

BULLETIN

SUPPLEMENT 1

2004

AMERICAN DÉTENTE AND GERMAN OSTPOLITIK,
1969–1972

PREFACE

David C. Geyer and Bernd Schaefer 1

CONTRIBUTORS

The Berlin Wall, Ostpolitik and Détente 5
Hope Harrison

Superpower Détente: US-Soviet Relations, 1969–1972 19
Vojtech Mastny

The Path toward Sino-American Rapprochement, 1969–1972 26
Chen Jian

“Thinking the Unthinkable” to “Make the Impossible Possible”:
Ostpolitik, Intra-German Policy, and the Moscow Treaty,
1969–1970 53
Carsten Tessmer

The Treaty of Warsaw: The Warsaw Pact Context 67
Douglas Selva

The Missing Link: Henry Kissinger and the Back-Channel
Negotiations on Berlin 80
David C. Geyer

“Washington as a Place for the German Campaign”: The U.S.
Government and the CDU/CSU Opposition, 1969–1972 98
Bernd Schaefer

“Take No Risks (Chinese)”: The Basic Treaty in the Context of
International Relations 109
Mary E. Sarotte

Ostpolitik: Phases, Short-Term Objectives, and Grand Design 118
Gottfried Niedhart

Statements and Discussion

137

Egon Bahr

Vyacheslav Kevorkov

Helmut Sonnenfeldt

James S. Sutterlin

Kenneth N. Skoug

Jonathan Dean

PREFACE

It may seem odd to begin a publication on “American Détente and German Ostpolitik” by reflecting on Soviet foreign policy in 1969. Given the situation in Europe at the time, however, such reflections are anything but far-fetched. Richard Nixon and Willy Brandt, after all, developed their policies to “reduce the tensions” of the Cold War with Leonid Brezhnev in mind. Moscow, meanwhile, structured its “Westpolitik” along similar lines, i.e., by focusing on both Washington and Bonn. This congruence of calculations was hardly accidental. By the end of the 1960s, all three capitals faced serious challenges: the invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968; the Sino-Soviet border clashes in March 1969; the independent policies of France and Romania; the Vietnam War, the German Question. The diplomacy of détente—as practiced by American, West German, and Soviet decision-makers—attempted to meet these challenges. The resulting pattern was familiar to the diplomats—but then largely forgotten by diplomatic historians. Many scholars have written, for instance, about how Nixon’s “opening” to China led to “triangular” diplomacy on a global scale; but few have studied how Brandt’s “opening” to the Soviet Union had a similar geometric effect on European affairs. Due to the availability of documents and former decision-makers, this volume emphasizes the American and West German sides. The contributors, however, have tried to add some dimension to the debate on détente and Ostpolitik. Many of the chapters that follow—in addition to offering Chinese, Polish and East German perspectives—examine the base of triangular diplomacy in Europe: the Soviet Union.

“Triangular relations,” Egon Bahr once observed, “are always complicated.”¹ In diplomacy, as in romance, one side often feels neglected while the other two are preoccupied with bilateral relations. For nine months, while West Germany and the Soviet Union were busy negotiating a renunciation of force agreement, the United States was the “third wheel.” When Brandt and Brezhnev met to celebrate the Moscow Treaty in August 1970, Nixon—who also hoped to visit the Soviet capital—was the “odd man out.” Neither Nixon, nor his national security adviser, Henry Kissinger, liked feeling left behind. Kissinger gave vent to his frustration in the summer of 1970 when he warned a West German official: “If there is to be a policy of détente, then we will do it and not you.”² Such outbursts did not go unnoticed. “I gained the impression [. . .],”

Brandt later recalled, “that [Kissinger] would rather have taken personal charge of the delicate complex of East-West problems in its entirety.”³

This was more than a mere conflict of personalities. Although their policies appeared parallel on the surface, the United States and West Germany had two different concepts of *détente*. After the crises of the early 1960s, Washington wanted to reduce the competition between the superpowers to a more manageable level, especially in the race for strategic armaments. Nixon also sought Soviet support for peace in Vietnam. As a regional power, Bonn had more limited goals. Brandt sought to mend historical fences by accepting the postwar borders in Eastern Europe, including the Oder-Neisse Line and the boundary between East and West Germany. He also hoped that “change through rapprochement” would ease the consequences of Germany’s division. The chancellor, in other words, tried to confront the consequences of losing the Second World War, while the president tried to avoid the consequences of losing the Vietnam War. The two men marched under the banner of *détente* but not always in the same direction. The tension in German-American relations was further exacerbated by a divergence in tactics. Both sides sought some leverage over Soviet policy. Bonn linked ratification of the Moscow Treaty to a “satisfactory” settlement in Berlin; and Washington linked an improvement in Soviet-American relations to a “satisfactory” settlement in Vietnam. Brandt moved first before asking the Soviets to pressure the East Germans; and Nixon refused to move before the Soviets agreed to pressure the North Vietnamese. This divergence made all the difference. By playing the hare rather than the tortoise, Brandt won the “race” to Moscow. Nixon and Kissinger, of course, were not on the sidelines for long. The politics behind ratification of the Moscow Treaty soon led to a remarkable round of triangular diplomacy, as a select group of Soviet, American, and West German officials conducted the secret talks behind the quadripartite agreement on Berlin.

Many contributed to the achievements of American *Détente* and German *Ostpolitik*: Richard Nixon, Henry Kissinger, Kenneth Rush, Leonid Brezhnev, Andrei Gromyko, Valentin Falin, Vyacheslav Kevorkov, Vladislav Gomulka, Egon Bahr. By all accounts, however, the key figure—the man at the vertex of the triangle—was Willy Brandt. Perhaps the most compelling testimony comes from Kissinger himself, who once described Brandt as “hulking, solid, [and] basically uncommunicative despite his hearty manner.”⁴ During the unveiling of Brandt’s portrait at the German Historical Institute in March 2003, the former Secretary of State painted a different picture: “It was the tremendous achievement of Brandt that he dared to raise the question of German national interests and attempted to relate them—and indeed succeeded in relating them—to the common interests of the West. It is one of the ironies of history that this occurred

when there was an administration in office in Washington whose sympathy for the Social Democrats was limited." As he recalled the highlights of Brandt's career, Kissinger waxed even more eloquent. "No formal statements could have reassured the rest of the world," he remarked, "as much as [...] the visit to the Warsaw Ghetto and the commitment that Brandt represented to the kind of human values that had not been associated with a national Germany policy for much of modern history. It is this quality that contributed to the fact that even though ideologically the leaders of the two countries had different views and were totally different personalities, there has certainly never been a better period in the relationship between Germany and the United States on the issues that mattered."⁵ The reader must judge for himself whether these remarks reflect more hagiography than historiography. The editors believe, however, that Kissinger's eulogy serves as the perfect introduction to a publication on American *détente* and German *Ostpolitik*.

* * * * *

This volume presents the proceedings of a conference held at the German Historical Institute in Washington on May 9 and 10, 2002⁶—thirty years after ratification of the so-called Eastern treaties or *Ostverträge* by the Bundestag in Bonn. The conference was jointly organized and funded by the German Historical Institute and the Bundeskanzler-Willy-Brandt-Stiftung in Berlin, and co-sponsored by the Parallel History Project on NATO and the Warsaw Pact at the National Security Archive and the Cold War International History Project at the Woodrow Wilson International Center, both based in Washington. For two days, historians and former decision-makers met to discuss their research and recollections on American *détente* and German *Ostpolitik*. The historians included those who have recently conducted research in American, German, Russian, and East European archives; the decision-makers, those who served in the American, German and Soviet governments from 1969 to 1972. Some of the scholarly papers provided the necessary context, including the origins and objectives of *Ostpolitik*, the diplomacy of Washington, Moscow, and Beijing, and the relationship between the Nixon administration and the Christian Democratic opposition. Others documented the details behind Brandt's diplomacy: the Moscow Treaty (1970); the Warsaw Treaty (1970); the Quadripartite Agreement on Berlin (1971); and the Basic Treaty between East and West Germany (1972). The decision-makers, on the other hand, gave some important perspectives, offering not only their recollections but also their reaction to the latest scholarship. The volume follows the structure of the conference by publishing first the papers, as revised by the presenters, and then a transcript of the subsequent discussion, as revised by the editors.

The editors wish to express their gratitude to everyone who helped make the concept of the conference a success, in particular, Carsten Tessmer, Wolfram Hoppenstedt and Bernd Rother from the Bundeskanzler-Willy-Brandt-Stiftung; and Douglas E. Selvage from the Office of the Historian in the US Department of State. This volume would not have been possible without the expert editing of the text by David Lazar, Janel B. Galvanek, Kelly McCullough, Erika Brown and Michael Shurkin at the GHI; the excellent transcription of tapes by Craig E. Daigle from George Washington University—and the essential support of Christof Mauch, Director of the GHI, who decided to make this the first in a new series of in-house scholarly publications. We would also like to thank two other scholars, Karen Riechert and Laura Talley Geyer, not only for their patience with the editors but also for their support of our work. *Maxima debetur noster uxori debitum.*

Washington, DC
December 2003
David Geyer
Bernd Schaefer

Notes

¹ Stephan Fuchs, *“Dreiecksverhältnisse sind immer kompliziert.” Kissinger, Bahr und die Ostpolitik*, (Hamburg, 1999). The author attributes Bahr’s quote to an interview he held with him in 1995.

² “Wenn schon Entspannung, dann machen wir sie.” See Paul Frank, *Entschlüsselte Botschaft. Ein Diplomat macht Inventur* (Stuttgart, 1981), p. 287.

³ Willy Brandt, *People and Politics: The Years 1960-1975*, translated by J. Maxwell Brownjohn, (Boston, 1976), 284.

⁴ Henry Kissinger, *White House Years*, (Boston, 1979), 99.

⁵ Henry A. Kissinger, Statement on the Unveiling of a Willy Brandt Portrait by Johannes Heisig. German Historical Institute, Washington D.C. 18 March 2003. www.ghi-dc.org/Kissinger.html.

⁶ See Bernd Schaefer’s conference report, “American Détente and German Ostpolitik, 1969–1972” in *Bulletin of the German Historical Institute* 31 (Fall 2002), 111–114.

THE BERLIN WALL, OSTPOLITIK, AND DÉTENTE

Hope M. Harrison

Willy Brandt: [I]n August 1961 a curtain was drawn aside to reveal an empty stage. To put it more bluntly, we lost certain illusions that had outlived the hopes underlying them . . . Ulbricht had been allowed to take a swipe at the Western superpower, and the United States merely winced with annoyance. My political deliberations in the years that followed were substantially influenced by this day's experience, and it was against this background that my so-called *Ostpolitik*—the beginning of détente—took shape.¹

President Kennedy: It's not a very nice solution but a wall is a hell of a lot better than a war.²

The building of the Berlin Wall on August 13, 1961, was an essential precursor to West Germany's Ostpolitik and East-West détente. This essay will examine the connections between the Berlin Crisis of 1958-61 and the years of Ostpolitik and détente from 1969 to 1972. The construction of the Berlin Wall signaled both the external strength of the East German communist regime and its fundamental internal weakness. The communists possessed the strength to close the border around West Berlin, but their need to do so to stop the flow of refugees indicated the core weakness of the regime and its lack of legitimacy. The brutal decision by the East Germans and Soviets to seal off access to West Berlin by erecting a wall had two paradoxical outcomes. On the one hand, it led the West Germans to realize that if they wanted to help the East German people, they would have to stop ignoring their leaders and instead establish direct relations with the East German regime. Thus, the building of the Wall affected West Germany's Ostpolitik over the next decade. On the other hand, it also contributed to East German popular disaffection with the regime, culminating in the revolution almost three decades later in 1989 that led to the collapse of the German Democratic Republic (GDR) and the East's unification with the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG).

This essay will highlight some of the dynamics leading up to and/or set in motion by the building of the Berlin Wall, and it will discuss the way these dynamics between and among the U.S., West Germany, East Germany and the Soviet Union (with China as a fifth key element) played out in the détente period. These dynamics include the acceptance of superpower spheres of influence, the complicated alliance relations of both superpowers with their German allies, and a distracting Chinese role in East-West relations.

The U.S. Commitment to West Berlin and Implicit Recognition of a Soviet Sphere of Influence in the East

In the years surrounding the building of the Berlin Wall, U.S. leaders made it clear that, all rhetoric aside, they were really only committed to defending their sphere of influence in the West and not to rolling back Soviet influence from East Berlin, East Germany, or Eastern Europe. In effect, the U.S. recognized a Soviet sphere of influence in the East. Thus, the U.S. did not attempt to defend the East Berliners from Soviet tanks in 1953, the Hungarians in 1956, or the Czechs in 1968.³ In the face of Soviet pressure on West Berlin during the Berlin Crisis of 1958-61, President John F. Kennedy gave a speech on July 25, 1961, focusing U.S. interests on “three essentials”: defending the West Berliners, ensuring Western access to West Berlin, and maintaining an Allied presence in West Berlin.⁴ Kennedy did not include movement between East and West Berlin or the freedom of the East Berliners in his priorities.

Khrushchev launched the Berlin Crisis in November 1958, threatening to transfer to the GDR control over the access routes between West Germany and West Berlin if the West did not agree to a World War II peace treaty with the two Germanies (thus recognizing East Germany) or with a united Germany. He also demanded the transformation of West Berlin into a “free city” (characterized by the withdrawal of Western troops and a drastic reduction in Western influence). Khrushchev’s goal was to solidify his own sphere of influence in East Germany by reducing Western influence there. Unable to push the West out after almost three years of trying, he had to settle for a more defensive strategy of shoring up the GDR with the Berlin Wall.

To the surprise of the East German leadership, Kennedy and the other Western leaders made no attempt to interfere with the construction of the Berlin Wall. East German leader Walter Ulbricht wrote to Khrushchev on September 15, confiding, “I must say that the enemy undertook fewer countermeasures than anticipated.”⁵ In fact, Kennedy felt relief that the communists had finally found a way to halt the refugee exodus in a way that did not threaten a war. Kennedy observed to his aides, “It’s not a very nice solution, but a wall is a hell of a lot better than a war.” After Khrushchev’s many threats during the Berlin Crisis to turn over to the GDR control of Western access to West Berlin and his talk of launching nuclear missiles against the West, the erection first of barbed wire and then of cement bricks just inside the borders of East Berlin and East Germany surrounding West Berlin looked much more defensive than offensive. Senator William Fulbright had publicly stated on July 30 that he did not understand why the East Germans were not closing their border to stop the refugee exodus, something he believed they had a right

to do.⁶ In early August, Kennedy himself privately told Walt Rostow, his Deputy Special Assistant for National Security Affairs: “Khrushchev is losing East Germany. He cannot let that happen. . . . He will have to do something to stop the flow of refugees—perhaps a wall. And we won’t be able to prevent it. I can hold the Alliance together to defend West Berlin but I cannot act to keep East Berlin open.”⁷ While no evidence has surfaced that Kennedy knew in advance of Soviet and East German plans to build a wall, to say nothing of any private acquiescence he made to such a wall, it is clear that his policy was guided by a sense of de facto spheres of influence. This same sense, as well as a recognition of nuclear parity and a desire to avoid nuclear war, would underlie Nixon and Kissinger’s steps toward détente with the Soviets.

In the aftermath of the Wall, the U.S. quickly reached out to the Soviets to resume talks on Germany and Berlin.⁸ These talks between Secretary of State Dean Rusk and Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko began in New York in September 1961 on the occasion of the annual convening of the UN General Assembly. Gromyko later reported to the Soviet Central Committee: “The Western Powers are not even raising in the talks the question of eliminating the control on the borders of West Berlin. Even more, representatives of the USA recognized in talks that the measures of August 13 correspond to the vital interests of the GDR and the other socialist states.”⁹ The Soviets got the message that Kennedy recognized the status quo. U.S. acquiescence in the Berlin Wall was a prelude to the U.S. and Western détente agreements of the 1970s, including the 1975 Helsinki Final Act, which formalized the recognition of post-World War II European borders and regimes.

The tension of the three-year Berlin Crisis and then the Cuban Missile Crisis a year later led the superpowers to seek détente. They both realized that the risks of confrontation were too great and that neither side was willing to relinquish its sphere of influence. Tensions over Berlin in particular were to be eliminated with the 1971 Quadripartite Agreement.¹⁰

The Complicated Dynamics of U.S.-West German Relations

While each superpower had a tight alliance with its German ally, there were some clear differences in interests and priorities between the superpowers, on the one hand, and the Germans, on the other, that were apparent both in the crisis surrounding the building of the Berlin Wall and in the détente years. On issues concerning Berlin and Germany, the two German leaders were understandably more adamant about protecting their interests than the U.S. and Soviet leaders were, while the superpowers always had to keep in mind the broad picture of East-West relations and not just the German question. These differences in perspectives led to some diverging policies and tactics.

During the Berlin Crisis, Presidents Eisenhower and Kennedy both expressed exasperation with Chancellor Konrad Adenauer's hard line on negotiations with the East. Eisenhower could not understand why Adenauer felt so insecure during the Berlin Crisis, why he was so afraid of publicly dealing with the East German regime. Adenauer, however, believed that if they gave the Soviets and East Germans an inch, they would take a mile; that recognizing East Germans as more than just "agents" of the Soviet Union would lead down "the slippery path" to the recognition of the East German regime.¹¹ As William Burr observes, during the Berlin Crisis Eisenhower "was a 'prisoner' of German sensibilities . . ."¹² "Throughout the crisis, Eisenhower had to shape and reshape positions so that they were politically tolerable to Adenauer. The degree to which this requirement gave Bonn a veto over the Allies' Berlin policy became a source of frustration, with Eisenhower finally seeing Adenauer as a barrier to a negotiated settlement."¹³ Kennedy felt the same way, but "West German resistance precluded pursuit of a new policy" of more constructive, less rigid relations with the East.¹⁴

Adenauer's hard-line policy toward the GDR relied on a combination of military and economic pressure and a diplomatic strategy, known as the Hallstein Doctrine, of ignoring the GDR and insisting that other countries also refuse to recognize the GDR. As the U.S. and Britain became increasingly interested in finding a new *modus vivendi* with the Soviets on Germany and Berlin during the Berlin Crisis so as to dampen international tensions, Adenauer remained steadfast in his insistence on not making any concessions. Both Eisenhower and Kennedy let their policies be guided by West German sensitivities because they were concerned that any wavering of American support for Adenauer might lead him to doubt the U.S. commitment to the defense of the FRG and hence to adopt a more neutral strategy between the blocs to keep the FRG out of a war. The U.S. leaders believed that the reliability of Adenauer's Western orientation hinged on their hard-line stance toward the Soviets on matters concerning Germany and Berlin.

A similar, albeit opposite, dynamic was apparent in U.S.-West German relations by the late 1960s. Whereas during the Berlin Crisis the West Germans favored stonewalling in negotiations with the Soviets, after the construction of the Berlin Wall—and particularly under Chancellor Willy Brandt's *Ostpolitik*—the West Germans became more eager than the U.S. to reach out to the Soviet bloc and to establish ties across the Berlin Wall. Again, U.S. leaders were worried about the reliability of their West German ally. Kissinger was concerned that Brandt might focus so much on *Ostpolitik* that he would give up West Germany's post-war focus on integration with the West. Thus, he and Nixon "were determined to spare

no effort to mute the latent incompatibility between Germany's national aims and its Atlantic and European ties."¹⁵ Kissinger felt that

a free-wheeling, powerful Germany trying to maneuver between East and West, whatever its ideology, posed the classic challenge to the equilibrium of Europe, for whichever side Germany favored would emerge as predominant. To forestall this, or perhaps to outflank it, each of Brandt's colleagues—including Nixon—sought to preempt Germany by conducting an active détente policy on its own. In this sense, *Ostpolitik* had effects far beyond those intended. It contributed to a race to Moscow . . .¹⁶

Kissinger and Nixon "were [thus] moved to develop an American détente with the Soviet Union in part to preclude a West German-led European détente with the Soviet Union from excluding the United States and thus splitting the Western alliance."¹⁷

During both the Berlin Crisis and the years of Ostpolitik and détente, West Germany exercised significant influence over U.S. policymaking. In the first case, it hindered the U.S. in its efforts to negotiate with the Soviets; in the second, it acted to push the U.S. into serious negotiations with the Soviets.

The Complicated Soviet-East German Relationship

Just as West German preferences influenced U.S. policy, East German proclivities affected Soviet policy and led to tensions between the two socialist states. Differences in tactics and priorities between the Soviet and East German leaders became at times dangerously clear during the Berlin Crisis and ultimately led to Ulbricht's ouster during the détente period. East Germany's persistent urging of the Soviets since 1953 to agree to close the Berlin sectoral border and its independent behavior there were crucial factors in leading the Soviets reluctantly to acquiesce in the summer of 1961 to building the Berlin Wall.¹⁸

The Soviets rebuffed the East German request in 1953 to close the inter-Berlin border by telling them such a step was "politically unacceptable" and "grossly simplistic."¹⁹ Instead, the Soviets urged the East German regime to institute more liberal policies, such as the "New Course" of June 1953, that would slow the pace of communist development, thus making life more enjoyable to the East German citizens and inducing them to remain in the country instead of fleeing to the West. Ulbricht never convincingly modified his policies in this way and continued to pressure the Soviets to sanction the border closure in Berlin, which was his preferred way of dealing with the refugee exodus. In spite of Khrushchev's admonitions to Ulbricht "not to undertake unilateral action in

Berlin" while the Soviet leader waited to meet with the new American president in 1961,²⁰ Khrushchev continued to receive reports from Soviet diplomats in Berlin that Ulbricht wanted to "close 'the door to the West' [. . .] at the sectoral border between democratic [East] and West Berlin" and that he was "exercising impatience and a somewhat unilateral approach to this problem [of refugees escaping across the Berlin border]."²¹

When Kennedy and Khrushchev failed to reach an agreement on Berlin at their Vienna summit in June 1961, Khrushchev granted Ulbricht approval for his plans to close the border in Berlin. But even after the border closure, Khrushchev remained concerned about Ulbricht's unilateralist tendencies and warned him not to institute any more new policies on the border in Berlin.²² Similarly, Foreign Minister Gromyko and Defense Minister Malinovsky were so concerned about the East German practice of shooting too readily and frequently at people on the border that they advised Khrushchev in October "that Ulbricht be counseled against taking any new measures [at the Berlin border] without prior discussion with the Soviets."²³

While Khrushchev resented Ulbricht's independent behavior, as well as his constant requests for more economic aid and his harsh style of rule in the GDR, which left the Soviets no choice other than closing the border to save Ulbricht's regime, he put up with him. Khrushchev's successor, Leonid Brezhnev, however, decided that Ulbricht's arrogant, unilateral style was too risky. In the Ostpolitik negotiations with the West Germans between 1969 and 1973, the Soviets did not allow for any East German independence, since the Soviets felt "Ulbricht seemed unreliable" and that "there was a chance that he might disobey the USSR."²⁴ It was precisely because of Ulbricht's unilateral behavior earlier in the Berlin Crisis that the Soviets were so worried about controlling him in the Ostpolitik period. Thus, "once Moscow saw that ratification [of the Moscow Treaty between the Soviet Union and the FRG] was dependent on progress in the German-German talks," Brezhnev "finally acted on the Honecker faction's requests to [. . .] forc(e) Ulbricht out."²⁵ Brezhnev also resented Ulbricht's "superior attitude" toward him and the other Soviet leaders.²⁶

The Soviet strategic situation in the world was different under Brezhnev than it had been under Khrushchev, making it easier for Brezhnev to sack Ulbricht. Precisely because Khrushchev had agreed to build the Wall, Brezhnev had more flexibility in his policy; he could afford to reach out to the West and have East Germany reach out to West Germany without worrying about the collapse of the East German regime. The Soviet strategic nuclear arms buildup of the 1960's was also very important. Brezhnev enjoyed a parity in his high-level talks with the U.S. that Khrushchev had longed for. If Khrushchev had had the same opportu-

nities that Brezhnev finally had for U.S. and West German recognition of the status quo, maybe he would have sacrificed Ulbricht, too.

In addition to Ulbricht's unilateral behavior, there is another aspect of Soviet bloc relations that connects the Berlin Crisis and the years of Ostpolitik: the question of economic, cultural, and other ties with West Germany and West Berlin. In the 1950s and 1960s, there were many disagreements between the Soviets, East Germans, and other East Europeans over these ties. Ulbricht sought to control all Soviet bloc relations with West Germany and West Berlin, and he was quite hostile to independent efforts by his socialist allies to develop ties with them, especially without FRG diplomatic recognition of the GDR.²⁷ At the August 1961 Warsaw Pact meeting in Moscow, which sanctioned the border closing in Berlin, Ulbricht's Polish, Czechoslovak and Hungarian allies made clear their reluctance to sacrifice their own economic relations with the FRG. They feared that signing a separate peace treaty with the GDR would provoke a West German economic embargo against the Soviet bloc. None of them wanted to jeopardize their economic relations with the FRG. Similarly, in response to Khrushchev's insistence that they join him in helping the GDR economically in the case of targeted sanctions by West Germany against the GDR, the East Europeans again resisted.²⁸

Thus, an East European independent approach to economic relations with the FRG was already well established before their receptive response in the mid-1960s to Chancellor Ludwig Erhard and Foreign Minister Gerhard Schröder's bridge-building policy, which focused on expanding economic ties with the East European states. Ulbricht tried to use this against the Czechs and others during and in the aftermath of the Prague Spring of 1968. As part of his ongoing efforts to thwart East European economic and political ties with the FRG, Ulbricht blamed the Prague Spring unrest on West German influence in Czechoslovakia. In contrast to Brezhnev's view that the Warsaw Pact's forceful crushing of the Prague Spring allowed them to deal with the West from a position of strength, Ulbricht argued that the lesson of the Prague Spring was to avoid deepening relations with Bonn.²⁹ Ulbricht also took the chance to lecture his allies about the dangers of economic dependence on the FRG.³⁰ Given East Germany's own significant economic reliance on trade with West Germany, a constant source of concern to both Khrushchev and Brezhnev, the skepticism of Ulbricht's allies about his calls for reducing their economic ties with the FRG was understandable.³¹ All the East European countries were worried about each other's economic dependence on the FRG, but none of them was willing to reduce its own. The Kremlin leaders also valued economic ties with West Germany. The Soviet practice of continuing and even expanding its economic relations with West Germany in spite of difficult political relations was in evidence during the

Berlin Crisis and afterwards and was an important factor in Soviet acceptance of West Germany's Ostpolitik overtures.³²

The Role of China

Another important connection between the years of the Berlin Crisis and those of détente was Chinese pressure on the Soviets. While Khrushchev had to contend with the burgeoning Sino-Soviet rift during the Berlin Crisis, of which Ulbricht took advantage, Brezhnev was strongly motivated to come to détente agreements with the U.S. in the aftermath of the Sino-Soviet military clashes in the Far East in March 1969.³³ Khrushchev's advisor Oleg Troyanovsky has observed that "China was never far from Khrushchev's mind,"³⁴ and China must have been an even greater preoccupation for Brezhnev.

