genscher, on the US to change its approach to the negotiations, then perhaps the Madrid meeting would not have produced a final document at all,\textsuperscript{65} which could have meant the end of the C.S.C.E. process. Tangible results were gained in relation to basket three, although progress was limited with regard to principle VII. The most important element of the document

\textsuperscript{52} Lehne (1) op. cit. p. 43
\textsuperscript{53} Birnbaum and Peters op. cit. pp. 314 - 315
\textsuperscript{54} ibid. p. 315
\textsuperscript{55} Frey op. cit. p.166

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was the mandate for the Conference on Confidence- and Security-building Measures and Disarmament in Europe (CDE). Two expert meetings on human issues were also to be convened in Ottawa and Bern. The successful conclusion of the Madrid conference did not, however, represent a turning point in East-West relations, because attention was still focussed on the then impending NATO deployment of nuclear weapons in Western Europe.

From 1981, the two German states extended their bilateral relations to cover questions of security and arms control. To make the second wave of détente more viable, both German states were interested in seeing a closer link between the political and military dimensions of the C.S.C.E. Hence after 1985, both German leaders actively supported a new round of European arms control negotiations to safeguard their own interests. This was revealed by the increasingly close consultations at the Stockholm CDE between Bähring and Citron, the two German representatives, which had the purpose of establishing

"the scope for East-West agreements and (safeguarding) the parallel interests of the two German states as the parties most immediately affected by the envisaged CSBM regime."  

The CDE opened in Stockholm in January 1984, at a time when the INF and START negotiations had been broken off and the MBFR talks stagnated, which magnified the political importance of the CDE and seemed to weaken its prospects for success. Until mid-1985, the negotiations were dominated by the conflicting proposals put forward by the various actors involved. Only under Gorbachev did the Soviet Union appear more flexible on the question of new arms control policies, and it began to make concessions in order to assure the success of the conference. The second Reagan administration too was interested in resuming a constructive dialogue on arms control.

The negotiations were in deadlock until August 1986 when the Soviet

"decision to accept on-site verification...was the clearest signal...of the new Soviet leadership’s changing approach to military security and of its determination to achieve progress on arms control."

The Stockholm document was adopted on 22 September 1986, the first agreement in the area of arms control in the 1980s. It re-affirmed the principle of the non-use of force in international relations and had detailed provisions for the following confidence-
building measures: notification of exercise activities; observation of notifiable activities; annual calendars (on military activities); constraining provisions on large activities; and verification through on-site inspections. This document turned the CSBMs of the Final Act into an effective instrument for the promotion of military stability, although the possibilities were not exhausted and were extended in the Vienna negotiations. The political significance of the Stockholm conference is at least as important as its military significance. It opened in a Cold War atmosphere and closed as a symbol for a renewed and productive East-West dialogue. It prepared the ground for the INF treaty and raised the stakes for the Vienna conference which took place from November 1986 to January 1989.

Despite the concern the consultations between the two German states in Stockholm had aroused among their respective allies, such German-German parallelism was an important feature of C.S.C.E. negotiations at the follow-up meeting in Vienna in the late 1980s. The two German states pursued a form of “tacit co-operation” rather than straightforward common policies, emphasising their commitment to the alliances. The GDR and the Federal Republic sought to promote a new round of CSBM talks in order to improve the Stockholm regime. West Germany also played an influential role in talks on a mandate for negotiations on conventional arms control in Europe (CFE), which started in March 1989.

The Vienna C.S.C.E. follow-up meeting had two main functions. Firstly, it served as a forum for an ongoing dialogue on the developments in the East as a result of Gorbachev’s commitment not to interfere in the internal affairs of the other Warsaw Pact states. This had particular significance in the human dimension because

“the prospect that any repression would immediately trigger strong international condemnation at the Vienna meeting made governments reluctant to resort to such measures, thus strengthening the confidence of activists and groups.”

The second function of the Vienna conference was to create a framework for continued change by drafting new commitments in such a way as to close the loopholes from earlier C.S.C.E. documents, by allowing a permanent review of the implementation of measures and by drawing up a programme to allow further progress in this sphere. It was no longer the case of balancing Soviet concessions in the human sphere with Western steps in the security area, although

“it was the CFE mandate as the key political issue that forced both sides to hold out until a balanced and substantive outcome was reached.”

The Vienna document was a triumph of “new” thinking over “old”. Particularly im-

88 Lehne (1) op. cit. p. 27
89 ibid.  p. 137
90 ibid. pp. 137 - 139

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important were the new human rights agreements, the decision to continue the negotiations on CSBMs and to initiate new negotiations on conventional forces.

However, whilst German influence played its part in the development of the C.S.C.E. process, both the GDR and the Federal Republic had to adjust their policies to alliance considerations on a number of occasions which often meant accepting considerations to their disadvantage. On the other hand, it must be remembered that

"some measure of German-German co-ordination was seen to be a *sine qua non* for successful efforts to dismantle the military confrontation between East and West in Europe."  

8 Conclusion

In the months immediately after March 1985 when Gorbachev became General-Secretary of the CPSU, there appeared to be little change in the outlook of the Soviet Union in foreign and security policy. The GDR continued to pursue active relations with the Federal Republic on the basis of the benefits this had on maintaining détente in Europe. From 1985 to 1987, German-German relations continued to improve, though more slowly, whilst superpower relations became only slightly less hostile. The overall international climate began to improve in 1986 and the Stockholm document at the end of the disarmament conference represented a compromise and constituted important moves towards creating greater confidence and security in Europe. It underlined the opportunity to change international relations for the better that was beginning to develop.  

The year 1987 revealed that the dynamic of German-German relations could not develop independently of the international situation, but also that they were not totally subordinate to this situation. The run-up to Erich Honecker's visit in 1987 indicated how important the political climate was for shaping German-German relations but on the other hand, how significant the interests of the two German states were in the further development of dialogue and closer co-operation in economics, politics, and security. The two German states could discuss initiatives which would then be discussed within the alliances, a fact which allowed them a certain amount of flexibility within the alliances. Pragmatic co-operation in all spheres of mutual interest, including security policy, continued, although there was always scope for improvement in humanitarian relations. The key was to combine all areas of interest and simultaneously reach more co-operation on issues of security policy in order to maintain the dynamic of German-German relations from the mid-1980s.

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82 Birnbaum and Peters *op. cit.* pp. 316 - 318  
83 Comment from *Neues Deutschland* 24 September 1986  
84 Rix 1988 *op. cit.* p. 70
The perspective for German-German relations was at the same time always the reflection of the German separatism. It was assumed that a solution to the German question and with it the ending of the division of Europe into antagonistic camps could only be achieved by a common effort: a policy of guarding peace, of gradually ending friend-foe thinking and acting, opening borders, free traffic of man and thought, economic co-operation and the overcoming of the East-West gap by creating a common life-style. The C.S.C.E. Final Act facilitated co-operation and offered a perspective where East and West could work together despite hostile bilateral superpower relations. The C.S.C.E. process always had more support from the European participants than from the superpowers. To a certain extent, therefore, it must be seen within the framework of the Europeanisation of Europe. Within this process, the two German states were leading advocates of toning down ideological competition, strengthening the channels of communication and consistently developing co-operation, even when the superpowers were suspicious of the forum.

However, in the second half of the 1980s, Gorbachev to an extent took over the policies of the two German states. Because Gorbachev was far more influential on the international stage, then the basis of the German-German dialogue appeared to have been removed. As a result, once it was realised in which direction Gorbachev was moving, the Federal Republic saw the limitations of a continued dialogue with the GDR - a small pawn in the international game - and sought to speak directly with the alliance leader on issues of security etc. However, under pressure from some elements in the government, consultations on security questions continued to be pursued between the two German governments and, as shown, played a valuable role. In day-to-day matters, the state of Soviet-US relations was of minor importance for German-German discussions - for practical issues such as removal of salt from the river Werra. It was the improvement of overall East-West relations, however, which facilitated the most significant development of the German-German relationship in the Gorbachev era before 1989, namely the Honecker visit. As a result of the dialogue and contacts between the two German states in the 1980s, both succeeded in their aims of strengthening the position of their individual states within the overall international arena, whilst German-German links were maintained. Within this sphere, German-German relations had a positive impact on the overall development of East-West relations, but the symbiosis between the two sets of relations was reversed after 1987.

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Bettzüge op. cit. p. 9

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CHAPTER SIX

THE SPD-SED DIALOGUE

Within the context of the security debate in German-German relations, the rapprochement between the SED and the SPD, referred to in the previous chapters, must be considered to evaluate its actual significance and the repercussions which arose from it. In their attempt to overcome the stalemate of classical Deutschlandpolitik, the two parties raised other issues which challenged the basis of the GDR's ideology and which provoked further debate in the Federal Republic. The aim of this chapter is to assess the motivations of the two parties, the agreements they reached and their implications. By doing this, the potential of a security debate between the two German states will be highlighted. The rapprochement between the two parties was another element of German-German relations going much further than the superpowers.

1 The motivations of the two parties

Though the Federal government under Christian Democrat leadership was receptive to the idea of a “community of responsibility” between the two German states to ensure that war never again emanated from German soil, and though it continued the Ostpolitik initiated by the social-liberal coalition, it limited contacts between the two German governments on security policy to consultations and discussions, with no concrete proposals at a bilateral level. As a result, the SPD and the SED discussed issues in this sphere to show what was possible if both sides were prepared to compromise. Given the history of their relationship - one of bitterness regarding their rivalry to represent the working class and the divergent paths they pursued from a common ideological root - there was no obvious natural affinity between the German Communists and Social Democrats. It would thus appear that a distinctive set of circumstances created an environment in which formidable obstacles were overcome by mutual interest. An analysis of the various interpretations offered will attempt to explain the motivations.

There was certainly a convergence of overriding concerns over the risks of confrontation in the nuclear age and the cost of superpower confrontation to the small and medium-sized European states that drew the two parties together as potential discussion partners. Similarly, the SPD’s concept of “common security” as the basis for a European peace order was in line with Honecker’s “coalition of reason”, but each party also had specific reasons for the dialogue.

In the 1980s, the SED made efforts “to convince others of their shared interests and of
the necessity for joint action, given that the whole of humanity was equally threatened by the exigencies of the nuclear age and by the fact that the arms race had become an independent threat to humanity as a result of its own momentum, and that human interest in survival overrode class interests. The SED’s reassessment of East-West confrontation and of its own foreign and security policies resulted in a new aim of combining parity with nuclear disarmament in an effort to de-escalate military confrontation. The primacy of politics on questions of security signalled the determination of the political leadership to interpret and safeguard security in a more comprehensively political way, hence the initiatives to build confidence and support arms control with the SPD - although, at this stage, it is unclear how much pressure for this came from the Soviet leadership. It has been argued that given the continued rivalry between the two superpowers when the SED-SPD discussions began, then the SED was “advised” that should it desire contacts with the Federal Republic, then it should turn to the SPD rather than to the conservative-dominated coalition. The dialogue with the SPD was intended to demonstrate to the Federal Republic that the SED remained interested and committed to improving relations between the two German states in all spheres.

