

STATEMENTS AND DISCUSSION

Egon Bahr: What later became known as Ostpolitik cannot be understood without bearing in mind the deep impression left behind by the suppression of the uprising in East Berlin on June 17, 1953, the crushing of the Hungarian revolt in 1956, and the disturbances in Poland in the same year. I witnessed the events of June 17 as editor-in-chief of RIAS, a radio station in the American sector. Without the intervention of Soviet tanks, the people in the Soviet zone would have achieved German unity at that time. But the view that the West would protest but would not help was anchored in our political thinking. In the German case, as in Hungary and Poland, it became clear that communist regimes could not be overthrown by internal revolts. This would not be tolerated by the Soviet Union.

No heroism on the part of East Germans, Poles, or Hungarians was enough to liberate their countries. It would have been irresponsible to encourage them to try again. If we wanted to help the East Germans, the Poles, or the Hungarians, we could only do so by negotiating with the real power center. The invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968 was merely a repeat of earlier interventions. I said at the time that we should try to have a Prague Spring in Moscow. At least then, the Czechs would not invade the Soviet Union.

These experiences molded our political thinking. They led us to believe that a way to change the situation could only be found in or via Moscow. Anything else would be in vain and even dangerous. Dangerous not only because it would involve playing with other people's fate, but also because revolutionary movements in the satellite states might get out of control, and their suppression would lead to further suffering.

Neither in Germany, Bulgaria, nor Romania was there a Walesa or a Havel. The mechanisms of control were too efficient. But through the principles embodied in the Helsinki Final Act of 1975, we gave people who dared to criticize their regimes in Eastern Europe a framework they could refer to and that allowed them to operate a little more freely. Essentially, it was only much later that the word "dissident" acquired a political meaning; originally, this term had only been used in connection with church history.

During the grand coalition, from 1966 to 1969, we, the planning staff of the Foreign Office, formulated a policy that Brandt later implemented with courage and stamina as Chancellor and for which he was awarded the Nobel Peace Prize. Within this policy of *détente*, based on a definition of German interests, we were prepared to embody in a treaty the factual but as yet unadmitted status quo. We had to avoid the word "recognition" at all costs, as Germany had to respect the rights of the Four Powers with regard to their responsibility for Germany as a whole. We were not

sufficiently sovereign to decide on those matters relating to the unification or the division of Germany. Recognition would have meant confirming the GDR's border as legitimate, whereas our policy aimed to make the border between the GDR and the Federal Republic one day disappear. The key to solving this problem was to make renunciation of force the guiding principle in relations between ourselves and Eastern Europe. All borders, however established, should become inviolable and only alterable or removable by mutual agreement.

I will not give a detailed account here of the struggle with Mr. Gromyko, which lasted for months before the Soviet Union was persuaded of the logical inevitability of having to renounce its firmly held belief that there must be binding recognition under international law of all existing borders. Afterwards, they also had to make their satellites accept this, which was, for them, a very painful step. But I did not mourn for Mr. Gromyko in this respect, I must add. It was wonderful to imagine that he had to do my job in East Berlin and some other places. Neither in East Berlin nor in Warsaw would we have been able to achieve this directly. We succeeded in moving Moscow, and subsequently East Berlin, to accept our letter on German unity in which we emphasized that our treaty would not alter our legitimate desire to strive peacefully for the realization of Germany's right to self-determination.

The East was able to tell itself that once the status quo had been confirmed and consolidated, one need not worry about a few Germans striving for unity. At that time, I wrote to a friend that the opposite was in fact true, and that I would not have initiated this policy had I not been convinced that it was a real starting point for the long-term development of the German question. "At this time," I quote, "the only ones in favor, at least theoretically, are the Americans. But in the long term I feel it will be possible to make the Russians see historical reasons, too." No one asked for a concrete plan at this time for German unification. We didn't have one anyway. The idea of the Soviet Union relinquishing the GDR seemed then both bold and utopian.

The other side of the coin was our concept for a European security order. It was intended to allay our neighbors' fears of German unity. It would have been impossible to talk about in public. On the one hand, we did not want to appear ridiculous. On the other, it would have mobilized counteracting forces. It was enough that Otto Winzer, former foreign minister of the GDR, labeled our policy "aggression in felt slippers." He was, to some degree, right. And when I once said in an interview that our goal was to liberate Eastern Europe from a disease called communism, I received no echo other than a mild reproach from Brandt, who reminded me that we had made up our minds to keep silent.

Only the future would tell whether the Soviet calculation or ours would prove right, which was to accept the status quo in order to change it. At that time, in 1970, I came back from Moscow convinced that even we, the weak and divided Germans, could shift the Soviet Union. We felt that it might in part be possible to find with the Soviets a limited common denominator. That was the strategic gain we exported from Moscow duty-free.

We benefited from this advantage for the first time when the Four Power Agreement on Berlin was at stake. This agreement was intended to establish a legal basis for unhindered civilian traffic to and from West Berlin, which had not been regulated since the war and had led to many crises, as we know. The GDR had to make substantial concessions, and we achieved this by behind-the-scenes negotiations among the American ambassador, the Soviet ambassador, and myself in Bonn. Each of us was in direct contact with his superior. When this special item was mentioned yesterday, I was a little bit astonished that this was not explained; that, in fact, it's strange that the Four Power Agreement was prepared on the level of three—with the exclusion of France and Britain, and, of course, of the GDR. It was remarkable that, within the four-power framework, it was necessary to conclude a separate transit treaty between the two German states, which only became valid through the Final Act of the Four Powers. This was indeed remarkable because, for the first time after the war, a treaty concerning Germany could only be concluded with the cooperation of the two German states. It was a four-plus-two formula which led to the two-plus-four formula seventeen years later. This was a good example of the normative power of facts: the victors could no longer exercise their legally unlimited authority without the defeated.

The subsequent Basic Treaty with the GDR was intended to regulate the relations between the two German states until their unification, and it fulfilled its purpose. Our policy, which was highly controversial and hotly disputed, was neither altered nor annulled once Helmut Kohl became chancellor. The only new elements were unconditional loans to the GDR amounting to billions of deutschmarks. It was especially satisfying to see that the new government was prepared to continue our policy and to forget the foolish talk of yesteryear. At any rate, in my country there is no longer any criticism of this first phase of Ostpolitik.

External criticism or mistrust did not really affect us because the Federal Republic of Germany was not only firmly tied to the European Community but also controlled by NATO. Our membership in these two organizations was in line with our country's vital interests. This remains unchanged to the present day. Only against this background was Ostpolitik able to develop. German postwar policy must be seen as a process stretching from Germany's unconditional surrender in May 1945 to the

full re-establishment of its sovereignty in March 1991, when the peace treaty, called the Two-plus-Four Treaty, entered into force.

Being part of a divided country that was not sovereign in fundamental national matters, we had to develop a policy of our own geared toward changing the situation in Central Europe, something none of our neighbors wanted. Our Ostpolitik can only be understood in the light of its underlying principle, namely the question of how to draw strength from weakness without being in a position to pose a military threat, either with our own weapons or, even less, with those of our allies. We could only implement Ostpolitik without the back-up of traditional power politics. It was impossible to force any step forward. For each step, we had to persuade a number of partners. In 1990, Helmut Kohl was in a better position. Suffice it to say that he would have been unable to do what we did without our earlier Ostpolitik. The former Soviet ambassador Valentin Falin put it in a nutshell when he said: "Without the German policy of détente, Gorbachev would never have become head of the Kremlin." And, I add: without Gorbachev, German unification would not have been possible either.

Within three years, from 1970 to 1972, we completed the bilateral phase of Ostpolitik and approached the multilateral phase, which culminated in the Helsinki Final Act in 1975. Against the background of the Moscow, Warsaw, and Prague Treaties, the Four Power Agreement on Berlin and the Basic Treaty with the GDR, our intention was to raise our principle of renunciation of force to a European level. We succeeded insofar as the wording of the Moscow Treaty was also used in the Helsinki Final Act. I am still convinced today that renouncing the threat or use of force in relation to existing borders could and should become a cornerstone of any European security structure yet to be developed. I am convinced that the solution, or, let me say, stability for the territories of the former Yugoslavia, can only be solved by implementing this principle.