As the Sino-Soviet split developed in the years 1958–61, Chinese leader Mao Zedong was very critical of Khrushchev's policy of "peaceful coexistence" with the West and insisted that the West was really a "paper tiger" the communists need not fear. Khrushchev accordingly felt pressure from Mao to be harder on the West, which partially contributed to his bellicose attitude during the Berlin Crisis. Ulbricht made use of Chinese pressure in his campaign to persuade Khrushchev to close the border in Berlin. The East Germans and Chinese shared key national goals: taking back "their" land in West Berlin and Taiwan from "the imperialists" and having Soviet support in the process. In a move calculated to add pressure on Khrushchev to carry out his threats against the West in the Berlin Crisis, in January 1961, Ulbricht sent a high-level delegation to China without first notifying the Soviets.³⁵ Premier Zhou Enlai told the East Germans on more than one occasion that they and the Chinese occupied the two external fronts of the socialist bloc and that the German front had precedence in the Cold War.³⁶ In this vein, Foreign Minister Chen Yi later expressed his satisfaction that the East Germans were shooting at their own citizens trying to escape after the August 13, 1961, erection of the Berlin Wall.³⁷

A Chinese role can also be seen in another Cold War crisis, the Cuban Missile Crisis. The Soviet decision to deploy missiles in Cuba in 1962 was partially due to indications that some top Cuban leaders were considering closer ties with China. The missile deployment was one way to keep the Cubans on the Soviet side of the Sino-Soviet split.³⁸

The Chinese role in East-West relations changed completely from the years of the Berlin Crisis to the years of détente. The hostile Chinese attitude toward the U.S. of the earlier period was replaced in the late 1960s and 1970s by a willingness for rapprochement with the U.S. and a designation of the Soviet Union as the main enemy.³⁹ Thus, China exerted

an equally strong, if opposite, influence on Soviet relations with the United States. A Soviet-Chinese competition for a hard-line against the U.S. in the 1950s and early 1960s was replaced by a competition for agreements with the U.S. by the early 1970s. The Soviet leaders' need to avoid military conflict on both their eastern and western fronts was a strong factor in their receptivity to Brandt's Ostpolitik and Nixon and Kissinger's détente following the Sino-Soviet border clashes of March 1969.⁴⁰

The Effect of the Berlin Wall on the West German Leaders

The most direct connection between the Berlin Crisis and Ostpolitik came in the person of Willy Brandt. Mayor of West Berlin when the Wall went up, Brandt went on to become the West German foreign minister in 1966 and then chancellor in 1969. When the first barbed wire appeared in the early morning hours of Sunday, August 13, 1961, Brandt was on a train to Kiel from Nuremberg, where he had spent Saturday launching his election campaign for the chancellorship. When the train stopped in Hannover and Brandt received the news about the border closure, he immediately flew to Berlin to survey the scene at the central points of Potsdamer Platz and the Brandenburg Gate. Live TV broadcasts showed him at the barbed wire.⁴¹

Brandt was almost as angry with the U.S. and other Western Allies for not doing anything to stop the Berlin Wall as he was with the Soviets and East Germans for its construction. This was the sentiment behind his statement about the "empty stage" and "lost illusions" that introduced this chapter.⁴² In an angry letter to Kennedy on August 16, Brandt spoke of a "crisis of confidence" among the West Berliners and "pointed out that the Western Powers . . . were in [the] process of being ousted from areas of joint responsibility [in Berlin]." Brandt requested that the U.S. bolster its garrison in West Berlin and that the three Western Powers clearly reinforce their responsibilities in West Berlin.⁴³ Although the U.S. did bolster its forces in West Berlin, send Vice President Johnson on August 19 to show support for the West Berliners, and appoint General Lucius D. Clay as President Kennedy's personal representative in West Berlin, Brandt recognized that fundamentally the U.S. accepted East Berlin and East Germany as within the Soviet sphere of influence:

I wondered then, not for the first or the last time, whether the two superpowers might not, with adamant consistency, have been pursuing the same principle in Europe in 1945: that, whatever happened, they would respect the spheres of influence broadly agreed at Yalta. . . . The basic principle governing the tacit ar-

rangement between Moscow and Washington remained in force during the construction of the Wall and thereafter.⁴⁴

Adenauer also seemed sufficiently content with the status quo, but Brandt was not. Instead, he sought “to create a climate in which the status quo could be changed—in other words, improved—by peaceful means.”⁴⁵

For Brandt and his advisor Egon Bahr,⁴⁶ the Wall was a huge wake-up call. They realized that Adenauer’s hard-line policy of non-recognition and pressure had not worked. Instead, a door had been slammed in their faces. The Wall went up. As Brandt wrote in his memoirs, “My new and inescapable realization was that traditional patterns of Western policy had proved ineffective, if not downright unrealistic.”⁴⁷ Brandt and Bahr realized that if they wanted to change anything on the other side of Wall and to help their compatriots, they had to take matters into their own hands “instead of relying solely on others to speak for us.”⁴⁸ They needed to change the nature of West German policy toward the East, probably without U.S. support. A Western policy of containment had not yielded any gains on German unification, so Brandt and Bahr decided to pursue engagement with the East German regime.

Brandt and Bahr developed a policy of “change through rapprochement” (*Wandel durch Annäherung*), believing that they could find ways to “mitigate the hardships and burdens arising from partition,”⁴⁹ ameliorate the lives of the East Germans, and try to change the harsh GDR government by reaching out to it, all hopefully leading to German reunification on Western democratic terms. “[W]ithin months of the building of the Wall, the first, strictly unofficial contact was made between a member of the Brandt team and an emissary of the East German leadership” to negotiate family reunifications: in return for West German hard currency, the GDR would release family members from East Germany to be reunited with their relatives in West Germany.⁵⁰ The first public, formal agreements would come two years later in 1963 with the Christmas and New Year’s day passes that allowed West Berliners to visit their relatives in East Berlin for a day at a time; some 790,000 West Berliners took advantage of this opportunity.⁵¹ In 1987, Bahr said of these visits “that the foundation-stone was laid for what later became known . . . as ‘Ostpolitik’.”⁵²

When Brandt became chancellor in 1969, he and Bahr expanded these first small steps into a whole framework of relations with the East: the Ostpolitik treaties of 1970 with Moscow and Warsaw, the 1971 treaty on Quadripartite control of Berlin, the 1972 Basic Treaty with East Berlin, and the 1973 treaty with Prague. The construction of the Berlin Wall had indicated to Brandt and Bahr not only that they had to deal with the East

German regime, but also that they had to deal more directly with the Soviet regime if they wanted to reach their fellow Germans across the Wall.⁵³ The Soviet crushing of the Prague Spring, just as the Czechs and West Germans had been negotiating expanded relations, reinforced this conclusion.⁵⁴ Thus, the Moscow Treaty was the first Eastern Treaty negotiated by the West Germans, paving the way for the Basic Treaty with the GDR two years later.⁵⁵

Conclusion

This essay has emphasized the connections between the Berlin Crisis of 1958-61 and the years of Ostpolitik and détente. Already ten years before the treaties of the 1970s were signed, there were important precursors to the dynamics of the détente period, both in terms of the nature of superpower relations and of their relations with their German allies. Willy Brandt's desire to build bridges over the Wall was a crucial and direct connection between the years of crisis and the years of Ostpolitik and détente. The superpowers' acceptance of each other's spheres of influence, Chinese pressure on the Soviets, and complicated U.S.-West German and Soviet-East German relations were also evident continuities.

Notes

¹ Willy Brandt, *People and Politics: The Years 1960-1975*, trans. J. Maxwell Brownjohn (Boston, 1978), 20.

² JFK's words to his aides, cited in Michael Beschloss, *The Crisis Years: Kennedy and Khrushchev, 1960-1963* (New York, 1991), 278.

³ Christian F. Ostermann, "'Keeping the Pot Simmering': The United States and the East German Uprising of 1953," *German Studies Review*, XIX, no. 1 (February 1996): 61-89; C. Ostermann, ed., *Uprising in East Germany, 1953: The Cold War, the German Question, and the First Major Upheaval Behind the Iron Curtain* (New York and Budapest, 2001); Csaba Bekes, Malcolm Byrne, and Janos Rainer, eds., *The 1956 Hungarian Revolution: A History in Documents* (Budapest, 2002); and Jaromir Navratil et. al., eds., *The Prague Spring, 1968* (Budapest, 1998).

⁴ "Report by President Kennedy to the Nation on the Berlin Crisis, July 25, 1961," U.S. Department of State, *Documents on Germany, 1944-1985* (Washington, DC, 1985), 762-65.

⁵ Ulbricht's September 15, 1961 letter to Khrushchev. Berlin, Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv (SAPMO-BA), DY 30, J IV 2/202/130, p. 1. Khrushchev had also remarked at the August 4 Warsaw Pact meeting in Moscow that he and his colleagues felt the West had been reacting less severely to Soviet proposals about Berlin than they had expected. He said that they had "expected more force," but the strongest intimidation was Kennedy's [July 25] speech." See the speech in Bernd Bonwetsch and A. M. Filitov, intro. and annot., "Iz stenogrammy soveshchaniia pervykh sekretarei TsK kommunisticheskikh i rabochikh partii stran-ychnastnits Varshavskogo Dogovora po voprosam, sviazannym s podgotovkoi k zakliucheniiu Germanskogo mirnogo dogovora, Moskva, 4 avgusta 1961 g, Utrennee zasiedanie, Vystuplenie tov. N.S. Khrushcheva," *Novaia i Noveishaia Istoriiia* 2 (March-April 1999): 141.

⁶ *New York Times*, August 3, 1961, cited in Honoré M. Catudal, *Kennedy and the Berlin Wall Crisis: A Case Study in U.S. Decision Making* (Berlin, 1980), 201.

⁷ W.W. Rostow, *The Diffusion of Power: An Essay in Recent History* (New York, 1972), 231.

⁸ Telegram from the Department of State [Rusk] to the Embassy in the Soviet Union, September 3, 1961, U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961–1963. Volume XIV, Berlin Crisis, 1961–1962* (Washington, DC, 1993), 138–39.

⁹ "Proekt materiala po voprosy o germanskom mirnom dovogore dlia obsyzhdeniia i soglasovaniia s dryz'iami," October 22, 1961, Arkhiv Vneshnei Politiki Russkoi Federatsii (AVPRF), Fond (collection, F.) 0742, Opis (file group, Op.) 6, Portfel' (portfolio, Por.) 36, Papka (folder, Pap.), 46, p. 10.

¹⁰ See the essay by David E. Geyer in this volume.

¹¹ On West German constraint of U.S. policy during the Berlin Crisis, see William Burr, "Dwight D. Eisenhower and American Policy During the Berlin Crisis, 1958–1960" unpublished paper presented at the conference, "New Perspectives on the Berlin Crisis," Washington, D.C., the Woodrow Wilson Center, May 20–21, 1993; idem, "Avoiding the Slippery Slope: The Eisenhower Administration and the Berlin Crisis, November 1958–January 1959," *Diplomatic History* (Spring 1994): 177–205; Marc Trachtenberg, *A Constructed Peace: The Making of the European Settlement, 1945–1963* (Princeton, 1999), 274–82; and Kara Stibora Fulcher, "A Sustainable Position? The United States, the Federal Republic, and the Ossification of Allied Policy on Germany, 1958–1962," *Diplomatic History* 26, no. 2 (Spring 2002): 283–307.

¹² Burr, "Dwight D. Eisenhower and American Policy During the Berlin Crisis, 1958–1960," 55.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 2.

¹⁴ Fulcher, "A Sustainable Position?," 306.

¹⁵ Henry Kissinger, *The White House Years* (Boston, 1979), 408–410.

¹⁶ Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (Boston, 1982), 146.

¹⁷ Raymond Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan*, rev. ed. (Washington, 1994), 126–127; Kissinger, *The White House Years*, 408–11, 529–30, and *Years of Upheaval*, 143–46.

¹⁸ See the author's book *Driving the Soviets Up the Wall: Soviet-East German Relations, 1953–1961* (Princeton, 2003) as well as her Working Paper No. 5 with the Cold War International History Project (Washington, D.C.: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, May 1993).

¹⁹ Foreign Minister Molotov's recommendation to the Council of Ministers of the Presidium, 18 March 1953, AVPRF, F. 06, Op. 12, Pap. 18, Por. 283. This document is reprinted in English in Ostermann, ed., *Uprising in East Germany, 1953*, 50–51.

²⁰ "Zapis' besedy tovarishcha N.S. Khrushcheva s tovarishchem V. Ul'brikhtom, 30 noiabria 1960 goda," AVPRF, F. 0742, Op. 6, Por. 4, Pap. 43, pp. 9–10. For an English translation, see Appendix A in Harrison, "Ulbricht and the Concrete 'Rose'."

²¹ Report from Soviet Ambassador Pervukhin in the GDR to Foreign Minister Gromyko, May 19, 1961, AVPRF, Fond: Referentura po GDR, Op. 6, Por. 34, Pap. 46, pp. 2–3. For an English translation, see Appendix C in Harrison, "Ulbricht and the Concrete 'Rose'."

²² Letter from Khrushchev to Ulbricht, September 28, 1961, SAPMO-BA, DY 30, J IV 2/202/130, p. 2. For an English translation, see Appendix J in Harrison, "Ulbricht and the Concrete 'Rose'."

²³ Bruce Menning, "The Berlin Crisis from the Perspective of the Soviet General Staff," in William W. Epley, ed., *International Cold War Military Records and History: Proceedings of the International Conference on Cold War Military Records and History Held in Washington, D.C., 21–26 March 1994* (Washington, 1996), 59.

²⁴ M. E. Sarotte, *Dealing with the Devil: East Germany, Détente and Ostpolitik, 1969–1973* (Chapel Hill, 2001), 31, 36, 56, 110, 167–68. See also Mary Sarotte's contribution in this volume.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 168.

²⁶ "Protokoll einer Unterredung zwischen L.I. Breschnew und Erich Honecker am 28. Juli 1970," SAPMO-BA, DY 30, J NL 2/32, also published in Peter Przybylski, *Tatort Politbüro: Die Akte Honecker* (Berlin, 1991), 284–85.

²⁷ "Zapis' besedy s zav. mezhdunarodnym otdelom TsK SEPG P. Florinom," May 12, 1958, from the diary of O.P. Selianinov, May 16, 1958, TsKhSD, R. 8873, F. 5, Op. 49, D. 76, pp. 2–5; "Zapis' besedy s t. Val'terom Ul'brikhtom, 11.6.58," from the diary of M.G. Pervukhin, June 12, 1958, Rossiiskii Gosudarstvennyi Arkhiv Noveishei Istorii (RGANI), Rolik (microfilm reel, R.) 8875, F. 5, Op. 49, Delo (file, D.) 81, pp. 1–3; note from Deputy Foreign Minister Zorin to Pervukhin on April 6, 1959, AVPRF, Referentura po GDR, Op. 5, Por. 26, Pap. 30; "Zapis' besedy s zamestitelem ministra inostrannykh del GDR I. Këningom," from the diary of O.P. Selianinov, 4 December 1959, RGANI, R. 8911, F. 5, Op. 49, D. 189; and "Otcheot o rabote Posol'stva SSSR v GDR za 1960 god," 15.12.60, Pervukhin, RGANI, R. 8948, F. 5, Op. 49, D. 287, p. 85.

²⁸ See the record of the August 4, 1961 discussions in Bernd Bonwetsch and Alexei Filitov, "Dokumentation. Chruschtschow und der Mauerbau. Die Gipfelkonferenz der Warschauer-Pakt-Staaten vom 3.–5. August 1961," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 48 (2000): 175–78, 196 and Khrushchev's August 4 speech in *idem.*, "Kak prinimalos' reshenie o vozvedenii berlinskoi steny," *Novia i noveishaia istoriia* 2 (March–April 1999): 70–72.

²⁹ Michael Sodaro, *Moscow, Germany, and the West from Khrushchev to Gorbachev* (Ithaca, 1990), 133–34; and Angela E. Stent, *Russia and Germany Reborn: Unification, the Soviet Collapse, and the New Europe* (Princeton, 1999), 15.

³⁰ Sodaro, *Moscow, Germany, and the West from Khrushchev to Gorbachev*, 115–121.

³¹ For Khrushchev's concern about East German economic dependence on West Germany, see his conversation with Ulbricht on November 30, 1960, "Zapis' besedy tovarishcha N.S. Khrushcheva s tovarishchem V. Ul'brikhtom, 30 noiabria 1960 goda," AVPRF, F. 0742, Op. 6, Por. 4, Pap. 43, pp. 9, 12–14. For Brezhnev's concern, see Sarotte, *Dealing with the Devil*, 66, 77–82.

³² Angela Stent, *From Embargo to Ostpolitik: The Political Economy of West German-Soviet Relations, 1955–1980* (New York, 1981), 79, 163–78.

³³ See the contribution by Chen Jian in this volume.

³⁴ Oleg Troyanovsky, *Cherez gody i rostoianniia: istoriia odnoi cem'i* (Moscow, 1997), 232.

³⁵ See the one-page report sent by Yuri Andropov to the Central Committee on January 18, 1961, written by I. Kabin, Chairman of the German section in the CPSU Central Committee Department on Relations with Communist and Workers' Parties of Socialist Countries, RGANI, R. 8978, F. 5, Op. 49, D. 377.

³⁶ See Zhou Enlai's statement to GDR Ambassador Hegen, "Vermerk über den Antrittsbesuch Botschafter Hegens beim Ministerpräsident der VR China, Genossen Tschou En-lai am 9.6.1961," written by Hegen, June 12, 1961. Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes (PolAA), Ministerium für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten der DDR (MfAA), A 17879, pp. 2–3, 6.

³⁷ See Foreign Minister Chen Yi's comment on August 31, "Aktenvermerk über ein Gespräch des Botschafters mit dem Mitglied des Politbüros und Aussenministers der VR China, Genossen Tschen Ji, mit anschliessendem Mittagessen am 31.8.61 in der Zeit vom 11.00 bis 12.45 Uhr," written by Ambassador Hegen, September 5, 1961. PolAA, MfAA, A 17879.

³⁸ Aleksandr Fursenko and Timothy Naftali, *"One Hell of a Gamble": Khrushchev, Castro, and Kennedy, 1958–1964* (New York, 1997), 167–70.

- ³⁹ On the Chinese motivations for changed relations with the U.S., see Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill, 2001), 238–76.
- ⁴⁰ Brandt was quite aware of this at the time: *People and Politics*, 194. See also Sarotte, *Dealing with the Devil*, 21–23, 24, 108–109, 177.
- ⁴¹ Ann Tusa, *The Last Division: A History of Berlin, 1945–1989* (Reading, Mass., 1997), 280.
- ⁴² Brandt, *People and Politics*, p. 20.
- ⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 31; and “Telegram From the Mission at Berlin to the Department of State,” Berlin, August 16, 1961, midnight, U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961–1963, Vol. XIV: Berlin Crisis, 1961–1962* (Washington, 1993), pp. 345–46.
- ⁴⁴ Brandt, *People and Politics*, 29.
- ⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 168.
- ⁴⁶ Egon Bahr was initially Brandt’s press spokesman and close advisor in Berlin, then head of the planning staff in Brandt’s foreign ministry and finally key negotiator of the Eastern Treaties when Brandt was chancellor.
- ⁴⁷ Brandt, *People and Politics*, 20.
- ⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 168.
- ⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 167.
- ⁵⁰ Timothy Garton Ash, *In Europe’s Name: Germany and the Divided Continent* (New York, 1991), 61.
- ⁵¹ *Ibid.*, 61–62.
- ⁵² *Ibid.*, 62.
- ⁵³ Brandt, *People and Politics*, 169, and W.R. Smyser, *From Yalta to Berlin: The Cold War Struggle over Germany* (New York, 1999), 212–213.
- ⁵⁴ Brandt, *People and Politics*, 217–18.
- ⁵⁵ See Carsten Tessler’s contribution in this volume.

SUPERPOWER DÉTENTE: US-SOVIET RELATIONS, 1969–1972

Vojtech Mastny

In the years 1969–72, the United States and the Soviet Union sought stability rather than détente. Détente was a by-product of the temporary stabilization that resulted. It rested, however, on precarious foundations. Rather than evolving from an effort to sort out the political issues that underlay the Cold War, the superpower détente stemmed from an ill-defined perception of parity in strategic nuclear armaments, the possession of which was increasingly difficult to relate to political purposes.

The conduct of policy by the superpowers was highly centralized and personalized—more effectively on the American side than on the Soviet side. Masterminding U.S. foreign policy with a lack of constraints unprecedented in the American political system, Henry Kissinger began in 1969 to implement a well-defined vision of the world that, inspired by conservative European notions of power politics, aimed at accommodating the Soviet Union in an international order that derived its legitimacy from the superpowers' stake in its stability. He was skeptical about the Soviet system's susceptibility to change.

In contrast to Kissinger, Leonid Brezhnev started out largely by improvising. He never achieved the extent of autocratic power that had been the hallmark of the Soviet system under his predecessors, nor did he possess the ability to conceptualize policy in anything other than crude Marxist terms. Despite these differences between the protagonists, both the United States and the Soviet Union shared a position of relative weakness—the former on account of its debilitating involvement in the Vietnam War, the latter on account of its failure to “normalize” the Czechoslovak situation while Soviet-Chinese relations deteriorated to the brink of war.

Whereas the course of U.S. policy that culminated in the landmark Nixon-Brezhnev summit of 1972 has been extensively elucidated using newly declassified documents, contemporaneous Soviet policy remains the least researched aspect of Cold War foreign policy-making. The paucity of top-level documents from Russian archives can in part be compensated for by newly accessible records from the archives of Moscow's former Eastern European allies. These records are all the more illuminating because the Soviet Union by that time felt more compelled than it had previously to treat its allies as junior partners rather than mere subordinates, and consequently Moscow coordinated its policies with them in

ways it had not been accustomed to before. This change in Soviet practice followed the long-delayed reorganization of the Warsaw Pact at the Budapest meeting of the alliance's Political Consultative Committee in March 1969—a response to NATO's recent success in overcoming its own internal crisis by accommodating the dual goals of defense and détente. The importance of the meeting was enhanced by its coincidence with the military turn of the Sino-Soviet conflict during clashes along the disputed border on the Ussuri River.

Having followed its traditional impulse of trying to drive wedges between Washington and its NATO allies without achieving the desired result, Moscow signaled its interest in improved U.S.-Soviet relations to the incoming Nixon administration. The renewed appeal by the Budapest meeting for a conference on security and cooperation in Europe (CSCE)—for the first time without preconditions—was similarly indicative of a Soviet desire to shore up relations with the West while conditions in the East remained unsettled. The change did not yet amount to a coherent policy, and above all it left open the crucial question of U.S. participation in the proposed conference and therefore elicited an understandably cool Western reaction.

It was not the superpowers but their respective allies, together with some of Europe's neutrals, who spearheaded the move toward détente. The smaller states had more interest in détente than the superpowers, who viewed it with suspicion. The offer by the Finnish government in April 1969 to host the security conference may have been commissioned by Moscow; Finnish President Urho Kekkonen, after all, maintained intimate contacts with the Soviet secret services. But it was more likely an independent initiative calculated to appeal to both the East and the West while enhancing the status of Finland and other neutrals as intermediaries. The initiative found the Soviet Union ill-prepared. It scrambled to rally its allies behind a coherent proposal for the conference, especially after several Western European countries, including France, indicated their support for the idea.

Cautioning the Warsaw Pact allies that “we do not want to call the conference to review the postwar order in Europe,” the Soviet Union had to contend with a proposal already prepared by Poland.¹ The proposal, the details of which have only recently emerged from Polish archives, aimed at a conference that would lead to the creation of a system of collective security superseding the existing military blocs. It entailed compulsory consultation in case of crises, thus limiting the capacity of the superpowers to act arbitrarily, and envisaged regional disarmament, which would call into question the presence in Europe of not only American but also Soviet troops and missiles.²

Disputes erupted behind the closed doors of Warsaw Pact meetings. The East Germans tried to steer the CSCE in trying to attain their cherished goal of having their country recognized internationally as a legitimate entity. The Romanians welcomed the project for the safeguards it might provide against Moscow's interference in their own affairs. Soviet Deputy Foreign Minister Vladimir Semenov found himself in the unusual position of having to resist what he called "extreme Polish, Romanian, and East German demands."³ He prevailed upon the Poles to hold up the publication of their proposal, but they still continued to promote it within the councils of the alliance.

The Nixon White House had no more sympathy for the potentially destabilizing agenda of the Western European advocates of détente than it did for the national aspirations of East Europeans. With its priorities skewed by its quixotic quest for Soviet help to end the Vietnam War, the administration sought to reassure the Kremlin that it would respect the Soviet sphere of influence in Eastern Europe while seeking a deal on nuclear armaments. Such a deal was not, however, a matter of great urgency for Moscow, which only agreed to start the SALT (strategic arms limitations talks) negotiations after its own hints about a pre-emptive strike against Chinese nuclear installations had prompted a U.S. alert in October 1969 that was calculated to intimidate the Soviet Union and subsequently led to the resumption of Sino-American diplomatic contacts.⁴

By the time the SALT talks started in November, however, the Sino-Soviet military confrontation had subsided and the disruptive effects of the Czechoslovak crisis on Eastern Europe had been largely contained. Moscow had little incentive to proceed quickly with the negotiations. Nor did the United States, which made progress in the negotiations dependent on a favorable "prevailing political context" that included such extraneous issues as the Middle East situation and the Paris negotiations on Vietnam.⁵ By the year's end, the results of the fledgling détente were decidedly meager.

Both Kissinger and the Soviet ambassador to Washington, Anatoly Dobrynin, would later assess 1970 as a wasted year—the former blaming the lack of a coherent Soviet policy, the latter the defensiveness of the Nixon administration.⁶ They were both right. For the United States, the Vietnam War was going from bad to worse, without an end in sight. In Moscow, the leadership remained divided in its assessment of the risks involved in any prospective accommodation with Washington. The most important East-West developments during that year took place outside of the superpower framework: West Germany's new Ostpolitik and the cooption of the CSCE project by the West Europeans with support from the State Department rather than from Kissinger or Nixon.

The Soviet Union devoted more attention to West Germany than to SALT. In December 1969, Brezhnev convened the Eastern European party chiefs for consultation.⁷ He wanted to know how they assessed the change of government in Bonn before he would proceed towards signing with it the August 1970 treaty that recognized West Germany as an international partner rather than an outlaw state. The Soviet Union discouraged East Germany's quest for full international recognition lest this create difficulties for the West German government of Chancellor Willy Brandt. Presumably well-informed about Brandt's thinking through Günter Guillaume, the East German spy planted in his office, Moscow was likely reassured about Brandt's intentions and regarded him as an asset. In the Kremlin's judgment, Soviet-West German rapprochement tilted the international "correlation of forces" decisively in Soviet favor.

As much as Moscow wanted to have the CSCE, it vacillated in pursuing the project. It first advanced but then abandoned its proposal for the creation of a permanent international body that could become the arbiter of security in Europe. It finally settled for seeking no more than recognition of the status quo that had emerged from World War II, the renunciation of force or the threat of force, and the removal of barriers to East-West trade. In the meantime, the Western nations had by late 1970 united in insisting upon a large and specific conference agenda, including the protection of human rights, freedom of movement, and other items that could potentially subvert Soviet totalitarianism and that would later to be known as "Basket Three."