Of some significance was the increasingly sophisticated analysis of the SPD by the SED in the 1980s. The SED began to move away from the deterministic analysis of the SPD subscribed to by Marxism-Leninism since Stalin, which argued that the SPD represented accommodation within the capitalist system, and instead saw the party representing protest within its system and acting as an important democratic potential in the Federal Republic - as

"a composition of fluid factions which represent vacillating tendencies toward either accommodation or protest, whereby the relative strength of a tendency depends on the changing interaction of political, economic and other factors within the Federal Republic."

The SED leadership also used the question of peace and disarmament as a means of increasing its own legitimacy, both national and international, because it could guarantee the support of its own population for its policy on these issues, and strengthen its position on the international stage.

"The engagement in disarmament of the SED gave it a high level of general credibility among the GDR population, and probably in no other matter did the people feel as well represented by and united with the GDR leadership than in peace policy."

However, to see this as the major motivation - a means to distract attention from other

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2 Interview with Professor Prokop in January 1992.
4 Hermann Scheer, as quoted in Uschner op. cit. p. 136
fundamental issues such as the lack of human rights and democracy, a form of escapism, as the CDU argued, ignores the genuine fear of war and confrontation which inspired the SED leadership. Opportunism certainly had a role to play but was not the main motivating factor. It was also a means of exercising pressure on the CDU government to do more for security and stability, and also to mobilise the West German public in support of these issues.

The SPD was subject to a variety of pressures that made a rethinking of their policy options inevitable. The SPD had suffered a stinging election defeat in January 1983 after the collapse of the social-liberal coalition in October 1982. The new Christian Democrat government under Helmut Kohl had shown surprising energy and alacrity in its dealings with the East, continuing and developing the relations with the GDR that had been pioneered under Chancellors Brandt and Schmidt. The SPD wanted to show that they were still at the forefront of such relations and could go one step further than the “latecomer Christian Democrats”. Thus the question of disarmament was an important part of the SPD’s domestic competition with the CDU. The SPD would not win an election on economic issues and therefore had to develop an innovative foreign and security policy comparable to the Ostpolitik of the late 1960s. The SPD also feared the consequences of the Reagan administration’s excessively militant policy towards the Soviet Union, given the breakdown of the Geneva arms control talks. A fresh point of departure was deemed necessary in light of the superpowers’ differing and incompatible interpretations of détente and the recognition that political agreements would not automatically lead to disarmament - a fundamental assumption in the 1970s. In discussing a new focus for security policy, common security, the SPD hoped to exploit strong anti-chemical and anti-nuclear sentiment in the Federal Republic.

It must be pointed out at this stage, however, that SPD advocates of joint security talks with the GDR were careful to emphasise that they wished only to facilitate discussion and the exchange of information, and not to discuss matters that were best left to NATO, the Warsaw Pact and the superpowers. Talks on disarmament issues between the two German parties were regarded by the SPD as devices to improve the political atmosphere and to inspire talks at government level on the arms’ control process. Hence their initiatives were to be seen as the first stage towards reopening negotiations in Geneva on crucial world-wide questions of disarmament. The SPD developed the controversial strategy of creating “working groups” with the Communist parties of Eastern Europe to discover whether the concept of a security partnership would work in the context of antagonistic alliance structures, with the aim of taking into account the

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6 Interview with Dr. Dobley in January 1992.
8 Interview with Prof. Albrecht.
interests and specific security considerations of both sides. The working groups were intended to demonstrate both the potential for co-operation between East and West and the effectiveness of the SPD in promoting that co-operation. It was within this framework that the SPD pursued its initiatives with the SED.

The SPD’s hopes for change in Eastern Europe were placed with reformers in the Communist system as it believed that only political and economic stability would serve reform. Stability in these states was regarded as a key issue in the second phase of Ostpolitik. The SPD’s so-called “parallel foreign policy” (“Nebennaßenpolitik” - a term coined by Rühe) was “an attempt to institutionalise such contacts and strengthen the sense of common destiny with East European states” as part of its efforts to create a new détente in Europe. It was the first occasion on which a German opposition party did not merely criticise government policy, but actually initiated its own policy. That the SPD was willing to discuss such issues was an indication of the broken security consensus in the Federal Republic. The SPD never lost sight of its aim to push for democratic reforms in Eastern Europe. Indeed, it worked on the basis that détente policy would improve the external framework for the domestic reformers. The SPD was heavily criticised for these contacts, although suspended relations with the SED before the autumn of 1989 because of the GDR’s increasing intransigence as far as internal reform was concerned.

Another interpretation of the SED-SPD dialogue saw it as the confirmation of the old struggle but by theoretical means, thus repudiating the idea of a convergence of interests. This more cynical explanation regarded the dialogue not as a means towards greater understanding and peace, but rather as a refined method of annihilation, where the common aim was to manipulate the other into abandoning its core positions. True, each party hoped to manipulate the other for its own benefit, but this interpretation supposed a single-mindedness of the two parties’ purposes which ignored the other motives the parties had for engaging in the dialogue, the impact of the changing international environment, the lessons the two had learnt from the Weimar period and the commitment to mutual change explicit in SED-SPD documents.

The two German parties were both fundamentally interested in preserving peace and creating a framework for the survival and development of the competing systems in the nuclear age. Intrinsic to this framework was the acceptance of mutual security. Within
their alliances, these two parties were at the forefront of ideological new thinking with regard to foreign and security policy, and they had reached unilaterally the undeniable conclusion that class interests had to be subordinated to securing peace in the modern age. The SED acknowledged the SPD’s position that peace could no longer be secured by arming against each other but rather by co-operating with the supposed enemy. It was undoubtedly a combination of all these points that contributed to the coming together of the two parties, although SPD-SED interests and motives were neither identical nor mutually exclusive as the dynamic of the dialogue demonstrated.

2 The security agreements

2.1 Framework agreement for a chemical weapon free zone in Central Europe, 19 June 1985.

On 19 June 1985, the SPD and SED announced that understanding had been reached on a framework agreement for the establishment of a chemical weapon free zone (CWFZ) in Europe. The agreement called for the prohibition of chemical weapons - a ban on production, stationing or transportation - in a core area formed by the GDR, the Federal Republic and Czechoslovakia (those states on the dividing line between East and West), but it was hoped that it would eventually also include the Benelux countries and Poland. It made specific proposals for control and verification of the zone in the form of an exchange of information on national control mechanisms and the establishment of an international control commission comprising all participating states. If compliance questions arose, then the international commission would follow a specified procedure to conduct on-site inspections to determine if a violation had occurred. The two parties had agreed that were a world-wide ban to come into effect, then their agreement would automatically be superseded.

In presenting the model agreement, both Hermann Axen and Karsten Voigt promoted it as a pilot project testing the potential for co-operation between East and West. Voigt pointed out in his press statement that it was new ground as far as disarmament policy went, it was a model for real disarmament in Europe, and it was the first time that politicians from the two German states had put forward such extensive and concrete disarmament proposals in the spirit of the Basic Treaty (specifically article 5). The aim was to create a model that showed that, within the concept of a security partnership

12 "Rahmen für ein Abkommen zur Bildung einer von chemischen Waffen freien Zone in Europa", in Für Chemiewaffenfreie Zone in Europa. Gemeinsame politische Initiative der SED und der SPD (Verlag Zeit im Bild, Dresden 1985). pp. 9 - 14
13 For further details, see ibid. pp. 9 - 14
15 See chapter 2
and détente, solutions to controversial questions of security policy were, in principle, possible, with a constructive approach, based on common interests to reduce tensions and create more security in Europe. In other words, it was part of the community of responsibility between the two German states, an example of where agreement extending across alliance borders could be reached to the benefit of both sides.

Criticisms of the agreement came basically from the Federal government under the Christian Democrats and from West Germany’s NATO partners. The response of the Federal government varied between outright rejection and tentative acceptance of the principles of negotiations as a useful part of the disarmament dialogue between East and West. It was a tactical error by the SPD and SED to present their work as a quasi-official framework agreement drawn up in treaty language with a preamble and provision for duration and review of the agreement. This permitted some justifiable criticism by the Kohl government and other opposition groups of the SPD arrogating authority which could be exercised only by the West German government. This criticism was acknowledged by the SPD, and the phraseology of their next proposal had been significantly changed. Another criticism was that it undermined the official government efforts to agree on a world-wide prohibition of production and storage of chemical weapons at the Geneva conference, rather than giving impetus to those negotiations. It was argued that the SPD-SED initiative was in fact a step backwards, lagging behind UN principles on questions of control, and that there should have been more emphasis on international checking procedures within the SPD-SED initiative.

Hermann Scheer, SPD, responded to the CDU criticism of the initiatives by arguing that they 

“emphasise their own responsibility for their own immediate problems. They no longer leave these issues to the competence of the world powers alone and they amount to a reduction of the latter’s influence.”

Chemical weapons were a military category that affected only the two German states. The Federal Republic was the only NATO country with American chemical weapons stored there. A similar situation existed with regard to the GDR in the Warsaw Pact.

However negative the response of the Federal government may have been in the immediate term, the initiative probably had some practical implication in its decision, reached with the Reagan administration in May 1986, to have chemical weapons removed from West German territory. The proposal was very popular, and this

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16 Though the CDU acknowledged that the Geneva conference needed a concrete political impulse, it did not accept the SPD-SED initiative as this. Interviews May - June 1991.
18 In Uschner op. cit. p. 135

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popularity may have spurred the government into action. The CDU / CSU denied any influence and explained Kohl's action by emphasising the government policy of creating security with fewer weapons and by stating that the chemical element was superfluous, given the risks involved with storage and transport. In other words, it was a symbolic gesture because there was no further military need for them.\textsuperscript{20} Though the agreement was a unilateral rather than a bilateral move, nevertheless it went some way towards fulfilling the aims of the SPD-SED's initiative.\textsuperscript{21} Czechoslovakia and the GDR proposed intergovernmental talks on such a zone to the Federal government, but the latter would only agree to closer, more regular, consultations between the respective representatives at the Geneva conference. Whilst the Federal government agreed that it was important that contacts at the non-state level be intensified, the SPD and SED were regarded as unequal partners, according to the Western understanding of democracy, discussing a topic for which they ultimately had no responsibility.