I would like to draw your attention to a factor that went largely unnoticed by the public. Ideological struggle was a central intellectual component of Ostpolitik. The Social Democrats—outwardly weak but internally sure of their strength—waged this struggle with the ruling communists, quietly and peacefully. Looking back to the year 1961, the Wall at first signified a bitter defeat for our nation, but ultimately it signified a defeat for Khrushchev and Ulbricht, not only for propagandistic but also for political reasons. Khrushchev had put a limit on expansion. A system based on an idea claiming to have universal validity and determined to spread its ideals to all continents had locked up its own people. Following the building of the Wall, I became increasingly convinced that this idea had clearly passed its zenith. For me, the Wall

reduced the dangers of communism; it was no longer the attraction of an ideology that was to be feared but the tanks and missiles of the Soviet Union.

In terms of policy, this resulted in the need to reduce military power through arms control and the reduction of armed forces in such a way that there would no longer be any Soviet superiority, either nuclear or conventional. The question of ideological power, that is the power that held the communist world together from within, had to be removed from its overriding position and made subordinate to the maintenance of peace. Willy Brandt's aphorism, "Peace is not everything, but without peace everything is nothing," sent a clear message to the Communists: only if we survive, can you, like us, hope for ideological gain.

After the split in the workers' movement at the end of World War I, and even more so after the rise of the Soviet Union as a global power, the Communists became fully convinced of their superiority. They despised the Social Democrats as weaklings who were prepared to lose power through elections. In their view, the idea of democracy as a substitute for the dictatorship of the proletariat was ridiculous. The Social Democrats were considered archenemies all the more because their evolutionary approach brought people greater prosperity more quickly than the revolutionary approach taken by the Communists. When I met Brezhnev in Oreanda during Brandt's visit in 1971, one of my remarks got the following response: "We will also become more progressive, please God!" I found the appeal to God by a Communist leader less remarkable than the fact that he measured progress by social-democratic criteria. He could only do so because he already doubted his own value system; because, in his position, he perhaps still felt he must be a good Communist although at heart he no longer was. As time went on, cynicism emerged. And cynicism signified ideological softening. The Communists were worried about what they called "social democratism," as they feared that the strength of social democratic arguments would undermine their value system.

When Gorbachev declared, "We need democracy like the air that we breathe," I said to Brandt, "Thus is settled a historic fight within the workers' movement." He put his finger to his lips and said: "Don't say that. We don't want to make it harder for this man than it already is."

I participated in three important meetings between Brandt and Gorbachev in 1985, 1988, and 1989. They took place in Moscow between the general secretary of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union and the leader of the Socialist International. The subjects discussed ranged from global problems, where Gorbachev made reference to the reports of the Brandt and Palme Commissions (both Social Democrats), to the question of whether a group of Soviet Communists and German Social Democrats

should try to find common ground. Maybe, it was suggested, they could reappraise the history of the split in the workers' movement. Brandt remained cautious. They agreed that it might be easier to deal with concrete topical issues such as disarmament and the architecture of the common European house. We might possibly find out, it was thought, that the past was not that important anymore.

Finally, Gorbachev invited a delegation of the Socialist International to attend the Congress of the Soviet Communist Party and declared: "With regard to deepening perestroika and achieving a new quality of society, an exchange of views with you will be one more reason to look back and to look ahead without fear. Bearing in mind our own identity, we are no longer embarrassed to work together with you. The process of drawing closer together should continue. The separation of 1914 can be overcome."

On our flight back, Brandt was thoughtful. "This could lead far," he said, and he asked what our brothers in East Berlin would say. I told him about the saying of a well-known Soviet journalist, who at that time was Russia's ambassador in Israel: "One could say that Bernstein has defeated Lenin."

A short time later, Gorbachev declared that he considered himself a Social Democrat. That, surely, was not due to Ronald Reagan or Helmut Kohl and not to the Pershing II missiles. It would be equally sensational if the Pope declared today that he felt he had been converted to the teachings of Martin Luther. For sure, some of the cardinals would speak of treason. But even they were unable to prevent the consequences that would come when the pope of communism made his confession. Any organization that claims to possess the only way to God and the only explanation of the world, the truth, and the future must collapse once it loses its substance.

Success has many fathers. Economic pressure, the arms race, deterrence based on military power all played a part, maybe even a major one. But the factor of ideological collapse has been underestimated. It could only be brought about by the Communists' archenemies—the Social Democrats. There is no monocausal explanation, but the dissolution of the ideological cement that kept the whole together was surely a central factor. It is quite possible that this was the reason for the astonishing lack of violence. It is probable that, if the ideological structure had been firm, there would have been an explosion with an ensuing massacre rather than an implosion. As it was, rulers who had lost the essence of their beliefs simply did not see any sense in using the power and the weapons still at their disposal.

Two errors in this phase of Ostpolitik should not be concealed. The first was that we wanted to help reform communist regimes. For us, the

end of the Soviet Union was unimaginable. But I don't know of any capital where it was considered conceivable. The other error was that, like many others, we were convinced that only a European security structure would take away the fear of German unity among Germany's neighbors. The course taken by history has been the reverse. We achieved unity but we did not create a structure for European security. Much homework remains to be done. The experience from the time of confrontation remains valid: just as the balance of terror, MAD, SALT, START, INF, and MBFR could only be established together with the Soviet Union, it will only be possible to achieve stability and security in Europe by including Russia.

The task which lies ahead is much easier and much less utopian than the one we faced some thirty years ago, namely that of freeing Eastern Europe from the disease called communism. Today, we do not need to reform or replace a value system, a closed ideology, an empire. We only need enough good sense to help those states seeking the same kind of security within the European house that we enjoy. This could also help to consolidate the new independent, former republics of the Soviet Union.

Allow me one last remark on Ostpolitik's happy ending. Not for a single moment during the decades of division did I have any doubts about German unification. But I did not believe that I would be alive to witness it. For Willy Brandt, it was a source of deep joy. Unlike him, I was skeptical about the progress of European integration from the Common Market to the European Union. I believe that if at that time we had such a union, German unity would only have been feasible through the annexation of the GDR by the Federal Republic, and this would not have been tolerated by the Soviet Union. Even now, I am glad that the European Union had not developed as well or as quickly as its protagonists might have wanted and still want today. Just imagine Helmut Kohl having to go through a long process of consultation and majority-building before going to Gorbachev in 1990 and agreeing with the Soviet leader in a remarkable solo effort to a unilateral reduction of the German armed forces from 600,000 to 370,000 men. I don't criticize him for that. In terms of foreign policy and international law, the process of unification was faultless. In terms of domestic and economic policy, however, many mistakes have been made from which Germany will continue to suffer for at least one more generation.

Vyacheslav Kevorkov: As I remember, it was the highest point of the Cold War and an extremely cold winter in Russia, when my close friend, a Russian journalist, and I, at that time a rather young security officer, flew to Germany at Christmas of 1969. Our task was to build together with the Germans a confidential political "bridge" between the top politicians of the Federal Republic of Germany and the Soviet Union. We

fulfilled this task, and the “bridge” functioned successfully for more than ten years. Years after, the questions that I must usually answer are, Who was the architect of the “bridge”? The Germans or the Russians, and then, who exactly?

I must say that the idea developed on both sides, Soviet and German, but the real pioneers of it were the two extraordinary Germans whom we used to call the “BB”s. Do not confuse the abbreviation with that of the famous French cinema star—Brigitte Bardot. The “BB”s were for us the two “German true men”—Willy Brandt and Egon Bahr.

Bahr was wise enough to write in November 1969 a very—for the time—bold letter, addressed to the Soviet leadership, and Brandt had enough courage to sign and send it to the Soviet prime minister. The addressee was wrong but the content was absolutely right. The letter suggested starting negotiations instead of expanding the Cold War. The letter stipulated that the “exchange of information has to be realized in confidential way.” And that was exactly what we needed and what we did.

But foreign policy was out of the competence of the Prime Minister, and the message landed at first on the desk of Brezhnev and then on Andropov’s. Here, I would like to mention a couple of words about Andropov. He was a diplomat and a party functionary. Managing the security service meant to him nothing more than a jumping-off place for achieving real political power. Therefore, he was worried that his position as the head of Soviet security could compromise him in case he would come to a top political position. That’s why he was so happy when he received the news that the former CIA director, Mr. George Bush, had come into top office. I must admit that Andropov had come to political power too late and died too early, unfortunately.

Coming back to the Brandt-Bahr letter, I remember that when Andropov handed a copy of it to me, he told me, “This letter is not addressed to me. Use it carefully and with respect.” As a matter of fact, we came to Germany not only “from Russia with love,” but with a copy of the original Brandt letter that authorized us to negotiate on behalf of the Soviet leadership. It was not even necessary to produce it. Only one sentence of the letter was enough for Mr. Bahr to make clear the whole situation. His talent was and is to catch promptly the sense of the matter. That made our work much easier afterwards. More important still is that our common work was based on the ground principle of mutual confidence. Sending me to Germany, Brezhnev said, “If you cannot tell the truth, keep silent instead of telling a lie.” Mr. Bahr supported this position.