It is still difficult to determine on the basis of reliable evidence the precise nature of the Kremlin disagreements that inhibited movement toward détente. Resistance to arms control can be plausibly attributed to the Soviet military—traditionally the most conservative part of the Soviet establishment. The Warsaw Pact records are replete with warnings by Soviet generals that the appearance of détente did not reduce the reality of the Western military threat—a threat to be countered by increased combat readiness, shortened alert times, and the formation of new assault troops capable of striking deep behind the enemy lines. "In 1971," in the opinion of Soviet defense minister Marshal Grechko, "the international situation deteriorated . . . and has hardly been more serious, tense, and turbulent than it is now."⁸

By the time of the 24th Party Congress (March 1971), Brezhnev concluded that the correlation of forces had become sufficiently favorable to justify troop and armaments reduction. As Gromyko famously put it, "Today, there is no question of any importance which can be decided without the Soviet Union or in opposition to it."⁹ Brezhnev began to call for "military détente"—a vague notion conveying a desire to reduce the dependence of policy on changes in military postures. At a meeting with

Brandt in September, Brezhnev followed up with a call for a reduction of conventional forces, but he did not act to put it into effect. Nor was the United States ready: Kissinger merely feigned interest in their reduction to fend off Senator Mike Mansfield's proposal for unilateral cuts.

It was the Sino-American rapprochement in July 1971 that served as the catalyst for accommodation between Washington and Moscow. Neither side, however, took full advantage of the opportunity. As early as May, with preparations for his secret Beijing trip sufficiently advanced, Kissinger had agreed with Dobrynin to substitute the more attainable ABM treaty for a more difficult agreement on strategic arms limitations. The shift had the effect of postponing substantive reductions of the nuclear stockpiles in favor of enhancing hypothetical deterrence against nuclear attack that neither superpower wished to contemplate in the first place. In arriving at the dubious agreement through their "back channel," the two "generalists" systematically bypassed the experts in their respective SALT delegations.¹⁰

When Dobrynin proposed to Nixon in June to discuss comprehensive arms reductions with the other nuclear powers—Great Britain, France, and China—the president expressed his preference for "a little talk" between the back-channel operators. In the president's view, what really mattered was "what the two major nuclear powers will do" to put "our whole postwar relations . . . on a new basis."¹¹ Accordingly, both superpowers welcomed the conclusion in September of the Quadripartite Treaty on Berlin as a stabilizing measure. Kissinger later commented with satisfaction that the treaty had harnessed "the beast of détente, making both a European Security Conference and ratification of Brandt's Eastern treaties dependent upon a Berlin agreement that met our objectives."¹²

In preparation for the May 1972 U.S.-Soviet summit in Moscow, Brezhnev tried to justify accommodation with the archenemy. In an important speech to the closed session of the Warsaw Pact's Political Consultative Committee in January, he enumerated all the favorable developments that had supposedly tilted the correlation of forces in Soviet favor; however, he conspicuously omitted mentioning the possibility that the new situation might allow the Soviet military machine to be scaled back. He explained that "military détente" meant preventing both Western military superiority and a continuation of the nuclear arms race, but he announced that a reduction of conventional forces would be premature. Lamenting that "unfortunately the situation is such that we cannot yet do it," he hinted cryptically that the Central Committee was nevertheless studying the subject.¹³ In the end, all that is known to have happened as a result was merely the cancellation in 1973 of military exercises enacting an offensive thrust into Western Europe. Military expenditures continued to increase.¹⁴

The flaws of the excessively personalized détente diplomacy became evident in April 1972 during Kissinger's preparatory talks in Moscow for the summit. He arrived with the assignment to elicit, through a "tough opening position," Soviet support for ending the Vietnam War before agreeing to discuss anything else. At a moment's notice, however, he changed his script by letting Brezhnev know that the United States merely wanted a "decent interval" in leaving Vietnam to its fate, not excluding its takeover by the communists.¹⁵ Having been given the signal that Washington was interested in pretense rather than substance, the Soviet leader responded in kind.

The next day, Brezhnev asked Kissinger to prepare for signing at the summit a document misleadingly described as a "Statement of Principles of Cooperation." He supplied a text vague enough to be interpreted to Soviet advantage whenever necessary. Without consulting anyone, Kissinger then took upon himself the task of editing the draft so that it could be interpreted to American advantage as well.¹⁶ The final version neither explicitly ruled out Soviet support for Third World "liberation movements" nor questioned the "Brezhnev Doctrine" that asserted Soviet right to intervene at will in Eastern Europe. The ability of both sides to read into the purported "principles" what they wanted made it possible later for each to accuse the other—correctly, if hypocritically—of having acted in bad faith.

The arms control agreements concluded at the summit substituted appearance for substance. The "interim" SALT agreement, valid for five years, did not reverse the arms race, and the ABM treaty perpetuated the illusion of security by deterring the nuclear attacks that neither side intended to launch. Brezhnev nevertheless acted as if he genuinely believed that America's acquiescence to Soviet global ascendancy was both historically inevitable and irreversible. And Kissinger, too, convinced of the strength of his "intuition on where the main historical currents were," judged the summit as a success in his quest for accommodation to what he regarded as the Soviet Union's inevitable rise as a superpower.¹⁷

Both readings of history were wrong. It was not the attempted stabilization of the untenable superpower dominance but, on the contrary, destabilization of the status quo that pointed the way to the eventual dénouement of the Cold War. The true harbingers of the future were not the self-styled realists of the back channels but the open Helsinki process, which had the potential to compel internal changes that would eventually undermine the Soviet system. In addition, the advances in Western conventional, rather than nuclear, weaponry would in time impress upon the Kremlin the system's inability to keep up in technological competition with the West. In a longer perspective, the superpower détente appears as an awkward episode, singularly lacking in grandeur.

Notes

¹ Statement by Leonid Ilichev, minutes of Berlin meeting of deputy ministers of foreign affairs, May 20–21, 1969. Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes (PolAA), Ministerium für auswärtige Angelegenheiten der DDR (MfAA), G-A 555, 9–140, at 34.

² Summary of project, October 16, 1969, KC PZPR, XIA/106, 24–27, Modern Records Archives, Warsaw.

³ Memorandum by Erdélyi on conversation with Semenov, October 18, 1969, MOL-M-KS-288, 501.ö.e., Hungarian National Archives, Budapest.

⁴ William Burr, Sino-American Relations, 1969: The Sino-Soviet Border War and Steps Towards *Rapprochement*,” *Cold War History* 1, no. 3 (2001): 73–112, at 86–99.

⁵ Nixon to Secretaries of State and Defense, February 4, 1969, cited in Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston, 1979), 136.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 527; Anatoly Dobrynin, *In Confidence: Moscow's Ambassador to America's Six Cold War Presidents* (New York, 1995), 206.

⁷ Report by Ceausescu on the December 2–4, 1969 summit meeting, minutes of Romanian politburo meeting, 5 December 1969, CC PCR, Chancellery, 145/1969, Romanian National Archives, Bucharest.

⁸ Statement by Grechko at the Budapest meeting of the Committee of the Ministers of Defense, March 2–3, 1971. Bundesarchiv-Militärarchiv Freiburg/Br. (BA-MA), AZN 23857, 113.

⁹ Cited in Raymond Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan* (Washington, 1994), 66.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 167–82.

¹¹ Memorandum of Nixon-Dobrynin conversation, June 15, 1971, National Security Archive, Washington, D.C.

¹² Kissinger, *White House Years*, p. 534.

¹³ Speech by Brezhnev at the Prague meeting of the Warsaw Pact Political Consultative Committee, January 25, 1972, ZK SED, DY/30/526, p. 34, SAPMO, Federal Archives, Berlin.

¹⁴ Rusov to Dzúr on the Minsk meeting of the Warsaw Pact military council on October 17–20 and October 23, 1972, Gè-OS 1972, 0036034/11–13, Central Military Archives, Prague.

¹⁵ Jussi M. Hanhimäki, “Some More ‘Smoking Guns’? The Vietnam War and Kissinger’s Summitry with Moscow and Beijing, 1971–73,” *SHAFR Newsletter*, December 2001: 40–45.

¹⁶ Memorandum of Kissinger-Brezhnev conversation, April 22, 1972, National Security Archive, Washington, D.C.

¹⁷ Cited in Robert S. Litwak, *Détente and the Nixon Doctrine: American Foreign Policy and the Pursuit of Stability, 1969–1976* (Cambridge, 1984), 48.

THE PATH TOWARD SINO-AMERICAN RAPPROCHEMENT, 1969–1972¹

Chen Jian

Early in 1969, it seemed that the confrontation between the People's Republic of China (PRC) and the United States was as sharp as it had ever been. When the newly elected U.S. president Richard Nixon delivered his inaugural address on January 20, Beijing's propaganda machine immediately fiercely attacked the "jittery chieftain of U.S. imperialism." *Renmin ribao* (People's Daily) and *Hongqi* (The Red Flag), the Chinese Communist Party's mouthpieces, jointly published an editorial essay characterizing Nixon's address as nothing but "a confession in an impasse" that demonstrated "the U.S. imperialists . . . are beset with profound crises both at home and abroad."¹ Indeed, the wording of the essay appeared quite similar to the anti-American rhetoric prevailing in the Chinese media during the Great Proletarian Cultural Revolution. Yet this was not one of the many ordinary anti-American propaganda pieces that the Chinese media churned out during the Cultural Revolution years. What made it unique was that it was published alongside Nixon's address in its entirety. More interestingly, major newspapers all over China, although following the general practice during the Cultural Revolution to reprint the commentator's essay, also reprinted Nixon's address.

Not until the late 1980s did we learn through newly released Chinese documents that it was Mao Zedong who personally ordered the publication of Nixon's address.² The likely reason behind the chairman's order was a point the U.S. president made in his speech: the United States was willing to develop relations with *all* countries in the world.³ The Chinese chairman, who had been paying attention both to the U.S. presidential election and to Nixon as a presidential candidate, immediately caught the subtext of Nixon's statement. Perhaps he ordered the publication of Nixon's address to reveal that he had noticed the message.

In retrospect, this was the beginning of a dramatic process that would finally lead to Nixon's visit to China in February 1972, during which he met face to face with Mao in Beijing. Toward the end of the "week that changed the world," Nixon and Chinese premier Zhou Enlai signed the historic Shanghai communiqué symbolizing the end of an era of intense conflict between China and the United States that had lasted for over two decades.

The conventional interpretation of Beijing's rapprochement with the United States emphasizes the role strategic-geopolitical considerations

played. Scholars favoring this interpretation usually argue that when the Soviet Union had emerged as the most serious threat to the PRC's security interests, it was impossible for Beijing to maintain simultaneously the same level of discord with the United States. By achieving a rapprochement with Washington, Beijing's leaders drastically improved China's strategic position vis-à-vis the Soviet threat, thus serving China's security interests.

In this essay, I argue that the geopolitics-centered interpretation alone does not fully reveal the complicated causes underlying Mao's decision to improve relations with the United States. I will place the Sino-American rapprochement in the context of the fading status of Mao's "continuous revolution," contending that a profound connection existed between these two phenomena and that the interpretation emphasizing the strategic-geopolitical element will make better sense if its link to the end of Mao's continuous revolution is properly comprehended. I will conclude the essay with some general comments on the relationship between the Chinese-American opening and the coming of Soviet-American détente in the development of the global Cold War.

China in 1968–1969: Deteriorating Security, Fading Revolution

Undoubtedly China in 1968–1969 was facing a rapidly worsening security situation. The contention between China and the United States, which began at the very moment of the PRC's establishment, seemed more intense than ever before. In response to the escalation of the Vietnam War and increasing American military involvement in it, Beijing dispatched large numbers of engineering and anti-aircraft artillery forces to North Vietnam while providing Hanoi with substantial military and other support.⁴ Beijing and Washington thus were in danger of repeating their Korean War experience—when they were both dragged into a direct military confrontation. Such security threats from China's southern borders were made worse by the sustained military standoff between the Chinese Communists and Nationalists across the Taiwan Strait, as well as by Japan's and South Korea's hostile attitudes toward the PRC.

The security situation on China's long western border with India was no better. Since the Chinese-Indian border war of 1962, Beijing and New Delhi each regarded the other as a dangerous enemy. Although India, in the wake of its humiliating defeat in the 1962 clash, was not in a position to threaten Chinese border safety militarily, it was more than capable of damaging Beijing's reputation as a self-proclaimed "peace-loving country" among Third World nations. It was also likely to pin down Beijing's

valuable resources and strategic attention in China's remote western areas.

The worst threat to China's border security existed in the north from a former ally, the Soviet Union. Since the late 1950s, significant differences between Chinese and Soviet leaders had begun to develop in the wake of the Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev's de-Stalinization campaign. Starting in the early 1960s, along with the escalation of the great Sino-Soviet polemic debate, the disputes between Beijing and Moscow quickly spread from the ideological field to state-to-state relations. The hostility between the two communist giants flared into hatred when the Cultural Revolution swept across China, with Beijing and Moscow each regarding the other as a "traitor" to true communism. By 1968–69, each side had massed several hundred thousand troops along the border areas that, only less than a decade ago, had been boasted as a region characterized by "peace and eternal safety."⁵

China's already extremely tense security situation dramatically worsened in March 1969, when two bloody conflicts erupted between Chinese and Soviet border garrison forces on Zhenbao Island (Damansky Island in Russian), located near the Chinese bank of the Ussuri River. This incident immediately brought China and the Soviet Union to the brink of a general war, and, reportedly, the Soviet leaders even considered conducting a preemptive nuclear strike against their former communist ally.⁶

Given the dramatic deterioration of China's overall security situation in 1968–69, it is not surprising that Beijing's leaders had to consider how to improve their nation's security environment by making major changes in Chinese foreign policy and security strategy. However, although the security-threat-centered interpretation makes good sense in explaining why in 1968–69 it was *necessary* for Beijing to make major changes in Chinese foreign policy and security strategy, it does not explain how and why it became *possible* for Beijing's leaders to achieve such changes in the late 1960s and early 1970s.

Historically, the question of how to deal with the United States was for Beijing not just a foreign policy issue but rather an issue concerning the very essence of the Chinese revolution. From the moment that the "new China" came into being, Beijing's leaders regarded the United States as China's primary enemy. They consistently declared that a fundamental aim of the Chinese revolution was to destroy the "old" world order dominated by the U.S. imperialists. For almost two decades, the United States had been thoroughly demonized in the Chinese popular image. As a result, the theme of "struggling against U.S. imperialism" had occupied a central position in Mao's efforts to legitimize his "continuous revolution" and was frequently invoked by the CCP to mobilize hundreds of millions of ordinary Chinese to participate in Mao's revolu-

tionary movements—most recently, the Cultural Revolution. Beijing's pursuit of fundamental changes in Chinese policy toward the United States therefore was fraught with political hazards, not least of which was possible detriment to the legitimacy of the Chinese revolution. It seemed that unless Beijing's leaders were willing to make basic compromises in their commitments to the anti-imperialist communist ideology, it would be impossible for them to pursue a rapprochement with the United States.

In this respect, we must note that Beijing's leaders considered pursuing a rapprochement with the United States within the context of radically redefining their concept of imperialism by identifying the Soviet Union as a "social-imperialist country." In Leninist vocabulary, "imperialism" represented the "highest stage" in the development of capitalism. Therefore, an imperialist country had to be capitalist in the first place; thus, few would ever call the Soviet Union "capitalist" given its overwhelmingly communist-dominated economic and political structures. However, in the wake of the great Sino-Soviet polemic debate, Beijing claimed that capitalism had been "restored" in the Soviet Union with the emerging dominance of a new "privileged bureaucratic capitalist class."⁷ During the height of the Cultural Revolution, and especially after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968, Beijing charged that the Soviet Union had become a "social-imperialist country." Consequently, both in the Chinese Communist definition of the "main contradiction" in the world and in Chinese propaganda, "Soviet social-imperialism" gradually replaced "U.S. imperialism" to become the most dangerous enemy of the world proletarian revolution.⁸ Within this new theoretical framework, "U.S. imperialism" remained China's enemy but no longer the primary one.

This important change had provided the much needed ideological space for Beijing to justify a rapprochement with the United States. In Maoist political philosophy, which had been heavily influenced by the emphasis in traditional Chinese political culture on the necessity of "borrowing the strength of the barbarians to check the barbarians," it was always legitimate to pursue a "united front" with a less dangerous enemy in order to focus on the contest against the primary enemy. Since Beijing identified the "social-imperialist" Soviet Union as the most dangerous among all imperialist countries in the world, a rapprochement with the imperialist United States, an enemy now less dangerous in comparison, became feasible and justifiable for Beijing's leaders even in ideological terms.

In a deeper sense, Beijing was also able to pursue a rapprochement with Washington because, for the first time in the PRC's history, Mao's "continuous revolution" was losing momentum due to the chairman's *own* policies.

From a historical perspective, the Cultural Revolution represented the climax of Mao's efforts to transform China's "old" state and society through extensive mass mobilization. Mao initiated the Cultural Revolution for two purposes. First, he hoped that it would allow him to discover new means to promote the transformation of China's party, state, and society in accordance with his ideal—that China should be transformed into a land of prosperity, universal justice, and equality. Second, he desired to use it to enhance his much weakened authority and reputation in the wake of the disastrous Great Leap Forward. In the chairman's mind, his strengthened leadership role would best guarantee the success of his revolution.

By carrying out the Cultural Revolution, Mao easily achieved the second goal, making his power and authority absolute. But the Cultural Revolution failed to bring him any closer to achieving the first goal. Although the power of the mass movement released by the Cultural Revolution destroyed both Mao's opponents and the "old" party-state control system, it was unable to create the new form of state power Mao desired so much for building a new society in China. Mao was ready, however, to halt the revolution in 1968–69. In late July, Mao dispatched the "Workers' Mao Zedong Thought Propaganda Team" to various universities in Beijing to reestablish the order that had been undermined by the "revolutionary masses." After the Red Guards at the Qinghua University opened fire on the team, Mao decided it was time to dismantle the Red Guards movement, thus leading his "continuous revolution" to a crucial turning point.⁹ This was a huge decision on Mao's part. For almost two decades, "mobilizing the masses" had been the key for Mao in maintaining and enhancing the momentum of his revolution; but now the chairman openly stood in opposition to the masses in an upside-down effort to reestablish the communist state's control over society.

Against this background, with the chairman's repeated pushes, Beijing began to stop using the notion that China was "the center of the world revolution," which had prevailed since the beginning of the Cultural Revolution.¹⁰ In several internal talks, Mao emphasized the importance of "consolidating" the achievements of the Cultural Revolution—which in reality meant no more than consolidating his own authority and political power. These were critical signs indicating that Mao's China as a revolutionary state, after being an uncompromising challenger to the "old world" for two decades, was now beginning to demonstrate a willingness to live with the yet-to-be-transformed "old" world order. In other words, a "socialization" process, to borrow a critical concept from David Armstrong, had been eroding the Maoist revolution.¹¹ It was within this context that, when the security threat from the Soviet Union escalated

dramatically in 1969, Mao began to consider adopting a new policy toward the United States.

The Marshals' Reports

The first sign of change in Chinese attitude toward the United States appeared in November 1968, when Washington proposed to resume the stagnant Sino-American ambassadorial talks in Warsaw. Beijing responded positively and with "unprecedented speed."¹² Then, in January 1969, Mao ordered the publication of Nixon's inaugural address. One month later, however, because Washington provided asylum to Liao Heshu, the Chinese chargé d'affaires in the Netherlands who defected to the West in February 1969, Beijing canceled the ambassadorial talks that had been scheduled to resume on February 20.¹³

Although we cannot know exactly what Mao was thinking when he showed interest in dealing with the United States, one thing is certain: the chairman now was turning more of his attention to international issues, trying to understand the orientation of Moscow's and Washington's global strategies in the wake of the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968. In late 1968–early 1969, in a series of conversations with foreign visitors to China, the chairman revealed his deep concern about the expansionist nature of Soviet foreign policy. Indeed, he tried hard to comprehend the significance of Soviet behavior, wondering aloud if the Soviet invasion should be interpreted as the prelude to a more general war. In the chairman's view, now "all under the heaven is in great chaos."¹⁴

It was against this background that on February 19, 1969, Mao summoned a meeting at his residence attended by Lin Biao, Zhou Enlai, members of the Central Cultural Revolution Group, several veteran party and government leaders, and the four marshals (Chen Yi, Xu Xiangqian, Nie Rongzhen, and Ye Jianying). To the great surprise of all participants, the four marshals in particular, the chairman announced that he hoped that the four marshals—who had been excluded from the decision-making inner circle during the Cultural Revolution—would devote more attention to "studying international strategic issues."¹⁵ Two days later, Zhou Enlai followed Mao's instructions to inform the four marshals that they should meet "once a week" to discuss "important international issues" for the purpose of providing Mao and the Party leadership with their opinions. In particular, the Chinese premier advised the marshals "not to be restricted by the old frame of thinking" in their deliberations.¹⁶

The four marshals began to meet on March 1 and had held four meetings by the end of the month. The first meeting was a general discussion. The next three were held after the Sino-Soviet border clash at

Zhenbao Island, so the discussion focused on assessing the implications of the clash and analyzing Soviet strategy toward China. By the end of March, the marshals had finished two reports, in which they cast doubt on the notion that the Soviet Union was ready to wage a major war against China. They also pointed out that the focus of the American-Soviet global dispute was "the competition over oil resources in the Middle East" and that the Soviet Union could not easily turn its main strategic attention to China before the situation in the Middle East had been resolved. Nowhere in the reports did the marshals refer to the sensitive question of adjusting Chinese policy toward the United States.¹⁷

Between April 1 and 24, the CCP held its Ninth National Congress. In the main political report delivered by Lin Biao, then China's second most important leader and Mao's designated successor, there was nothing to indicate that Beijing had changed its attitude toward the United States.¹⁸ Lin's report was, however, prepared for a public audience. When Mao wanted a more sophisticated understanding of the changing world situation, he again turned to the four marshals, instructing them to resume regular meetings to "study the international situation."¹⁹ In mid-May, Zhou Enlai further informed them that Mao assigned them this task because the international situation was "too complicated" to fit the Ninth Congress's conclusions. Zhou again asked the marshals not to be "restricted by any established framework" in their thinking and to try to help Mao to "gain command of the new tendency in the strategic development" in the world.²⁰

The marshals resumed meeting on June 7, 1969. On July 11, they submitted a comprehensive report, "A Preliminary Evaluation of the War Situation," to Mao and the Central Committee. They argued that the United States and the Soviet Union, which each regarded China as an enemy, took "each other as the enemy" too; for them, "the real threat is the one existing between themselves." Because the United States and the Soviet Union were both facing many difficulties at home and abroad, and because the focus of the strategic confrontation between them existed in Europe, stressed the marshals, "it is unlikely that U.S. imperialists and Soviet revisionists will launch a large-scale war against China, either jointly or separately."²¹ The marshals did not probe further into the question of adjusting Chinese foreign policy in their report.

After the marshals adjourned on July 11, several signs showed that subtle changes were happening in Washington's attitude toward China. On July 21, the U.S. State Department announced it was relaxing restrictions on American citizens traveling to China; five days later, Prince Norodom Sihanouk, Cambodia's chief of state, conveyed a letter by Senator Mike Mansfield to Zhou Enlai in which the veteran American politician expressed the desire to visit China to seek solutions to the "twenty-

year confrontation" between the two countries. Moscow proposed a meeting between top Chinese and Soviet leaders around the same time.²²

To better understand these new developments, the marshals resumed their discussions on July 29. They saw a possibility of "intentionally utilizing the contradictions between the United States and the Soviet Union" and believed, moreover, that not only should border negotiations with the Soviet Union be held in order to strengthen "our position in the struggle against America," but other policy options should also be considered. However, they did not believe that the time was right to accept Mansfield's request to visit China and proposed to "let him wait for a while."²³

Before the marshals could put these opinions into writing, another major border clash, more serious than the two clashes at Zhenbao Island in March, occurred between Chinese and Soviet garrisons in Xinjiang on August 13. An entire Chinese brigade was eliminated.²⁴ Beijing reacted immediately to this incident and to other signs indicating that Moscow probably was preparing to start a major war against China. On August 28, the CCP Central Committee ordered Chinese provinces and regions bordering the Soviet Union and Outer Mongolia to enter a status of general mobilization.²⁵ The marshals, meanwhile, still believed it unlikely the Soviet Union would wage a large-scale war against China, but, at the same time, they emphasized the need for Beijing to be prepared for a worst-case scenario. Within this context, Chen Yi and Ye Jianying mentioned that in order for China to be ready for a major confrontation with the Soviet Union, "the card of the United States" should be played. In another report, "Our Views about the Current Situation," they proposed on September 17 that in waging "a tit-for-tat struggle against both the United States and the Soviet Union" China should also use "negotiation as a means to struggle against them" and then perhaps the Sino-American ambassadorial talks should be resumed "when the timing is proper."²⁶ After submitting the report, Chen Yi confided some of his "unconventional thoughts" to Zhou Enlai, proposing that in addition to resuming the ambassadorial talks in Warsaw, China should "take the initiative in proposing to hold Sino-American talks at the ministerial or even higher levels, so that basic and related problems in Sino-American relations can be solved."²⁷

We do not know exactly how Mao responded to these reports. Yet the fact that the chairman, through Zhou Enlai, encouraged the marshals to present ideas that were not necessarily consistent with the general foreign policy line set up by the party's Ninth Congress is revealing enough. Apparently, what the chairman wanted to get was exactly such "unconventional thoughts." According to the recollections of Mao's doctor, Li Zhisui, the chairman said in August 1969: "Think about this. We have the

Soviet Union to the north and the west, India to the south, and Japan to the east. If all our enemies were to unite, attacking us from the north, south, east, and west, what do you think we should do? . . . Think again. Beyond Japan is the United States. Didn't our ancestors counsel negotiating with faraway countries while fighting with those that are near?"²⁸

With these "unconventional thoughts" in his mind, the chairman was determined to explore the possibility of opening relations with the United States. The main question he then faced was: through what channel could Beijing establish communication with the Americans? Not just by coincidence, Nixon was eager to find an answer to the same question.

Opening Moves

In the fall of 1969, there existed no channel of communication between China and the United States. The last meeting of the Sino-American ambassadorial talks was held in Warsaw in January 1968, and the talks had then been indefinitely suspended. Therefore, when President Nixon intended to let the Chinese know of his "readiness to open communication with Peking [Beijing],"²⁹ he had to travel a circuitous path. During an around-the-world trip beginning in late July 1969, the U.S. president talked to Pakistani president Mohammad Yahya Khan and Romanian leader Nicolae Ceausescu, both of whom had good relations with Beijing, and asked them to convey to the Chinese leaders his belief that "Asia could not 'move forward' if a nation as large as China remained isolated."³⁰ When Zhou Enlai received the message from Yahya Khan, he commented in a report to Mao on November 16, 1969: "The direction of movement of Nixon and Kissinger is noteworthy."³¹

Washington took the first substantial move toward reopening channels of communication with Beijing on December 3, 1969, when the American ambassador to Poland, Walter Stoessel, following Nixon's instructions, approached a Chinese diplomat at a Yugoslavian fashion exhibition in Warsaw. The diplomat, caught off guard, quickly fled from the exhibition site. However, Stoessel was able to catch the Chinese interpreter, telling him in "broken Polish" that he had an important message for the Chinese embassy.³²

After receiving the Chinese embassy's report on the American ambassador's "unusual behavior," Zhou Enlai immediately reported it to Mao, commenting that "the opportunity now is coming; we now have a brick in our hands to knock the door [of the Americans]."³³ The premier acted at once to let the Americans know of Beijing's interest in reopening communication with Washington.