2.2 Principles for a nuclear weapon free corridor in Central Europe, 21 October 1986

On 21 October 1986, the two parties proposed a set of "Principles for a nuclear weapon free corridor in Central Europe".\textsuperscript{22} The intended area of the corridor was limited to a 150km wide strip either side of the border in the Federal Republic, the GDR and Czechoslovakia. All nuclear weapons and delivery systems would be withdrawn from this 300km wide corridor within which the storage, deployment and transit of nuclear weapons, together with manoeuvres involving their use, would be forbidden. Nuclear powers would have to pledge to remove the weapons from this area and to respect the integrity of the corridor and not to use or threaten to use nuclear weapons against it. As with the proposal for the CWFZ, national control procedures were to have precedence over international ones - indeed verification measures resembled those of the previous initiative closely, but were extended to include the establishment of observation points to monitor the withdrawal of nuclear weapons and to ensure that they did not return. Permanent monitoring points and random inspection sessions for the period following withdrawal were also proposed.\textsuperscript{23}

The aim of the agreement was to create and maintain a

"stable common security at an increasingly lower level of armaments and forces... to reduce the danger of an outbreak of war"\textsuperscript{24}

\textsuperscript{20} Interviews with Dr. Doblay and Dr. Boysen in January 1992.
\textsuperscript{21} Interview with Herr Voigt.
\textsuperscript{22} "Grundsätze für einen atomwaffenfreien Korridor in Mitteleuropa", in \textit{Für Atomwaffenfreien Korridor in Mitteleuropa. Gemeinsame politische Initiative der SED und der SPD} (Verlag Zeit im Bild, Dresden 1986). pp. 9 -15
\textsuperscript{23} ibid. pp. 12 - 13
\textsuperscript{24} ibid. pp. 9 - 10

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and thus to complement the negotiations in Geneva on the reduction and elimination of strategic and medium-range nuclear weapons. The principles, regarded by some as "meaningless", would not have essentially changed the existing military options of the two alliances, but it would have brought gradual improvements in particularly sensitive areas of the nuclear threshold and conventional offensive capability, and in absolute military terms, the Warsaw Pact would have to have given up more than NATO. The significance of the proposal in terms of arms control was emphasised:

1. The proposal linked nominal equality and real asymmetry in an almost ideal way, fulfilling Western demands for asymmetrical arms control and Eastern ones for equal handling. The SED agreed to this concept at a time when the USSR was still determined only to accept symmetrical cuts.
2. The corridor would contribute to the repoliticisation of nuclear weapons ie political determination of the nuclear threshold and the reintroduction of a clear distinction between conventional and nuclear war - an old arms control and military political demand.
3. It would solve the question of verification in a satisfactory way given the amalgam of measures to produce a new and comprehensive system important for arms control in general.
4. The dynamic of the proposal would allow a politically and militarily risk free extension in terms of geography, weapons systems and control mechanisms - amounting to arms control through small steps and institutionalised negotiation processes.

Although not all military discrepancies would be removed (for example, INF and intercontinental missiles would continue to be deployed, and conventional technologies might be further developed), the principles represented a concrete step forward despite or even because of their limitations. The corridor would have potentially improved East-West relations in general in terms of crisis stability and damage limitation, whilst speeding up existing arms control negotiations and extending the détente process. In political terms of the East-West relationship, the principles were pertinent to 1986, because both East and West were about to begin the modernisation of tactical nuclear weapons. Arms control measures would perhaps have reduced the military function of such weapons for central Europe, and it would perhaps have increased the political influence of those groups interested in real disarmament among the Soviet leadership.

Despite the efforts of the GDR in particular, the response of the international com-

26 "There's no private peace", The Economist 8 November 1985 Vol. 301 No. 7471 pp. 19 - 21
27 "There's no private peace", The Economist 8 November 1985 Vol. 301 No. 7471 pp. 19 - 21
29 Seidelmann op. cit. pp. 139 - 140
munity was on the whole negative. The Warsaw Pact never adopted the proposals despite some limited support, and most members of NATO, except Greece, rejected the corridor proposal outright with the Federal Government neither approving of the corridor nor of the idea in general. However, Honecker’s constant efforts to win the support of the Federal government may have had some success during the INF debate in 1987 leading to a gradual convergence of views in the two German states.

2.3 Proposals for a zone of confidence and security in Central Europe, 7 July 1988

On 7 July 1988, the SPD and the SED put forward proposals for “A zone of confidence and security in central Europe”. It was presented as the interim findings of the group’s work on questions of non-offensive defence which was to be continued in the autumn of 1988. This proposal illustrated the chances of further disarmament steps in Europe to reach security at the lowest possible level. It pointed out the fact that negotiations at governmental level did not remove the responsibilities of parties to support and contribute to the disarmament process through their own ideas and proposals. The proposals were intended to extend the CBMs discussed in Stockholm and would be aimed at all members of the C.S.C.E., with the Central European states, the Federal Republic, the GDR and Czechoslovakia, fulfilling corresponding initiatives.

Thus the proposals called for a reduction of the size criterion for notifiable manoeuvres, 2 year notification of manoeuvres involving 20 000 or more troops, the inclusion of independent manoeuvres by air and sea forces, and a ban on manoeuvres involving more than 40 000 men and on notifiable manoeuvres within 50km either side of the border between the alliances. Observers would be present at all notifiable manoeuvres, and permanent “confidence-building centres” would be established, along with permanent mixed observation posts at strategically important sites, direct bi-lateral links or hot lines and the exchange of military attachés and information. Joint European satellite observation would inform all member states immediately of developments.

The proposal was regarded as a political initiative going beyond alliance borders. It envisaged “regional or bilateral settlements within, or parallel with, broader inter-alliance developments.” In this respect, and in relation to their area of application, the proposals were consistent with the SPD-SED initiatives on regional weapons reductions, with the underlying philosophy that transparency creates confidence and trust. The potentially catastrophic effects of a conventional war were recognised, including fear of damage to nuclear power stations thus creating severe nuclear pollution - a point

28 "Vorschlag für eine 'Zone des Vertrauens und der Sicherheit in Zentraleuropa'." in Für eine 'Zone des Vertrauens und der Sicherheit in Zentraleuropa'. Gemeinsamer Vorschlag der SED und der SPD (Verlag Zeit im Bild, Dresden. 1988). pp. 8 - 13
29 ibid. pp. 10 - 13
illustrated by the Chernobyl accident.

The GDR's willingness to discuss conventional stability with the SPD was linked with Egon Bahr's proposal that the nuclear weapons free corridor should apply to conventional weapons, implying the removal of all heavy weaponry including tanks and helicopters, and leaving only lightly armed units without the capacity for attack. Bahr argued that such a zone would substantially lengthen warning time and constitute "structural non-offensive defence" and as such it became the basis for the discussions between the SPD and the SED. Although Bahr's concept was not abandoned, the SPD-SED's efforts to produce a model for regional conventional military reductions came up against insurmountable problems.

At the press conference on 7 July 1988, Bahr argued that the proposal was relevant to 1988, did not deviate from alliance positions and tied in with ongoing negotiations in Vienna. The main value of the proposals was to show that confidence building was not only a concern for the superpowers or for the neutral and non-aligned countries, but rather for the small and medium states in the centre of Europe as well, without contradicting either side's alliance loyalty. Hermann Axen, the co-chair with Egon Bahr, pointed to the continuity the SPD-SED proposal on confidence-building measures implied in terms of the two German parties' efforts to contribute to peace and security in Europe and to support other states' initiatives. The setting up of a central European zone of confidence and security would be an important link in a system of European and international security. The SPD and SED had made an important contribution to the process of disarmament and confidence building in Europe, and the newest proposal was a significant development along the same path.

3 Results and consequences of the proposals

Some criticisms were aimed at all three proposals. The legitimacy of the zonal aspect of the agreements was questioned. Within NATO, there was a belief that any zone would strain the alliance and drive a wedge between its partners, potentially weakening the strategy of flexible response and the doctrine of deterrence. Some observers argued that weapon free zones were an untenable concept for European security, because they foresaw only the removal and not the outright destruction of the weapons in question leaving the requisite delivery systems behind, and the countries in the zone would

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30 Spanger op. cit. p. 71
31 Bahr, Egon: "Erklärung ... auf der internationalen Pressekonferenz am 7. Juli 1988 in Bonn", in Für eine Zone des Vertrauens und der Sicherheit in Zentraleuropa op. cit. pp. 14 - 17
remain the targets of other countries. These were countered by the argument that they were merely building on a long tradition in Europe, from the Rapacki plan to the MBFR negotiations. It was support for and continuation of old demands for both parties. The SPD was basing its ideas on the Palme Commission Report of 1982 and its own proposals from the 1983 election campaign, and for the SED, there was a comparable development in the Prague Declaration on UN initiatives and corresponding bilateral impulses.

Chemical weapons had been chosen as the first pilot project because it was expected that a world-wide and dependably verifiable ban on chemical weapons would have an enormous political signal effect on all other disarmament talks and could act as a starting signal for nations to deal with each other with more reason and humanity. Though a regional solution had its limitations when compared to a world-wide ban, it had a tactically important function in terms of the dynamic of political negotiations. It forced the West German government to pay more attention in Geneva because of the domestic interest, and it revealed to the NATO and Warsaw Pact states the political risks of further stagnation. It was regarded as a signal for the acceleration of the Geneva negotiations and as an option for a parallel negotiating point of departure which could give added impetus to the course of arms' control negotiations. It would have been a practical example of a security partnership in action, building confidence with no real risks involved. It would also have been an initiative from German soil to contribute to peace - a valuable confidence-building measure in itself.

The SPD-SED initiatives marked a new quality of co-operation between the two German parties without damaging co-operation at government level. They reflected East Germany's increased independence in foreign policy, thus correcting the impression, created by the cancellation of Honecker's visit in 1984, that its room for manoeuvre had been reduced; and they proved that the GDR was seriously making efforts to convert the doctrine of a German-German community of responsibility in a militarily important area into concrete initiatives. Had the initiatives been discussed at governmental level, as the two parties had hoped, then they would have contributed significantly to the new function for German-German co-operation in terms of all-European security.

The proposals had domestic and party political relevance. The initiatives had four political consequences for the SPD:-

1. They complied with the SPD's idea of a second phase of détente, in which arms control was to play a major role, and were acceptable to the Warsaw Pact.
2. They clarified the SPD's engagement and competence in peace policy and its

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ability to achieve success compared to the government’s lack of conception and success in arms control. Whilst linking real proposals to create a better climate between East and West, with an unspoken reproach of inactivity directed at the Federal government, they increased conflict within the government coalition, weakening it politically.

3. Within the SPD itself, the initiatives had a mobilising and integrating function, healing the divisions caused by the INF debate. They increased the influence and credibility of the SPD within the framework of international social democracy, particularly within the Socialist International, re-establishing the SPD at the forefront of peace initiatives.

4. The SPD’s commitment to arms control and its willingness to co-operate with the GDR within the framework of the community of responsibility, supporting the GDR’s initiatives within the Warsaw Pact was made clear to the Soviet Union.

The initiatives were of similar political importance for the SED:-

a. The equal and successful co-operation with the SPD gave the SED more foreign policy legitimation with the GDR population.

b. The topics were of deep concern and the concrete proposals helped reduce some of the SED’s credibility deficit in terms of its peace policy.

c. They increased the confidence of the SED leadership and moved some way towards supporting the national identity within the GDR without damaging the German-German orientation of the population.

d. The initiatives proved to other East European communist parties and to the Socialist International that the SED was capable of co-operating with the SPD on sensitive issues and of achieving concrete political success by doing so.35

The fact that these initiatives also created problems for the SED is discussed at a later stage.

The principles revealed four political problems for the Federal Republic:-

i. They raised the fundamental question of how far parties should be allowed to go in foreign policy in a party parliamentary system. It will always be a matter of concern, particularly when a competent opposition goes beyond the scope of the government. It is a question of political culture for which both sides are equally responsible.

ii. The proposals raise the strategic question of how far domestic consensus among the main parties is useful and necessary for successful security and foreign policies. Some support from the government parties was forthcoming but there was no consensus on the proposals.

iii. Another point questions the validity of the German-German element. Should the

35 Seidelmann 1987 op. cit. pp. 140-141
SPD have chosen a multi-lateral level or a common position for Western Europe’s social democracy before searching for East-West contacts? In the long-term, the international element demands the priority of international policy above nationally-oriented foreign policy.

iv. The basic differences between the SPD and the SED were also a cause for concern, necessitating the clarification of the limits of co-operation. The dispute between the parties on democracy and socialism should also have been considered. The two parties were doing this under different auspices. Problems for the GDR were caused by the common paper of 1987.