I must say he is much older than I. At the end of March [2002], the whole of Germany celebrated his 80th birthday. I will be 80 only next year.

But I know my duty to the elders. Therefore, when we come together, thirty two years later, I am used to telling him the whole truth—even when we are just talking about women. Of course, it was not so simple to be open at that difficult time. Today it is not so simple either. Then, our main problem was not translating from one language to another but from one mentality to a different one.

As I remember, Brezhnev was hospitalized at a special clinic after his second heart attack. Logically, that stopped the exchange of information between the two leaders. Mr. Bahr was angry: “What has happened?” We, on our side, had to keep silent. But we had to tell him the truth at last: Brezhnev was ill. The reaction of Mr. Bahr was that of a noble man: he picked up the phone and said, “I am calling Willy and we [will] immediately send a telegram to Mr. Brezhnev with our best wishes for his recovery.” By these words, the rest of my hair stood on end. I asked Mr. Bahr to write an appendix to the telegram saying that my journalist friend and I were both dead. Since, in that case, by the time of our return to Moscow, we would have been accused of high treason. The problem in those times was that not the location of Soviet rockets but rather the health condition of the General Secretary was seen as the top secret in the Soviet Union. Mr. Bahr took pity on us. The telegram was never sent.

Sometimes we could not be sure of the reaction of our own leadership. At the first meeting, Brandt said that in case of a conflict between the USSR and the USA, the Federal Republic would take the position of the United States. On my way home, I was in a very bad mood, being sure that I was carrying bad news. Don’t forget that it was the time of the Cold War. To my surprise, the reaction of Brezhnev and Andropov was exactly the opposite. “Look, Yuri,” said Brezhnev—he used to call Andropov by his first name—“Brandt seems to be a very honest man. He says what he has on his mind. We can deal with him.”

And now I am ready to answer your logical question before you put it to me: Why was it that Soviet security was charged with this important mission? The question seems to be difficult; the answer is quite simple. There were two reasons: the main one was that the foreign minister, Mr. Andrei Gromyko, better known in the U.S. as “Mr. No,” still used to think in the terms of WWII. Twenty five years after the end of the war he still used to take the Germans only as bitter enemies (and to negotiate with them was more than he could stand). Once every two or three months, Gromyko used to invite me to his office at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs for a lunch at his country house near Moscow to discuss the situation in Germany. It was the idea of Brezhnev for me to help Gromyko change his opinion about the Germans for the better. Getting ahead, I must admit that I had little success.

Every time I entered his office, Gromyko used to ask me—instead of his usual greeting—“So Comrade Kevorkov, what’s going on in your ‘new political construction?’” Under new political construction,” he understood the Federal Republic of Germany. He took it for a good joke. To negotiate with Germans was a very hard task for him. It was much harder still for Mr. Bahr to negotiate with Gromyko.

Another reason was the permanent leaking of confidential information from the German Ministry of Foreign Affairs. Egon Bahr wrote the “ten points” of the draft agreement between the Federal Republic and the USSR and sent it to the Foreign Ministry. A couple of days later, the text of it appeared in a cheap daily newspaper. “I cannot negotiate with Brandt through the media channels” was Brezhnev’s reaction.

And last but not least, I want to tell you that some representatives of the Security and International Department of the Central Committee also tried to organize a back channel between American and Soviet top politicians, using the good relations of certain Democratic congressional leaders. Much time and effort, but no result.

In the late seventies, at the time when Mr. Brzezinski was appointed security adviser for the American president, I was asked for advice about how to organize a similar back channel with the U.S. and make it successful. My personal advice was simple: “Replace Mr. Brzezinski with Mr. Bahr.” He would have built a brilliant and solid “Atlantic bridge” between Russia and America. There never was one until now. This is a short story about how the Germans and the Russians tried to make corrections in those dramatic postwar times.

Egon Bahr: I think it would have been impossible to move Gromyko, really. I had every reason to believe that Gromyko, to some [extent], even took a hostile position against the whole intention of what later became the Moscow Treaty. Since it was possible to move him to a more positive position, after the negotiations he was promoted, because he became a member of the Politburo, which he was not before the Moscow Treaty.

Number two, I would like to draw your attention to the fact that without this established back channel, it would have been impossible to come to a result for the Four Power Treaty concerning Berlin. I must tell you that I had, of course, informed Henry Kissinger about the existence of this back channel [with Kevorkov]. He told me that he was using the Soviet ambassador here, Anatoly Dobrynin, also as a back channel, and we sometimes exchanged our information and our methods of linkage. So, I can give you an example—sorry to say, Mr. Sutterlin—that in the negotiations for the Four Power Agreement, we needed really to get West German passports for the West Berliners. Of course, this was a very symbolic—but not only symbolic—point, just because it had been given up by Adenauer at the end of the 1950s. We recognized holders of the

Federal Republic's passports; it was really a signal and a guarantee for the West Berliners that they [would be] considered part of West Germany, part of the Federal Republic. So to get the passports back, which had been lost earlier, was a big thing for us. In the negotiations it was difficult; it seemed to be nearly impossible. Then the chancellor wrote a letter to Brezhnev via our channel. The result was that Brezhnev accepted, understanding for [domestic] political reasons the necessity for Brandt to insist on passports for the West Berliners, [West German] passports for the West Berliners. So he accepted.

When we got this message, we were in a wonderful position but also in a very complicated position, because the American State Department/Embassy position was, of course, not to pick up the passports at all. Because Martin Hillenbrand said very clearly to me when we had our conversation in Bonn about this, "It's hopeless." I insisted, "We need this." He became very angry, saying "Who is negotiating, you or me?" I told him, "Of course, you are negotiating. We need this." Then he agreed—not very happily—to try this. Of course, the American side was very, very astonished when the Soviets, when the Americans proposed it, accepted. This was one example to explain how this channel worked. Of course, Henry Kissinger was informed that this was working; but it was not my fault that he didn't inform the State Department people, who came in a very terrible position from the point of view of the State Department official. I only wanted to give you an example of how complicated the whole situation was.

When Chancellor Brandt resigned, Chancellor Schmidt asked me to maintain this channel for him. So I did. When Chancellor Schmidt was replaced by Chancellor Kohl, I went to Helmut Kohl and told him, "Now, you are chancellor. You must be aware of this back channel. I think you have to understand that this channel is the best thing we can have concerning confidence-building, because it's the only way you can really, without investing prestige, say what you need, what you cannot accept, what you want, what you do not want. It's up to you to say, 'I will continue or not.'" Kohl thought rather fast and said, "I think I will pick it up and continue. One cannot know what will happen. But let me sleep one night. I'll give you a call in the morning." He gave me the call next morning and said, "I stay with my positive answer." So we had an appointment clearly, officially, between the Soviet man, Mr. Teltschik, who replaced me in the Chancellery, and myself, and we officially transferred this wonderful back channel to the chancellor. I went to Willy Brandt after this meeting and told him, "I have the impression our Ostpolitik is in good hands."

Douglas Selvage: I have several questions for Mr. Bahr. At Erfurt, when [GDR Prime Minister] Stoph mentioned the possibility of establish-

ing some sort of back channel, Brandt proposed using Hermann von Berg. My first question is: did Hermann von Berg become a back channel? Then, after Erfurt, you reported to Brandt that, based on your talks in the back channel with Lednev, the Soviets would push the GDR to establish a “working level,” an *Arbeitsebene*, between the two German states at Kassel. What actually happened, however, was that Brezhnev told the East German leadership before Kassel to oppose an *Arbeitsebene* and propose instead a *Denkpause*, or “pause for reflection,” in the inner-German talks. In effect, you assumed the Soviets were putting pressure on the GDR to be flexible but the opposite was the case: they were pushing the GDR to be inflexible. So my second and third questions are: in retrospect, did you make a tactical or strategic mistake in assuming the Soviets would pressure the East Germans to be flexible? And do you think Lednev gave you misinformation when he told you that the Soviets would be pressuring the East Germans for an *Arbeitsebene*?