Following Beijing's instructions, the Chinese embassy in Warsaw informed the American embassy by telephone that Lei Yang, Chinese

chargé d'affaires, was willing to meet Ambassador Stoessel. On December 11, 1969, Lei and Stoessel held an "informal meeting" at the Chinese embassy during which the American ambassador, in addition to proposing a resumption of the ambassadorial talks, asked the Chinese to "pay attention to a series of positive measures the American side had taken in recent months."³⁴ On January 8, Lei and Stoessel held another informal meeting at the American embassy in Warsaw. The two sides agreed to resume the ambassadorial talks, which would be held in turn at the Chinese and American embassies, on January 20.³⁵ When the Sino-American ambassadorial talks formally resumed on January 20 at the Chinese embassy, Stoessel expressed Washington's intention to improve relations with China, stating that, in order to have "more thorough discussion" on "any question" related to Sino-American relations, Washington was willing to dispatch an envoy to Beijing or accept one from the Chinese government in Washington. Lei Yang, already having received detailed instructions from Beijing on how to deal with different scenarios, replied that if Washington were interested in "holding meetings at higher levels or through other channels," the Americans might present more specific proposals "for discussion in future ambassadorial talks."³⁶

The second formal meeting between Lei and Stoessel was scheduled to be held at the American embassy on February 20, 1970. On February 12, Zhou Enlai chaired a politburo meeting to draft instructions and prepare speech notes for Lei Yang. The politburo decided that Lei should inform the American side that "if the U.S. government is willing to dispatch a minister-level official or a special envoy representing the president to visit Beijing to explore further solutions to the fundamental questions in Sino-American relations, the Chinese government will receive him." Mao approved the decision on the same day.³⁷ When Lei met with Stoessel on February 20, he highlighted the Taiwan issue, emphasizing that Taiwan was part of Chinese territory and that "withdrawal of all U.S. armed forces from the Taiwan Strait area" and the "solution of the Taiwan issue" were the preconditions for "fundamentally improving Sino-American relations." The Chinese chargé d'affaires, though, also mentioned that China was willing to "consider and discuss whatever ideas and suggestions" the American side would make to "reduce tensions between China and the United States and fundamentally improve the relations between them in accordance with the five principles of peaceful-coexistence." In particular, he informed the American ambassador that the Chinese government "will be willing to receive" a high-ranking American representative in Beijing.³⁸

After the meeting, Nixon, eager to bring contact with Beijing to a higher and more substantial level, conveyed (again through Yahya Khan) the following message to Beijing: "We prepare to open a direct channel of

communication from the White House to Beijing. If Beijing agrees [to establish such a channel], its existence will not be known by anyone outside the White House, and we guarantee that [we have] the complete freedom to make decisions." Zhou Enlai received the message on March 21 and commented: "Nixon intends to adopt the method of the [American-Vietnamese] negotiation in Paris, and let Kissinger make the contact."³⁹

At this moment, however, several events combined together to prevent Beijing and Washington from establishing high-level direct contacts. In mid-March, Cambodia's Prince Norodom Sihanouk, while on an annual vacation abroad, was removed by a coup at home, and he came to Beijing to establish an anti-American exile resistance government. In April, Taiwan's vice premier Jiang Jinguo visited the United States. Early in May, Nixon ordered American troops to conduct a large-scale operation aimed at destroying Vietnamese communist bases inside Cambodia. On May 18, Beijing announced the postponement of the Sino-American talks in Warsaw. Two days later, a million Chinese held a protest rally at the Tiananmen Square, and Mao issued a statement calling for "the people of the world to unite and defeat the U.S. aggressors and all their running dogs."⁴⁰ Consequently, the process of Sino-American rapprochement was delayed.

Despite Beijing's renewed anti-American propaganda, the Nixon administration decided not to give up the effort to open channels of communication with China. On June 15, Vernon Walters, military attaché at the American embassy in Paris, followed Washington's instruction to approach Fang Wen, the Chinese military attaché in Paris, and asked that the Chinese open another "confidential channel of communication" as the "Warsaw forum was too public and too formalistic."⁴¹ But Beijing was not ready to come back to the table at the moment. On June 16, at a politburo meeting chaired by Zhou Enlai, CCP leaders decided that, "given the current international situation," the ambassadorial talks in Warsaw "will be postponed further" and that only the Chinese liaison personnel would continue to maintain contacts with the Americans.⁴² Yet Beijing did not want to allow the process toward opening relations with Washington to lose momentum completely. On July 10, Beijing released Bishop James Walsh, an American citizen who had been imprisoned in China since 1958 on espionage charges.⁴³

Beijing slowed the pace of opening communication with Washington in summer of 1970 not just because Nixon had ordered the invasion of Cambodia. A potential storm was brewing between two of China's most powerful men, Mao Zedong and Lin Biao, which forced the chairman to turn his main attention to domestic, especially inner-party, affairs. After the party's Ninth Congress in April 1969, Lin's relations with the chair-

man turned sour, and they deteriorated rapidly during the summer of 1970. In designing China's new state structure to reflect "the achievements of the Cultural Revolution," Lin, as Mao's designated successor, argued that Mao should reclaim the position as chairman of the state, which, in Mao's eyes, reflected Lin's own ambition to occupy the position himself.⁴⁴ The struggle between Mao and Lin escalated significantly in the summer of 1970, leading to a *de facto* showdown between Mao and several of Lin's main supporters at a party Central Committee plenary session held from August 23 to September 6. At one point, it seemed that Lin and his followers had gained the support of most Central Committee members, and only after Mao personally addressed the plenary session did he control the situation.⁴⁵ This major inner-leadership struggle occupied much of Mao's energy and time, making it difficult for him to take sophisticated new steps in pursuing contacts with the Americans. Consequently, the process of opening relations with the United States was again deferred.

The Role of Edgar Snow

Mao began to refocus his attention on the Americans in late 1970. Just like Nixon, he was not happy with the "formalistic" nature of the Warsaw channel. However, because of some complicated concerns—to be discussed below—Mao, though willing to establish secret connection with Washington, did not want to follow the pace set by and communicate under terms defined by Washington.

In October and November 1970, Beijing received more overtures from Washington through the Pakistani and Romanian channels indicating that Nixon remained willing to dispatch a high-ranking representative to China.⁴⁶ Beijing's leaders decided to respond positively to these messages. On November 14, Zhou Enlai told President Yahya, who was in China for a state visit, that "if the American side indeed has the intention to solve the Taiwan issue," Beijing would welcome the U.S. president's "representative to Beijing for discussions." The premier also emphasized that this was the first time Beijing's response "has come from a Head, through a Head, to a Head."⁴⁷ One week later, in a meeting with Romanian vice premier Gheorghe Radulescu, Zhou asked China's "friends in Bucharest" to convey to Washington that the Chinese government would welcome Nixon's representative, or even Nixon himself, to Beijing for discussions about "solving the Taiwan issue" and improving Sino-American relations.⁴⁸ Interestingly, Zhou also advised the Pakistanis and Romanians to hold the message for a while before delivering it to Washington. As a result, the Pakistanis did not convey the message to Washington until December 9 and the Romanians not until January 11, 1971.

Kissinger reported in his memoirs that he had found such delay puzzling.⁴⁹ The likely reason for the delay was that Mao, for the purpose of legitimizing the coming changes in Sino-American relations, was planning to make an initiative in his own way, and his vision had fallen on the American writer Edgar Snow.

Snow had been a friend of Mao and the Chinese Communists since the mid-1930s, when he visited the Chinese Communist base areas in northern Shannxi province and interviewed Mao and many other CCP leaders. His highly-acclaimed book, *Red Star over China* (1938) helped create a positive image of the Chinese revolution both within and outside China. After the PRC's establishment, Snow visited China in 1960 and 1965, and he continued to write about the "great achievements" of Mao's "long revolution."⁵⁰ During the Cultural Revolution years, Snow attempted several times to revisit China, but he was unable to get a Chinese visa. The situation suddenly changed in August 1970. Snow, then living in Switzerland, received several urgent calls from Hunag Zhen, the Chinese ambassador to France and another of the American writer's old friends. When Snow arrived at the Chinese embassy in Paris, he was urged by Huang to reapply for visiting China. The Chinese ambassador, in response to the American writer's complaint that Beijing had ignored him in previous years, told him that the invitation "comes from the top" and promised that "he will be treated as a distinguished guest by Chairman Mao himself."⁵¹

On October 1, 1970, when Snow and his wife were invited to review the annual National Day celebration parade at the top of the Gate of Heavenly Peace, they were escorted by Zhou Enlai to meet Mao and stand by the chairman's side. A picture of Snow and Mao together would later be printed on the front page of major Chinese newspapers. Mao was sending a message intended not only for the Americans but also for people all over China. For over two decades, the United States had been thoroughly demonized in the minds of Chinese people by the CCP's widespread anti-American propaganda campaigns and indoctrination efforts. Now, as the chairman was planning to pursue a new relationship with the United States, he would need to create a new American image in the Chinese people's minds. A subtle signal such as this one would serve to gradually prepare the Chinese people psychologically for the big changes in Sino-American relations.

Mao obviously did not invite Snow to Beijing merely to take a publishable photo, however. He also planned to use Snow in pursuit of larger goals. After several delays, the chairman received Snow on December 18 for a lengthy interview. As far as the prospect of Sino-American relations was concerned, Mao's most noteworthy statement during the interview was that he was willing to receive Nixon in Beijing. The chairman told

Snow that Beijing was considering allowing Americans of all political persuasions—Left, Right, and Center—to come to China. He particularly emphasized that he would like to welcome Nixon in Beijing because the U.S. president was the person with whom he could “discuss and solve the problems between China and the United States.” The chairman made it clear that he “would be happy to meet Nixon, either as president or as a tourist.”⁵² After the interview, Snow received a copy of the interview transcribed by the Chinese interpreter Tang Wensheng (Nancy Tang) but was advised not to publish it “at the moment.” Snow did not publish the interview “with the use of direct quotation” until April 1971.⁵³ According to Nixon, however, Washington “learned of Mao’s statement [on welcoming Nixon to Beijing] within days after he made it.”⁵⁴

It is likely that Mao asked Snow to hold the publication of the interview, again, for domestic considerations. The chairman’s five-hour interview with Snow covered a wide range of issues. In addition to Sino-American relations, he particularly focused on the Cultural Revolution. As the chairman had done on many other occasions, he argued compellingly that the Cultural Revolution was absolutely necessary because it exposed the “bad elements” by creating chaos “all under the heaven.” But he also mentioned that he did not favor two tendencies prevailing during the Cultural Revolution: one was “not telling the truth,” the other “the maltreatment of captives” in an “all-round civil war.” This rare confession from the chairman on the fading status of the Cultural Revolution was further linked to his ongoing political struggle with Lin Biao. Implicitly targeting his designated “heir and successor” and “Cultural Revolution star,” the chairman claimed that it was too much and ridiculous to call him the “Great Teacher, Great Leader, Great Supreme Commander, and Great Helmsman,” and that “one day every title will be eliminated except for the title ‘Teacher’.”⁵⁵ Throughout the interview, Mao jumped freely between domestic and international topics, implying that improving relations with the United States would have to be closely interwoven with major changes in China’s political and social life.⁵⁶ What seems ironic is that although he consciously defended the Cultural Revolution as much as he could, on a subconscious level he was virtually saying farewell to this most radical phase of his continuous revolution.

The transcript of Mao’s interview with Snow was another masterpiece from the chairman designed to influence the minds of the Chinese masses. The content of this message, though, was different from that of any of the chairman’s previous ones in that, rather than trying to encourage the people to enter a revolutionary movement, it attempted to convince them of the need to end an existing one. The chairman knew that such messages had to be delivered to the party and the nation in calculated ways. In this sense, Snow was the chairman’s carefully picked

agent—by having a well-known American sympathizer for the Chinese revolution deliver the message, the chairman, as he had done so many times in his long political career, was staging an unconventional political drama, one that he hoped would justify the rapprochement with the Americans and convince the Chinese masses that his revolution was still alive. As does any drama, this one needed a climactic episode to produce its maximum effect. This episode was something Mao much needed but could not plan well in advance, although he must have believed that it would emerge during the course of events. Indeed, in a few months, that dramatic episode took place, and it was what would be recorded in history as the “Ping Pong diplomacy.”

“Ping Pong Diplomacy”

The exchanges between Beijing and Washington slowed in the early months of 1971. Although both sides were willing to upgrade the discussions between them to higher levels, neither the Chinese nor American leaders seemed to know exactly how to take the next step. One major obstacle was determining the issues that should be on the agenda. The differences between Beijing and Washington were tremendous. For Beijing’s leaders, the key issue was America’s military intervention in Taiwan. They had argued for over two decades that to improve Sino-American relations, Washington had to stop meddling in China’s internal affairs. For Washington, however, the key to resolving the Taiwan issue lay in Beijing’s recognizing that the Nationalists had effective control over Taiwan and agreeing that any resolution of the matter must be reached by peaceful means. The Chinese and Americans also differed significantly on other international issues, such as how to end the military conflict in Vietnam, how to deal with the division between North and South Korea, and how to evaluate Japan’s reemergence as an economic giant. On none of these questions was it easy for the two sides to reach a compromise. In order to close the gap, both sides believed it necessary to hold bilateral meetings at higher levels. Before such talks could begin, policy makers in Beijing and Washington spent the early months of 1971 assessing diplomatic options and formulating negotiation strategies.⁵⁷

In the meantime, both the Chinese and Americans were waiting for the opportunity to take the next step. This was especially important for Beijing. In addition to weighing the pros and cons of reaching a rapprochement with Washington strategically and geopolitically, Beijing’s leaders, Mao in particular, needed to find a “triggering event” that would allow them to mobilize and achieve the Chinese people’s support for establishing a new relationship with the United States. It was against this background that in April 1971 an opportunity appeared almost suddenly

in Nagoya, Japan, where the Chinese Ping Pong team was participating in the Thirty-First World Table Tennis Championships.

In 1967 and 1969, because of the chaos of the Cultural Revolution, Chinese table tennis players—the best in the world—failed to show up at the world championships. Early in 1971, Koji Goto, president of the Japanese Table Tennis Association, visited China to invite the Chinese to participate in the forthcoming world championships in Nagoya.⁵⁸ From the beginning, Beijing regarded the decision whether to dispatch a team to Japan as a political issue, especially because this would be the first time since the height of the Cultural Revolution that a Chinese sports team would attend a major international event. Zhou Enlai and Mao Zedong in particular finally decided that “our team should go.”⁵⁹

Table tennis was the most popular sport in China in the early 1970s and the only one in which the Chinese players could defeat anyone in the world. Not surprisingly, Chinese participation in the Nagoya championships turned out to be a major national event that resulted in widespread “Ping Pong fever” throughout the country. In the meantime, the Chinese team leadership, who had been instructed to make two to four phone calls back to Beijing everyday, kept top leaders in Beijing abreast of any new developments in Nagoya.⁶⁰

During the course of the championships, Chinese and American players had several unplanned encounters. On March 27, the Chinese players talked to a few American players at the championships’ opening reception. Four days later, Graham B. Steenhoven, manager of the American delegation, encountered Song Zhong, general secretary of the Chinese delegation, at an International Table Tennis Association meeting break. Reportedly, Steenhoven mentioned that only two weeks earlier the U.S. State Department had terminated all restrictions on the use of American passports for traveling to China and asked Song “if the American players could have the opportunity to visit China.” Officials of the Chinese delegation met the same evening to discuss the “implications” of Steenhoven’s comments, and they decided to report to Beijing that “the Americans want to visit China.”⁶¹ Officials at the Chinese Foreign Ministry and National Commission on Sports treated the report seriously. After carefully discussing the matter, they concluded in a report on April 3 that “the timing now is not yet mature for the Americans to visit China, and the Americans should be advised that there will be other opportunities in the future.”⁶² On April 4, Zhou Enlai endorsed the report. The premier, however, was uncertain about his decision and sent the report to Mao for the chairman to make the final ruling.⁶³

In the meantime, another incident occurred between Chinese and American players. On the afternoon of April 4, Glenn Cowen, a nineteen-year-old American player, accidentally boarded a bus carrying Chinese

players. The Chinese all smiled, but no one extended him a greeting. Suddenly, three-time world champion Zhuang Zedong approached him, presenting him with an embroidered scarf as a gift.⁶⁴ The next day, Cowen returned the favor by offering Zhuang a T-shirt with the Beatles' popular slogan "Let It Be" on it as a gift.⁶⁵

In Beijing, Mao had been following the events in Nagoya from the start. Mao's chief nurse, Wu Xujun, recollected that during the championships the chairman was constantly excited, lost sleep, and did not have much of an appetite. Wu noted that Mao's state was usually a sign that he was thinking about big decisions.⁶⁶ Zhou's report regarding the American players visiting China had been sitting on Mao's desk for more than two days when, on April 6, the chairman finally approved it and returned it to the Foreign Ministry.⁶⁷ Yet the chairman's concerns were far from over. When Wu read to him foreign news reports about the encounters between Zhuang Zedong and Cowen, the chairman's eyes "suddenly turned bright." He asked Wu to read the reports again, commenting that "Zhuang Zedong not only plays good Ping Pong but knows how to conduct diplomacy as well." That evening Mao went to bed at around eleven o'clock after taking several sleeping pills. But before he fell asleep, he suddenly called Wu to his bed and asked her to call the Foreign Ministry immediately and to "invite the American team to visit China." Wu did not at first trust her own ears since the chairman had reversed the decision he had endorsed when his mind had been clear. But the chairman, despite being under the strong influence of medicine, insisted Wu make the phone call. Only after confirming that the chief nurse indeed had made the call did the chairman allow himself to get to sleep.⁶⁸

Mao's sudden change of mind caused a sleepless night for Zhou Enlai and many others at the Foreign Ministry and National Commission on Sports. The next day, Chinese officials with the Ping Pong team in Nagoya received the order from Beijing to extend an invitation to the American table tennis team to visit China.⁶⁹ Upon learning of the invitation, the White House immediately approved it.⁷⁰ The Americans' activities during their visit to China were widely covered by the Chinese media. The highlight of the visit was a meeting held on April 14 between the American team, together with teams from four other countries, with Zhou Enlai at the Great Hall of the People during which the premier announced, "[Y]our visit has opened a new chapter in the history of the relations between Chinese and American peoples."⁷¹ A few hours after Zhou met with the American players, Washington announced five new measures concerning China, including the termination of the twenty-two-year-old trade embargo. In a few short days, Ping Pong diplomacy had completely changed the political atmosphere between China and the United States, making the theme of improving relations between the two

countries, as Kissinger put it, “an international sensation” that “captured the world’s imagination.”⁷²

When the Americans were playing China’s most popular and strongest sport in front of a huge Chinese audience (especially if radio and television audiences were included), it was almost as if a modern version of the ritual procedures related to the age-old Chinese “tribute system,” wherein foreign barbarians came to China to pay tribute the superior Chinese emperor, was taking place. The Chinese players were very friendly toward the Americans, even allowing them to win quite a few matches. In the eyes of the Chinese audience, though, this was not just an indication of friendship but also, and more importantly, a revelation of superiority.

Mao moved quickly to fit the new Chinese popular mood toward America into the orbit of the relations he was planning to pursue with the United States. The chairman looked to Snow once again. In addition to permitting the American writer to publish in the West, the chairman ordered that the complete transcript of the interview—in which he said that he was willing to meet Nixon in Beijing—be relayed to the entire party and the whole country.⁷³ Mao’s maneuvers, as it turned out, further prepared the Chinese people politically and psychologically for the forthcoming transformation of Sino-American relations.

Kissinger’s Secret Trip to Beijing

In the wake of the Ping Pong diplomacy, Beijing and Washington immediately worked toward plans for the high-level meeting that had been discussed since late 1970. The Pakistani channel again played a crucial role in facilitating communications between the two sides. After a series of exchanges of messages through the Pakistanis, Kissinger stated in a message to Beijing on May 10 that because of the importance Nixon had attached to normalizing relations with China, he was prepared to visit Beijing “for direct conversations” with PRC leaders.⁷⁴

The progress in handling relations with Beijing significantly enhanced Washington’s confidence and capacity in dealing with relations with Moscow. In mid-May, Washington and Moscow reached a procedural breakthrough in the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks. Kissinger immediately asked the Pakistanis to convey an advance copy of the U.S.-Soviet agreement to Beijing, with an accompanying message stating that Washington would “conclude no agreement which would be directed against the People’s Republic of China.”⁷⁵

In late May, with Mao’s approval, Zhou Enlai chaired a series of meetings (including a politburo meeting) to discuss the issue concerning improving Sino-American relations. These meetings concluded that the

visit of top American leaders to China would allow Beijing to voice its opinions on the Taiwan issue, and would enhance China's international position vis-à-vis the two superpowers. If the opening succeeded, the "competition between the two superpowers" would be more fierce; and even if the opening failed, the "reactionary face" of U.S. imperialism would be further exposed. Therefore, there was no reason not to pursue the opening. Mao approved the conclusions reached at the meeting.⁷⁶

On May 29, Zhou Enlai, once again via the Pakistani channel, sent Beijing's formal responses to Washington, informing the Americans that Mao was looking forward to "direct conversations" with Nixon, "in which each side would be free to raise the principal issue of concern" and that Zhou welcomed Kissinger to China "for a preliminary secret meeting with high level Chinese officials to prepare for and make necessary arrangements for President Nixon's visit to Beijing."⁷⁷ Nixon received the message four days later, commenting, "This is the most important communication that has come to an American president since the end of World War II."⁷⁸

After careful planning, Kissinger secretly visited Beijing from July 9 to 11. During the forty-eight hours he stayed in Beijing, he met with Zhou and other high-ranking Chinese officials in six meetings lasting a total of seventeen hours.⁷⁹ Although Beijing had repeatedly emphasized that unless progress could be reached on the Taiwan issue no other question would be discussed, Zhou's attitude was flexible. The most important breakthrough was reached on the first day, when the two leaders tried to comprehend the other's basic stand. Kissinger spent much time explaining Washington's policies toward a series of international issues, including Taiwan. He stated that Washington would withdraw two-thirds of U.S. armed forces from Taiwan after the end of the Vietnam War and would continue to withdraw more troops from Taiwan in concert with further improvement in Sino-American relations. Kissinger also made it clear that the United States acknowledged Taiwan as a part of China and would not support Taiwan's independence. Within this context, he emphasized that Washington firmly believed that the Taiwan issue should be solved in a peaceful manner. Kissinger also told the Chinese that the Nixon administration had committed to ending the Vietnam War through negotiations and thus was willing to follow a timetable to withdraw American troops from South Vietnam if America's honor and self-esteem were protected. Mao and Zhou seemed satisfied with Kissinger's statement that Washington recognized Taiwan was a part of China. Although in the talks with Kissinger Zhou continued to emphasize that all American troops must be withdrawn from Taiwan and the U.S.-Taiwan treaty must be abolished, he also stated that the differences between Beijing and Washington should not prevent the two from living in peace and equal-

ity.⁸⁰ On July 15, Beijing and Washington announced simultaneously that Nixon was to visit China “at an appropriate date before May 1972.”

Closing Moves

The communication between Beijing and Washington became more direct after Kissinger’s trip: in addition to occasional use of the Pakistani channel, a new secret “Paris channel” was established. Vernon Walters and Huang Zhen, the American and Chinese ambassadors to France, were assigned by Washington and Beijing to serve as messengers.⁸¹

To settle important details for Nixon’s visit, Kissinger openly visited Beijing from October 20 to 26. During his seven-day stay in Beijing, he and Zhou Enlai held ten meetings, which lasted a total of twenty-three hours and forty minutes.⁸² They exchanged opinions on a host of international issues and the details of Nixon’s visit (e.g. media coverage); the most difficult challenge they faced, however, was to work out a draft summit communiqué. Before coming to China, Kissinger had prepared a draft, in which he emphasized the common grounds shared by Beijing and Washington while using vague language to describe the issues on which the two had sharp differences. But Mao instructed Zhou to veto the draft, claiming it to be “totally unacceptable.” The Chinese premier emphasized that the communiqué must reflect the fundamental differences between Beijing and Washington and not present an “untruthful appearance.”⁸³

In essence, Zhou’s response reflected Mao’s way of demonstrating to the Americans his moral superiority in handling important international issues. What the Americans had proposed was a conventional document that would make the chairman’s unprecedented acceptance of Nixon’s visit look like no more than a common diplomatic venture. By contrast, the chairman wanted to emphasize the drama of the visit and thereby put the Chinese in an “equal” (as Mao defined the term), thus superior, position vis-à-vis the Americans. When Kissinger received the Chinese draft communiqué that had been approved by Mao, his first reaction was disbelief. But when he had finished reading this document and had time to reflect, he “began to see that the very novelty of the [Chinese] approach might resolve our perplexities.”⁸⁴ The two sides then started working on a mutually acceptable draft that not only defined common grounds but also used clear yet moderate language to state each side’s views on important issues. The most difficult in this regard was, of course, Taiwan. When Kissinger departed from Beijing on October 26, the two sides had reached agreement on almost all points except for a few specific expressions concerning Washington’s attitude toward Taiwan.⁸⁵

When Kissinger was in Beijing, the United Nations General Assembly voted with the support of an overwhelming majority to let Beijing have

China's seat at the UN and expel Taipei from it. This development was immediately propagated throughout China as a "great victory" of Chinese foreign policy as well as an indication of the "significant enhancement" of the PRC's international status and reputation.⁸⁶ In internal indoctrination, the "victory" was further linked to Mao's "brilliant decision" to open relations with the United States. At a time when Mao and his revolution continuously had suffered the loss of the Chinese people's inner support, the breakthrough in China's external relations, which allowed Beijing's leaders to proclaim that Mao's revolution had indeed transformed China from a weak country into a prestigious world power, played an increasingly important role in providing legitimacy to Mao's regime.

It was in this context that Alexander Haig, Kissinger's deputy on the national security staff, inadvertently offended his Chinese hosts while in China in early January 1972 to make the final technical preparations for Nixon's visit. At a meeting with Zhou Enlai on January 4, Haig delivered an assessment from Nixon and Kissinger about the recently concluded India-Pakistan crisis that made clear the American leaders, in managing the crisis, were concerned about China's viability and believed that maintaining China was in the fundamental interests of the United States. When Zhou reported the meeting to Mao, the chairman commented: "Why should our viability become America's concern? If China's independence and viability should be protected by the Americans, it is very dangerous [for us]."⁸⁷ On January 6, Zhou formally told Haig that "no country should depend upon a foreign power in maintaining its own independence and viability" as "otherwise it would become that power's subordinate and colony."⁸⁸ Such emphasis—or overemphasis—upon Beijing's determination to maintain China's independence and self-esteem reflected the CCP leaders' understanding of the importance of the viability issue in legitimizing the Communist regime in China.

Nixon arrived in Beijing on February 21. He had hardly settled down at the guest house when Zhou Enlai informed him that Mao was ready to meet him. The conversation between the Chinese chairman and the U.S. president lasted one hour and seems not to have had a central focus.⁸⁹ The chairman refused to get into details of any specific issues, announcing that he would only "discuss philosophical questions." It appears that the chairman was eager to demonstrate his broad vision, showing the Americans that not only was he in total control of matters concerning China, but he also occupied a privileged position to comprehend and deal with *anything* of significance in the known universe. In a sense, what was most meaningful for the chairman was not the specific issues he would discuss with the president but the simple fact that it was Nixon and Kissinger who came to *his* study to listen to *his* teachings. The chairman

probably was revealing some of his truest feelings when he said that he had “only changed a few places in the vicinity of Beijing.” Yet, at the bottom of his heart, he also must have believed that he had indeed changed the world—had he not, the “head of international imperialism” would not have come to visit his country in the first place.