The meaning of the initiatives in terms of security policy was significant whatever the German-German, domestic and alliance considerations, interpreted differently depending on party position. If the task of opposition parties was regarded as a foreign policy precursor, with political dissent as a means of innovation and Deutschlandpolitik as a means of creating more security for the two German states and the European region, then the initiatives must be seen as a positive development.

The combination of the German-German initiative, the party political aim and the arms’ control theme gave the initiatives their political value and sustained importance. Despite the criticisms, the signal character of the agreements must not be overlooked. The SPD was using its position as an opposition party as it had done in the 1960s to develop a programme for a future SPD government with minimal political risks - a quest that is both legitimate and useful within a parliamentary democracy. It had the freedom to test out the ground in Eastern Europe without making binding commitments. The talks revealed a certain amount of naivety on the part of the SPD, because they could have potentially called into question the existence of NATO, but they did contribute to the weakening of the heart of Marxist-Leninist ideology, thus perhaps contributing over the years to the collapse of the Soviet system.

All the issues discussed between the two parties directly affected the two German states specifically and would gradually facilitate the demilitarisation of East-West relations. The discussions could only take place under the proviso of membership in opposing alliances and of informing their allies about the negotiations, but they were important as they corresponded to the bipolar structure of international relations. The proposals were a result of compromise on both sides - for the CWFZ, the most difficult question was that of verification, whereas for the NWFZ it was the area of the zone (the GDR had wanted an area which would have removed the threat of medium-ranged missiles as far as it was concerned).

36 Seidelmann 1987 op. cit. pp. 141 - 142
37 Interview with Professor Schulz in May 1991.
"In the GDR's eyes,...the result of the CDE was only a compromise. Its real aspirations went further and were reflected in the efforts to establish zones of military disengagement that became over the ...years a focus of the GDR’s initiatives, and were viewed as the sort of CBM which would have 'independent significance in the overall process of arms limitation and disarmament'."

Even if the initiatives could not be realised, it was important that politicians in both German states discussed security policy directly rather than via the two superpowers. It was a way of maintaining German-German détente despite East-West tensions. The effort to use German-German relations as an element of stabilisation in East-West relations was in the interest of the Federal government as well as the SPD. The initiatives were understood, if not actively supported, by the US, whereas Gorbachev spoke more favourably about the discussions and the proposals because they were in line with Soviet aims. Although they would probably never be realised, in theory they corresponded to the Soviet policy of arms reduction, pursued because of the state of the Soviet economy and also fear of SDI.

The work on the first initiative was a test project to see whether co-operation on security policy was possible between two differently oriented parties belonging to opposing military alliances. Having tested the ground and the possible efficiency of co-operation, the substance of the talks and the international echo, even the influence on international negotiating forums, proved to be positive. The proposal for a NWFZ also had a positive effect on the negotiations in Vienna. The final proposal in 1988 for a zone of confidence included confidence building measures which went beyond those negotiated at Stockholm and aimed at a state where conflict would be solved peacefully. The initiatives of the SPD and SED contributed significantly to the development of the principles of the Helsinki Final Act and brought German disarmament interests to the fore on the international stage. Indeed, the co-operation between the SPD and the SED on security policy issues created trust and encouraged the reformers in the SED. The common paper presented in 1987 would never have been possible without the security initiatives.

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38 Spanger op. cit. pp. 53 - 54
41 Interview with Herr Krabatsch in January 1992. He also argued that they did not have as much importance for the Soviet Union because it was involved in global negotiations with the US.
42 Uschner op. cit. pp. 139 - 140
43 ibid. p. 142
4 "Conflicting ideologies and common security", 27 August 1987

On 27 August 1987, at simultaneous press conferences in Bonn and East Berlin, the SPD and the SED introduced their most controversial joint project - the theoretical document "Conflicting ideologies and common security" - an attempt to outline a framework within which competition between the two systems could continue peacefully in the nuclear age, written by the SPD Basic Values Commission and the Academy of Sciences of the SED Central Committee. It was published in both the Frankfurter Allgemeine Zeitung and Neues Deutschland on 28 August 1987, making it accessible to the East German population.

The document was based on the premise that humankind will either survive or go down together, and that it was the quality of politics, not that of weapons, that would ensure security and stability in the world. Each side had to take into account and respect the security interests of the other side, and the aim of world peace through disarmament, dialogue and confidence building was to be linked to the creation of a just world economic order, a joint attack on global problems, international co-operation to combat hunger and to provide reasonable conditions for all people, and measures to tackle the ecological crisis. Thus both sides need to be frank, predictable and restrained in their choice of methods for dealing with each other. The pursuit of self-interest prescribes arms control plus co-operation; these in turn help to build the confidence and trust between the two systems necessary to transform the contemporary conduct of international relations.

The common roots of the Social Democrats and the Communists were acknowledged in the document, but the convergence theory, popular in the 1970s, was rejected. The profound differences in fundamental values of the two parties were clearly set out. As Erhard Eppler, SPD, said at the press conference in Bonn,

"Each side knows exactly where it belongs. There can be no ideological neutrality.... We say ... that the struggle must go on, but that there is something more important than our struggle - peace - and this must have consequences on the form and content of the ideological struggle."

The basic philosophies of the two parties were specifically defined - Social Democrats are committed to pluralism in all areas of social life - politics, economics, culture - as the basis and guarantor of democracy, whilst the Marxist-Leninists maintain that

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45 Common paper op. cit. section I, part 2.

46 Phillips op. cit. p. 21

democracy can only be built on social ownership of the means of production. As a result, human rights can only develop when economic rights are guaranteed by socialism and will be fully realised in communism, according to Marxist-Leninists. By contrast, Social Democrats regard human rights as possessing absolute worth which must be promoted and protected against political and economic power, regardless of the socio-economic system. The ideological struggle will continue and probably increase but through peaceful competition and without the use of force. As Gwyn Edwards has put it

"Each system will be judged on its ability to meet the challenges of the scientific-technological changes, to develop a vital democracy, to realise and further develop human rights, and to achieve a balance between economy and ecology."

This showed an increased awareness of ecological problems.

Thus, the common paper outlined a culture of political conflict in which competition between the systems could proceed peacefully. Three principles were to provide the basis of this culture and representatives of both parties highlighted them as the three central concepts of the paper:

- each system had to recognise the right of the other to exist;
- each had to recognise the other as being capable of peace;
- each had to regard the other as capable of reform.

Peaceful co-existence and common security thus required that the deeply ingrained perceptions of an inherently expansionist adversary be revised on both sides. Grounds for fear had to be removed and static images of the enemy given up. The most important change was perhaps the mutual acceptance of each state as it was. Change in both systems was expected but not as a precondition for negotiations and co-operation. The fact that the two parties had agreed on the joint paper indicated that they had already recognised the qualities regarded as central to the paper. The acceptance of these principles created a minimum level of trust and respect necessary to defuse the East-West conflict, to create peaceful coexistence and common security.

The next section of the common paper set out the basic rules for the political culture envisaged, with co-operation, competition and conflict between the systems as normal ways of dealing with each other. Criticism was to be based on verifiable facts, but was not to be disregarded as interference in internal affairs - the traditional rebuff from the GDR. Open debate on the competition between the systems, their successes and failures, advantages and disadvantages, had to be possible within either society, sup-

44 Common paper op. cit. section III
50 Common paper op. cit. section IV
51 ibid. section IV, parts 1 - 4
ported by the exchange and dissemination of information.\textsuperscript{52} Were the latter to have been implemented, it would have done much to comply with the spirit of the Helsinki C.S.C.E. Final Act. The final part of the common paper emphasised a crucial element of the political culture - ideological conflict must not be transferred to interstate relations - a distinguishing factor of East-West relations in the past.

The initiative for the talks between the SPD and SED on non-security issues did not come from the SED Politburo nor the leadership of the SPD. They began as a result of a personal meeting between Eppler and a member of the SED. The process was allowed to develop because it fitted into the political line pursued by the Honecker leadership at that time - namely dialogue with the West - which gave the talks a certain autonomy.\textsuperscript{53} The role of Otto Reinhold in this process must not be underestimated. He had to carry the responsibility for the document, but he remained wholeheartedly committed in favour of it, even before it was clear that Honecker would accept it.\textsuperscript{54}

The talks were relatively open - not merely propaganda exchanges, although compromises had to be reached in order to make the document acceptable to the Politburo - but there was still some doubt among the delegations that it would be accepted, let alone published, in \textit{Neues Deutschland}, by the SED leadership. It was passed by the Politburo because Honecker supported it, although there were some fears that the language was too social-democratic in orientation. There was even a live television debate on the GDR network between members of the SPD and SED.\textsuperscript{55} The timing of the publication of the common paper, shortly before Honecker's visit to the Federal Republic, was fortuitous but not carefully planned. It is assumed that the paper would have been published anyway because it had Honecker's support and because it fitted into the policy of cooperation with the West.

The liberal and moderate tone of the paper drew criticism from various groups, and enthusiastic support from others. In the Federal Republic, one of the CDU's arguments was that the paper had blurred the distinction between freedom and dictatorship, and the conservative newspaper, \textit{Die Welt}, described it as a "disgraceful paper". The idea of the equality of the negotiating parties referred to in the text of the common paper was seen as no more than lip service to the constant demand of the SED and the GDR to be dealt with on a basis of equality and equal security, according to the opponents of the paper. The critics of the paper also argued that the three main tenets of the paper would never be realised until human rights, as understood by the Western states, were introduced into the GDR. Indeed, conservative groups in both German states criticised

\textsuperscript{52} \textit{Common paper} \textit{op. cit.} sections IV and V
\textsuperscript{53} Interview with Professor Rei\ssig in January 1992.
\textsuperscript{54} Correspondence with Professor Hahn in February 1993.
\textsuperscript{55} Rei\ssig would never have believed that this was possible prior to the announcement.
the groups involved for having acknowledged the right to exist of the opposing state, and their ability to achieve peace and reform. The CDU / CSU regarded the common paper as the highpoint of a misguided policy by the SPD, as a false fraternisation between Communists and Social Democrats. They considered it an illusion to think that one paper would change the situation in the GDR and the SED, and the common paper was regarded as ineffectual when compared to the various documents signed in the C.S.C.E. process.56

Even members of the SPD found the paper disturbing. Professor Gesine Schwan, in the FAZ from 23 September 1987, accepted the possibilities for change within the paper, but criticised the lack of emphasis on freedom, the unquestioning description of communism and the fact that it was a joint document based on the understanding that social democracy and communism had a common European heritage and that each side had equal status, with the SPD apparently accepting that dictatorship was as capable of peace as a democracy.57 SPD members who had been involved with the formulation of the document pointed out, however, that the SPD had not accepted the communists as friends and allies, but that they had acknowledged that the ideological struggle with communism would go on. Differences between the parties had not been ignored and would remain deep.58 Criticism of the paper from another member of the SPD, Dieter Haack, was based on the terminology used in the paper. Several terms were used but were never defined, were interpreted too narrowly or were understood differently by the two parties - such as ideology, democracy and self-determination.59 Critics of the paper saw the need for an open dialogue across the systems but did not regard the common paper as the means of creating it.