Egon Bahr: It is very difficult, nearly impossible, for me to give you a real answer to this, because we never had really good knowledge about what was going on in East Berlin. We had really better relations and more confidential relations with Moscow than with East Berlin. We never tried Hermann von Berg. We had every reason to because we thought he was a man of Stoph’s but later it became clear he was a man of [GDR Minister for State Security] Mielke’s. Von Berg did not behave [well] when he was allowed to leave the GDR, which only was possible when Brandt had his only meeting with Honecker. He didn’t behave, let me say, as a gentleman; just the contrary. No, I think we had, for example, no idea that Ulbricht had tried to become a little bit independent from Moscow, following his own interests and defending his own interests. We thought he was only doing what Moscow told him and he followed, of course, without really seriously defending his own interests. This has been proved wrong, I think; but this we know, let me say, since the last five, six years. When he was replaced by Honecker, it was even more simple for the Soviets—you might correct me—to handle the GDR because Honecker was a man who wanted to settle himself as Secretary General, so he was very careful, did what the Soviets wanted. You know, we did not, to my knowledge, have such a back channel comparable with what has been explained by Slava Kevorkov [with] the East Germans. Never.

Douglas Selvage: Do you think Herbert Wehner might have? Or tried to?

Egon Bahr: You know, this is a special point, Herbert Wehner, a very, very complex personality. I only want to tell you, I think even Herbert Wehner had no direct contact with East Germany before we started our policy, before we reached agreement in Moscow, in Berlin, and with the Basic Treaty. I remember very, very well—it became unforgettable—that

when he received an invitation to meet Herr Honecker, he had really feared, feared for his life, that he could run the risk of paying a visit in East Germany. [There] was a conversation between Brandt, Wehner, and myself. When I told him, "If we are preparing and you are invited, you can be sure nothing will happen to you. You will be more secure than in New York," then he became angry and said, "You have no idea. There are things that cannot be forgotten and forgiven." This was an old Communist blaming Social Democrats. Only after this, when he went back and met this man Honecker on the other side, [did he] establish a link—a personal link with letters exchanging using the lawyer Vogel—but [this was] incomparable with the official but closed, behind-the-scenes chat.

David Binder: Would you care to comment, General Kevorkov, on the *Arbeitsebene* issue raised by the questioner, about this period between the Erfurt and Kassel meetings, how the Soviet government saw this?

Vyacheslav Kevorkov: Andropov was very disappointed. He said the meeting in Erfurt was a mistake because Brandt did not achieve any result from the meeting. And we were sure that it was a big mistake, the Erfurt meeting was a big mistake of Brandt.

[end of the first session]

Helmut Sonnenfeldt: I want to make a few general remarks about how Ostpolitik, our relations with the Germans, and the development of Germany in the period when I was on the National Security Council staff, fit into other aspects of American foreign policy, particularly American policy toward the Soviet Union.

First, however, let me make a couple of comments on some points that came up yesterday. The first relates to the pervasive use of back channels and secret diplomacy in the period after Nixon became president. It may seem peculiar to Nixon and Kissinger but, perhaps some of the historians here will agree that many governments over the years or even centuries have used channels of communication with other governments that were not the official, formal ones. The Americans, from the earliest days, have a history of doing so.

My second comment relates to the approach to the Soviet Union that Nixon and Kissinger talked about during the transition before the inauguration. The country was in a rather complicated situation. The Vietnam War was going on and had been a big issue in the campaign; the Soviets had fairly recently invaded Czechoslovakia; there were chronic difficulties in the Middle East; there were problems with the Europeans, including over relations with the Soviets; frictions with Moscow relating to Germany and Berlin were somewhat inflamed, a host of other things. The approach the president and his new assistant sought was intended to be more effective in dealing with the Soviets by tackling issues with the USSR on what was called a broad front rather than seriatim. The ap-

proach in the Johnson administration had been described as looking for “islands of cooperation,” that is, to seek progress on issue A and get the benefits of it. Nixon and Kissinger wanted to move on a broader front, say A to H, and see if some tradeoffs may provide us some leverage. This was later described as “linkage” in the media and came to be applied to the Nixon approach to diplomacy as a whole.

This was not easy to manage with the bureaucracy as it existed in the American government. In the State Department itself, it meant getting the differing positions of various bureaus—geographic and functional—consolidated on the seventh floor, the executive suite, so that a coherent policy would emerge rather than merely balancing the preferences of the different bureaus until you ended up with a rather thin gruel of a policy. But the problem wasn’t only in the State Department. A lot of the issues with the Soviet Union, including the German ones, were of interest to the Defense Department and the Treasury Department as well as the State Department. Many issues involved the Congress as well. Inevitably, these structural problems resulted in concentrating a lot of decision-making—the planning as well as the execution—in the White House. That conclusion was reached for another reason as well; Nixon, like Kennedy and some other presidents before him, didn’t have much confidence in the State Department as an institution. There were individuals they held in high regard, but not the institution.

Nixon had appointed William P. Rogers as his Secretary of State. He had served with him in the Eisenhower administration when Rogers was the Attorney General and Nixon the Vice President. It was generally thought that these two men were close to each other and that was why Nixon had chosen Rogers. They may have been close to each other and friends; but Nixon chose not to use him for important decisions in foreign policy. He wanted to concentrate the effort where he had control over it and could get his own views implemented, rather than operating at the end of a rather long and convoluted bureaucratic process.

He was confirmed in this preference shortly after his inauguration. One of his first initiatives was to plan a trip to Europe to show that despite Vietnam, the United States had strong interests in Europe and placed strong reliance on its allies. He wanted to make this clear in person to the leaders in Europe. But that was hard to keep secret for long because plans had to be made and the advance teams had to be sent out all over Europe, as we do when the President goes traveling (we rearrange furniture in rooms where there are going to be television cameras and so on). So it was necessary to ask the Department of State—I had come from the Department of State to the NSC staff and several others had as well—to send over briefing books on the countries the president was going to visit and on the state of our European policy in general. But what they did for

the most part was to take the books that had been put together for the transition and just tailor them a little bit as though they had been written for the trip. Whenever there is a transition in the White House, the departments send briefing books with their preferred positions. So we already had stacks of these books that nobody had really read during the transition. But the State Department was also asked to send over one person for one or two countries at a time for a briefing session with the president. Some of them were very good and very sophisticated and the president and Henry took close notice. Some of them, however, simply couldn't break out of what had essentially been policy for a long time and what was incorporated in the rather standard transition briefing books. This experience further moved the president and the national security advisor to a more concentrated form of doing things. They kept policy moves as tight as possible, in part because the State Department was considered a direct channel to the media—unfairly, I think in many cases—and also to avoid having State signal presidential moves ahead of time to our ambassadors (many holdovers).

This also meant that as relationships developed between Nixon and government leaders in other countries—he knew many of them anyway from his days in the Eisenhower administration and from his travels after that—the information that came out of those meetings and the activities that might have resulted from them were not always passed on to the Department of State. This then led to the use of back channels and their awkwardness. Egon mentioned an example in his case. Kissinger himself, I think, wrote in his memoirs, not exactly contritely, but, in any event, saying in principle he's against this sort of thing. But in practice there wasn't any other alternative. It was necessary to do it this way because we were trying to shake up the policy.

Thus, Nixon and Kissinger had talked about a possible opening to China in the transition period. Nixon had written an article about it in *Foreign Affairs*; Kissinger hadn't written about it but was interested in it. They wanted to use the broader approach mentioned above in dealing with the Soviets. We would have more leverage than we had in previous approaches when we had concentrated too much on things we were eager to get, which automatically put us in an awkward position as a demandeur. They wanted to get a connection ("linkage") between things the Soviets were interested in where we would have some leverage and things that we were interested in so that we could have some bargaining room. That meant having control of how this was going to be done. And that was largely exercised from the White House.

Let me quickly get to German aspects of this. The "grand coalition," as has been pointed out—and as all the historians here know in much greater detail than I do—had proceeded to a form of Ostpolitik. In fact,

the term first came to be used mostly with regard to the East Europeans. Yesterday we talked about whether this was, in fact, a wise policy, especially when Franz Josef Strauss started dealing with the Romanians, who had become the bad boy of the Warsaw Pact. We discussed whether this was the best way to get interest from Moscow in alleviating some of the problems in inter-German relations, the Wall, other Berlin-related issues, and so on. When Nixon became president and met with Chancellor Kiesinger shortly thereafter during his European trip in early 1969, the issues weren't really dealt with. Brandt, of course, was foreign minister, but the shift to a different approach, namely, a more direct German approach to the Soviets, had not really crystallized. It was essentially left to the four occupying powers, and, in particular, the United States. But when we met with Kiesinger and Brandt and others—I can't remember whether you [Bahr] were there; I assume you were—in any event, we did have an issue: the Germans were going to have their presidential election in Berlin, the Bundesversammlung was going to have its meetings there as it had in the past. The Soviets objected to it as did the East Germans, and we were having incidents on the Autobahn and the usual reaction to things that the Soviets didn't like in either German or American behavior. There were some people in the U.S. government who said that maybe to avoid this sort of thing, the Germans ought to find a different way to select their president than going to Berlin to do so; and maybe the Germans ought to stop having committee meetings of the Bundestag in the Reichstag building because the symbolism would merely produce more problems with the Soviets.