The Taiwan issue remained the key to finalizing the text of the joint communiqué, which Kissinger and Ch’iao Kuan-hua, China’s vice foreign minister and one of Zhou’s main associates, were responsible for composing. The main challenge was finding a mutually acceptable expression of the United States’ stand toward the linkage between Washington’s agreement to withdraw U.S. troops from Taiwan and Beijing’s commitment to a peaceful settlement of the Taiwan issue. Although this was a sensitive issue for the Chinese because they had to stick to the principle that anything concerning Taiwan “belonged to China’s internal affairs,” they showed flexibility by allowing compromises to be reached.⁹⁰

On February 28, the Sino-American joint communiqué was signed in Shanghai. This was an unconventional document in that in addition to emphasizing common ground, it also highlighted differences between Beijing and Washington, with each side expressing in its own way its basic policies toward important international issues. From Beijing’s perspective, such a format best served China’s fundamental interests. In a geopolitical sense, Nixon’s visit did establish the framework in which a strategic partnership could be constructed between China and the United States. More importantly, especially for Mao, the unique format of the communiqué allowed China not only to remain a revolutionary country but also to claim an equal footing with the United States in the world. Not just for propaganda purposes did Beijing claim that Mao had won a “great diplomatic victory.”

Yet this was not a victory for international communism. With the deepening of the Sino-Soviet confrontation and the continuation of the Sino-American rapprochement in the 1970s, fundamental changes occurred in the orientation and, in a sense, even the essence of the global Cold War. The great Sino-Soviet ideological and, now, military and strategic rivalry not only forced Moscow into an ever-worsening over-extension of power but also, and more importantly, further drained both material and spiritual resources from international communism as a self-proclaimed trend that “represents the future.” In the meantime, the Sino-American opening enormously enhanced Washington’s strategic position in its global competition with Moscow. As far as these two events’ overall historical impact is concerned, together they caused the most profound shift in the international balance of power—in both strategic and ideological terms—between the two contending superpowers, presaging the

Cold War's end with the collapse of the Soviet Union and the Soviet Bloc in the late 1980s and early 1990s.

But in terms of their immediate effect on American-Soviet relations in Europe, these two events created a crucial condition for the two superpowers to consider how to wage the Cold War in forms and styles that had been inconceivable in the past. Indeed, as Moscow had to devote a large portion of its resources to coping with an ever-worsening confrontation with China, and after Washington, through a new, albeit limited "strategic partnership" with China, enhanced its strategic position vis-à-vis the Soviet bloc in Europe, it was almost inevitable that the Cold War politics would have to be pursued in new ways. Not by mere coincidence, therefore, we see that "détente" emerged between Moscow and Washington as well as between Warsaw Pact and NATO in the 1970s. The global Cold War subsequently entered a new stage.

Notes

* This essay is a shortened and revised version of Chapter 9 in Chen Jian, *Mao's China and the Cold War* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), and is included here with the permission of the University of North Carolina Press.

¹ *Renmin ribao* [People's Daily], January 28, 1969. For the English text of the essay, see *Peking Review* (January 31, 1969), 7–10.

² See Chen Jian and David L. Wilson eds., "All Under the Heaven Is Great Chaos: Beijing, the Sino-Soviet Border Clashes, and the Turn Toward Sino-American Rapprochement, 1968–1969," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin*, no. 11 (Winter 1998), 161.

³ For Nixon's address, see *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon, 1969* (Washington, DC, 1971), 1–4.

⁴ See Chen Jian, "China's Involvement in the Vietnam War," *China Quarterly*, no. 142 (June 1995), 356–387.

⁵ Yang Kuisong, "From Zhenbao Island Incident to Sino-American Rapprochement," *Dangshi yanjiu ziliao* [Party History Research Materials, Beijing], no. 12 (1997), 7–8; Xu Yan, "The Sino-Soviet Border Clashes of 1969," *Dangshi yanjiu ziliao*, no. 6 (1994), 6–10.

⁶ For example, Kissinger recorded in his memoirs that in August 1969, a Soviet diplomat in Washington inquired about "what the US reaction would be to a Soviet attack on Chinese nuclear facilities." See Henry Kissinger, *White House Year* (New York, 1979), 183. See also discussions in Yang Kuisong, "From Zhenbao Island Incident to Sino-American Rapprochement," 12.

⁷ See, for example, editorial essay, "March forward along the Path of the October Revolution," *Renmin ribao*, November 6, 1967; and Lin Biao speech at the rally celebrating the fiftieth anniversary of the October Revolution, *Renmin ribao*, November 8, 1967.

⁸ See, for example, editorial essay, "Leninism or Social-imperialism," *Renmin ribao*, April 22, 1970.

⁹ Remarks by Mao Zedong, August 5, 1968, *Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong wengao* [Mao Zedong's Manuscripts since the Formation of the People's Republic] (Beijing, 1987–1993), vol. 13, 516–517; see also transcript, "Mao Zedong's talks with the Red Guard Leaders from Five Universities in Beijing," July 28, 1968, in Song Yongyi chief ed. *Zhongguo wenhua dageming wenku* [Chinese Cultural Revolution Database] (Hong Kong, 2002), Part II, 1968.07.28.

¹⁰ Mao Zedong, "A Series of Remarks on External Propaganda and Diplomatic Affairs," March 1967–March 1971, *Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong wengao*, vol. 13, 275–276, 283–284.

¹¹ First in a pioneering case study on the changing behavior of Mao's China as a revolutionary state, then in a comprehensive study on the relationship between revolutionary states and world order, David Armstrong has developed a sophisticated concept useful for understanding how and why revolutionary states, such as Mao's China, become "socialized" during the process of encountering the existing world order. According to Armstrong, "Socialization denotes the process 'where men consciously or unconsciously conform to the convention of the society in which they live in order to function more effectively within it (and) whereby an increasing entanglement within an existing structure of relationships brings about an increasing degree of adaptation to the normal behavior patterns of that structure.'" See David Armstrong, *Revolution and World Order: The Revolutionary State in International Society* (New York, 1993), 7–8; see also David Armstrong, *Revolutionary Diplomacy: Chinese Foreign Policy and the United Front Doctrine* (Berkeley and Los Angeles, 1977).

¹² See John H. Holdridge, *Crossing the Divide: An Insider's Account of Normalization of U.S.-China Relations* (Lanham, MD, 1997), 25. Reportedly, Beijing's quick and positive response was approved by Mao himself. See Gong Li, *Mao Zedong waijiao fengyun* [A Record of Mao Zedong's Diplomacy] (Zhengzhou, 1996), 207.

¹³ *Renmin ribao*, February 20, 1969.

¹⁴ See, for example, conversation between Mao Zedong and Beqir Balluku, Albania's defense minister, October 1, 1968 and conversation between Mao Zedong and E. F. Hill, chairman of the Australian Communist Party (Marxism-Leninism), November 28, 1968, *CWIHP Bulletin*, no. 11 (Winter 1998), 156–161.

¹⁵ Li Ping et al., *Zhou Enlai nianpu, 1949–1976* [A Chronological Record of Zhou Enlai] (Beijing, 1998), vol. 3, 281; Liu Wusheng and Du Hongqi et al., *Zhou Enlai junshi huodong jishi* [Records of Zhou Enlai's Military Activities] (Beijing, 2000), vol. 2, 689.

¹⁶ Hu Shiwei et al., *Chen Yi zhuan* [A Biography of Chen Yi] (Beijing, 1991), 614; Du Yi, *Daxue ya qingsong: wenge zhong de Chen Yi* [An Unyielding Green Pine in Big Snow: Chen Yi in the Cultural Revolution] (Beijing, 1997), 208; Chen Xiaolu, "Chen Yi and Chinese Diplomacy," in Zhang Tuosheng chief ed., *Huanqiu tongci liangre* [All Around the World Is Like the Same] (Beijing, 1993), 155.

¹⁷ See Fan Shuo et al., *Ye Jianying zhuan* [A Biography of Ye Jianying] (Beijing, 1995), 598–599; Wei Wei et al., *Nie Rongzhen zhuan* [A Biography of Nie Rongzhen] (Beijing, 1994), 676–677; Hu Shiyuan, *Chen Yi zhuan*, 614; Liu Zhi et al., *Xu Xiangqian zhuan* [A Biography of Xu Xiangqian] (Beijing, 1995), 541–542; and Zheng Qian, "The Nationwide War Preparations before and after the CCP's Ninth Congress," *Zhonggong dangshi ziliao* [CCP History Materials], no. 41 (April 1992), 211.

¹⁸ *Renmin ribao*, April 25, 1969.

¹⁹ Xiong Xianghui, "The Prelude to the Opening of Sino-American Relations," *Zhonggong dangshi ziliao*, no. 42 (June 1992), 61.

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 61–62.

²¹ Reports by Four Chinese Marshals to the Central Committee, "A Preliminary Evaluation of the War Situation," July 11, 1969, *CWIHP Bulletin*, no. 11 (Winter 1998), 166–168.

²² Xiong Xianghui, "The Prelude to the Opening of Sino-American Relations," 76–77.

²³ *Ibid.*, 78–79.

²⁴ Xu Yan, "The Sino-Soviet Border Clashes of 1969," 10; Yang Kuisong, "From Zhenbao Island Incident to Sino-American Rapprochement," 11–23.

²⁵ See "The CCP Central Committee's Order for General Mobilization in Border Provinces and Regions," August 28, 1969, *CWIHP Bulletin*, no. 11 (Winter 1998): 168–169.

²⁶ "Report by Four Chinese Marshals, 'Our Views about the Current Situation,'" September 17, 1969, *CWIHP Bulletin*, no. 11 (Winter 1998), 170.

- ²⁷ “Further Thoughts by Marshal Chen Yi on Sino-American Relations,” *ibid.*, 170–171.
- ²⁸ Dr. Li Zhisui, *The Private Life of Chairman Mao* (New York, 1994), 514.
- ²⁹ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 180.
- ³⁰ *Ibid.*, 180–181. For the role played by the “Pakistan channel” in the Chinese-American opening, see F. S. Aijazuddin, *From a Head, Through a Head, To a Head: The Secret Channel between the US and China through Pakistan* (Karachi, 2000).
- ³¹ Jin Chongji chief ed., *Zhou Enlai zhuan, 1949–1976* [A Biography of Zhou Enlai, 1949–1976] (Beijing, 1998), 1088; Li Ping and Ma Zhisun et al., *Zhou Enlai nianpu, 1949–1976*, vol. 3, 334.
- ³² Xue Mouhong et al., *Dangdai zhongguo waijiao* [Contemporary Chinese Diplomacy] (Beijing, 1989), 218; see also: Telegram, Stoessel to Secretary of State, December 3, 1969. National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Record Group (RG) 59, Subject-Numeric Files, 1967–69, POL 23-8 US.
- ³³ Jin Chongji, *Zhou Enlai zhuan, 1949–1976*, 1087.
- ³⁴ Gong Li, *Kuayue honggou: 1969–1979 nian zhongmei guanxi de yanbian* [Bridging the Chasm: The Evolution of Sino-American Relations, 1969–1979] (Zhengzhou, 1992), 49; Luo Yisu, “My Years in Poland,” 180–181; see also Kissinger, *White House Years*, 188–189.
- ³⁵ Luo Yisu, “My Years in Poland,” 181; Telegram, Stoessel to the Secretary of State, 8 January 1970. NARA, RG 59, Subject-Numeric Files, 1967–69, CHICOM-US.
- ³⁶ Luo Yisu, “My Years in Poland,” 181; Report, Stoessel-Lei talks, January 20, 1970. NARA, RG 59, Subject-Numeric Files, 1970–73, POL CHICOM-US.
- ³⁷ Li Ping and Ma Zhisun et al., *Zhou Enlai nianpu, 1949–1976*, vol. 3, 348; Jin Chongji, *Zhou Enlai zhuan, 1949–1976*, 1089.
- ³⁸ Gong Li, *Kuayue honggou*, 50–51; see also: Report, Stoessel-Lei talks, 21 February 1970. NARA, RG 59, Policy Planning Staff (Director’s) Files, 1969–1977, POL CHICOM-US.
- ³⁹ Li Ping and Ma Zhisun et al., *Zhou Enlai nianpu, 1949–1976*, vol. 3, 356; Jin Chongji, *Zhou Enlai zhuan, 1949–1976*, 1089–1090.
- ⁴⁰ *Renmin ribao*, May 19 and 20, 1970; see also Gong Li, *Kuayue honggou*, 55–57.
- ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 696; Gong Li, *Kuayue honggou*, 59.
- ⁴² Li Ping and Ma Zhisun et al., *Zhou Enlai nianpu, 1949–1976*, vol. 3, 372.
- ⁴³ *Renmin ribao*, July 11, 1970.
- ⁴⁴ In 1959, Mao resigned the position as chairman of the PRC, which was taken by Liu Shaoqi. During the Cultural Revolution, Liu was purged and the chairmanship of the PRC was virtually vacated. See remarks by Mao Zedong, *Jianguo yi lai Mao Zedong wengao*, vol. 13, 94.
- ⁴⁵ For a detailed study of the session, see Wang Nianyi, *Dadongluan de shinian* [The Decade of Great Chaos] (Zhengzhou, 1989), 394–406. The struggle between Mao and Lin would eventually result in Lin’s escape from Beidaihe by plane on September 13, 1971; Lin died together with his wife and son when the plane crashed in Mongolia.
- ⁴⁶ Li Ping and Ma Zhisun et al., *Zhou Enlai nianpu, 1949–1976*, vol. 3, 406; see also Richard Nixon, *Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York, 1978), 546–547.
- ⁴⁷ Jin Chongji, *Zhou Enlai zhuan, 1949–1976*, 1091; Li Ping and Ma Zhisun et al., *Zhou Enlai nianpu, 1949–1976*, vol. 3, 410–411; Yang Mingwei and Chen Yangyong, *Zhou Enlai waijiao fengyun* [Zhou Enlai’s Diplomatic Career] (Beijing, 1995), 244; see also Nixon, *Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, 546–547.
- ⁴⁸ Li Ping and Ma Zhisun et al., *Zhou Enlai nianpu, 1949–1976*, vol. 3, 417; Yang Mingwei and Chen Yangyong, *Zhou Enlai waijiao fengyun*, 244.
- ⁴⁹ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 700–703; Nixon, *Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, 546–547.

- ⁵⁰ Edgar Snow, *The Long Revolution* (New York, 1972).
- ⁵¹ Yin Jiamin, *Jiangjun buru shiming* [The General Has Succeeded in Carrying out the Mission] (Beijing, 1992), 211–214.
- ⁵² Minute, interview with Edgar Snow, December 18, 1970, *Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong wengao*, vol. 13, 166–168.
- ⁵³ Edgar Snow, “A Conversation with Mao Tse-tung [Mao Zedong],” *Life*, 70 (April 30, 1971): 46–48; see also Mao’s comments on not publishing the interview records, *Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong wengao*, vol. 13: 164.
- ⁵⁴ Nixon, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, 547.
- ⁵⁵ Lin Biao was the initiator of the four titles for Mao.
- ⁵⁶ For the full text of the interview transcript, see *Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong wengao*, vol. 13, 163–187; for Snow’s account, see *Life*, 70 (April 30, 1971): 46–48.
- ⁵⁷ For example, Kissinger mentioned that in the early months early of 1971, he “used the interval to try to educate myself on China” by meeting academic China experts for policy suggestions. Kissinger, *White House Years*, 704–705.
- ⁵⁸ *Peking Review* (February 5, 1971): 4; see also Qian Jiang, *Ping Pong waijiao muhou*, 21–40.
- ⁵⁹ Jin Chongji, *Zhou Enlai zhuan, 1949–1976*, 1093; Zhao Zhenghong, “The Ping Pong Diplomacy as I knew,” *Zhonggong dangshi ziliao*, no. 39 (1991): 133–136; *Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong wengao*, vol. 13, 284–285.
- ⁶⁰ Zhao Zhenghong, “The Ping Pong Diplomacy as I knew,” 144.
- ⁶¹ Qian Jiang, *Ping Pong waijiao muhou*, 170–172.
- ⁶² *Ibid.*, 195.
- ⁶³ Gong Li, *Kuayue honggou*, 79; Qian Jiang, *Ping Pong waijiao muhou*, 211.
- ⁶⁴ Zhao Zhenghong, “The Ping Pong Diplomacy as I Knew,” 143–144; Qian Jiang, *Ping Pong waijiao muhou*, 197–198.
- ⁶⁵ Qian Jiang, *Ping Pong waijiao muhou*, 199–200.
- ⁶⁶ Wu Xujun, “Mao Zedong’s Five Superior Moves in Opening Sino-American Relations,” in Li Ke, Xu Tao, and Wu Xujun, *Lishi de zhenshi* [The Truth of History] (Hong Kong, 1995), 302–303.
- ⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 306.
- ⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, 306–309.
- ⁶⁹ Zhao Zhenghong, “The Ping Pong Diplomacy that I knew,” 144–145.
- ⁷⁰ Nixon, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, 548.
- ⁷¹ Minute, Zhou Enlai, “Conversations with the American Table Tennis Delegation,” April 14, 1971, ZWJWX, 469–475. The Chinese media widely reported the meeting. See, for example, *Renmin ribao*, 15 April 1971, front page, where the quote can be found.
- ⁷² Kissinger, *White House Years*, 710.
- ⁷³ On May 31, 1971, the CCP Central Committee, with Mao’s approval, ordered that the printed text of the interview be distributed to the party’s “bottom branches” and its contents relayed to every party member. See *Jianguo yilai Mao Zedong wengao*, vol. 13, 182.
- ⁷⁴ Kissinger, *The White House Years*, 723–724; see also Jin Chongji, *Zhou Enlai zhuan, 1949–1976*, 1095–1095; Gong Li, *Kuayue honggou*, 97–98.
- ⁷⁵ Kissinger, *White House Years*, pp. 725–726; Gong Li, *Kuayue honggou*, p. 98.
- ⁷⁶ “CCP Politburo’s Report on Chinese-American Talks,” May 29, 1971, in Song Yongyi chief ed., *Wenhua dageming wenku*, Part I, 1971.05.29; Gong Li, *Kuayue honggou*, 105–106; Jin Chongji, *Zhou Enlai zhuan, 1949–1976*, 1096.

- ⁷⁷ Gong Li, *Kuayue honggou*, 107; Kissinger, *White House Years*, 726–727.
- ⁷⁸ Nixon, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, 552.
- ⁷⁹ Transcripts of these meetings are now available in NARA, RG 59, Policy Planning Staff (Director's) Files, 1969–1977.
- ⁸⁰ Haig to Eliot, January 28, 1972, enclosing Kissinger to the President, "My Talks with Chou Enlai [Zhou Enlai]," July 17, 1971. NARA, RG 59, Top Secret Subject-Numeric Files, 1970–1972, POL 7 Kissinger; see also Wei Shiyan, "The Inside Story of Kissinger's Secret Visit to Beijing," 40–41.
- ⁸¹ Cao Guisheng, "Recalling the secret 'Paris Channel' between China and the United States," in Pei Jianzhang ed., *Xin zhongguo waijiao fengyun*, vol. 2, 46–56.
- ⁸² For Kissinger's report on the trip, as transmitted to the State Department, see Haig to Eliot, 28 January 1972. NARA, RG 59, Top Secret Subject-Numeric Files, 1970–73, POL 7 Kissinger.
- ⁸³ Wei Shiyan, "Kissinger's Second Visit to Beijing," in Pei Jianzhang, *Xin zhongguo waijiao fengyun*, vol. 3, 66–67; Kissinger, *White House Years*, 781.
- ⁸⁴ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 782.
- ⁸⁵ Wei Shiyan, "Kissinger's Second Visit to Beijing," 69–70; Kissinger, *White House Years*, 787. The important breakthrough during the negotiation on the Taiwan issue was achieved after Kissinger proposed a highly subtle way to express the U.S. attitude toward Taiwan's status: "The United States acknowledges that all Chinese on either side of the Taiwan Straits maintain there is but one China and that Taiwan is a part of China. The United States Government does not challenge that position."
- ⁸⁶ See, for example, editorial essay, "The Tide of History Cannot be Stopped," *Renmin ribao*, 28 October 1971.
- ⁸⁷ Wei Shiyan, "The Haig Advance Group's Experience for Arranging Nixon's Visit," in Pei Jianzhang ed., *Xin zhongguo waijiao fengyun*, vol. 3, 76–79.
- ⁸⁸ Minute, Zhou Enlai's conversations with Alexander Haig, January 6, 1971, quoted from Jin Chongji, *Zhou Enlai zhuan, 1949–1976*, 1104–1105.
- ⁸⁹ Memcon of Nixon and Mao, 21 February 1972, in Burr, ed., *The Kissinger Transcripts*, 59–65.
- ⁹⁰ The text on the issue reads: "It [the U.S.] reaffirms its interest in a peaceful settlement of the Taiwan question by the Chinese themselves. With this prospect in mind, it affirms the ultimate objective of the withdrawal of U.S. forces and military installations from Taiwan. In the meantime, it will progressively reduce its forces and military installations on Taiwan as the tension in the area diminishes."

“THINKING THE UNTHINKABLE” TO “MAKE THE IMPOSSIBLE POSSIBLE”: OSTPOLITIK, INTRA-GERMAN POLICY, AND THE MOSCOW TREATY, 1969–1970

Carsten Tessmer

Echoing a well-known quotation from Bismarck, Willy Brandt said in 1964 that politics is “the art of making something that seems impossible possible.”¹ By politics, he meant above all West German foreign policy and intra-German policy. “Something that seems impossible” was, from the viewpoint of Western officials in the 1960s, the restoration of the unity of the German state. According to the preamble of the Federal Republic of Germany’s constitution, the Basic Law (*Grundgesetz*), unification ought to take place in freedom. Because Germany’s division was tied to the particular security needs of its neighbors and the confrontation between the military blocs, a European peace order was necessary to make the “impossible” happen. That order would have to guarantee two things: security from Germany, including a united Germany, and security for Germany by means of détente, confidence-building measures, and disarmament on the part of the two antagonistic alliance systems. It was necessary to “think the unthinkable” twenty years after the establishment of the two German states—Egon Bahr appealed to the members of the Foreign Ministry’s planning staff in 1968–9—in order to develop goals based on national interests; an operational, offensive plan of action to achieve these goals would be necessary.²

The motto coined for West Germany’s Ostpolitik and its inner-German policy at the beginning of the Social Democratic-Free Democratic (SPD-FDP) coalition in the fall of 1969 was to “think the unthinkable” to “make the impossible possible.” This applied especially to relations with the Kremlin, where, in Brandt and Bahr’s opinion, the key to solving Europe’s security problems and thus to German unity lay. Although the efforts at a re-orientation of West German foreign policy had been labeled “new” in the three years of the “grand coalition” between the Christian Democrats and Social Democrats (CDU/CSU-SPD), it was the Ostpolitik and inner-German policy of the Brandt era that deserved this distinction. Something came about that Chancellor Kurt Georg Kiesinger did not fully achieve: a profound change in German politics and a departure from previous political patterns.³

What was really new in the policy of the Brandt-Scheel government? To answer this question, I will first give a brief overview of the initial conditions in foreign and domestic policies when the SPD-FDP coalition

came to power in October 1969. Then I will discuss how the SPD-led government perceived the Kremlin's policy, a perception that was not unimportant for the subsequent negotiations with Moscow. My main focus, however, will be the German-Soviet talks in 1970 that resulted in the conclusion of the Moscow Treaty. I will not deal with all the topics that were at issue during the West German-Soviet talks, but rather concentrate on what was, in my opinion, essential in regard to the German question.

The fierce domestic policy dispute in the early 1970s between the SPD-FDP government and the CDU/CSU opposition over treaties with certain Central and Eastern European states obscured the fact that it was the Grand Coalition that had laid the foundations of this policy.⁴ Even if the coalition partners no longer agreed on foreign policy at the end of their "temporary marriage," it was the Kiesinger-Brandt government that initiated the change of policy on the German question and in dealing with the Eastern bloc. The new approach of seeking to restore the unity of the German state by pursuing a policy of *détente* within a European peace order was based on a consensus between the CDU/CSU and the SPD. And there was also a consensus among the three parties about the strategy of maintaining the option of peaceful change of the status quo in Europe by means of agreements with the states of the Eastern bloc, including the German Democratic Republic, on the renunciation of the use of force. In the end, though, the political will of the coalition partners did not suffice to keep the policy change on track. The relapse of the CDU/CSU to the non-recognition policy of the Adenauer era must be blamed on the lack of success with its Ostpolitik efforts and intra-German policy. In this context, however, one should not forget that the lack of success in Ostpolitik and intra-German policy in this period was due in large measure not only to Moscow and East Berlin but also to Prague and Warsaw because of their hesitant response to Bonn's efforts at achieving an understanding.⁵

That a new Ostpolitik and intra-German policy followed the change of government in Bonn was also tied to the simple fact that the beginning of the Brandt era coincided with the Kremlin's departure from its uncooperative stance toward the West. In a talk with his East German counterpart in early September 1969, Soviet Foreign Minister Andrey Gromyko reported, "Thus far, we have only exchanged documents, but now we want to proceed with negotiations with the West German side."⁶ In addition, the Social Democrats and Free Democrats held almost identical views on foreign and intra-German policy views, which made it easier to translate "the unthinkable" into policy. Since the construction of the Berlin Wall, both parties had tried to correct the previous political positions toward Eastern Europe and the GDR. In many aspects, the two

parties' positions were similar, as had become clear through an ongoing exchange of ideas they had begun in 1967.⁷

The coalition partners were agreed in their willingness to extend international communication, i.e. to integrate the Soviet Union fully into a foreign policy dialogue and to develop new ideas on a security partnership. They were also ready to revise the picture of the Soviet Union as negotiating partner by giving up the old-fashioned enemy images from the height of the Cold War. Another indication of the SPD and FDP's realism was their willingness to look upon the territorial status quo in Europe as being unchangeable for the time being. The combination of these two developments—a greater willingness for dialogue with the East bloc and the openly expressed will to recognize existing borders and spheres of influence in Europe—is the fundamental difference separating Ostpolitik and intra-German policy of the Brandt-Scheel government from the policies of its predecessors.⁸

But the SPD-FDP coalition's openness to dialogue with the Kremlin did not mean, as was time and again insinuated by the opposition, unilaterally giving up its own position and giving in to Soviet maximum demands. For East-West communication to function, the Soviets also had to show the ability to enter into dialogue. In the opinion of the Social Democratic chancellor and his aides, negotiations aimed at putting relations on a sound basis made sense only if, Brandt said, the Soviet leadership stopped stirring up a "primitive and excessively hostile attitude toward the Federal Republic of Germany" in its sphere of influence, reduced its "unfamiliarity with the West" (*Westfremdheit*), and expressed a willingness to enter into a de-ideologized dialogue on facts.⁹ Perception of the Kremlin's policy and its position toward the Federal Republic of Germany was, in other words, an important factor as the SPD and FDP drafted their new Ostpolitik and future negotiating strategy during the change of government in Bonn in 1969.