Reactions in the GDR were also mixed. In a conversation with Manfred Banaschak in Einheit in September 1987, Otto Reinhold argued that imperialism was not of necessity aggressive and that people interested in and capable of peace through détente and disarmament existed within the capitalist states. If this was not acknowledged, then the policy of common security would have no future.60 In an article in Horizont, Reinhold described the common paper as “a document of historical quality”.61 He emphasised the importance of the three central elements of the paper, accepting their implications. He stated that the common paper would play a positive role in developing the politically

56 Interviews with Dr. Dobiey and Boysen in January 1992.
57 Edwards 1988 op. cit. p. 220
60 Reinhold, Otto and Banaschak, Manfred: “Ein Gespräch über Der Streit der Ideologien und die gemeinsame Sicherheit”, in Einheit 9 / 1987 42. Jg. pp. 772 - 777
necessary new thinking and acting to secure further disarmament developments.

The reactions in the GDR can basically be divided into three groups. Firstly, there was strong opposition to the document within the SED at all levels, particularly at the highest level. Secondly, there was strong support for the document from the majority of opposition groups within the GDR who used it to base their claims for more dialogue and increased participation within the GDR. Indeed, the importance of the paper was acknowledged even by those who did not wholly support it for various reasons, for example Bärbel Bohley. It had an important legitimising function for people like Eppleman in the opposition movement, as it could be quoted to justify demands. The document also received a great deal of support from within the SED. And thirdly, there were those who regarded the document as proof that there existed within the SED a willingness to reform. Despite the outward appearance of unanimity in the SED, the SPD-SED dialogue acted as a major impulse for those people, who saw the need for change in the GDR and who supported Gorbachev’s efforts in the Soviet Union. It could have been used as an instrument for the further opening up of the GDR, but instead it became an excuse to increase internal repression. The common paper led to a further intensification of contradictions in East German society.

Distinctions in public appraisals of the common paper in the GDR may have been largely semantic, but there was sharp conflict over the interpretation of the paper within the SED leadership. Several previously fundamental axioms of Marxist-Leninist theory had to be re-interpreted by the SED.

"Social progress, the superiority of socialism and the essence of socialism are three distinct, but related issues fundamental to Marxism-Leninism which have been called into question within the SED during the course of the dialogue."^64

4.1 Social progress

The SED had accepted that Clausewitz’ aphorism, that war was a continuation of politics by other means, no longer held true in the nuclear age. It also concluded that class struggle could no longer be used as an engine for social progress.^64 A quasi alliance between capitalism and socialism, through peaceful coexistence, was essential for guaranteeing peace and for coping with the global problems threatening to overwhelm both systems. The new rules of competition between the systems placed the

^62 In Talk im Turm mit Erich Böhme, a TV show on SAT 1 broadcast on Sunday 26 January 1992, Bärbel Bohley commented on the importance of the document for the opposition. The other members of the panel were Klaus von Dohnanyi, Heinrich Fink, Heinz-Klaus Mertes, Vera Wollenberger and Rolf Schneider.


^64 Phillips op. cit. p. 28

^64e Phillips op. cit. p. 65
impetus for change and social progress on internal developments in each system.\textsuperscript{45} Competition and co-operation between the two systems to solve global problems would generate creative, constructive contributions to social progress. Even capitalist development was regarded by some as social progress and was therefore encouraged. The triumph of socialism in this new process was no longer considered inevitable by the end of the 1980s - a significant change in ideology.

4.2 The superiority of socialism

The most controversial and problematic concept for the SED was that of capitalism being capable of peace, even when it was relativised to capitalism being potentially capable of peace under socialist pressure. It undermined the claim of socialist superiority that peace emanated from socialism. Capitalism had always been regarded as inherently expansionist, although the inevitability of war was abandoned by the SED in the second half of the 1980s. The sensitivity of this issue - a fundamental change in Marxist-Leninist ideology - was reflected in the controversial debate within the SED.\textsuperscript{46}

The objective requirements of maintaining human existence and common interests in the nuclear age challenged the Marxist-Leninist claim to be the champion of peace, because the destructive capability of nuclear weapons forced imperialists to recognise that a nuclear war would destroy their own system as well as socialism.\textsuperscript{47} Additionally, economic problems associated with the arms race in the capitalist states

"significantly bolstered the potential for peaceful capitalism and marked an important departure from the traditional portrayal of capitalism's economic imperatives."\textsuperscript{48}

On 28 October 1987, in an interview in \textit{Neues Deutschland}, Kurt Hager, chief SED ideologist, stated that imperialism “must be made capable of peace; it is not inherently peaceful.” He compounded the situation by continuing:

“Our image of the enemy is clear: we will not stop fighting the aggressive powers of imperialism as the enemy, as the opponent of a peaceful life for humanity."\textsuperscript{49}

It was likely that his words were designed for domestic consumption as a warning that there would be no sudden ideological changes in the GDR and no convergence of the two systems, but it was denounced in the West as a violation of the spirit and letter of the common paper. It revealed the extent to which the leaders of the SED had under-

\textsuperscript{45} Common paper \textit{op. cit.} section IV part 1
\textsuperscript{46} Interview with Professor Reißig in January 1992.
\textsuperscript{47} Reinhold and Banaschak \textit{op. cit.} p. 775 and Reinhold \textit{op. cit.} p. 9
\textsuperscript{48} Phillips \textit{op. cit.} p. 34
\textsuperscript{49} Hager, Kurt: “Friedenssicherung und ideologischer Streit” in \textit{Neues Deutschland} 28 October 1987
estimated the effects the document would have within the GDR. The SED was presumed to have agreed to the common paper because it included acknowledgement of its right to exist (not merely the respect thereof), and because it believed that it would be able to control and limit the effects of the paper on the GDR population. When, in November 1987, Otto Reinhold exacerbated the situation by supporting Hager’s comments and by attempting to limit the damage to the traditional ideological stance, it was clear that the hardliners in the SED had gained the upper hand and that the misrepresentation of terms used in the common paper reflected the fear the paper had aroused.

That capitalism was capable of reform did not cause as much controversy for the SED because it recognised that there was no pure form of capitalism in operation and no single model of capitalism, but rather variations on some basic organising principles. Reinhold argued, however, in an interview with the theoretical journal Einheit in September 1987 that real existing socialism was capable of reform by its nature and that imperialism was above all in need of reform. This was another instance of the SED’s use of semantics to save its ideological position, weakened by the common paper.

Recognition of the GDR’s right to exist was crucial to the SED’s insistence that peace could only be built upon the given political and territorial realities of the postwar era.

“The entire framework for peaceful existence formulated in the SPD-SED paper hinged upon recognising the right of each system to exist and displacing threat with challenge as the centrepiece of capitalist-socialist competition.”

In the common paper, the SED committed itself to competition between the two systems based purely on performance in terms of which system can best solve the problems facing the globe, thus demonstrating system superiority. These terms, however, undercut socialism’s claim to superiority, because virtually all measures of economic performance favoured capitalism, and similarly competition to demonstrate which system was best able to solve or alleviate global problems favoured the capitalist states at the end of the 1980s in terms of know-how, wealth and technology.

The question of legitimacy, though not identical, was tied in with the right to exist. Some SED scholars came to accept self-determination as the basis for legitimacy, which had enormous implications for Marxist-Leninists and their claim to universality, although it remained unclear how the SED would exercise self-determination. Change was anticipated in both systems, but it was not a prerequisite for coexistence. The two German states exerted leverage on the German-German relationship in different ways.

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70 Haack op. cit. p. 42
71 Reinhold and Banaschak op. cit. p. 775
72 Phillips op. cit. p. 36
73 Common paper op. cit. section II part 2

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and the attractiveness of the Federal Republic for GDR citizens acted as both a
challenge and a threat to the SED leadership and the chances of reform in the GDR.

4.3 The essence of socialism

Despite the lack of support for reform in the GDR, there was agreement among SED
leaders that the CPSU had defined the essence of socialism for too long; and despite
the concept of the ability to reform subscribed to in the common paper, there was no
consensus on how socialism would develop nor as to what constituted the inviolable
tenets of socialism. For example, the concept of pluralism was gaining ground in the
SED analysis of socialism as illustrated in the use of the term “unity in diversity”, and
traditional concepts of class were breaking down. The problem for the SED was how
to continue to represent the working class when it was so differentiated. This was
linked with the problems of maintaining a communist identity at a time when core
principles were open to discussion and subject to change.

The SED-SPD policy of dialogue reinforced the issue of dialogue with the opposition
groups within the GDR as the common paper required that the SED engaged in
dialogue with groups within the GDR as well as between the systems. It could have
brought the church, the opposition movement and the reformers in the SED together to
create real dialogue, but it was not used for this purpose, and, gradually, a more
negative development began. The potential of this ideological debate was of immense
importance in the GDR as it could have been used as a way of saving socialism there.
It has been argued that the course of dialogue was the beginning of the end of
socialism. However, the alternative, and perhaps more valid, view is that socialism
failed because it did not realise this course. If the GDR had been economically stable,
then perhaps a more humane socialism could have developed. The joint document
offered a possibility of opening up and liberalising the GDR, but it was not taken up.
Thus many factors conspired to strain the apparent strong and enduring commitment to
the inherent superiority of socialism among SED scholars.

\[ ^{74}\text{Marxist-Leninists have come to accept the concept of pluralism as integral to a modern industrialised society. However, the SED had developed its own term of 'diversity in unity' ('Vielfalt in Einheit') as an attempt to reconcile the traditional notion of unity in a socialist society with the diversity required by the scientific-technical revolution. In Phillips } \textit{op. cit.} \textit{p. 21} \]
5 The end of the SPD-SED dialogue

"The more dependent the GDR became on multilateral negotiations, and the more it fell into the shadow of the increasingly flexible and dynamic Soviet disarmament policy, the less its ability - and perhaps also its readiness - to engage in independent initiatives." 75

Throughout 1988, there was a clear hardening of the ideological stance of the SED, despite any tacit support given to the common paper during that year. 76 The SED moved away from the Soviet position as it had done in the early 1980s, but this time without the support of the GDR population. As a result of increased insecurity (a manifestation related to the economic predicament of the GDR and a lack of conceptions on how to improve the situation, compounded by the developments in Poland, Hungary and the Soviet Union), the SED began to use ideological rhetoric against the Federal Republic, and the GDR began to pull down the ideological bridges built to the West in the 1980s under the banner of new thinking. Despite agreement in December 1988 between the SPD and the SED that the common paper remained an outline of valid criteria and methods to achieve mutual responsibility for peace and co-operation, and despite Reinhold's description of the common paper not as a document "of final truth, rather (as) a bridge to new questions", capturing the essence of the paper for the GDR population in terms of its risks, and the opportunities and hopes it afforded, the SED position had changed. As 1989 progressed, the GDR's flexibility and willingness to co-operate in East-West relations and détente in general steadily declined.