That was not Nixon's view. He didn't particularly encourage the presidential elections but he sought no argument about it with Kiesinger or the Germans in general. But we did have to face the problem that there were some disturbances on the Autobahn. That, not so incidentally, helped stimulate what later became the channel between the Americans and the Soviets via the Soviet Ambassador, Mr. Dobrynin, here in Washington. The one thing at that point in time that Nixon did not particularly look for was to get into some crisis with the Soviets, even if it was a mini-crisis. He wanted to get some room to maneuver because he was trying to give the Soviets some incentives to be helpful with contacts with North Vietnam, to try to deal with that overriding concern of the American administration. (Much of this material is much better known to you than to me or to my memory from the materials that have been made public and declassified, or those that you can obtain when you ask for them and will be automatically declassified.) This channel became a central aspect of relations with the Soviets and became a way of bringing issues as they arose and as we wanted them to arise into direct communication between the White House and the Kremlin. I won't go through

the full list, but Vietnam was obviously at the top. Also near the top was avoiding a crisis in Germany and exploring if something could be done to stabilize the situation in Berlin. Middle East problems and much else somehow eventually got into this channel, as did what eventually became the agreement to start what came to be known as the CSCE process and resulted in the Helsinki Final Act. Over the years, the bilateral U.S.-Soviet negotiations on strategic arms control became a major topic.

James Sutterlin: First of all, as far as what Hal [Sonnenfeldt] was just saying, I have to agree with him that the use of personal representatives and back channels goes back a long time. I think of Harry Hopkins and Colonel House and so forth. But I had a little trouble imagining John Adams and Ken Rush somehow in the same capacity. That gave me a little trouble there, so we can elucidate that.

More to the point, memory is a very selective thing. It can be distorted by preconceived notions and by personal dislikes and, of course, most of all by ego. But so can selective reading of materials. Nowhere has that been more evident than in these very useful talks that we have been having here, for which we should be very grateful to all the sponsors. In my case, the most I can do is to state some personal conclusions that have emerged as I tried to look back—and it's looking back a long time because I have not been concerned with German affairs for a good many years.

Let me start by saying that I was the U.S. representative in the Bonn Group in the embassy in Bonn when the *kleine Schritte* started. The first of those was the Christmas pass agreement in 1963, which was actually proposed by the East Germans but because of the invitation for contact which chancellor—not then chancellor—but which Willy Brandt extended. The Bonn Group took this proposal very seriously. It undertook a very, very detailed, legalistic examination as to whether there should be postmen or somebody else to issue passes and where they should do it and so forth and so on. These were considered in Bonn by this quadripartite group. Then the instructions were sent to Berlin, and since in Berlin it was the three powers, the Kommandatura, which was really in charge, so to speak, it was they who communicated the instructions to the persons on the German side who were doing the negotiations. This understandably led to considerable impatience on the part of Willy Brandt at the time, taking instructions from Bonn on this beginning of what was already seen as a potentially very important movement. It also led to the impression, which I think lasted a long time, that since it was the three powers—the three Western powers—who passed on these instructions that somehow they were the ones who were reluctant to see these *kleine Schritte* taken because of fear of what they might lead to. Not knowing—although he should have, I think—that, in fact, it was the government in Bonn which was most concerned about these little steps. I have to say

here, it would be easy to say it was because it was the CDU government and the CDU wanted to undermine Brandt's initiative. But, to be objective, which historians must, we have to take into account this very legal mind that Carstens had at this point and I think kept. Because there were two things that the German side was very concerned about, and which was a little bit contagious. The Western Allies, certainly, did not disagree. But the German side was especially concerned that the beginning of this policy, the *kleine Schritte*, unless it was very carefully limited, could lead eventually to two things: one, the recognition of the GDR as a separate state; and secondly, to a position of power by the GDR in West Berlin. The Allies were more concerned about the second than they were about the first. And when I talk about Allies—now I'm going back into history—the Allies in this context means the three powers and not the four powers.

Going forward now, a little bit, after a year or so, I was posted in Washington to be head of the German desk—the German office. I was rather surprised to find how little interest there had been and was in these evidently minor little things about postmen and locations and this type of thing. In fact, I found rather the contrary; that in Washington there was a certain impatience with the stultified nature of the German problem, especially the Hallstein Doctrine. Let me give you my only mention now of the United Nations—I promise—in this whole story. But, at that point, the Federal Republic was still extremely insistent that the GDR not gain entry into international organizations, which it repeatedly tried to do. Technically, that would have been possible. Entry to the UN is not possible without the agreement of the United States or the British or the French because it's subject to the veto. But that is not true in specialized agencies. The GDR knew that, so the GDR repeatedly applied for membership in the World Health Organization, for example, and in other such organizations as a step towards international recognition—the very thing at that time the Federal Republic wished to avoid, although the beginnings of Ostpolitik were already apparent. Under these circumstances, Washington was requested to use its influence around the world to persuade countries in Africa, Asia, and everywhere else, not to vote in favor of the admission of the GDR to the WHO. This was rather tiresome, quite honestly. When I, as head of the German office, had to go around to the other bureaus and say, "Look, won't you please send a telegram to our ambassador in Ghana," or wherever, "Go in and tell"—that he should go in and tell them, "Don't vote for those nasty East Germans." Well, the ambassador in Ghana was unlikely to know anything about the Federal Republic of Germany or the GDR, so there was this atmosphere, an atmosphere of a little bit of tiredness—I would even say a readiness to accept the inevitability of the recognition of the GDR. This led some people in Washington, and this was true especially in the CIA, to be

fearful because they felt recognition of the GDR, which would be an inevitable consequence of Ostpolitik, would lead to a weakening of the Western position in West Berlin. This was not the position, this was not an official position. It was certainly not my position—nor Martin Hillenbrand's, I might say. I also agreed, and I think Martin did too—I will speak for him here—that Ostpolitik would lead to the recognition of the GDR and that basically that was a good and inevitable thing that really should not and could not be avoided. There were some differences on that.

Let me talk just a minute about personalities. This has been brought up here. Let me say a word about Willy Brandt and Washington. First of all, as a public figure he was enormously admired. He was the heroic mayor of Berlin, the Kennedy of Germany—and maybe not so good for him as far as Nixon was concerned but he was also considered a great friend of the Kennedys. Brandt, in pursuing Ostpolitik, and [in] practically every conversation that, at least, I was aware of, always emphasized that the Federal Republic's anchor was in NATO and that's the only way an Ostpolitik could successfully be pursued. I don't think anybody that I knew in Washington really doubted that; he was believed on that. But there were differences in personal attitudes. Somewhat surprisingly, Secretary Rogers took an immediate liking to Willy Brandt. They were very different people. [Rogers] instinctively trusted [Brandt] and he trusted his policies. Rogers never had the slightest doubt about this Ostpolitik, to the extent that we worried about it at all, which he didn't, not very much. He wanted to be Willy Brandt's friend and he went to almost excessive efforts to entertain him, which Brandt did not want. Because, while Brandt had no feelings against Rogers, he recognized, or at least considered him a man of little importance, which he had probably been told by Henry Kissinger to be the truth.

Nixon, on the other hand, as far as I could perceive, did not really like Willy Brandt. And I don't think Willy Brandt liked him very much. I will tell you about an incident, which led me—it's a very small thing, but small things make a difference. Once, when Willy Brandt was coming for an official visit to Washington, the president, of course, was giving a dinner in his honor. We had the duty to communicate to Bonn that the dinner would be white tie. The word came back from Bonn that the chancellor did not wish to come to a white tie dinner, that he didn't wear white tie. This was communicated to the president and the president said, "This is my party and if I say it's going to be white tie, it's going to be white tie!" Well, the resolution was that Mr. Brandt wore black tie and other people wore white ties. It was confusing but it was a little bit emblematic of, let us say, the difference in mind set between the two

parties. But this did not translate, let me assure you, into U.S. opposition to Ostpolitik.