Perceptions were all the more important because the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia to crush the "Prague Spring" of 1968 and the so-called Brezhnev Doctrine reinforced notions of threat dating from the height of the Cold War. During the Brandt-Gromyko meeting on the occasion of the UN General Assembly in October 1968, the West German foreign minister did not get answers to "new and pressing questions" that he saw arising from the Soviet actions. In an address to the SPD leadership, Brandt, who based his views on a decision by the NATO foreign ministers, said the uncertainty, as far as geography was concerned, surrounding Moscow's hegemonic claims and "our limited ability to foresee Soviet decisions" could be addressed only by a continuous "exchange of opinion with the Soviet Union about open political ques-

tions."¹⁰ The West did not show much concern for the ideological content of Soviet policy, but rather took a more pragmatic view. This was in part a result of the undisputed view that one should not expect the "Soviet Union to try to use its influence in Western Europe in a dangerous way." But, as Brandt wrote to a party colleague, a foreign policy free of "ideological and other prejudices" was a precondition for foreign policy to "concentrate on the interests of our state."¹¹

Between December 1968 and the 1969 Bundestag election, Brandt and Moscow's ambassador held a series of talks, which were not publicized.¹² These talks were supplemented by an exchange of opinion and information on the party level. For the West Germans, the main concern was to get as accurate a picture of Soviet intentions as possible and to present themselves as a partner with a serious interest in treaty negotiations. The Soviet Union plainly conveyed to the SPD that it was also willing "to make a new beginning" in its relations with the Federal Republic, especially if the future government was led by a Social Democrat. The SPD should consider this willingness for talks and, as Gromyko underlined in his conversation with Brandt in New York during the UN General Assembly in September 1969, for "all forms of contact" a "very important signal by the Soviet government."¹³ This view also corresponded with the impression that an FDP delegation and Helmut Schmidt received during their trips to Moscow in the summer of 1969 at the invitation of the Soviet Union. In talks with Scheel, Genscher, and Mischnick, Kossygin had confirmed the Soviets' great interest in better relations and increased economic exchange between the two states.¹⁴ Helmut Schmidt not only attested to "a certain degree of pragmatism" on the part of his interlocutors, but he also vouched for their "very strong . . . and . . . very credible . . . wish for mutual touch and mutual contact"¹⁵ After the change of government in Bonn, Kossygin let Brandt know that the chancellor could turn to him at any time "with all kinds of questions." This was an offer that the Soviet leader clarified a little bit later with his proposal to set up a "confidential channel" between Brezhnev and the chancellor.¹⁶ But, as the foreign policy experts of the new SPD-FDP government were aware, this strong Soviet willingness to enter into negotiations did not say anything about what the Soviets might be willing to agree to or what concessions and compromises they were willing to make, particularly on the German question. Even at the beginning of 1970, the German foreign minister considered the signals from the Kremlin to be "strangely diverse" and "strangely sparkling."¹⁷ That is why it was an important task during the Allardt-Gromyko talks and later during the Bahr-Gromyko talks to find out to what extent German interests could be asserted.

The interests that the Federal Republic of Germany pursued with its Ostpolitik and its intra-German policy under the Brandt government

and that it wanted to assert in the negotiations with the Soviet Union were much more clearly defined. The new Ostpolitik and intra-German policy consisted in large part of an active adaptation to the Western course initiated by the Grand Coalition. This course was characterized by a serious interest in easing the rigid front between the blocs and improving relations by the dual strategy of security *and* détente laid down in the Harmel report. It was the prime task of the West German policy to reduce the “gap of détente” that existed between the American and the German policies towards the Eastern bloc and to end the West German “special conflict”¹⁸ with the U.S.S.R. and its allies.

According to the plan that was developed by Egon Bahr in 1968-69, the new Ostpolitik and intra-German policy should take into account four framework conditions:¹⁹

- the U.S. interest in easing tensions in relations with the USSR and its allies;
- the Soviet policy dilemma of trying, on the one hand, to safeguard its sphere of influence and, on the other hand, to allow an opening to the outside and to loosen the reins at home to make possible an absolutely necessary increase in economic efficiency;
- the continuation and possible deepening of the division of Germany;
- the impending international recognition of the GDR, which could hardly be stopped.

Proceeding on the assumption that the FRG was firmly embedded in the Western alliance, the SPD-FDP government focused its Ostpolitik and intra-German policy on the idea of a European peace order. Basically, this policy tried, on the one hand, to achieve an overdue understanding with the nations of Central and Eastern Europe: through agreements on the renunciation of force and the recognition of existing borders, the Federal Republic sought to achieve a “normalization” of relations with its eastern neighbors. On the other hand, by including the GDR in the policy of treaties, the relationship between the two German states would be formally clarified. The FRG thus hoped that with such an approach “the material elements of the treaty [with the GDR] and the starting points for a discussion on relations contained therein will gain political weight and will have a positive effect on overcoming division.”²⁰ The FRG sought a *modus vivendi* on the basis of recognition of the “existing real situation” in Europe, including Soviet hegemony over the East bloc. But this *modus vivendi* should also leave open the option of overcoming the status quo. The Soviet Union, in contrast, was interested in legalizing the European status quo.

The policy of the West German government was not aimed at balancing this “genuine difference of interest” between Bonn and Moscow, but at asserting its own interests.²¹ The Brandt-Scheel government took advantage of the Soviets’ pressing desire for increased economic and technical cooperation and their hopes for convening a European security conference (ESC). Bonn declared its willingness to contribute to meeting these requests. In a confidential note to the chancellor, Egon Bahr wrote, “There will be no ESC without the Federal Republic. This is our leverage.” He continued, “This leverage serves the bilateral renunciation of the use of force,” but it will become “all the weaker, the closer the ESC theoretically comes without us having achieved this bilateral renunciation of force.” He added that a loss of time would mean a “loss of time for the government to take action” on the international and domestic stage. This is why Bahr advocated a “continuation of the initiated policy, and this without haste but swiftly and unwaveringly” as well as negotiations with the Soviet Union. He also wrote that the treaty should be completed by the summer of 1970 at the latest.²²

The chances for quick negotiations were not bad because, in the preparatory stages of the talks, the West German government met Soviet requests for intensified economic cooperation and made two unilateral moves: it signed the nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty and recognized the existence of the GDR as a state. These moves were aimed at emphasizing German goodwill but were also intended to relieve the pressure on two points that were very important to the Soviets. The Soviets were particularly grateful to West Germany for signing the NPT; nonetheless, Gromyko, on Kosygin’s order, subsequently tried, to no avail, to establish a link-up between the negotiations on the treaty and the West German ratification of the NPT.²³

The immediate intervention of Egon Bahr, who replaced Ambassador Allardt as negotiating leader in January 1970, was important for the momentum of the discussion process because it resulted in an extension of the basis of negotiations. The point was no longer to reach “a *concrete* agreement on *limited* aspects of the renunciation of force,” as Allardt had been instructed, but rather to work out the guidelines with the leading Eastern power.²⁴ This discussion aimed at paving the way for a treaty with the Soviet Union, but also for follow-up treaties with other members of the Warsaw Pact, including the GDR. With this approach, the Brandt-Scheel government took into account the Kremlin’s willingness to accept the grand coalition’s proposal for an agreement on the renunciation of force as a basis for negotiations. It also realized that the desired treaties with the Soviet Union’s allies could hardly be concluded without a previous agreement with Moscow. By the same token, there was reason to assume that an agreement with the Soviet Union would exert pressure

on the GDR to follow suit and give up its maximum demands if it wanted to avoid continued isolation in foreign policy. At the beginning of February 1970, Bahr persuaded his Soviet interlocutors to attempt to take stock of all previous talks in order to maintain pressure on the GDR and to not restrict German-Soviet negotiations to bilateral questions. He presented a so-called non-paper, the basic version of the "Bahr paper" that became public later. It contained a list of questions that needed to be discussed and settled.²⁵ They were put in the context of a treaty with Moscow and follow-up treaties with Poland, Czechoslovakia, and the GDR. The fact that these envisioned treaties were an "overall entity" was also accepted in the final version of the paper that was agreed upon with the Soviet Union. It summarized the German-Soviet exchange of opinion in ten guiding principles and was actually the basis for the text of the treaty and the closely linked joint declaration of intent by both sides.²⁶

Before the treaty was completed, however, both sides had to find a solution to their previously mentioned "genuine conflicting interests." The "dominant dual question" in the negotiations was "how and to what extent—with respect to content and form—the status quo and a new *modus vivendi* could be put forward in a new treaty."²⁷ This referred primarily to the question of European borders, a very controversial question in the Bahr-Gromyko talks, and, closely linked to it, the question of future relations between the two German states. In order to dampen Soviet expectations concerning this question from the onset, Bahr told the Soviets at Christmas in 1969 that a "recognition of the GDR according to the principles of international law was [. . .] out of the question." Instead, he was striving to "[lay] down the rules that regularize relations" between the two German states, and these rules "had the same binding character as the ones with all other [nations] but with a prospect for German self-determination that depended on the development of history."²⁸ The fact that the new SPD-led German government considered the German question to be open ran counter to the Kremlin's wish for a definite recognition of existing European borders (and thus of its sphere of control extending to the Elbe). For Gromyko, however, Bonn's willingness to make binding its position that it would not use force to bring about a change in borders did not go far enough. Bahr conceded that in principle it was acceptable not to change borders at all, but he also said Germany would not give up its interest in pursuing reunification. He said, "This is impossible and would not have any effectiveness. The border that we want to change is the border with the GDR."²⁹ As much as the Soviets insisted on the affirmation of the unchangeability of the intra-German border in the German-Soviet treaty, Egon Bahr wanted to raise the prospect of the restoration of German unity in the treaty. At this point, a failure of the negotiations could not be ruled out. Gromyko told Bahr,

"If we are unable to agree on borders and relations between the FRG and the GDR, we will be unable to reach an agreement with you." However threatening this may have sounded, his remark "we have patience" nevertheless signaled a willingness for a continuation of the dialogue.³⁰ A few days later in East Berlin, the Soviet foreign minister indicated that there was still a certain latitude for negotiations on the Soviet side. Instead of Ulbricht's *demand* that the inner-German border *must* be mentioned in the treaty, the Soviet comrade expressed the *wish* that it *should* be mentioned.³¹ This was perhaps only a tactical ruse to change the mind of the stubborn East German leader. But the West Germans did not learn about this exchange, and Gromyko remained intransigent in his talks with Bahr.

The problem was solved by excluding it from the treaty. Bahr suggested that the incompatibility of positions on the German question could be noted by both sides and that both sides could give assurances to the other that the treaty would not affect their incompatible goals. Bahr added, "This does not mean a violation of the renunciation of force, and both sides are fully aware of this." He said that instead of putting forward this view in the treaty, the West German side could also "imagine an exchange of letters."³² But the path to "the letter of German unity" was still very long.³³ From the Soviet point of view, an exchange of letters was out of the question. Bahr's proposal that only the Federal Republic would write such a letter was rejected at the outset even though Bahr said that "not even a confirmation of receipt" was necessary.³⁴ Only when the Soviet side made acceptance of such a letter dependent on explicit mention of the *recognition* of borders in the text of the treaty did things get moving again.³⁵ In the end, after tough negotiations, the Soviet text referred to *recognition*, while the German version used the term *acknowledgement* instead.³⁶ The German side could accept this link-up and mention of the inviolability of the intra-German border because the Soviet Union had conceded that adherence to the goal of unification of West and East Germany would not be questioned by the Moscow Treaty.

Gromyko was not willing, however, to make any concessions on the problem of Poland's western border along the Oder-Neisse line.³⁷ He categorically rejected the West German demand that the explicit mention of the final border stood under the Four Powers' reservation of rights and of a peace treaty. He was not impressed by the view that such a position would jeopardize the constitutionality of the treaty in the Federal Republic. The West German government tried to resolve this problem by stressing that it wanted to put greater emphasis on the article on the European borders by "concretizing the article on the renunciation of force [. . .] with a phrase linking both articles."³⁸ Walter Scheel told his counterpart that this "border article" should mean "the concrete application of the renun-

ciation of force to the sector of territorial integrity and to borders." He gave assurances that it was not the FRG's intention to open the gate to revisionist tendencies, as Gromyko feared. "We respect the territorial integrity and borders in Europe. We do not have any territorial demands and will not raise such demands in the future," Scheel told him.³⁹ But only after relying on the "back channel" between Bonn and Moscow, a personal intervention by Bahr, and a decision of the Politburo of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union did the Soviet side approve this "bridge" between both articles.⁴⁰

At the same time, the German negotiating delegation was interested in pointing in its interpretation of the treaty to the rights of the Four Powers and in expressing its reservations concerning the peace treaty without provoking immediate Soviet protests. In his talks with his Soviet negotiating partner, Scheel said on August 1, 1970, that "without mentioning that a peace treaty is still pending, the treaty will be impossible." Finally, the two foreign ministers coordinated the West German note to the governments of the three Western powers. Gromyko said, "If you address the peace treaty in your letter to the Western powers, I will remain silent." He added, "I will only say what is my position concerning these rights and that this has nothing to do with the treaty."⁴¹ This, then, was the text, couched in diplomatic language, that was sent by the government in Bonn as a "verbal note" to the governments in Washington, London, and Paris.⁴² At the beginning of August 1970, the treaty was finally ready to be signed. In a letter to Brandt, Bahr wrote from Moscow on August 1, 1970, that the "scope of action in the negotiations [. . .] has now been exhausted."⁴³ The first of the treaties with the Eastern European nations, the Moscow Treaty, was signed ten days later. Kosygin and Gromyko signed it for the Soviet Union, and Brandt and Scheel for the Federal Republic of Germany.

Brandt believed the Moscow treaty provided the opportunity not only for more political and economic exchange between the Federal Republic and the Soviet Union and the West and the Soviet Union, but also "though this proved wrong, for a reduction in Soviet armaments."⁴⁴ The German chancellor made efforts to convince the Western allies, especially the Americans, that the treaty, as an important part of his Ostpolitik, and the Western policy of détente were mutually supportive and motivated by the same interest in relaxing the rigid front between the blocs. As Gottfried Niedhart wrote, "If approached in a proper way, Ostpolitik—as an integral part of the Western policy of détente—might influence Soviet politics for the better."⁴⁵ At the same time, Brandt warned against illusions. "Setbacks," he underlined in a letter to Nixon, "are common practice in Soviet tactics."⁴⁶ Furthermore, the West must remain on guard, since it would never know for how long the Soviet Union was prepared

to respect Western interests. Thus Brandt, according to the memoranda and notes from his talks with the Soviet leaders in 1970 and 1971, took note with pleasure of Brezhnev's pledge that Soviet policy did not intend to undermine the Western alliance. As Brandt commented, both sides demonstrated "strict and full loyalty to [their respective] allies" and understood where their "agreements, rapprochements, [and] differences" lay.⁴⁷ At the same time this meant, as Brandt wrote to John J. McCloy, that the conflict between communism and democracy, between the two systems, would go on and remain to be resolved, but without resorting to military force.⁴⁸ By starting a process of confidence-building, the enmity between the West and the East should be transformed in a "conflict under control," as Helmut Schmidt explained in a speech before the Bundestag.⁴⁹

Schmidt, who is not known as a very emotional person given to euphoria, described the Moscow Treaty in a letter to Brandt on August 13, 1970, as a "great step forward," and he hailed the beginning of a "new era" in East-West-relations.⁵⁰ He based his conclusion on the following observations about the agreement and its consequences:

- the treaty did not remove the fundamental differences between communism and democracy;
- the treaty did not result in any need for changes in the relations between Bonn and its Western allies;
- the treaty in no way questioned the dual strategy of security *and* détente, it did not alter German dependence on Western support and the solid safeguard of NATO, but it also made evident that Ostpolitik was an independent German initiative and that the Brandt-Scheel government was a driving force of détente;
- and not to forget: "the treaty left room to manoeuvre with respect to peaceful change of the European status quo."⁵¹

The concept of the inviolability of borders laid down in the Moscow Treaty—in contrast to the unchangeability of borders that the Soviet side had long demanded—was accepted in all subsequent treaties with the Eastern European nations as well as the in so-called Letter on German Unity that was added to the Moscow Treaty. This marks the most important success of the new Ostpolitik and intra-German policy. The government had succeeded in putting forward in a treaty the prospect for the restoration of German unity.⁵² In addition, by recognizing the status quo and thus Soviet dominance in the East bloc, the SPD-FDP government had, as paradoxical as it may sound, opened up the possibility of influencing the GDR and of improving the situation in West Berlin through the hegemonic power in the Eastern alliance. The government in Bonn subsequently made wide use of this new ability.⁵³

The new Ostpolitik was basically an intra-German policy, or, in the words of Gottfried Niedhart, a new, peaceful form of revisionism.⁵⁴ As Timothy Garton Ash has written, "To diminish the consequences of the division of Germany and Berlin was not the only but the most important goal of the new beginning which the Bonn government sought with the Soviet Union and Eastern Europe."⁵⁵ In this respect, relations with the USSR and the Moscow Treaty were of decisive significance.

Notes

¹ Interview with Willy Brandt by Guenter Gaus, 25.9.1964, in *Auf dem Weg nach vorn. Willy Brandt und die SPD 1947–1972*, ed., on behalf of the Bundeskanzler-Willy-Brandt-Stiftung (Federal Chancellor Willy Brandt Foundation) by Helga Grebing, Gregor Schoellgen, and Heinrich August Winkler (Bonn 2000 [Willy Brandt–Berliner Ausgabe, vol. 4]), 319.

² Egon Bahr, *Zu meiner Zeit* (Munich 1996), 226; Andreas Vogtmeier, *Egon Bahr und die deutsche Frage. Zur Entwicklung der sozialdemokratischen Ost- und Deutschlandpolitik vom Kriegsende bis zur Vereinigung*, Politik- und Gesellschaftsgeschichte, vol. 44 (Bonn 1996), 101–2; see also Dieter S. Lutz, ed., *Das Udenkbare denken. Festschrift für Egon Bahr zum siebzigsten Geburtstag* (Baden-Baden, 1992).

³ See, for example, Gottfried Niedhart/Reiner Alpert, "Neue Ostpolitik und das Bild der Sowjetunion von 1968 bis 1975," *Aus Politik und Zeitgeschichte* (1994): 14, 27–8; Werner Link, "Außen- und Deutschlandpolitik in der Ära Brandt 1969–1974," in Karl Dietrich Bracher, Wolfgang Jaeger, Werner Link, *Republik im Wandel 1969–1974. Die Ära Brandt* vol. 5/I, Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (Stuttgart 1986), 323–38; Richard Loewenthal, *Vom Kalten Krieg zur Ostpolitik* (Stuttgart, 1974); Heinrich Potthoff, *Im Schatten der Mauer. Deutschlandpolitik 1961 bis 1990* (Berlin, 1999), 77–81.

⁴ See, for example, Timothy Garton Ash, *Im Namen Europas. Deutschland und der geteilte Kontinent* (Munich/Vienna 1993), 84–6; Klaus Hildebrand, *Von Erhard zur Grossen Koalition 1963–1969*, vol. 4, Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (Stuttgart, 1984), 323–38; Peter Graf Kielmansegg, *Nach der Katastrophe. Eine Geschichte des geteilten Deutschland* (Berlin 2000), 194–6; Werner Link, "Die Entstehung des Moskauer Vertrags im Lichte neuer Archivalien," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 49 (2001): 2, 300–4; Potthoff, *Im Schatten der Mauer*, 57–9, 71–2.

⁵ See, for example, Ash, *Im Namen Europas*, 87, 90; Potthoff, *Im Schatten der Mauer*, 59–61, 75; Guenter Schmid, *Politik des Ausverkaufs? Die Deutschlandpolitik der Regierung Brandt/Scheel* (Munich, 1975), 22; see also Henry A. Kissinger, *Memoiren 1968–1973* (Munich, 1979), 109–11, 441–442.

⁶ Memorandum of the conversation between Gromyko and Winzer, September 1, 1969, in *SAPMO-BArch*, DY 30, J IV 2/202/81; see also Hans Georg Lehmann, *Öffnung nach Osten. Die Ostreise Helmut Schmidts und die Entstehung der Ost- und Entspannungspolitik* (Bonn, 1984), 160; Potthoff, *Im Schatten der Mauer*, 76–7.

⁷ See Arnulf Baring (with the assistance of Manfred Goertemaker), *Machtwechsel. Die Ära Brandt-Scheel* (Munich, 1984), 211–13, 218–223, 226–229; Hildebrand, *Von Erhard zur Grossen Koalition*, 339–52.

⁸ Niedhart/Alpert, *Neue Ostpolitik und das Bild der Sowjetunion*, 28.

⁹ Speech given by Willy Brandt at a common meeting of the SPD executive, party council and control commission, August 25, 1969, and summary of the talks in Moscow given by Willy Brandt at a meeting of the SPD executive, September 14, 1970, in *AdsD*, SPD-Parteivorstand, PV-Protokolle.

¹⁰ Speech given by Willy Brandt at a common meeting of the SPD executive, party council and control commission, November 1–2, 1968, in *AdsD*, SPD-Parteivorstand, PV-Protokolle; see also, for example, the memorandum of conversation between Kurt Georg Kiesinger and Semen Zarakin, September 2, 1968, the memorandum of conversation between Willy Brandt and Michel Debré, September 7, 1968, the memorandum of conversation between Willy Brandt and Andrej Gromyko, October 8, 1968, and notes taken by Dirk Oncken at a special meeting of NATO ambassadors, October 17, 1968, in *Akten zur Auswärtigen Politik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (AAPD [Files on the Foreign Policy of the Federal Republic of Germany]) 1968*, ed. Hans-Peter Schwarz and others, Munich 1999, 1069–76, 1103–8, 1290–3 and 1351–3; Willy Brandt, *Begegnungen und Einsichten. Die Jahre 1960–1975* (Hamburg 1976), 253–6, 285–6; Bahr, *Zu meiner Zeit*, 210.

¹¹ Interview with Willy Brandt, in *Fuldaer Zeitung*, October 20, 1970; Willy Brandt to Wolfgang Kiehne, March 15, 1972, in *AdsD*, WBA, A 8/28.

¹² Brandt, *Begegnungen und Einsichten*, 256–61.

¹³ Valentin Falin, *Politische Erinnerungen* (Munich, 1995), 51–62 (quotation: 61); memorandum of conversation between Willy Brandt and Andrej Gromyko, September 22, 1969, in *AAPD 1969*, Munich 2000, 1057–63; Niedhart/Alpert, *Neue Ostpolitik und das Bild der Sowjetunion*, 31.

¹⁴ Baring, *Machtwechsel*, 234–5; see also Allardt to German Foreign Office, August 25, 1969, in *AAPD 1969*, 861–3; Falin, *Politische Erinnerungen*, 55–6; Hans Dietrich Genscher, *Erinnerungen* (Berlin, 1995), 98–9; Helmut Allardt, *Moskauer Tagebuch. Beobachtungen, Notizen, Erlebnisse* (Duesseldorf/Vienna, 1973), 204.

¹⁵ Summary on the talks of a SPD delegation (Schmidt, Möller, Franke, Selbmann) in Moscow given by Helmut Schmidt at a common meeting of the SPD executive, party council and control commission, August 25, 1969, in *AdsD*, SPD-Parteivorstand, PV-Protokolle; see also notes by Hans Ruete on the visit of the SPD delegation in Moscow, September 15, 1969, in *AAPD 1969*, 1001–8; Helmut Schmidt, *Menschen und Mächte* (Berlin, 1987), 25–6; Alex Moeller, *Genosse Generaldirektor* (Munich/Zurich, 1978), 384–401; Falin, *Politische Erinnerungen*, 56–7; Allardt, *Moskauer Tagebuch*, 208–9.

¹⁶ Helmut Allardt to the German Foreign Office, October 27, 1969, Willy Brandt to Alexej Kossygin, November 19, 1969, and notes by Egon Bahr for Horst Ehmke and Willy Brandt on a conversation with Lednev, December 24, 1969, in *AAPD 1969*, 1162–3, 1313–5 and 1465–6; Wjatscheslaw Keworkow, *Der geheime Kanal. Moskau, der KGB und die Bonner Ostpolitik* (Berlin, 1995); Bahr, *Zu meiner Zeit*, 277–8, 293–8; see also Detlef Nakath, “Gewaltverzicht und Gleichberechtigung. Zur Parallelität der deutsch-sowjetischen Gespräche und der deutsch-deutschen Gipfeltreffen in Erfurt und Kassel im Frühjahr,” 1970, *Deutschland Archiv* 31 (1998): 2, 198–9; Potthoff, *Im Schatten der Mauer*, 82–3.

¹⁷ Speech given by Walter Scheel in the German Bundestag, January 15, 1970.

¹⁸ Loewenthal, *Vom Kalten Krieg zur Ostpolitik*, 2.

¹⁹ Notes by Egon Bahr on European security, June 27, 1968, and notes by Egon Bahr on *Ostpolitik* after the invasion of Czechoslovakia, October 1, 1968, in *AAPD 1968*, 796–814 and 1278–81; notes by Egon Bahr on a framework treaty with the GDR, September 18, 1969, and notes by Egon Bahr on the foreign policy of a forthcoming Federal government, September 21, 1969, in *AAPD 1969*, 1030–41 and 1047–57; see also Bahr, *Zu meiner Zeit*, 226–9, 243–7; Ash, *Im Namen Europas*, 104–6; Link, *Die Entstehung des Moskauer Vertrags*, 304–6; Vogtmeier, *Egon Bahr*, 102–118, 121–2.

²⁰ Notes by Egon Bahr on a framework treaty with the GDR, September 18, 1969, in *AAPD 1969*, 1041.

²¹ *Ibid.*, 1040. Already one year earlier Bahr’s analysis of the political situation after the Soviet intervention in Czechoslovakia and his concept for a new *Ostpolitik* focused on this “genuine difference of interests” between the USSR and the FRG (notes by Egon Bahr on *Ostpolitik* after the invasion of Czechoslovakia, October 1, 1968, in *AAPD 1968*, 1279); see also Link, *Die Entstehung des Moskauer Vertrags*, 304.

²² Notes by Egon Bahr for Horst Ehmke and Willy Brandt on the political situation before continuing the talks in Moscow, January 14, 1970, in *AAPD 1970* (Munich, 2001), 20–3 (quotation: 22).

²³ For more details, see Link, *Außen- und Deutschlandpolitik in der Ära Brandt*, 166–9; Link, *Die Entstehung des Moskauer Vertrags*, 307–9.

²⁴ Walter Scheel to Helmut Allardt, December 6, 1969, in *AAPD 1969*, 1379–1383 (quotation: 1380); Notes by Egon Bahr for Horst Ehmke and Willy Brandt on the political situation before continuing the talks in Moscow, January 14, 1970, in *AAPD 1970*, 21; see also Allardt, *Moskauer Tagebuch*, 259, 264–7; for details about the negotiation process see *ibid.*, 259–295; Bahr, *Zu meiner Zeit*, 277–9, 283–338; Falin, *Politische Erinnerungen*, 71–125; Ash, *Im Namen Europas*, 107–15; Link, *Außen- und Deutschlandpolitik in der Ära Brandt*, 179–90; Link, *Die Entstehung des Moskauer Vertrags*, 307–323; Vogtmeier, *Egon Bahr*, 127–145; a great deal of documents were published in *AAPD 1970*.

²⁵ Link, *Die Entstehung des Moskauer Vertrags*, 312–4; see also Egon Bahr to Walter Scheel, February 6, 1970, in *AAPD 1970*, 171–3.

²⁶ The text of the so called Bahr paper, the Moscow treaty and the closely linked joint declaration of intent by both sides were published in *Zehn Jahre Deutschlandpolitik. Die Entwicklung der Beziehungen zwischen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik 1969–1979* (Bonn, 1980), 156–8; *AAPD 1970*, 822–4; see also: Egon Bahr, *Sicherheit für und vor Deutschland. Vom Wandel durch Annäherung zur Europäischen Sicherheitsgemeinschaft* (Munich/Vienna, 1991), 36.

²⁷ Link, *Die Entstehung des Moskauer Vertrags*, 314; see also Ash, *Im Namen Europas*, 108.

²⁸ Notes by Egon Bahr for Horst Ehmke and Willy Brandt on a conversation with Lednev, 24.12.1969, in *AAPD 1969*, 1465–6 (quotation: 1466).