The disappointment of the SPD with the SED's performance measured in terms of the common paper became increasingly apparent. On 29 March 1989, in response to the SED's crackdown on peaceful demonstrations by church and peace groups, the SPD Basic Values Commission published a negative assessment of the results of its dialogue with the SED since the common paper. The SPD noted "with a lack of understanding and indignation" that the SED was limiting internal dialogue between different social groups in the GDR, in direct contradiction to the common paper. It concluded that if the GDR prevented internal dialogue, then intersystem dialogue would, in the long run be endangered. 77 Indeed, the SPD began to give priority to the church and opposition movement as partners for dialogue, although discussions continued with the SED. This elicited an immediate response from the SED in the form of an interview in Neues Deutschland with Otto Reinhold on 31 March 1989, in which he repudiated the com-

75 Spanger op. cit. pp. 71 -72
ments saying that they did not reflect reality in the GDR and that they would restrict discussion with the SPD. He asserted the SED's continuing loyalty to the principles and expressed dismay at the timing and substance of the SPD's comments. The intransigence of the SED leadership in this sphere justified sceptics opinions that the SED had not been honest in the common paper.

The more the SED distanced itself from the reforms in the USSR under the motto “Socialism in East German colours”, and the more ideological pressure it put on those members of the SED committed to the common paper to return to the fold, the greater the disappointment of the SPD and the more leading members openly criticised SED policy. This criticism was reflected regularly in the press, and even the GDR media reported it. Meetings continued at all levels between the two parties, but wherever possible the SPD took the opportunity to criticise the SED’s handling of dissidents and its condoning of the Peking massacre. In his speech to the Bundestag on 17 June 1989, Erhard Eppler emphasised the need for change in the GDR despite more difficulties there compared to other East European states. Relations were suspended by the SPD in August / September 1989, when government contacts were suspended, when it was still unclear whether the process of change in the unstable GDR would be undertaken peacefully. They were suspended in the hope that they would be continued when the situation settled; they were only broken off permanently at a later stage.

6 Conclusion

In the 1980s, the new thinking and its implications in the GDR represented potential rather than reality. The new thinking began with a re-assessment of the concept of security policy in the nuclear age, but this examination of the intersystem relationship was not followed by an analysis of GDR society itself with the consequences envisioned by the SPD. It left the impression of a debate without roots in the GDR. Pressure was mounting from within the SED for change, from the church and peace groups who used the common paper to justify their claims. The threshold of performance criteria had been reached, and the SED was beginning to analyse its own criteria for further development of the economy and society. The fear of instability as a

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80 Reißig put forward this point not as a means of justification for their actions, but rather to explain the situation. He admitted that perhaps they should have pushed more and taken up dialogue with the opposition movements - in direct contradiction of party specifications. This ideological pressure is, however, questioned by others.
82 Interview with Herr Voigt in January 1992.
result of too far-reaching change united all political groups in the GDR, indeed the GDR’s exposed position dictated against the adoption of radical reform. Had the GDR moved too quickly, then it would have come off the road; that it moved too slowly resulted in it being left perilously far behind with an old leadership unwilling to relinquish its power.

Both the security initiatives and the ideological paper were direct consequences of “new thinking” in the SED. In this sense, the joint document was not in opposition to Honecker and the SED, but a consequence of Honecker’s policies, even though thereafter he acted against the spirit of the document. Indeed, Honecker had fully supported the document and had expressed the opinion that it was of historic significance, although it was, in some aspects, objectively opposed to Honecker’s position. The risk of such a document for the SED was not negated - it was acknowledged that, in effect, the joint document was the articulation of the SPD’s policy of “change through rapprochement”. The GDR was not, however, stable enough, for the risks engendered in the document to work to the benefit of the GDR.

Perhaps an explanation of the turn-around in SED policy after September 1987 is that the publication of the document during Gorbachev’s weak period (late summer / early autumn 1987) was the expression of an over-inflated self-confidence on the part of the SED. Given the growing deficit in the GDR’s sense of legitimacy, it had apparently overstepped the mark, and in October 1987, when Gorbachev appeared to be making a partial retreat, the orthodox members of the SED took the opportunity to reinterpret the paper. Honecker warned that the image of the enemy would not be altered and Kurt Hager misrepresented the line taken by the SPD / SED paper in a deliberate attempt to re-establish the old line.

Important distinctions had existed between the SPD and the SED on the status of the model agreements reflecting the two parties’ roles. Though they had the support of the SPD party executive, there had been no party wide referendum to adopt them as party policy. The dialogue remained controversial within the SPD. In the GDR, the initiatives had a more official character, because of the role of the SED as the leading party. In some senses, perhaps, the common paper was a small contribution to the collapse of the GDR. Differences had begun to develop within the SED in broad terms between supporters and opponents of Gorbachev’s policy of perestroika in the Soviet Union. The common paper served to bring to the fore the differentiation within the SED.

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83 Phillips op. cit. pp. 43 - 47
84 Interview with Professor Hahn in January 1992.
86 Oldenburg 1988 op. cit. p. 12
88 Interview with Professor Reilig in January 1992.
on the support of the majority of the SED in the autumn and winter of 1989.

The SPD / SED dialogue did not live up to its potential. The links gave the SED credibility with the Socialist International, and it was seen to be undertaking a vanguard movement which could be used to the benefit of other East European countries. It represented genuine dialogue between social democrats and communists for the first time in the twentieth century. Had the SED been willing to take the consequences further, then perhaps it would have developed a momentum of its own.

In conclusion, “the SPD-SED dialogue as a whole represented an ambitious effort to alter the basis of East-West relations,” given the conditions of the nuclear age, in which both sides hoped to reap political gain. That the new thinking on security issues initiated questions about the relationship between capitalism and socialism among SED scholars and politicians was an important result of this process. The fact that the SPD found a willing partner in the SED and that the SED initiated some of the moves negated the image of a static SED for some years, but when it came to the crunch in late 1989, the “old” thinking of the elderly leadership highlighted the divisions within the GDR and contributed to its eventual downfall. Whether any long-term electoral damage has been done to the SPD in the now united Germany remains to be seen. Perhaps the relatively poor showing of the SPD in the Federal elections of December 1990 can be put down to the policy employed by the governing coalition rather than to the fact that the SPD was tarnished with the same brush as the SED as a result of the dialogue.88

87 Phillips op. cit. p. 22
88 The effect on the SPD’s election chances in 1987 have been assessed as negligible. If there was an effect, then it was probably positive, but not significant. Interviews with Professor Albrecht and Herr Voigt in January 1992.
CONCLUSION

The détente of the 1970s had opened up new opportunities to both East and West, but also confronted them with new challenges. The states involved in the process had had to adapt to the new circumstances and the new type of relations because former foes had become partners to a certain extent. This proved to be the case particularly in the early 1980s when the superpower relations had deteriorated into the second Cold War as a result of the crises in the developing world and Eastern Europe, and of the rearmament issue. The intransigence of both the United States and the Soviet Union to negotiate a solution in the face of these difficulties forced the Europeans in East and West to reassess their positions. The network of ties that had developed across the East-West divide undermined the ability of the superpowers to impose their will on their allies and therefore to control the political environment. In other words, the strength of relations between Eastern and Western Europe accentuated the weakness of relations within each alliance. This is not to say that the alliance membership of any state was ever in doubt, but rather that there was a difference in (threat) perceptions between the alliance leaders and their members. Within this framework of East-West relations, the development of German-German ties became a crucial sub-set, highlighting how well relations at sub-systemic level were able to flourish despite the resurgence of superpower hostility.

At a bilateral level, the examination of the positions of the major parties forming governments in the two states on Deutschlandpolitik revealed a remarkable degree of continuity of aim throughout the years in terms of eventual reunification. In policy terms, in the Federal Republic the opposition tended to reconcile its position with that of the incumbent government, even taking that policy further when in office itself. A significant change in direction was that undertaken by the SPD from 1963 onwards by coming into line with the Western allies and, when in government (1969 - 1982), seeking rapprochement with the East. Equally important was the CDU’s willingness after 1982 to continue the policy adopted by the social-liberal coalition and to extend it. A factor of continuity was the FDP, always an advocate of accommodation with the East European states. The CSU maintained a consistent approach to the East, going along with the CDU in coalition, but for pragmatic reasons rather than out of any conviction that it was indeed the best way to overcome the division. In the GDR, there were different emphases of policy according to the circumstances in which it was made. The aim of reunification (but under socialist auspices) was maintained, but tactical realignments necessitated alternative approaches.

The legal and international framework within which the two German states developed their relations was the result of the Federal Republic and the GDR coming into line with the détente between the two superpowers at the end of the 1960s. Indeed this super-
power détente facilitated the reconciliation between the Federal Republic and Eastern Europe, achieved on the basis of renunciation of force agreements. With the solution to the Berlin problem found in the Quadripartite Agreement of 1971, and the developing modus vivendi in Eastern Europe, the conclusion of the Basic Treaty between East and West Germany in 1972 marked a turning point in their relations and in the development of relations between East and West in general as it cleared the path for the Conference on Security and Co-operation in Europe - the zenith of the period of détente. It was a forum for East and West European states to discuss issues ranging from security policy and confidence building measures to economic issues and human rights. Indeed it was perhaps in the latter sphere that it served its most important function, opening up East European states to Western influences and standards, which perhaps contributed to the collapse of Eastern Europe in the late 1980s.

The consideration of the crises at the end of the 1970s and the beginning of the 1980s with regard to the onset of the second Cold War showed that both sides had to bear the responsibility for its outbreak. A difficult situation was exacerbated by the Soviet deployment of SS-20s after 1977, which the US then used as justification for the NATO twin-track decision in 1979 (INF modernisation if negotiations failed to remove the new Soviet missiles). The crises in Ethiopia, Iran and Afghanistan served to aggravate the situation still further, and the Polish crisis emphasised most clearly the deteriorating relationship between the two superpowers. That both sides were to blame for this situation was inevitable given the ideological confrontation endemic to the East-West divide. The reactions of the two German states to these developments indicated their changing position within the framework of their alliances and within Europe.

In the introduction to this thesis, I posed a series of questions with regard to the development of German-German relations and their inter-action with the East-West climate in general. Throughout the body of the work, I have proposed answers to these questions. In summarising these issues in the conclusion, the following points must be highlighted.

1. It had always been assumed that a stable, balanced relationship between the superpowers created the optimum conditions for an improvement in East-West relations in Europe. Détente in the 1970s had, however, created a new situation, where European détente was divisible from and different to superpower détente, independent from it, but also affected by the climate between the superpowers. Détente in Europe had promoted dialogue and the development of common interests across the East-West division. This phenomenon was termed the “Europeanisation of Europe” by Peter Bender in 1981, and it proved to be the frame of reference within which the two German states acted to protect their relations thereafter.
The superpower relationship deteriorated significantly at the end of the 1970s as a result of the series of crises culminating in the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan and the NATO twin-track decision in December 1979. However, the two German states had a considerable commitment to détente by the beginning of the 1980s. The foundation of co-operative stability between the two states, based on the treaties and agreements reached after 1972, had sufficient momentum to survive disputes and international developments detrimental to the détente process after 1979, as a result of the bi-polar Soviet-American contests throughout the world. The two German states endeavoured to isolate their relations from this overall international climate and succeeded for several years, maintaining the benefits accrued to both sides in the 1970s. These were the first indications of the Federal Republic and the GDR’s willingness to seek, maintain and develop their own special German-German preserve. At the heart of this “community of responsibility” of the two German states was their commitment to preventing the outbreak of war on German soil and their joint responsibility for maintaining peace and security in Europe.