We've heard already about some of the correlation even between Ostpolitik and U.S. policy. There were, there was pressure from the CDU for the U.S. to express reservations. There were repeated visits—the presentation from [Bernd] Schaefer yesterday on Rainer Barzel was right on the mark. We felt sometimes we should get a Green Card for Rainer Barzel, he was in Washington so often. Quite honestly, it was our assessment, it was Martin Hillenbrand's assessment, although they were close friends, that Barzel was playing his cards wrong, that the election in Bonn could not be won in Washington. That proved to be the case. Barzel, I have to say, was not one of the ones who took the lead in criticizing Ostpolitik. It was others. There were a lot of them. Quite a few of them had contacts on the Hill and did use those contacts to express doubts about the advisability of Ostpolitik as far as the United States was concerned. But the United States did not oppose it and for a very good reason. There was a directive from the White House, I believe, which went not just to the State Department but to all of the departments, which said in effect the United States should not take a position on these, the question of Ostpolitik or other policies that are of internal German nature because that would get us involved in the internal political situation in Germany, which the United States should not and will not do. That remained the policy, at least as far as I know. I'm learning I don't know a whole lot. But, in any event, as far as I know, that was the guideline of the U.S. attitude with regard to this particular question.

Now finally, I have to come, of course, to the Four Power Agreement on Berlin and the question that had been raised about this. As I have had listened, I sometimes wondered, "Well, what was I doing all those fourteen-hour days preparing telegrams of instructions. Maybe that was a dream. Maybe these sessions in the Allied Control Council never took place in Berlin." But they did; they did take place. There was an enormous amount of negotiation that went on outside of the back channels. What I want to emphasize here is that it had its importance. I have to disagree when our colleague Egon Bahr refers to the quadripartite agreement essentially as a tripartite agreement. That simply is not true because an enormous amount of effort went into developing the texts that were the basis actually of the ultimately secret negotiations on certain details of the texts. Those texts had to be negotiated not just with the Russians but also with the British and the French who had their own ideas. I have to say, that as important as the back channel was, I am sure, it did not facilitate relations with the British and French, to put it mildly. Ultimately it almost led to catastrophe, because the very last stage in the complex which was the Quadripartite Agreement was the admission of the two

German states to the United Nations. And that was provided for in the Quadripartite Agreement. However, there had to be a letter from the three Western powers to the Secretary General of the United Nations expressing reservation on the powers of the four powers with regard to Berlin and Germany. Perhaps out of habit, Henry Kissinger immediately turned to Ambassador Dobrynin and said, "Well, let us work this out." So they did. They worked out a text, which actually was not a very good text. But in this case, Kissinger did something which he had definitely not done before. He actually sent it to the State Department and said, you know, "Is this okay?"

Well, we looked at it and said, "It's not perfect but it's not going to do any harm, so go ahead, put it in your channel the way you want to or we'll introduce it." As a matter of fact, it was left to the State Department representative, who was no longer Ambassador Rush—it was Hillenbrand at that point, who did introduce it. The French objected; and the French said this is not an acceptable text. They realized, of course, that it had been pre-cooked and they simply wouldn't agree. So the Russians changed and the text was different from the one that Henry had reached with Dobrynin. I gave you this example to explain how important this aspect of negotiations was in the Quadripartite Agreement. Because we were able, the three powers, to keep together, but it required a lot of work.

I wanted to answer one other question raised by Egon Bahr and that was the question of the inter-German contacts on access, because I think it should be clear that this was foreseen in the very first drafts, the very first policy papers that were prepared in the State Department. It was foreseen that there should be inter-German contacts to work out access to Berlin. I'll tell you why at least the United States was so anxious that these be inter-German contacts and that was because we figured there was going to be a cost and that the Federal Republic should pay if there was going to be a cost. So that was the decision. The idea, at that point, at the very beginning, and it was the one that was ultimately realized partly in the secret negotiations, that the Quadripartite Powers should provide the umbrella under which the Germans could safely negotiate their agreement on access.

Kenneth Skoug: What I'm going to try to do today is offer some views and try to hit some of the points that others haven't done. I can vouch, by the way, for the fourteen-hour days that Jim Sutterlin consistently put in from the very beginning. There were others who were dragged into this, too, and put in the same long hours. One of them, one of our lawyers, Art Downey, was even beaten up and robbed after one of our weekend sessions, because around the Department of State there wasn't always perfect security.

With reference to the agreement itself on Berlin, we started off talking about improvements in travel and communications in and around Berlin—that's what the original sounding was about. We thought the results were going to be very modest and what would be given up was some part of a demonstrative West German federal presence in Berlin. The Soviets didn't respond very enthusiastically to this proposal. Maybe they thought a few sonic booms over West Berlin would take care of the "federal" in federal presence anyway. But, of course, that turned out to be perhaps the most palpable result of the Berlin agreement, thanks in very great part to Mr. Bahr's negotiations on the inter-German level. That must have been the most important thing for the Berliners, along with the assurance of access. But in access, we, of course, were not able to move the city of Berlin, nor were we able to establish some sort of a land corridor. So it always would have been subject to "selective détente," how the Soviet Union felt about Berlin. Now, the Soviet Union made certain commitments, but it also got a commitment, that in a "relevant area," which the Soviet Union understood to be West Berlin, there would be no unilateral change. Of course, *mutatis mutandis* that could have been grounds for problems. Fortunately, it's nugatory and it didn't happen.

I'm going to pass over the ties, but I do want to say a word about the Junktim, without which we would not have had those substantial results. But the Junktim also owed a lot to German domestic politics, which I don't think has been mentioned. There was a mention of the famous press leak of June 13, 1970—Mr. Bahr's negotiations with the Soviets—and this was not very well received by the CDU. There were Landtag elections coming up the next day in Nordrhein-Westfalen and in Niedersachsen and in Saarland. The result of those elections was bad for the SPD, devastating for the FDP; they lost representation in the Landtag and they also had the warning that they might lose representation on the national scene in the next election. So extinction is forever. The FDP, I think at that point, must have made it very clear that there had to be a substantial improvement in Berlin; that the agreement, the term used was "satisfactory," but "satisfactory" meant getting quite a bit. So then we were confronted with a new ball game. We had to greatly increase our own interest and work on the Berlin agreement. The Soviet Union, of course, was put under a certain amount of pressure as well, although they came up with their own reverse Junktim in the long run and the ratification of the Bonn-Moscow treaty was June 1, 1972—two days before the signing of the Quadripartite Agreement—so they theoretically could have refused to sign the agreement unless they got their way.

Henry Kissinger, in his book *White House Years*, feared that Brandt would blame us, blame the United States, whether the State Department or the White House, for slowing down his Ostpolitik. For that reason, he

states that [is] one of the reasons why we used such celerity in 1971, when the term of art in the Department of State was the “mad rush.” We could not understand why Ambassador Rush was so sure he would reach an agreement when the relevant National Security Decision Memorandum, the NSDM, set certain conditions for the much expanded Soviet presence in West Berlin. We knew we weren’t getting those conditions. It seemed that we did not have to act with that amount of haste, that there could have been better communication within the US government on the subject, because Brandt could not have moved, even assuming that Brandt had rascality in his mind, which I do not assume, he could not have moved in that parliamentary situation, whereas Dr. Kissinger has said the FRG lacked the bargaining tools to conduct Ostpolitik on a purely national basis.

Kissinger—one can’t avoid a mention of him—I hate to dwell on the point, but there’s a condescending style in his book. He refers to [Bahr] as a man of great intelligence and extraordinary self-confidence. I guess that’s a compliment. On Brandt, he refers to him as “hulking, solid, basically uncommunicative,” with views that were more compatible with those of our State Department. That definitely was not a compliment. Don’t feel bad at the derogatory mention. I’m sure that I’m mentioned in the book as the “nitpicker on the German desk”—unless that was Jim Sutterlin, but I think he was too high to be the “nitpicker.”

The methodology of the Nixon-Kissinger administration in foreign affairs was spelled out in the First President’s Report in 1970, where it talks about the importance of facts being known to all departments of the government and they would be communicated in writing to all of the departments. Unfortunately, that was a wise doctrine but it wasn’t honored in practice. The attitude toward Secretary Rogers, that he might be too anxious to negotiate, that he might want to claim credit in quotes for progress, those hurt us. I would say, as somebody who admires the mind of Henry Kissinger, who gave us a degree of scope that many administrations lacked, like Nixon he alienated needlessly those who would like to have been his friends. That unfortunately was what happened.

There were some disagreements, again overcome. There was a disagreement on Radio Free Europe/Radio Liberty, which the Brandt administration wanted to get out of Germany. Those radios at the time were CIA assets; they were very important to the administration because they were one way of manifesting what I said was our continuing interest in the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe. They were a very effective, ideological weapon. Fortunately we prevailed in that case, keeping the radios in Germany. We changed them into a public radio.