²⁹ Memorandum of the conversation between Egon Bahr and Andrey Gromyko, January 30, 1970, in *AAPD 1970*, 105–18, in particular 106–7, 112–7 (quotation: 113).

³⁰ *Ibid.*, 117.

³¹ Memorandum of the conversation between Walter Ulbricht and Andrey Gromyko, February 24, 1970, in *SAPMO-BArch*, DY 30 J IV 2/201/1108.

³² Memorandum of the conversation between Egon Bahr and Andrey Gromyko, February 17, 1970, in *AAPD 1970*, 256–60 (quotations: 259); see also notes by Egon Bahr for Horst Ehmke and Willy Brandt on a treaty with the USSR, April 17, 1970, *ibid.*, 614–7, in particular 616.

³³ For details, see Link, *Die Entstehung des Moskauer Vertrags*, 317–8; Vogtmeier, *Egon Bahr*, 133–40.

³⁴ Memorandum of the conversation between Egon Bahr and Andrey Gromyko, March 10, 1970, in *AAPD 1970*, 417–30, in particular 421–429 (quotation: 422).

³⁵ See in particular Egon Bahr to Willy Brandt, May 14, 1970, Egon Bahr to Walter Scheel, 15. and May 18, 1970, notes by Egon Bahr on his conversation with Valentin Falin, May 20, 1970, memorandum of the conversation between Egon Bahr and Andrey Gromyko, May 20, 1970, Egon Bahr to Walter Scheel, May 21, 1970, Walter Scheel to Egon Bahr, May 21, 1970, and memorandum of the conversation between Egon Bahr and Andrey Gromyko, May 22, 1970, Egon Bahr to Walter Scheel, May 22, 1970, in *AAPD 1970*, 770–2, in particular 771, 776–778, 802–3, 821–2, 825–830 and 846–56; see also Bahr, *Zu meiner Zeit*, 315–321; Falin, *Politische Erinnerungen*, 88–100; Joachim Peckert, *Zeitenwende zum Frieden. Ostpolitik miterlebt und mitgestaltet* (Herford, 1990), 162.

³⁶ *Zehn Jahre Deutschlandpolitik*, 157.

³⁷ Link, *Die Entstehung des Moskauer Vertrags*, 318–20.

³⁸ Notes by Berndt von Staden on the Soviet-German agreement on the renunciation of force, July 6, 1970, in *AAPD 1970*, 1121–30 (quotation: 1124).

³⁹ Notes by Walter Scheel on his talks with Andrey Gromyko, August 2, 1970, *ibid.*, 1337–41 (quotations: 1340).

⁴⁰ Egon Bahr to Willy Brandt, August 1, 1970, in *AdsD*, WBA, A 8/2 (also in *AAPD 1970*, 1335–37, in particular 1336); notes by Walter Scheel on his talks with Andrey Gromyko, August 2, 1970, *ibid.*, 1337–41, in particular 1341; see also Bahr, *Zu meiner Zeit*, 328–9; *Zehn Jahre Deutschlandpolitik*, 156.

⁴¹ Memorandum of the conversation between Walter Scheel and Andrey Gromyko, August 1, 1970, in *AAPD 1970*, 1328–35 (quotations: 1334); Link, *Die Entstehung des Moskauer Vertrags*, 320–1.

⁴² *AAPD 1970*, 1426, n. 2; see also Willy Brandt to Richard M. Nixon, August 7, 1970, in NARA, Nixon Presidential Materials Staff, National Security Council, 1969–1974, Presidential Correspondence 1969–74, Box 753.

⁴³ Egon Bahr to Willy Brandt, August 1, 1970, in *AdsD*, WBA, A 8/2 (also in *AAPD 1970*, 1336); for the answer by Brandt, August 3, 1970, and its drafts see *AdsD*, WBA, A 8/2.

⁴⁴ Gottfried Niedhart, “The Federal Republic’s *Ostpolitik* and the United States: Initiatives and Constraints,” in *The United States and the European Alliance since 1945*, ed. Kathleen Burk and Melvyn Stokes, (Oxford/New York 1999), 301; see also handwritten notes taken by Willy Brandt on his talks with Leonid Brezhnev and Andrey Kosygin in Moscow, August 12–13, 1970, in *AdsD*, Dep. Egon Bahr, 429A; handwritten notes by Willy Brandt for his talks with Leonid Brezhnev in Oreanda, no date [1971], in *ibid.*, WBA, A 8/92; interview with Willy Brandt, in *Der Spiegel*, August 17, 1970; Willy Brandt, *Erinnerungen* (Berlin, 1990), 195–206, in particular 204–5; Brandt, *Begegnungen und Einsichten*, 428–455.

⁴⁵ Niedhart, *The Federal Republic’s Ostpolitik*, 289–91, 297–301 (quotation: 301); see, for example, memorandum of the conversation between Egon Bahr and Henry A. Kissinger, August 17, 1970, and memorandum of the conversation between Horst Ehmke and Henry A. Kissinger, December 21, 1970, in NARA, Nixon Presidential Materials Staff, National Security Council, 1969–1974, Country Files, Box 684 and Box 690, and *AAPD 1970*, 1487–91 and 2305–10; see also Bahr, *Zu meiner Zeit*, 336; Horst Ehmke, *Mittendrin. Von der Grossen Koalition zur Deutschen Einheit* (Berlin 1994), 140–2; Kissinger, *Memoiren*, 564–70, in particular 569.

⁴⁶ Willy Brandt to Richard M. Nixon, 14.10.1970, in NARA, Nixon Presidential Materials Staff, National Security Council, 1969–1974, Presidential Correspondence 1969–74, Box 753.

⁴⁷ Summary of the talks in Moscow given by Willy Brandt at a meeting of the SPD executive, September 14, 1970, in *AdsD*, SPD-Parteivorstand, PV-Protokolle; handwritten notes by Willy Brandt on his talks with Leonid Brezhnev in Oreanda, September 18, 1971, in *ibid.*, WBA, A 8/92.

⁴⁸ Willy Brandt to John J. McCloy, March 24, 1971, in *Amherst College Library*, Archives and Special Collections, Re: John J. McCloy (AC 1916) Papers, Series 14 (Germany), Box GY 1, folder 27.

⁴⁹ Speech given by Helmut Schmidt in the German Bundestag, February 14, 1972.

⁵⁰ Helmut Schmidt to Willy Brandt, August 13, 1970, in *AdsD*, WBA, A 8/170.

⁵¹ Memorandum by the planning staff of the German Defense Ministry for Helmut Schmidt, August 28, 1970, quoted in: Niedhart, *The Federal Republic’s Ostpolitik*, 308, n. 49.

⁵² See, for example, Willy Brandt to Olof Palme, June 15, 1970, in *AAB*, Olof Palme Archiv, 3.2/051 B; see also Link, *Die Entstehung des Moskauer Vertrags*, 318, 323–4, 330–1; Ash, *Im Namen Europas*, 113–4.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, 116–7, 125.

⁵⁴ Niedhart, *The Federal Republic’s Ostpolitik*, 290.

⁵⁵ Ash, *Im Namen Europas*, 189.

THE TREATY OF WARSAW: THE WARSAW PACT CONTEXT

Douglas Selvage

The standard Cold-War era narrative of the negotiations leading to the Treaty of Warsaw of December 1970 is quite simple. The Polish communists feared that a resurgent West Germany, which refused to recognize the postwar Polish-German border, the Oder-Neisse line, would one day seek to revise it by force. Fearful for Poland's security, they demanded that the FRG and the West in general recognize the border as permanent. Finally, after nineteen years of waiting on the Polish side, West German Foreign Minister Willy Brandt, in his capacity as Chairman of the Social Democratic Party (SPD), proposed in March 1968 that Bonn "respect or otherwise recognize" the Oder-Neisse Line until a final German peace treaty. In response, on May 17, 1969, Poland's communist leader, Wladyslaw Gomulka, offered to negotiate an agreement in which Bonn would recognize the border. After Brandt's election to the chancellorship in the fall of 1969, Bonn and Warsaw entered negotiations. The result was Bonn's de facto recognition of the Oder-Neisse line in the Treaty of Warsaw of December 1970.¹

This traditional portrait of the origins of the Warsaw Treaty is accurate to the extent that it underlines both communist Poland's fears of a West German threat to its borders and the significance of the break between Brandt's Ostpolitik and previous West German policy towards Poland. Research using newly opened Polish and East German sources suggests, however, that this portrayal is inaccurate for two major reasons. First, Poland was not a passive actor waiting for Bonn's recognition. In fact, it was Poland, more than the GDR, that successfully blocked any substantial improvement in relations between the Soviet bloc and Bonn from 1967 to 1969. When Gomulka finally decided to open up to Bonn in 1969, he entered into a running conflict with the Soviet Union and the GDR over whose interests were to take priority in negotiations with the West Germans. Second, the traditional narrative suggests that the only factor affecting Poland's decision to enter into negotiations with Bonn was Brandt's offer. Available sources, however, suggest that it was not Brandt's offer, but changes within the Warsaw Pact—specifically, the openness of Moscow and East Berlin to negotiations with West Germany—that led Gomulka to break down and respond to Brandt's offer.

My essay will focus on Gomulka's offer in May 1969 to enter into negotiations with Bonn, the offer that culminated in the Treaty of Warsaw

of December 1970. Gomulka's opening to Bonn, I will argue, was determined more by the inner dynamics of the Warsaw Pact than any epiphany on his part with regard to West Germany. Specifically, the GDR's unwillingness to serve as a buffer against German unification, along with Moscow's failure to compel it to do so, led Gomulka to make his historic opening to Bonn. Only the utter failure of Gomulka's hard line towards Bonn within the Warsaw Pact led him to seek improved relations with Bonn.

To understand why Gomulka looked increasingly to the GDR as a buffer state in the mid-1960s, one must begin with the Soviet Union—specifically, the way in which Moscow's actions undermined his German policy goals. Gomulka's greatest concern was the security of Poland's western border, the Oder-Neisse Line. He not only sought Western recognition of the border, delineated at Potsdam, but he also opposed any changes in the East-West balance that might threaten it and encourage German reunification.² A third priority for Gomulka, closely related to the other two, was to prevent any German-Soviet deal at Poland's expense. The Polish leader suffered from a "Rapallo complex" and was paranoid about any Soviet negotiations with the West Germans.³

A turning point came during Khrushchev's last year in power, 1963–4. As Sino-Soviet tensions mounted, Khrushchev spoke more and more about the possibility of a "new Rapallo" with the FRG.⁴ That is, he sought to reduce tensions on Moscow's European front in order to have a free hand for dealing with China.⁵ During a visit to the FRG in the summer of 1964, Khrushchev's son-in-law, Alexei Adzhubei, suggested to West German officials that Moscow was no longer opposed to West German access to nuclear weapons, that concessions could be made at the GDR's expense, and that the Polish border could be revised at some future date.⁶ Polish intelligence succeeded in taping some of Adzhubei's private conversations, and Gomulka provided Khrushchev's opponents in Moscow with a transcript. The transcript was used to discredit Khrushchev and to help justify his removal in October 1964.⁷

Although the new Soviet leaders, Leonid Brezhnev and Alexei Kosygin, openly broke with Khrushchev's policy, Gomulka knew that the geopolitical temptation to reach an accommodation with Bonn still remained as the Sino-Soviet rift escalated.⁸ How could Gomulka prevent or forestall a Soviet-West German accommodation, help preserve Germany's division, and further secure Poland's western border, the Oder-Neisse Line? It was at this point that Gomulka turned to the GDR. He sought to foster a special relationship with the GDR based on common opposition to Soviet concessions to West Germany, for he knew that the East Germans had also opposed Khrushchev's Rapallo policy.⁹ This was no easy matter. Gomulka and the GDR's communist leader, Walter Ul-

Ulbricht, strongly disliked each other, and they had frequently argued in the past over domestic and foreign policy. The GDR itself had only reluctantly recognized the Oder-Neisse Line in 1950, under pressure from the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, the shock of Khrushchev's Rapallo policy led Ulbricht to reconsider the GDR's relations with Poland, and there was a warming trend from 1964 to 1966. Ulbricht praised the Polish communists for limiting their economic and political contacts with West Germany and for calling on Bonn to recognize the GDR.¹⁰

Gomulka, however, wanted more from the East Germans. Since the Berlin Crisis, he had insisted that the GDR integrate itself economically with the Soviet bloc. He wanted the GDR to be bound economically to these countries in the same way that the FRG was bound to the European Economic Community. The GDR's economic integration with the Soviet bloc would not only help Poland raise its productivity and standard of living through new technology, but it would also help maintain Germany's division.¹¹ Gomulka's opposition to German reunification also led him to oppose the GDR's various proposals for German unity, including the SED's proposed exchange of speakers with the West German Social Democrats (SPD) in 1966.¹² Gomulka worried that a wave of nationalism might one day spark German reunification, which would be a threat to Poland's western border. In general, the Polish leader favored *Abgrenzung* between the two German states long before it became an issue in Moscow and East Berlin.

Although Ulbricht praised Poland's increasingly hard line towards West Germany, he was not willing to take the measures Gomulka sought. In 1965, he vetoed a program for closer economic cooperation with Poland because it conflicted with the GDR's ambitious economic goals under the "New Economic System" (*Neues ökonomisches System*, or NÖS), Ulbricht's project to transform the GDR into a leading economic power.¹³ He also proved reluctant to discard East German slogans favoring German unification, lest the West Germans gain a propaganda advantage. Only a second major crisis in the Warsaw Pact's German policy led Ulbricht to reconsider the GDR's relations with Poland.¹⁴ The crisis came in 1966–7 in the form of Bonn's "new Ostpolitik." The FRG offered to conclude renunciation of force agreements with all the Warsaw Pact states, except the GDR, and then it revised the Hallstein Doctrine to permit diplomatic relations with the GDR's allies. Bonn refused, however, to recognize either the GDR or the Oder-Neisse Line. As the other East European states rushed to establish diplomatic relations with Bonn, Poland and the GDR faced the prospect of isolation within their own alliance.¹⁵ The Soviet Union, for its part, offered to negotiate with Bonn over renunciation of force and did not oppose diplomatic relations between the socialist states and West Germany.¹⁶ Only Gomulka's forceful inter-

vention with Brezhnev led the Warsaw Pact to impose three conditions on diplomatic relations with the FRG in February 1967: Bonn's recognition of the GDR, its recognition of the Oder-Neisse Line, and its renunciation of access to nuclear weapons in any form.¹⁷

In response to Gomulka's successful intervention, a grateful Ulbricht finally agreed in principle to wide-ranging economic cooperation with Poland. In the spring of 1967, Poland, the GDR, and Czechoslovakia signed a series of friendship treaties—dubbed the “iron triangle” in the West—that reaffirmed the Warsaw Pact's hard line towards Bonn. On the eve of signing the Polish-East German friendship treaty, Ulbricht committed the GDR to closer economic cooperation with Poland in all areas, including semiconductors and computers. He told Gomulka that the GDR was “removing German unification from the international agenda.”¹⁸ The Soviet Union, for its part, agreed to enforce the Warsaw Pact prohibition on diplomatic relations with Bonn until the FRG recognized the GDR and the Oder-Neisse Line.¹⁹

In the spring of 1967, Gomulka was at the height of his influence within the Soviet bloc. He had succeeded in making recognition of the Oder-Neisse Line a precondition for diplomatic relations with Bonn. The Soviet Union, it seemed, had returned to a hard line towards West Germany: there would be no deals with the FRG at Poland's expense. Most importantly, the GDR had agreed to further separate itself from West Germany and to enter into closer economic cooperation with Poland and its Eastern bloc neighbors. For Gomulka, this was the key to preventing German unification. By the end of 1967, however, Gomulka's arrangements collapsed. The cause was not the smaller Warsaw Pact states, but the GDR and the Soviet Union.

The first blow came in the fall of 1967. Although Ulbricht had every intention of improving economic relations with Poland, he failed to do so. During the summer of 1967, under his orders, the GDR's vice premier, Julius Balkow, negotiated a far-reaching agreement on economic cooperation with Poland.²⁰ East German Premier Willi Stoph approved the agreement and invited his Polish counterpart, Jozef Cyrankiewicz, to East Berlin to sign it.²¹ Problems arose, however, when the final draft crossed the desk of Günter Mittag, Ulbricht's main architect for the NÖS. The agreement, Mittag concluded, did not conform to NÖS criteria and was of questionable economic benefit to the GDR.²² Ulbricht, forced to choose between cooperation with Poland and his pet project, NÖS, chose the latter. Poland rejected a series of revisions proposed by the GDR; Mittag's office had gone so far as to remove a passage calling for a “higher stage” of cooperation with Poland.²³ At the fiftieth anniversary celebrations of the October Revolution in Moscow in November 1967, a bitter confron-

tation ensued. Gomulka allegedly yelled at Ulbricht, "Why don't you buy our industrial products—you treat us like a colony (*Hinterland*)!" Ulbricht allegedly snapped back, "Because you Poles produce such shit!"²⁴ Relations between Poland and East Germany entered a deep freeze from which they would not recover until Gomulka fell from power in December 1970.

The fact that Gomulka, despite Ulbricht's rejection, did not give up on his plans for economic integration with the GDR, demonstrated the importance that he attached to maintaining Germany's division. The Polish leader turned to Moscow for support. Brezhnev was sympathetic; the East Germans, he suggested to Gomulka, were unreasonable in their economic demands.²⁵ In apparent response to Gomulka's warnings about an "economic reunification of Germany," Brezhnev advised Ulbricht in December 1967 to limit intra-German trade to items that were "economically necessary."²⁶ Visibly encouraged by Moscow's response, Poland came forward with a new initiative to bind the GDR economically to the other socialist states: a proposal to reform the Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (Comecon). The Poles called for the adoption of a common, exchangeable currency as a first step towards economic integration in Eastern Europe. Not surprisingly, Ulbricht opposed the idea. He told the Soviets: "With such proposals, I could blow up all of Comecon."²⁷ Still, Moscow offered bland encouragement to Gomulka to pursue his proposal in order to prevent a public rift within the Soviet bloc.

While the GDR backed out of its economic commitments to Poland, Moscow continued its own discussions with Bonn over renunciation of force in 1967–68. In the talks, Moscow betrayed a willingness to compromise with Bonn at the expense of Poland's interests. When Gomulka received Moscow's draft renunciation of force agreement, he was appalled by what he read. After Gomulka had spent months publicly opposing Bonn's attempt to gain recognition of the fact that there were "disputed questions" between the Soviet bloc and Bonn over borders and recognition, the Soviet draft proposal included the phrase "peaceful regulation of *disputed* problems." On May 23, 1967, Gomulka offered his assessment of the Soviet counter-proposal in a letter to Brezhnev. The inclusion of such a phrase in a renunciation of force agreement with Bonn, he warned Brezhnev, would mean that "Poland and other states that signed such declarations would recognize as 'disputed' our western border, along with the GDR's existence as a sovereign German state." The Soviets removed the offending language, but continued their discussions with Bonn.²⁸

The GDR responded to Moscow's continuing talks with Bonn with its own initiative: a draft agreement for relations between the two German states. The GDR's proposal was in technical violation of the Warsaw

agreement because it did not demand that Bonn recognize the Oder-Neisse Line. Although Brezhnev approved the GDR's draft, Poland intervened, and Moscow then compelled the East Germans to include the Polish border issue.²⁹ Bonn, for its part, rejected the East German proposal, but continued its negotiations with Moscow over renunciation of force.

Summing up, by the end of 1967, Gomulka's policy had failed. Although Moscow had blocked the other socialist states from establishing diplomatic relations with Bonn, it was continuing its own talks with Bonn regarding renunciation of force, and these talks threatened to end in a compromise contrary to Polish interests. At the same time, the GDR had rejected economic integration with Poland and seemed oblivious to the danger of closer economic ties with Bonn. The GDR had also undertaken its own initiative to normalize relations with Bonn, without any consideration for the Oder-Neisse Line.

Given the relative openness of both the Soviet Union and the GDR to negotiations with Bonn, why did Gomulka persist in his hard line towards West Germany? After the Cold War, West German journalist Hansjakob Stehle revealed a possible reason: Gomulka had not been informed about the efforts of Willy Brandt's trusted lieutenant, Egon Bahr, to make secret contacts with Warsaw in January 1968. (Bahr suggested to a Polish diplomat in Vienna that Bonn might recognize the Polish border up to the point of German reunification.)³⁰ Although Gomulka was not informed about Bahr's attempted contact until over a year later, other considerations, I believe, prevented Poland from considering negotiations with Bonn in early 1968. After all, Brandt publicly offered at the Nuremberg convention of the SPD in January 1968 "to respect or otherwise recognize" the Polish border until a German peace treaty; Gomulka certainly knew about Brandt's speech. One likely reason why Poland did not enter into talks with Bonn was because Gomulka feared that if Poland wavered in its hard line, the Soviets, the GDR, and the other socialist states would have used it as an excuse to enter into their own negotiations with West Germany. Furthermore, maintaining Germany's division was a higher priority for Gomulka in early 1968 than Bonn's recognition of the Oder-Neisse Line.³¹ The key to improving Polish-West German relations, Gomulka repeatedly told the Soviets, was not Bonn's recognition of the Oder-Neisse Line, but its recognition of the GDR.

Other factors also prevented Gomulka from reconsidering his hard line towards West Germany in early 1968. In March, the "anti-Zionist campaign" began.³² The "Partisans," a faction of the Polish communist party, purged alleged Jews and reformers from the party's ranks in a bid to take power. Poland's veteran foreign minister, Adam Rapacki, resigned in protest when the campaign spread to the Polish foreign min-

istry; it would have been difficult at that point for any diplomatic contacts with Bonn to have come to fruition.³³ Moreover, the “Partisans” sought to outbid Gomulka in nationalistic rhetoric; they linked the Jews and Germans together in an alleged international conspiracy against Poland.³⁴ Any offer by Gomulka to normalize relations with Bonn would have been denounced in early 1968 as betrayal. At the same time, the reforms of the Prague Spring in Czechoslovakia were threatening to spill over into Poland and undermine Gomulka’s rule. Gomulka joined Ulbricht in harshly criticizing Alexander Dubcek and the Czechoslovakian communists for their efforts to normalize relations with Bonn. Both Ulbricht and Gomulka in particular were pushing the Soviets to intervene militarily in Czechoslovakia.³⁵ To Gomulka’s chagrin, Brezhnev wavered; he also did not seem to oppose Prague’s growing relations with West Germany. The Soviets finally joined both Poland and the GDR in publicly denouncing Prague’s contacts with Bonn in June 1968, only weeks before the invasion.³⁶ Even then, Gromyko made clear to the GDR Moscow’s continuing interest in talks with West German Foreign Minister Willy Brandt and other SPD officials.³⁷

In the autumn of 1968, Gomulka might have made an opening to West Germany, but he did not. He, along with Ulbricht, clearly hoped that the invasion of Czechoslovakia would dampen Moscow’s enthusiasm for détente with West Germany. For the Soviets, however, the invasion of Czechoslovakia was truly a “traffic accident on the road to détente.” They hastened to re-establish contact with Willy Brandt.³⁸

Three developments at the end of 1968 and beginning of 1969 led Gomulka to reconsider Poland’s hard line and to make his opening to West Germany. First, the Soviets made clear that they would continue their own talks with Bonn over renunciation of force. Since the Soviets were clearly going to negotiate with Bonn on matters of interest to Poland, including recognition of the Oder-Neisse Line, Gomulka wanted Poland to have its own, parallel negotiations.³⁹

The decisive factor in Gomulka’s opening to Bonn was not the Soviet Union, however; it was East Germany. Gomulka failed in his larger goal of binding the GDR economically to the Soviet bloc. In December 1968, the GDR concluded a long-term trade agreement with Bonn; this was the second factor that led Gomulka to make his opening to Bonn. The intra-German trade agreement provided for a doubling of West German exports and a tripling of East German exports over six years. The increased level of trade was to be fueled, in part, by a “swing” credit of DM 350 million from West Germany.⁴⁰ Gomulka warned the Soviets that if the GDR’s economic “integration” with the FRG continued at such a pace, it would lead to German reunification. At a meeting with Brezhnev and Kosygin in Moscow on March 3, 1969, Gomulka reiterated—perhaps for

the last time—that the future of the GDR was of greater concern to Poland than the Oder-Neisse Line. He told the Soviets: “Brandt has said . . . that the FRG would be prepared to recognize [our] borders until the unification of Germany. On this basis we could enter into talks, and as a result we could have diplomatic relations with both the GDR and the FRG. We do not want, however, to create any diversions [*spekulacja*]. Our stance with regard to Germany derives from other sources. We believe that the loss of the GDR would mean crossing out the results of World War II and would open the way to a great offensive against our camp.” Gomulka demanded that Moscow not only take action to compel the GDR to cooperate more closely with Poland in the economic realm, but also to support Poland’s proposal for Comecon reform.⁴¹ Despite Gomulka’s lobbying in Moscow, Poland’s initiative for Comecon reform—aimed at East Germany—met with defeat at a Soviet-bloc summit in April 1969. Ulbricht, backed by the Romanians, effectively vetoed it. The Soviets, wanting to preserve a façade of unity, substituted a meaningless declaration in favor of multilateral cooperation. For Gomulka, this was the third and final straw.⁴² Less than a month later, he made his offer to Brandt to negotiate a border.

At a meeting of the Polish Politburo on June 2, 1969, Gomulka explained the grounds behind his opening to West Germany. He complained in general about the movement within the Eastern bloc towards improving economic and political relations with Bonn, but he reserved his harshest criticism for the Soviet Union and the GDR. In 1967, the Warsaw Pact, he said, had agreed to act in a unified fashion towards the FRG, but the Soviets had decided to negotiate an improvement of relations with Bonn on a bilateral basis. Poland, he implied, could not afford to be left behind, so it would enter into its own talks with the FRG. Gomulka then added, “There is also the matter of the GDR . . . What’s going on there should not come onto the agenda. Ulbricht’s conception boils down to this: there’s no use linking [the GDR] economically with Poland, there’s no use talking about economic integration. . . . They reject close economic bonds, they have a policy of tightening cooperation with the FRG. One can say that the GDR is joining ‘the six’ [the EEC] through the FRG. . . . It is known that extensive economic relations also lead to political relations, and a process of merging follows. This creates the prospect that not only economic rapprochement will follow, but also unification. We should not permit this to come onto the agenda.”⁴³

To summarize, the danger of a future unification of Germany, caused by the GDR’s economic policies, along with the threat of diminished sovereignty for Poland, resulting from Soviet-West German negotiations, led Gomulka to make his opening to Bonn. If the Soviet Union had not been so open to Brandt’s overtures, or if the GDR had agreed to economic integration with Poland, Gomulka would have likely vetoed or post-

poned any negotiations with West Germany. The Comecon summit in April 1969 had made clear, however, that the economic future of the Soviet bloc would not be based on economic integration, but on an economic opening to the West. For Gomulka, this meant the “economic reunification” of Germany and the potential collapse of the Soviet bloc. He had to rescue what he could, while he could, for a communist Poland.

The potential unification of Germany and Moscow’s perceived willingness to compromise Poland’s security interests compelled Gomulka to obtain an independent West German guarantee for Poland’s western border. Gomulka achieved his goal with the Treaty of Warsaw of December 1970. He obtained de facto recognition of the border in a bilateral treaty with the FRG at a time when the future of the border was threatened—in his opinion—through the policies of the Soviet Union and the GDR. If the Warsaw treaty was a victory for Brandt, then it was even more so for Gomulka; it was his crowning achievement, attained less than two weeks before his fall from power on December 20, 1970.