In order to maintain a minimum of détente, the two German states developed a form of bridge-building, which had the full backing of the populations of both states. The events in Poland, more so than the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, introduced a note of uncertainty into the development of East-West relations in general, and into German-German relations in particular, but they also demonstrated that the agreements from the 1970s, although vulnerable to external pressures to a certain degree, had nevertheless acquired a substantial amount of durability and permanence.

A significant issue in this process was the fact that détente had served the Europeans well. They had more in common and more worth preserving. Indeed, although far from perfect, the principal achievements had proved positive, lasting and beneficial to both sides. As a result, the Europeans had become more independent from their superpowers and also more interdependent. Moreover they had a special and joint responsibility to preserve the peace and well-being of their own continent.

In the period from October 1980 to December 1981, the fear of instability in the GDR as a result of the events in Poland and Soviet pressure on the GDR meant that the GDR kept a low profile and used the Gera demands to put a halt to the development of German-German relations. The temporary, tactical nature of the demands was, however, clear by the end of 1980. Relations between the two German states continued to develop, though more cautiously, and they contributed to the resumption of superpower dialogue in November 1981 (particularly as a result of the efforts of Helmut Schmidt).

2. The Schmidt visit to the GDR in December 1981, which highlighted the renewal of
high level relations between the two states, was indicative of the willingness of the two states to maintain good relations. Both German leaders stated that the relations between their states could not be separated from the overall international climate. However, from January 1982, the two German states took independent actions contrary to the prevailing international scenario, placing them in direct opposition to superpower policy at that stage. The Polish crisis had abated, though it had revealed that given the Soviet commitments in Afghanistan and the inertia of the Soviet leadership, then the Soviet Union was no longer in a position to guarantee the stability of the Communist regimes in its sphere. When coupled with the growing fear of nuclear war in the GDR, this prompted the SED leadership actively to promote peace and good-neighbourly relations with the Federal Republic (perhaps also in a bid to gain the loyalty of the GDR population). This policy of developing good relations, at a time when superpower relations had deteriorated to a new low, was reciprocated by the Federal Republic, and 1983 saw German-German relations reaching new heights. Thus German-German relations entered a phase where they developed positively as superpower relations stagnated and deteriorated.

3. The room for manoeuvre the two German states had was increased significantly in the early to mid-1980s. The West German credit to the GDR in July 1983 indicated the readiness of the Federal Republic to maintain good relations despite the mounting INF crisis. Indeed, in November 1983, superpower relations were broken off altogether when the Soviets walked out of the Geneva arms control talks, after the West German decision to accept the deployment of new US missiles on its territory. Nevertheless, the East German reaction was that relations between the two German states be continued and that any damage be limited. German-German relations entered their most productive stage in early 1984 at bilateral level, but they had also gained a significance that went beyond this.

The degree of room for manoeuvre and the risks the two German states were willing to take to safeguard this were exemplified by the conflict in the Warsaw Pact in 1984. The conflict was supposedly a result of GDR policy towards the Federal Republic, but it went beyond this, questioning the political line advocated by Moscow, and according small and medium states in Europe a role in East-West relations - a view expressed most articulately by the Hungarians but fully endorsed by the GDR. This defiance demonstrated the newly-defined role of the GDR within the Warsaw Pact and the lengths to which it was willing to go to safeguard its interests in the West, in particular with the Federal Republic. Honecker’s open expression of defiance and dissent in 1984 was a clear indication that the days of absolute Soviet dominance in Eastern Europe were over.

1 Schulz 1989 op. cit. p. 67
Though fundamental issues such as membership of the Warsaw Pact and the monopoly of political power by the Communist party were never questioned, there was considerable diversity within Eastern Europe. National interests and priorities had become increasingly important, in terms of the economy, foreign and security policy. The East European states resisted Soviet attempts to sacrifice their interests for the sake of Soviet priorities in periods of Soviet-American tensions. Although the proposed Honecker visit to the Federal Republic was ultimately postponed in September 1984 under Soviet pressure, it can be assumed that Honecker acceded to that pressure in order to maintain the long-term benefits of his policy with the West. Indeed, by the end of 1984, GDR rhetoric against the Federal Republic had reduced significantly, and German-German relations seemed once more to be on an even keel.

The situation did not change with the advent of Gorbachev in the Soviet Union. Initially thereafter, Soviet foreign policy seemed to emphasise bloc solidarity and criticised independent political and ideological attitudes of its socialist allies, condemning "nationalist deviations", but the GDR continued its policy of co-operation with the Federal Republic - although the focus of its policy was the SPD at that stage. Nevertheless it bore testimony to the GDR's ongoing commitment to maintaining good relations with the Federal Republic. That the GDR improved its relations with the SPD represented a considerable risk for the SED leadership as the SPD was its closest ideological/political rival.

4. The question of whether Deutschlandpolitik was a functional equivalent of peace policy necessitated a consideration of the effect better relations between the two German states had on the overall situation in Europe. Situated at the heart of Europe, on the most sensitive border in the world, with highly militarised territories, any improvement in relations between the GDR and the Federal Republic constituted, by its very nature, a contribution to peace in the region. By recognising each other, the two German states, through their respective Deutschlandpolitik, facilitated an easing of tensions in Europe and between East and West in general.

5. The addition of a security dimension to the German-German relationship meant that the two German states were no longer simply pawns in the East-West confrontation nor a stumbling block preventing the conclusion of arms control agreements. They became active in this sphere, making autonomous contributions to stability in Europe. They had the potential to make far-reaching initiatives in security policy terms, and although these were never fully developed, nevertheless by promoting co-operation across the East-West divide at such a sensitive point, and by discussing security issues, the two German states made an important contribution to the maintenance of stability in Europe.

An improvement in these relations also created the necessary conditions for the con-
vening of the C.S.C.E. At its conception in the 1970s, the C.S.C.E. was seen as an instrument to mitigate some of the consequences of the East-West division. Despite the deterioration of East-West relations in the early 1980s, there was never a loss of interest in the C.S.C.E. process as a whole. Indeed, the

“Madrid experience proved that the CSCE process did not simply mirror the prevailing East-West climate, but that it provided an instrument to influence the quality of this relationship.”

Indeed the interest of the two German states in maintaining the momentum of the C.S.C.E. contributed to the continuation of the process as a significant international forum and to the preservation of peace in Europe. Not only did it preserve dialogue during the second Cold War, but it also served as an important arena for the ideological struggle between East and West. In the 1980s, it helped to open up the East European states and ultimately to eliminate the East-West division. It produced some progress towards co-operation in the economic, social and cultural spheres, and also served to remind East European states that fundamental reforms were necessary to achieve a full normalisation of relations. Hence the C.S.C.E. had a dual character - as an instrument of détente and as an agent for systemic change. It was in both these senses that the C.S.C.E. process influenced the development of German-German relations - particularly in the emergence of opposition groups in the GDR preparing the ground for the events of late 1989. Moreover, the Hungarian leaders justified their decision to open the borders with Austria with the commitment to freer movement of people embodied in the C.S.C.E. Final Act.

The process of negotiations and dialogue between the SPD and SED in the second half of the 1980s, which resulted in the proposals for weapon free zones, were indicative of the role the two German states could have played and the way in which they could have made another positive contribution to the preservation of peace in Europe. The two parties regarded regional solutions to the problems of chemical and nuclear weapons - both of which had been the subject of major multi-lateral and superpower negotiations for as many as 10 years - as a possible impetus for overcoming the stagnation and stalemate in these negotiations. Both parties had recognised the need for common security in view of the growing interdependence of states and societies, and considered that political trust and goodwill would overcome any potential difficulties and facilitate constructive compromise. It is difficult to say whether such proposals would have contributed to the creation of a new dimension to the détente process, beneficial to both the two German states and to Europe in general, had they been negotiated at state level. However, it is almost certainly true that the Federal government failed to capitalise on the opportunity, offered by these proposals, of reasserting a national consensus in security and foreign policy. The SPD’s “second Ostpolitik” or “parallel foreign policy” was part of its attempt to develop a pan-European interest in preserving détente from

\(^1\) Lehne The CSCE in the 1990s, op. cit. p. 4

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superpower confrontation in East and West by institutionalising contacts across the East-West divide and strengthening a sense of common destiny for all Europeans.

The SPD-SED agreements corresponded to the bi-polar structure of international relations and drew attention to the relative lack of content in official German-German contacts at that stage on security issues. To a certain extent, the political dynamic triggered by the SPD-SED discussions was more important than the actual content of their proposals. Though the Federal government regarded the contacts as reducing its room for manoeuvre in security policy, it must be noted that consultations on security issues between the GDR and other NATO states had increased, and the United States had shown more interest in cultivating relations with the GDR.

The ideological document, "Conflicting ideologies and common security" discussed by the SPD Basic Values commission and some members of the SED Academy, was the first time that the SED deviated from the sacred dogmas of the socialist system. The document had two major components. The first argued the imperative for the participants' commitment to common security and outlined the substance of this concept, whilst the second described the principles of and the requirements for developing a culture of political conflict which would facilitate constructive competition between the two systems. The document would never have been as successful as it was without the introduction of glasnost and perestroika in the Soviet Union. It remains unclear exactly why Honecker accepted the document and had it published, but there was strong opposition from the party hardliners and, within weeks, the spirit of the document was violated by the SED leadership. The leadership's growing resistance to reform was countered by the increasing activity of dissidents and human rights groups in the GDR. The SPD called for the SED to adopt the idea of dialogue within the GDR, but it continued to resist, and no reforms were implemented.

6. The theory of an inverse relationship between German-German relations and superpower relations in the early 1980s has been validated. In other words, as the latter deteriorated after 1979, so then the former improved, contradicting the assumption that stable balanced superpower relations were necessary to guarantee better East-West relations below the level. The external conditions for German-German relations began to change with the adoption of a policy of "new thinking" in Soviet foreign policy. Thereafter, superpower relations began to improve, and as they made real progress towards an INF agreement, Soviet propaganda against the West was reduced gradually. The corollary of the inverse relationship between German-German relations and superpower relations of the early 1980s would have been expected in these circumstances - that is that German-German relations deteriorated as superpower relations improved. However, the assumption that the two German states lost completely their function as champions of dialogue in the détente process when the superpower relation-
ship improved is not valid. Though the resumption of superpower relations, to a certain extent, superseded German-German relations, pushing them more into the background, nevertheless the latter continued to flourish throughout 1986, and the year 1987 saw perhaps the most important development in German-German relations since the conclusion of the Basic Treaty in 1972.