The shrinking majority in the Bundestag was another issue. One of the first things that Brandt wanted to do was get the Berlin deputies to

vote because he only had a margin of twelve at the beginning. We wouldn't let the Berlin deputies vote because they had never voted before and this would be a change in four-power responsibilities. Whether it was right or wrong, we couldn't change it for Brandt. That was another issue that was overcome. Then there were the defections, of course, as the majority—the majority vanished actually. Mende defected with two of his colleagues in October 1970, and the rest of them went before the vote. So there was pressure on us, Jim Sutterlin has mentioned this, to intervene and say that the treaty, the Soviet-German treaty, was of interest to the United States. That would have been catastrophic for us to have intervened on an issue of so much magnitude for Germany: renouncing the lost territories of the Second World War; admitting the separate existence of the GDR. We didn't want to intervene. In fact, we strenuously opposed that intervention. And it worked out. You won anyway. The SPD won anyway. We didn't have to appear as a—it could have been a new *Dolchstoßlegende* [stab-in-the-back legend] about Germany's territories being ripped off because of the pressure of the United States.

Jonathan Dean: Ten years before Jim Sutterlin got tired and bored with fending off GDR membership in international organizations, I was tied to the desk in the then Bureau of German Affairs doing the same thing. So I had ten more years of it than he did. I also want, before I go into other aspects, to say something about this back channel aspect, which wounds all good Foreign Service men. As far as Ambassador Rush was concerned, I have reason to believe that he used in the back channel and in the front channel the material that we Foreign Service men prepared for him on all of the aspects of the Berlin agreement. Much of it did come from prods and nods from Jim Sutterlin. So I think there wasn't a real distinction in the subject matter or in content because of the mode of communication.

As I think back on the Berlin negotiations, I do want to mention one aspect of them that we were influenced by in 1969–1970. The first was the August 1968 Warsaw Pact invasion of Czechoslovakia, an event which Helmut Sonnenfeldt predicted to me in July, maybe once or twice before I returned to Bonn at that time. This event turned world opinion and also unofficial opinion in the Warsaw Pact countries against the Soviet Union. As we saw it, the Soviet Union was trying to reestablish its own international status as well as to consolidate the status quo in Eastern Europe. We believed this meant that the Soviet Union could and should be squeezed for material concessions about Berlin. Second, I was present as the U.S. reporting officer in the December 1968 ministerial four-power meeting in Brussels on German issues. At that meeting, Willy Brandt, as Foreign Minister of the Federal Republic, made a very energetic case for holding negotiations on Berlin. Now he didn't say so but I would guess

he had been assured by Egon Bahr, on the basis of his own Soviet contacts, that negotiations of this kind would be productive. My own personal philosophy on the Ostpolitik, which I gained from my earlier service in the Federal Republic, was that, if the German political leaders wanted something, the United States should go along with it, if it appeared feasible and was not clearly damaging.

From first-hand observation, I had a good deal of respect for the judgment and the knowledge of top German leaders and senior officials. I felt that they knew what they were doing. This assessment covered Foreign Minister and Chancellor Brandt, also Egon Bahr. Then and now, I considered Egon Bahr to be a German patriot—despite his close and sometimes occasionally visible working association with General Kevorkov, which did raise, from time to time, questions in the United States. Now, in particular, I felt that it would be very unwise for the United States to appear to thwart the desires of German political leaders on any question related to the division of Germany. Maybe we, in the State Department, American officials connected with Germany at that time, overestimated the interest of the German public in this subject. But it was a continued concern. Herbert Wehner repeatedly complained to me in the 1950s about Western rejection of Soviet offers of all-German elections. With many others, I was worried about the possibility that Federal German public opinion might someday become totally alienated over presumed Western blockage of progress toward German unification.

That's why at the time of the Soviet offers of free elections, I had argued they should be accepted and that the Soviet Union would not come through, and the German public would see that the Soviets were responsible, not the West, for blocking German unity. But, so close to the end of World War II, Western leaders did not yet have sufficient confidence in the common sense of the German public to take the risk of exploring the Soviet proposal—another fallout from the war itself. We also felt in this context that Egon Bahr's negotiations with the Soviet Union had already conceded the main negotiating leverage in this situation, namely, the existence of two German states and acceptance of current German borders, and that we should try to get something for the United States' interests out of the complex. Specifically, I know this was a shared view: we wanted continuing Soviet responsibility for Berlin because we were then apprehensive over the possible consequences of a transfer of responsibility to East Germany. We thought that the Soviet Union, as a nuclear weapon state, would be more cautious in this manner than East Germany. I think, intentionally or not, the Soviet officials had let some of their concern about the steadiness of the East German leadership seep through to the West.

The third point that we in the embassy had in mind and that we discussed with Ambassador Rush at length was the view that the Berlin negotiations represented one component of de facto peace treaty negotiations on Germany—negotiations that might extend for twenty years or more and that would include as other components: acceptance of the postwar borders of Germany; de facto acceptance of the GDR; a U.S.-Soviet agreement on nuclear reductions that was going on in the background; and a build-down of the huge East-West military confrontation in Europe, as well as the CSCE talks. This was why I personally asked to be assigned to the preparatory work for the NATO-Warsaw Pact force reduction negotiations, which later began in Vienna.

After the Quadripartite Agreement was signed—this was a topic that came up yesterday—I kept in close touch with Rainer Barzel, the Christian Democratic floor leader, a man of remarkable ambition, endless schemes, an adventurous, high-wire acrobat of politics. He wanted both to keep, according to his accounts, the Ostverträge and to become chancellor of Germany. As one result, there was a remarkable picture of this CDU fraktion leader publicly negotiating with the Soviet Union for amendments, and interpretations of the Ostverträge. Barzel told me repeatedly that he wanted to obtain ratification of the Ostverträge and he wanted to use the Berlin agreement to tie the package together. As Ken Skoug and Jim Sutterlin have both mentioned, the State Department had instructed the embassy to stay scrupulously out of the debate over ratification of the Ostverträge, fearing that an adverse mythology might grow up around them if the Allies pressed for their acceptance. This policy was surely correct. Nevertheless, I did pass on to Ambassador Rush in Washington Barzel's plea—and there were many of them—for a positive administration statement on the Berlin agreement. Ultimately, Washington did issue a cautious statement of support. I don't know whether it had any affect one way or another, but in any case it did take place. Then followed the no-confidence vote against the Brandt government—with votes bought and sold on both sides—a dramatic occasion. I knew the central figure on the Social Democratic side, Karl Wienand, a man who had lost a leg in World War II as a member of the penal battalion of the Wehrmacht. Wienand came to me time and time again saying that he had saved the Ostverträge with his dealings with the other side and asking for help, which, of course, we couldn't give. Herbert Wehner had made him the scapegoat as the paymaster of these shifts. Wienand, I thought, deserved better than that. Barzel, of course, as we know, failed in his bid to unseat Brandt and on May 17, the Bundestag ratified the Ostverträge and the entire CDU, in spite of all this effort on the part of Barzel, abstained in total on the vote, repudiating Barzel's efforts to get a positive vote. Twelve years later, Barzel performed the

remarkable feat of working himself back into the position of CDU floor leader. He was again forced to resign, this time in one of the party financing scandals, which have been such a heavy burden on German politics and also on American politics.

I want to take this occasion, and especially before you historians, to celebrate the essential role and remarkable achievements of the Bonn Group, and especially of its German members. As many of you know—Jim Sutterlin has referred to it—the Bonn Group was an information-sharing and policy coordination group of officials from the three Allied embassies and the *Auswärtiges Amt* that dealt with issues dealing with Berlin and Germany as a whole. The cohesion in this group was so strong that, on one occasion, we even had the temerity to invite Ambassador Sauvagnargues out of the room in his own French embassy, where the group was meeting, telling him that he was not a member and would he please leave. That illustrates a certain cast of mind in any case. I've already explained here why I considered myself an intermediary between the German component of the Bonn Group and the State Department, trying to report to Washington in as reassuring a way as possible some of the really astounding developments that were taking place at that time. The leader of the German contingent of the Bonn Group was my friend Guenther van Well, who died in this country some years ago, after having been Federal German Ambassador to Washington and Federal German Permanent Representative at the UN. Egon Bahr explained *Ostpolitik* to the ambassadors; it was Guenther van Well's job to explain *Ostpolitik* as it developed to the often very skeptical members of the Bonn Group, including our British and French members, who had the latitude, as ambassadors seldom did, to raise the painful questions and pursue them to the end. These dialogues and discussions were extremely important. Guenther always had a logical account of German policy, even when I suspected he had, at least for the moment, made it up himself. In any case, he made *Ostpolitik* appear the most consistent and logical development in the world instead of a wildly revolutionary approach. So his audience then reported these constructive interpretations to their home governments. Van Well was a virtuoso of explanation and rationalization and, in my view, also a German patriot. His work contributed greatly to keeping the Western allies together in solidarity during a period of rapid and far-reaching change, where U.S.-German relations, and allied relations, could have been very seriously strained. His work and that of his colleagues was an essential part of the historic achievement of the *Ostpolitik*.