Honecker's visit to the Federal Republic in September 1987 was a landmark in East Germany's quest for legitimacy and international recognition, and it was an exercise in pragmatism for the Federal Republic. It appeared to confirm that both states had accepted the division of Germany and did not expect to realise unification in the foreseeable future. Though Honecker was received with full pomp and circumstance, however, the visit also highlighted the weakness of the SED leadership in terms of the question of unification. Ties between the two German states were becoming stronger, and Honecker's comments with regard to socialism and capitalism being like fire and water served to alienate further the GDR leadership from its population. As a result, the Honecker visit was perceived as being the beginning of the end for German-German relations. It was assumed that thereafter the Federal Republic conducted its Deutschlandpolitik with the Soviet Union over the head of the GDR. The fact was, however, that strong German-German ties were maintained until the late summer of 1989. No spectacular developments were made, but nor were any expected. There was not enough time for the newly-adopted agreements to become fully operational, but relations did continue at a steady pace, and both states remained committed to dialogue and détente.

Throughout the 1980s, high-level diplomatic activity was maintained between the two German states through attendance at the funerals of leading politicians in the East-West confrontation. Western statesmen attended the funeral of President Tito in Yugoslavia in May 1980 and set the precedent for attendance of ceremonies in Moscow. This produced a new kind of funeral diplomacy which was particularly significant for the two German leaders who were able to meet on neutral ground and without protocol problems. This served an important function in the mid-1980s when the state of superpower relations precluded official visits at that level.

The question of “new thinking” played an important role for the GDR. Gorbachev had reached the conclusion that war in the nuclear age was not winnable, that the arms race would ruin the Soviet Union economically, and that the international community had only two options - either common survival or common extermination. Hence he adopted a new policy of co-operating with the West, and the United States in particular, in order to achieve arms control agreements. The “new thinking” in international affairs seemed initially to be in complete harmony with the views and positions of the SED leadership, especially in security and disarmament matters. Honecker’s peace policy
was reaffirmed.

Certainly, Honecker’s demand for a “coalition of common sense” was an important departure from previous positions and his view that efforts to maintain peace should be valued more highly than class (state) interests was nothing less than heretical in 1983 / 1984. However, he probably was aware of some support within the CPSU at the time, and if his policies did form the basis of “new thinking”, then they stagnated in the realm of foreign policy and were not taken to their logical conclusion in the domestic sphere. Quite the reverse occurred, in that the openness of the GDR’s foreign policy was used almost as justification for its repressive domestic policies. The domestic side of “new thinking” posed a difficult challenge for the GDR. The GDR was made aware of its isolation from the rest of the world. Gorbachev foresaw the democratisation of the system in order to achieve increased economic efficiency. Given the existence of the Federal Republic, the GDR could not and would not accept such measures. Thus “by supporting disarmament and common security in Europe - which implied even more co-operation, interdependence and opening-up to the West - the East German government (was) seeking to compensate for its reluctance to reform its society.”

Indeed the first signs of dissatisfaction were beginning to show by 1988 in the GDR as a result of the lack of a legal basis for travel outside the Eastern bloc.

In conclusion, the détente of the 1970s had an almost liberating effect on the GDR allowing it to take more control of the development of relations with the Federal Republic in terms of a certain amount of bargaining leverage. The GDR’s changed perception of its vulnerability was matched by a change in its behaviour. It sought in the 1980s to present itself as the most active champion of disarmament in the Warsaw Pact, thus bringing itself into conflict with the Soviet Union in theoretical / conceptual and in practical terms. The GDR was willing to reciprocate West German advances in terms of better relations and greater co-operation because of its revised assessment of the risks, advantages and opportunities afforded by this co-operation. By developing those closer links, the two German states had acknowledged that to exert any influence on the maintenance of security and stability in Europe, then they had in part to divorce their relations from the broader East-West context. Despite the differing positions and interests on basic issues, the sense of responsibility between the two German states allowed them to reach common views on the safeguarding of peace in Europe.

Whether the Deutschlandpolitik and Ostpolitik of the Federal governments actually contributed to the unification of the two German states is a moot point. Certainly it facilitated the access East Germans had to West Germany and travel between the two

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states in general, thus maintaining the idea of belonging to one German nation, and it created the necessary conditions for the relatively strong familial links, but it cannot be regarded as a major factor alone in the reunification process. Other factors such as the advent of Gorbachev and the lack of reforms in the GDR must also be taken into consideration.4

Perhaps the culmination of détente in Europe was the collapse of centrally-planned socialism in Eastern Europe. Détente was intended as a policy for enabling East-West rivalry to be conducted peacefully. The West German concept of détente as “change through rapprochement” was ultimately successful because its persistent emphasis on human rights and contacts in the GDR stimulated change there, although it had initially served to stabilise the regime. The final collapse of the GDR, however, may be attributed primarily to the dire economic situation in the GDR coupled with the obstinacy of the SED leadership, and its refusal to respond to social change by implementing reforms. Socialist structures had become immutable and innovation remained absent. Given the rapid push for unification in 1990, it is unclear whether economic or social reform of the GDR in the late 1980s would have made any difference. In October 1989, there may have been a slight chance that renewal in the GDR was possible, but the opening of the Berlin Wall in November sealed the fate of the GDR as the second German state. Unification when it came, on 3 October 1990, was nothing more than an enlargement of the Federal Republic.

APPENDIX

QUESTIONNAIRE USED AS THE BASIS FOR INTERVIEWS

German version

   - welche Bedeutung hatten das Viemächte-Abkommen über Berlin und die Ostverträge der Bundesregierung für die Bundesrepublik?
   - welche Auswirkungen hatte der Grundlagenvertrag 1972 für die Bundesrepublik?
   - wie wichtig war die Rolle der beiden deutschen Staaten beim Zustandekommen der Konferenz über Sicherheit und Zusammenarbeit in Europa und welche Bedeutung hatte dieser Prozeß für die beiden Staaten insbesonder für die Bundesrepublik?
   (- hat dieser Prozeß jetzt eine Zukunft und welche Rolle könnte Deutschland dabei spielen?)

2. Bedingungen für die deutsch-deutschen Beziehungen in den 80er Jahren.
   - konnten sich die deutsch-deutschen Beziehungen von der Gesamtsituation abkoppeln?
   - welchen Einfluß hatte das politische Gesamtklima der internationalen Beziehungen für die deutsch-deutschen Beziehungen?

3. Standpunkte der Parteien (CDU usw.).
   - welche Motive verfolgten die CDU(SPD etc) und die CDU-geführte Regierung bei der Gestaltung ihrer Beziehungen zur DDR?
   - wie differenziert sie sich von den anderen Parteien?
   - wann hat die Politik der CDU angefangen, sich zu ändern in bezug auf Deutschlandpolitik und warum?
   - wie wichtig war die Rolle von Franz Josef Strauß beim Zustandekommen des Milliardenkredits 1983?

   - was war die Bedeutung der Geraer Forderungen für die Beziehungen? War die geänderte Reihenfolge in den 80er Jahren zufällig?
   - was war konsensfähig / strittig zwischen den beiden deutschen Staaten?
   - wie wichtig war der Besuch von Schmidt in der DDR 1981?
   - welchen Stellenwert hatten die gemeinsame Erklärung von Honecker und Kohl im März 1985 und der Besuch Honeckers 1987 in der Bundesrepublik?

5. Handlungsspielraum.
   - wie groß war der Handlungsspielraum der beiden deutschen Staaten?
- welche Rolle spielte die UdSSR für die Beziehungen der Bundesrepublik mit der DDR?
- wie wichtig war der Gorbatschow-Faktor?
- hatte die Politik der USA und der NATO insgesamt die Politik der Bundesregierung in bezug auf Osteuropa und die DDR eingeschränkt?

6. Sicherheitspolitik.
- was war die Basis für CDU(SPD etc)-Sicherheitsauffassungen?
- wie wichtig war die "Verantwortungsgemeinschaft" zwischen den beiden deutschen Staaten aus der Sicht der Bundesrepublik?
- welche Rolle spielte die Sicherheitsdebatte in den deutsch-deutschen Beziehungen?

7. SPD-SED Initiativen.
- wie wichtig waren diese Initiativen für die ideologische Auseinandersetzung der beiden Systeme in Deutschland?
- welche Auswirkung hatte das Dokument "Der Streit der Ideologien und die Gemeinsame Sicherheit" 1987 innerhalb der beiden Staaten Ihrer Meinung nach?
- welchen Stellenwert hatten die Sicherheits- und vertrauensbildenden Maßnahmen bei diesen Initiativen?

8. Menschliche Erleichterungen
- auf welchen Gebiet war die DDR kompromiß- und gesprächsbereit? Wo hatte der Kompromiß Grenzen?
- wie groß waren die DDR-Kompromisse im humanitären Bereich?
- warum hatte die Bundesrepublik soviel Gewicht auf Menschenrechte und menschliche Erleichterungen gelegt?

English version

1. The legal basis of the German-German relations
- what meaning did the Four Power Agreement on Berlin and the Eastern Treaties of the Federal government have for the Federal Republic?
- what effects did the Basic Treaty of 1972 have for the Federal Republic?
- how important was the role of the two German states in bringing about the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, and what importance did this process hold for the German states, particularly the Federal Republic? (does this process have a future now, and what role could Germany play in this?)

2. Conditions for German-German relations in the 1980s
- could German-German relations decouple themselves from the general climate in international politics?
- what influence did this political climate of international relations have on German-German relations?

3. Positions of the parties (CDU etc.)
- which motives did the CDU and CDU-led government follow in shaping their relations with the GDR?
- how did it differentiate itself from the other parties?
- when and why did the CDU’s policy start to change in terms of Deutschlandpolitik and acceptance of the Eastern Treaties etc?
- how important was the role of Franz Josef Strauß in arranging the credit of 1983?

4. German-German relations in the 1980s
- what was the meaning of the Gera demands for the relations? Was the change in order of these demands coincidental in the 1980s?
- where could the two German states achieve consensus and where did problems arise?
- how important was Schmidt’s visit to the GDR in 1981?
- what was the significance of the declaration by Kohl and Honecker in March 1985?
- is it possible to quantify the importance of the Honecker visit to the Federal Republic in 1987?
- how did German-German relations develop after this date?

5. Room for manoeuvre
- how much room for manoeuvre did the two German states have within their respective alliances?
- what role did the Soviet Union play in the development of relations as far as the Federal Republic was concerned?
- how important was the “Gorbachev factor”?
- did the policy of the United States and NATO in general limit or determine the policy of the Federal Republic in terms of Eastern Europe and the GDR in particular?

6. Security policy
- what was the basis of the CDU’s position on security policy in the Federal Republic?
- how important was the “community of responsibility” between the two German states from the Federal government’s point of view?
- what role did the security debate play in German-German relations as far as the Federal government was concerned?

7. SPD-SED initiatives
- how important were these initiatives for the ideological debate between the two systems in Germany?
- what effect did the document “Conflicting ideologies and common security” of 1987 have within the two German states in your opinion?
- what value did the security and confidence building measures have in these initiatives?

8. Humanitarian improvements
- in which areas was the GDR willing to negotiate and make compromises? What were the limits to this compromise?
- how large were the GDR’s compromises in the humanitarian field?
- why did the Federal Republic lay so much value on human rights and humanitarian improvements in the German-German relationship?
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