David Binder: As one who attended many of these affairs as a journalist in the fifties, sixties, seventies, eighties and nineties, I am very pleased to say to myself and to share with you, I haven't heard anything

I disagree with today, except I would tell you, Jonathan Dean, I knew Karl Wienand pretty well and he volunteered for the role when Wehner asked him. He said, "Yes, I'll do it." So he was the scapegoat, but he wasn't made the scapegoat by Wehner. He was a very loyal man.

I want to pick up one idea from yesterday morning's presentations and ask you guys—you Americans—how you received this, when Mr. Leffler concluded his presentation with a characterization of U.S. strength during the Nixon-Kissinger years as being at such a low point, that it was weak, that they were operating from weakness. I heard weak or weakness from the entire United States government, at least twenty times. Have you any evidence from your experience of the Kissinger-Nixon people feeling that they were operating from weakness?

Helmut Sonnenfeldt: I can't remember whether I was thinking about yesterday or whether I said something about it yesterday when this point was made. It's true that we had a troubled time in this country. We were stuck in Vietnam; we were on the way out, but it was painful, and in the American public, there were deep divisions. So it was not an ideal situation in which to try to bargain and develop relations with the Soviets. This was recognized by the administration, and properly so, because we did have some real problems. This gave rise then also to this talk about Kissinger being a "Spenglerian," and generally a pessimist about the American future, the American role. That aspect of it, I think, has been grossly overdone. In fact, it turns out that the story of 1970-1 is a story of substantial American achievements.

Jonathan Dean: I would agree with that assessment, but I did see some feeling that the U.S. was operating from weakness, and that things could get out of control, in particular, with regard to Ostpolitik and to the effort, as Egon Bahr has described it today, to dissolve the "ideological cement" of communism—an effort with which I personally strongly agreed. This worry was reflected in the skepticism of the administration about the steadfastness of public opinion in the United States and Europe, in particular. We can understand the administration's skepticism about public opinion in the United States, given the demonstrations about the Vietnam War—demonstrations which, in my opinion, were justified—but, in any case, we can understand their worries about American opinion. But there was also a belief on the U.S. side that the Soviets were masters of manipulation of opinion. The idea that European and specifically German public opinion and voters could be gulled by these capacities was fairly widespread in the U.S. administration, and it was a source of some feeling of weakness.

James Sutterlin: I think probably you can't generalize on this because you have to distinguish between the overall sense of perhaps vulnerability of the administration given the unrest in this country and its relations

with discrete regions or areas. In the case with the Soviet Union, there was reason for belief and confidence that, after a series of crises—most notably Kennedy’s experiences with Khrushchev and even the Wall—that there was a degree of power on the part of the United States, which certainly matched that of the Soviet Union. So I don’t think that there was anything in recent history at that period which would have led Mr. Kissinger or anybody else to feel that they were negotiating from weakness in terms of the Soviet Union.

Vyacheslav Kevorkov: Even if the United States was weak at the time, they concealed it very, very well. The Soviet Union was sure that the United States was very strong, and [we] were sure of it even at the time when Khrushchev, from the tribune of the United Nations, told the whole world that he has everything in his portfolio, all the files, and can prove that the Soviet Union can put everything in order. They knew very well that this portfolio had nothing in it. The idea was that the position of the Soviet Union was grounded because the Soviets were sure how strong the Americans were in 1960–1, the period of Khrushchev.

Robert Gerald Livingston: Let me raise another subject, which I think deserves attention here—perhaps it should be reserved for the afternoon—but let me raise it now because it was touched on by two of the speakers. There is a rumor going around relating to Egon, and that is the importance of the Central Intelligence Agency in Germany, in German policy, and in Germany as a whole. It’s one of the ironies, I think, of historical research that thanks to the opening of the archives in the GDR and the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe, and to presentations like General Kevorkov’s, we know really more about the role of the KGB in many of these East-West relationships than we do of the Central Intelligence Agency. I guess there were probably more CIA agents in Germany than there were State Department people, and that may even be true today. So it has always been massively represented there.

Jim [Sutterlin] mentioned—and I just wanted to bring up three specific questions—Jim mentioned in passing, the opposition—if I understood you correctly, Jim—the opposition of the Central Intelligence Agency to the strengthening of the Soviet presence in West Berlin. Ken [Skoug] mentioned the fact that the two radios in Munich, Radio Free Europe and Radio Liberty, were run for many, many years by the Central Intelligence Agency. And thirdly, there was always the rumor, Egon, here in Washington during this period that you—as had been true in the case of many leaders of the SPD in the fifties and sixties, including Herbert Wehner—were in closest touch with the agency during this period; and that your intent in doing so was to be sure that the reports sent in the CIA channels about your activities were reassuring to the National Security Adviser, who read them, and thereby gained more confidence in you and

what you were doing; and that this was your intent, and a very clever intent, and to that degree you used at least the American intelligence almost as wisely as you used your contacts with the Soviet intelligence.

Egon Bahr: First of all, I would like to express my gratitude [for] what we have heard this morning because it gave a wonderful impression about the [wide range] of American opinions, and to differences of opinions between the several administrations. In looking back, I'm really, even more grateful than before that we had to work together with the White House via these back channels—which surely has a long history, and will have a long history further because it's understandable for all governments, which really [want] to create something new and want to create confidence. I would like to come back later on this afternoon to something you said, Mr. Sutterlin, and would like to answer the question which has been raised by Gerry.

I had, to my knowledge, no contact with KGB people at all. When I [made] contact [with Kevorkov], I didn't know that he was a KGB man, because this man, who has run a real personal risk in what he did—much bigger than what all the people involved on the Western side had to accept—I learned after the end of the Soviet Union what his position had been. If I would have [known] this in advance, I nevertheless would have tried to do the same because our real interest was to have a reliable, working contact with the Kremlin. I think that it is quite natural. [West German State Minister in the Chancellery Wolfgang] Schäuble, of course, worked together with [East German Deputy Minister of Trade Alexander] Schalck-Golodkowski, but knowing that he had a high rank in the Secret Service of the GDR. But it didn't play a role; it worked reliably.

When I came to Berlin in 1960, I met someone, who later became a good friend, by the name of Ralph Brown. Ralph Brown was a representative of the CIA in Berlin. He became a real good friend; he belonged to the mission in Berlin. We used him, of course, for [several] reasons. One was we knew that CIA representatives were in Bonn, observing the situation there and reporting to Washington. We were, of course, interested that our points of view concerning the situation, concerning our intentions, were reported to Washington correctly so that Washington is not only dependent on what has been reported from the CDU and from Bonn. This worked excellently up to a point in which, when I came back from Moscow after the signature of the Moscow Treaty. "Ralphie Boy," as he was called, came up to me and said, "Our people in Washington do not know what you have in mind when you speak about the necessity of negotiating on Berlin. We are in such a weak position in Berlin. It's so vulnerable. What to negotiate? It's even dangerous to negotiate. What should be the content on negotiations concerning Berlin?" So then I started to explain to him what our intentions and the content of the Berlin

negotiations, in our mind, should be. To some degree it was exactly the same as what the Soviet side said. When you make the fate of the Moscow Treaty dependent on successful negotiations on Berlin, you give the Americans the possibility to prevent the Moscow Treaty, to destroy it. So the fact was that we have used with pleasure and good results the excellent relations with CIA, and this went on the whole period until Ralphie Boy died in Bonn in a restaurant after he finished eating. Of course, when I came to Bonn from Berlin, Ralph was also coming to Bonn, and there I found another man from the CIA, who was especially interested in observing the party—Freddie—we knew only the first names. When I had been introduced to this man [Kevorkov], he was introduced with the name Slava. That's all. I didn't ask the second name because if he wanted to give me the name, he would do it. If not, he'll give me a wrong name. It was exactly the same with the Americans. I accepted the names of Freddie and Ralph.