Notes

¹ Peter Bender, *Die “Neue Ostpolitik” und ihre Folgen: Vom Mauerbau bis zur Vereinigung*, 3rd Revised and Enlarged Edition (München, 1995), 152–53, 179–80.

² Douglas Selvage, “Poland, the German Democratic Republic and the ‘German Question,’ 1955–1967,” (Ph.D. Diss., Yale University, 1998), *passim*.

³ On Gomulka’s “Rapallo Complex,” see Piotr Madajczyk, *Na drodze do pojednania* (Warsaw, 1994), 37; Janusz Rolicki, *Edward Gierek: Przerwana dekada* (Warsaw, 1990), 121; Jerzy Eisler and Stanisław Trepczyński, *Grudzień ’70 wewnątrz Białego Domu* (Warsaw, 1991), 63–4; Piotr Kostikow and Bohdan Roliński, *Widziane z Kremla: Moskwa-Warszawa, Gra o Polskę* (Warsaw, 1992), 56; Interview with Andrzej Werblan, December 3, 1993; Interview with Stefan Jedrychowski, September 18, 1994. The Polish leader had reason to be suspicious. During the 1940s and 1950s, the Soviets had manipulated their continuing support for the Oder-Neisse Line to extort everything from Poland from cheap coal to adherence to Moscow’s line in foreign policy. Privately, Gomulka complained that Stalin had shifted Poland’s borders westward in order to “have Poland on a leash.” Stanisław Mikołajczyk, *The Rape of Poland: The Pattern of Soviet Aggression* (New York, 1948), 140–42; Andrzej Korzon, *Kłopotliwy satelita. Stosunki polsko-sowieckie 1947–1957*, in Andrzej Koryn, ed., *Rola i miejsce Polski w Europie, 1914–1957* (Warsaw, 1994), especially 159–61. For Gomulka’s comment, see Mięczysław F. Rakowski, *Dzienniki polityczne, 1963–1966* (Warszawa, 1999), 198.

⁴ On Khrushchev’s frequent discussion of Rapallo, see Averell Harriman’s telegram from Moscow to the Department of State, July 27, 1963, in *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1961–1963* (henceforth, *FRUS*), Vol. XV (Washington, DC, 1994), 540; Telegram, Jaszczuk, Moscow, to Naszkowski, July 11, 1963, in Archiwum Ministerstwa Spraw Zagranicznych (AMSZ), Zespół depeš, w. 94, t. 604; and Gomulka’s speech to the II Plenum of the PZPR in November 1964 in Stenogram II Plenarnego Posiedzenia Komitetu Centralnego Polskiej Zjednoczonej Partii Robotniczej, November 20–1, 1964, in Archiwum Akt Nowych (AAN), PZPR Central Committee (KC PZPR), sygn. 1265, 337–9.

⁵ Selvage, “Poland, the German Democratic Republic and the ‘German Question,’” Chapter 4; idem., “The Warsaw Pact and Nuclear Nonproliferation, 1963–1965,” *Cold War International History Project Working Paper* (Washington, DC: Cold War International History Project, 2001).

⁶ "Kampf den Mongolen," *Der Spiegel* (August 5, 1964): 17–20; Daniel Kosthorst, "Sowjetische Geheimpolitik in Deutschland? Chruschtschow und die Adschubej-Mission 1964," *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 44 (1996), 279; Piotr Kostikow and Bohdan Roliński, *Widziane z Kremla: Moskwa-Warszawa, Gra o Polskę* (Warsaw, 1992), 17; Szymon Jakubowicz, Notatka z rozmów z towarzyszem Adz'ubem [Memorandum from a Conversation with Comrade Adzhubei], October 12, 1964, in AAN, KC PZPR, Kancelaria Sekretariatu, 237/V-532, 46–9.

⁷ Aleksej Adzhubej, *Gestürzte Hoffnung: Meine Erinnerungen an Chruschtschow*, transl. Susanne Roedel (Berlin, 1990), 341–42; Sergei Khrushchev, *Khrushchev on Khrushchev* (Boston, Toronto, London, 1990), 132–33; Kostikow and Roliński, *Widziane z Kremla*, 17; interview, Andrzej Werblan, December 3, 1993. In 1964, Werblan was director of the Division for Science and Education in the Polish Central Committee.

⁸ Gomułka's close associate, Artur Starewicz, told Mieczysław Rakowski in 1966: After all, . . . it's clear that when Khrushchev came forward in the summer of 1964 with his initiative to improve relations with Bonn, he was not alone. Certain circles stood behind him. Khrushchev is gone, but these people remain." Rakowski, *Dzienniki polityczne, 1963–66*, 370.

⁹ In October 1964, Hermann Axen, head of the International Division of the SED Central Committee, had criticized Khrushchev in talks with Soviet diplomats for his failure to consult with the SED before planning a visit to Bonn. Leiter, Abteilung Internationale Verbindungen ZK der SED, to Ulbricht, October 27, 1964, in: Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der ehemaligen DDR im Bundesarchiv (SAPMO-BA), J IV 2/202–322. Also see Ulbricht's statements to Zhou Enlai on November 10, 1964, in "Besprechung der Partei- und Regierungsdelegation der DDR mit der Partei- und Regierungsdelegation der VR China," n.d., in: SAPMO-BA, DY 30, J IV 2/201-712, p. 27.

¹⁰ Letter, Ulbricht to Gomułka, April 22, 1965. AAN, KC PZPR, p. 131, t. 121, pp. 1–6.

¹¹ In February 1965, Gomułka told the East German ambassador to Poland, Karl Mewis, that the GDRs continued existence as a socialist state could only be secured through its economic integration with the other states of the socialist bloc, especially Poland and the USSR. His goal, Gomułka said, was to link the GDR to the other socialist states with ties of interdependence that would be impossible to break. If the GDR failed to link itself economically with the other Comecon states, Gomułka warned Mewis, it would eventually be swallowed up by the FRG. Protokół ze spotkania przywódców PZPR i KPZR w Moskwie, 3–4 marca 1969r. [Transcript from the Meeting of the Leaders of the PZPR and CPSU in Moscow, March 3–4, 1969, in AAN, KC PZPR, p. 114, t. 33].

¹² Notatka z rozmów delegacji polskiej i czeskosłowackiej w KC PZPR w dniu 28 lutego 1967 r. pod przewodnictwem tow.tow.W.GOMUŁKI i A. NOVOTNEGO, March 2, 1967. AAN, KC PZPR, p. 108, t.8.

¹³ Notatka z rozmowy I sekretarza KC PZPR Władysława Gomułka z ministrem Spraw Zagranicznych ZSSR Andrzejem Gromyko /7 grudnia 1967/ [Memorandum from a Conversation of First Secretary Władysław Gomułka of the CC of the PZPR with the USSR Minister of Foreign Affairs, Andrei Gromyko /December 7, 1967/], in AAN, KC PZPR, sygn. 2642, pp. 185, 190–95; and Przemówienie tow. Gomułka na spotkaniu z I sekretarzami KW i kierownikami wydziałów KC w dniu 12 grudnia 69r. [Comrade Gomułka's Speech at a Meeting with the First Secretaries of the District Committees on 12 December 1969], in AAN, KC PZPR, 237/V-911, p. 14.

¹⁴ Dept. I, MSZ, Notatka z rozmów delegacji polskiej i delegacji NRD w KC PZPR w dniu 14 marca 1967r. pod przewodnictwem tow. W. Gomułka i W. Ulbrichta, 21 March 1967, in AAN, KC PZPR, p. 110, t. 16.

¹⁵ See Selvage, Poland, the German Democratic Republic and the German Question, Chapter 6.

¹⁶ On Moscow's willingness to enter into negotiations with Bonn over renunciation of force, see Moscow's response to Bonn's "Peace Note" in *Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik* (hence-

forth, *DzDP*) IV/12: 723–32. On its lack of opposition to diplomatic relations between the socialist states and Bonn, see Gomulka's comments to Brezhnev in January 1967 in "Protokół ze spotkania przywódców Polskiej Zjednoczonej Partii Robotniczej i Komunistycznej Partii Związku Radzieckiego /18 stycznia 1967 roku - Łańsk/, n.d., in AAN, KC PZPR, sygn. 2642, p. 11.

¹⁷ Protokół ze spotkania przywódców Polskiej Zjednoczonej Partii Robotniczej i Komunistycznej Partii Związku Radzieckiego /18 stycznia 1967 roku - Łańsk/, n.d., in AAN, KC PZPR, sygn. 2642, p. 11; PROTOKOLLNIEDERSCHRIFT EINER VEREINBARUNG, attached to memorandum, Markowski to Ulbricht, February 8, 1967. SAPMO-BA, DY 30, J IV 2/202–261.

¹⁸ Dept. I, MSZ, Notatka z rozmów delegacji polskiej i delegacji NRD w KC PZPR w dniu 14 marca 1967r. pod przewodnictwem tow. W. Gomułki i W. Ulbrichta, March 21, 1967, in AAN, KC PZPR, p. 110, t. 16.

¹⁹ Stenografische Niederschrift der Verhandlungen der Delegationen des ZK der SED und des ZK der KPdSU am 22. März 1967 in Moskau," n.d. SAPMO-BA, DY 30, IV 2/201–745.

²⁰ Abteilung Planung und Finanzen, ZK der SED, "Information über eine Beratung der DDR-Sektion im Wirtschaftsausschuß DDR-Volksrepublik Polen," June 7, 1967, in: SAPMO-BA, DY 30, IV A 2/2.021-836; Letter, Balkow, Deputy Chairman, Council of Ministers of the GDR, to Stoph, July 25, 1967, in: SAPMO-BA, DY 30, formerly Sonderablage Stoph, DC 20-4617; Draft, "Protokoll über Beratungen zwischen dem Vorsitzenden dem Ministerrates der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik—Genossen Willi Stoph—und dem Premierminister der Volksrepublik Polen—Genossen J. Cyrankiewicz—am . . . September 1967 (Entwurf, mit der polnischen Seite am 18.7.67 in Warschau abgestimmt)," n.d., and Memorandum, Hengst, Abt. Planung und Finanzen, to Dr. Mittag, "Information über den Stand der Vorbereitungsarbeiten für die vorgesehenen Beratungen des Vorsitzenden des Ministerrates der DDR, Genossen Stoph, mit dem Vorsitzenden des Ministerrates der Volksrepublik Polen, Genossen Cyrankiewicz," 13 September 1967, in: SAPMO-BA, DY 30, IV A 2/2.021–839.

²¹ Letter, Stoph to Cyrankiewicz, September 13, 1967, in: SAPMO-BA, DY 30, formerly Sonderablage Stoph, DC 20-4617, pp. 46–7.

²² See the handwritten comments on the memorandum from Hengst, Abteilung Planung und Finanzen, to Comrade Dr. Mittag, August 31, 1967; Memorandum, Hengst to Mittag, September 13, 1967; Abt. Planung und Finanzen, "Stellungnahme zum Protokollentwurf über die Beratungen zwischen dem Vorsitzenden des Ministerrates der DDR, Genossen W. Stoph, und dem Premierminister der Volksrepublik Polen, Genossen J. Cyrankiewicz," September 15, 1967; Abt. Planung und Finanzen, "Information," n.d.; all in: SAPMO-BA, DY 30, IV A 2/2.021–839.

²³ "Protokoll Nr. 30/67 der Sitzung des Politbüros des Zentralkomitees vom 24. Oktober 1967," n.d., in: SAPMO-BA, DY 30, J IV 2/2-1140, pp. 3–14; "Vorschlag des Genossen Cyrankiewicz (ausgehend vom bestätigten Protokollentwurf) zur Ergänzung des vom Genossen Rauchfuß am 28.9.1967 in Warschau übergebenen neuen Protokollentwurfs," in SAPMO-BA, DY 30, formerly Sonderablage Stoph, DC 20-4617, pp. 87–100; compare to GDR, Büro des Ministerrates, "Beschluß des Ministerrates 02–11/II.4/67," September 28, 1967, in SAPMO-BA, DY 30, formerly Sonderablage Stoph, DC 20-I/4/1629. Also see Abt. Planung und Finanzen, "Notiz über ein Gespräch mit dem Sekretär der DDR-Sektion im Wirtschaftsausschuß DDR-Volksrepublik Polen, Genossen Ebert," March 10, 1967, in SAPMO-BA, DY 30, IV A 2/2.021–836, pp. 258–59.

²⁴ Interview, Andrzej Werblan, December 3, 1993. Although this exchange was not included in the transcript of Gomulka's meeting with Ulbricht, their recorded exchanges were also quite heated. S. Trepczynski, Notatka ze spotkania delegacji partyjno-rządowych Polski i NRD w Moskwie, w dn. 8. listopada 1967 4., November 8, 1967, in AAN, KC PZPR, p. 110, t. 116.

- ²⁵ ZAPIS ROZMÓW przeprowadzonych przez ttow. W. GOMUŁKĄ z tow. BREŻNIEWEM, N. KOSYGINEM i N. PODGORNYM w Moskwie, dn. 22 września 1967r., n.d., in AAN, KC PZPR, sygn. 2642.
- ²⁶ Notatka z rozmowy I sekretarza KC PZPR Władysława Gomułki z Ministrem Spraw Zagranicznych ZSRR Andrejem Gromyko /7 grudnia 1967r./, n.d., in AAN, KC PZPR, sygn. 2642, pp. 185, 190–95; Stenografische Niederschrift, 11 December 1967, in: SAPMO-BA, DY 30, J IV 2/201–767.
- ²⁷ Stenografische Niederschrift, December 12, 1967, in: SAPMO-BA, DY 30, J IV 2/201–767.
- ²⁸ Letter, Gomułka to Brezhnev, 23 May 1967, in AAN, KC PZPR, sygn. 2632, pp. 301–6.
- ²⁹ Letter, Ulbricht and Stoph to Brezhnev and Kosygin, August 1, 1967; and letter, Brezhnev and Kosygin to Ulbricht and Stoph, 29 August 1967; Kohrt, MfAA, "Vermerk über eine Unterredung des Genossen Walter Ulbricht mit Genossen Rapacki und Genossen Semjonow am 15.9.1967 im Gebäude des Staatsrates," n.d. SAPMO-BA, DY 30, JIV 2/202–79, b.p.; Oskar Fischer, Stellv. des Ministers für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten, "Vermerk über eine Unterredung des Ersten Sekretärs des ZK der SED und Vorsitzenden des Staatsrates der DDR, Genossen Walter Ulbricht, mit dem Außerordentlichen und Bevollmächtigten Botschafter der UdSSR in der westdeutschen Bundesrepublik, Genossen S.K. Zarapkin, am 18.9.1967," n.d., in SAPMO-BA, DY 30, IV 2/202–134.
- ³⁰ Hansjakob Stehle, Eine vertrackte Vorgeschichte. Zum Warschauer Vertrag: Wie ein Schlüsseldokument verschwand und wieder auftauchte, in: *Die Zeit* 50 (December 7, 1990), 41–2; Egon Bahr, *Zu meiner Zeit* (München, 1996), 229–35.
- ³¹ On Gomułka's steadfast stance, see, for example, his comments to Brezhnev in March 1969 in Protokół ze spotkania przywódców PZPR i KPZR w Moskwie, 3–4 marca 1969 r., n.d. AAN, KC PZPR, p.114, t.33, pp. 28–90.
- ³² Stehle, Eine vertrackte Vorgeschichte.
- ³³ On Rapacki's resignation, see Stanisław Stomma, *Pościg za nadzieją, Świadkowie XX Wieku*, Vol. 3 (Paris, 1991), 145.
- ³⁴ The most glaring example of the Partisans propaganda was a book that linked Jews—even during the Holocaust—with the Germans in alleged anti-Polish activities: Tadeusz Walichnowski, *Izrael-NRF a Polska* (Warsaw, 1968). The book was translated into German and English.
- ³⁵ Mark Kramer, "The Czechoslovak Crisis and the Brezhnev Doctrine," in Carole Fink, Philipp Gassert, and Detlef Junker, eds., *1968: The World Transformed* (Washington, D.C. and Cambridge, 1998), 120–21, 127–29; Jaromír Navrátil, et al., eds., *The Prague Spring 1968: A National Security Archive Documents Reader* (Budapest, 1998), 28.
- ³⁶ When Ulbricht complained to Brezhnev in March 1967 about Prague's growing contacts with the FRG, the Soviet leader advised him not to interfere with the socialist states' economic relations with West Germany. The Soviets apparently did not officially question Prague's relations with Bonn until Dubček's visit to Moscow in May 1968. After over a year of complaints from Ulbricht, Brezhnev finally brought up the large numbers of West Germans traveling to Czechoslovakia; he suggested that their visits were undermining the security of the Warsaw Pact's borders. "Stenografische Niederschrift der Verhandlungen der Delegationen des ZK der SED und des ZK der KPdSU am 21. März 1967 in Moskau," n.d. SAPMO-BA, IV 2/201/745; "Stenographic Account of the Soviet-Czechoslovak Summit Meeting in Moscow," May 4–5, 1968 (excerpts) in Navrátil, *Prague Spring*, 118, 122.
- ³⁷ Oskar Fischer, MfAA, "Vermerk über ein Gespräch zwischen dem Minister für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten der DDR, Genossen Otto Winzer, und dem Minister für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten der UdSSR, Genossen A.A. Gromyko, am 1. Juli 1968 (17.15 - 18.45 Uhr)," July 2, 1968, in SAPMO BA, J IV 2/201–1100.
- ³⁸ Kruczkowski, Dept.IV, MSZ, "Pilna Notatka o rozmowie Gromyko z Brandtem," October 23, 1968, in AAN, KC PZPR, p. 116, t.41, pp. 124–30; memorandum marked, "Gen. W. Ulbricht, Persönlich," December 17, 1968, in SAPMO-BA, J IV 2/202–80.

³⁹ "Wystąpienie tow. Gomułki w sprawie NRF na posiedzeniu B.P. w dniu 2.VI.1969r., attachment to Protokół Nr. 5 posiedzenia Biura Politycznego w dniu 2 czerwca 1969r, n.d., in AAN, KC PZPR, sygn. 1742, pp. 269–73.

⁴⁰ The West German Economics Minister, Karl Schiller, publicly announced the details of the agreement on December 6, 1968. Telegram, Lodge, American Embassy in Bonn, to Secretary of State, December 6, 1968, in: NARA, RG 59, Subject-Numeric, 1967–69, Box 918, FT GER E - GER W.

⁴¹ Protokół ze spotkania przywódców PZPR i KPZR w Moskwie, 3–4 marca 1969 r., n.d. AAN, KC PZPR, p.114, t.33, pp. 28–90.

⁴² See Gomułka's handwritten notes during the XXIII Extraordinary Session of the CMEA in Moscow, April 24–6, 1969, in AAN, KC PZPR, p. 110, t. 16. Also see Douglas Selvage, *Polska-NRD. Doktryna Ulbrichta w świetle dokumentów*, *Rocznik Polsko-Niemiecki* 3 (1994): 77–106.

⁴³ "Wystąpienie tow. Gomułki w sprawie NRF na posiedzeniu B.P. w dniu 2.VI.1969r.," attachment to "Protokół Nr. 5 posiedzenia Biura Politycznego w dniu 2 czerwca 1969r.," n.d., in AAN, KC PZPR, sygn. 1742, pp. 269–73.

THE MISSING LINK: HENRY KISSINGER AND THE BACK-CHANNEL NEGOTIATIONS ON BERLIN

David C. Geyer

Few diplomats have been more identified with the means of their diplomacy than Henry Kissinger with the practice of linkage. As Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs, and later as Secretary of State, Kissinger linked "separate objectives" as a source of leverage, especially in relations with the Soviet Union. The primary object of Kissinger's strategy was Vietnam; the principal subject was Ambassador Anatoly Dobrynin. In February 1969, Kissinger and Dobrynin established a "confidential channel" in Washington to exchange views on "delicate and important matters." Throughout his first two years in office, Kissinger repeatedly used this channel to tie a settlement in Vietnam to agreements elsewhere, including the Middle East and arms control. Repetition apparently served to enhance his reputation. When Kissinger promised trade liberalization in exchange for an "understanding attitude" on Vietnam in September 1969, Dobrynin noted his "unusual ability to link things together."¹ The following month, President Nixon used the channel to reiterate the connection in his foreign policy between Moscow and Hanoi. "[I]f the Soviet Union found it possible to do something in Vietnam, and the Vietnam war ended," Nixon told Dobrynin, "the U.S. might do something dramatic to improve Soviet-U.S. relations, indeed something more dramatic than they could now imagine."² The Soviets, however, were not ready to play their part. As Nixon later recalled: "I was disappointed but not surprised by the apparent ineffectiveness of our attempts in 1969 to get the Soviets to apply pressure on North Vietnam."³

Kissinger was not the only diplomat to practice linkage. Egon Bahr, Willy Brandt's foreign policy advisor, used similar tactics in his negotiations with the Soviets on a renunciation of force agreement. The primary object of Bahr's strategy was Berlin; the principal subject was Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko. During three rounds of talks from January to May 1970, Bahr repeatedly warned Gromyko that a bilateral treaty in Moscow would be tied to a quadripartite agreement on Berlin. During their first meeting, Bahr declared: "Détente and normalization in Europe must include Berlin."⁴ Before signing the Moscow Treaty in August, Brandt reiterated the importance of a Berlin agreement in a meeting with Soviet party leader Leonid Brezhnev. "I said we would ratify the Moscow Treaty," Brandt later explained, "only when the Four Powers had concluded their negotiations satisfactorily."⁵ The language may have been

different but the idea was the same: Bonn would not proceed in Moscow without progress on Berlin. Although annoyed by the requirement, the Soviets understood the realities behind this *Junktim* or “package deal.” During a meeting with Foreign Minister Walter Scheel near Frankfurt in October, Gromyko conceded that ratification of the Moscow Treaty would require a “satisfactory” settlement on Berlin.⁶

After two years, the results of linkage, therefore, were mixed: Bahr had succeeded in Berlin but Kissinger had failed in Vietnam. In diplomacy, failure, like success, may be fleeting. As Bahr reached a crossroads between Moscow and Berlin, Kissinger reached a turning point between Moscow and Beijing. In spite of the confidential channel, the Soviets had not delivered the North Vietnamese to the bargaining table. Kissinger, however, was not ready to abandon his strategy. In December 1970, several developments turned in his direction. On December 9, President Nixon received a message from Chinese Premier Zhou Enlai inviting a “special envoy” to Beijing for a discussion of Taiwan. On December 14, one week after Brandt signed a renunciation of force agreement with Poland, workers in Gdansk sparked a popular movement to protest an increase in food prices, leading six days later to a change of government in Warsaw. And on December 21, Horst Ehmke, head of the chancellery in Bonn, met Kissinger at the White House to seek American support for an “intensification” of the four-power talks in Berlin. These developments—all of which exposed Soviet vulnerabilities—allowed Kissinger to practice what he preached. In an impressive display of geopolitical geometry, Kissinger began to use triangular diplomacy with Beijing and the quadripartite negotiations on Berlin to force an improvement of bilateral relations with Moscow. This time, the primary object was not a settlement in Vietnam but a summit in the Soviet Union.

On December 22, Kissinger met Dobrynin at the White House to review the “general state” of Soviet-American relations. In spite of recent Soviet provocation, including harassment of Allied corridors to West Berlin, Kissinger emphasized Nixon’s desire to improve the atmosphere between the superpowers. “We are at a crossroads in our bilateral relationship,” he declared. “We have the choice between letting this chain of events continue and making a fundamental attempt to set a new course.” Dobrynin also listed a number of incidents that the Soviets found irritating. The French and West Germans, for instance, claimed that the Americans were “holding up progress” in the quadripartite talks on Berlin. Dobrynin, however, welcomed Kissinger’s suggestion that “frank exchanges between us can help to remove imagined differences based on misunderstanding as well as to make progress on real issues.”⁷ Within one month, Kissinger and Dobrynin began a series of “frank exchanges” that would change the course of East-West relations. Previous accounts

have emphasized the impact of such “real issues” as China and SALT in the diplomacy that followed.⁸ Using recently declassified materials on Kissinger’s role—memoranda of his meetings with Dobrynin, tapes of his conversations with Nixon, and his messages with Ambassador Kenneth Rush in Bonn—this paper will re-examine a “missing link” in his strategy: the “back-channel” negotiations on Berlin.

After their meeting in December, Kissinger and Dobrynin spent several weeks discussing how to arrange a “strictly confidential exchange of views.”⁹ On January 23, 1971, Dobrynin, who had just returned from an “extensive review” in Moscow, reported that the Kremlin was eager to conduct secret talks with the White House on Berlin. Dobrynin also mentioned that Brandt believed Kissinger was “the only person who understood German conditions enough to break through the logjams created by [the] bureaucracy” in Washington. Kissinger, who needed little encouragement to exclude the Department of State, replied that he needed time to include Bahr and Rush in his plans. He emphasized, however, the “extreme delicacy of the bureaucratic situation in which these matters were being handled. Total discretion was essential; if this failed we would simply have to interrupt this channel and he [Dobrynin] would have to take his chances through ordinary procedures.” The Soviet Ambassador did not need the reminder. “So the future of Soviet-US relations is in our hands,” Dobrynin remarked, “and I want you to know we are going to make a big effort to improve them.”¹⁰

By the end of January, Kissinger had already circumvented the bureaucracy on Berlin. On January 27, Jim Fazio of his personal staff arrived in Bonn to arrange for Bahr and Rush to visit Washington as soon as possible.¹¹ Four days later, Bahr met Kissinger not in Washington but aboard an airplane bound for New York from Cape Kennedy. Such measures were necessary, Kissinger claimed, due to “Foreign Office jealousies in Bonn and State Department problems here.” After a brief exchange on the issues, Kissinger and Bahr discussed the procedures necessary to expedite a Berlin agreement. Bahr told Kissinger that Brandt would “welcome with enthusiasm any bilateral Soviet-American conversations.” The two men then agreed to supplement the Kissinger-Dobrynin channel by installing a “secure communications link” between Washington and Bonn.¹² Kissinger described the procedures to Dobrynin on February 2: “Bahr would tell me what the German Government might be willing to consider; I would discuss this with Rush. If they both agreed, I would discuss it with Dobrynin; if the three of us agreed, we would introduce it first in the Four Power Western group and subsequently in the Four Power talks on Berlin.”¹³ On February 4, Kissinger not only reviewed these arrangements with Rush in Washington but also established the “secure communications link” via a U.S. naval intelligence officer in

Frankfurt. The "back channel," which would eventually lead to an agreement on Berlin, had become operational.¹⁴

After establishing the procedures, Kissinger and Dobrynin met on February 10 to discuss the substance of a settlement. Dobrynin stated that the Western draft agreement, which the Allies had tabled five days earlier, was "unacceptable as it stood."¹⁵ Rather than defend the draft, Kissinger began to debate the details, including the constitutional status of parliamentary party group meetings in West Berlin. Dobrynin complained that the Germans were too legalistic on federal presence and the Americans too principled on access. Kissinger replied that a "constructive solution" required not only a balance between the two but also concessions on both sides. Changing the subject to format, Dobrynin noted that the Soviets had already agreed to a three-power Allied declaration on federal presence. Would the Allies, he asked, accept a unilateral Soviet declaration on access? Kissinger, who considered the proposal a "distinct possibility," promised to solicit comments from Rush and Bahr.¹⁶ During their meeting six days later, however, Kissinger refused to discuss Berlin until Dobrynin explained recent Soviet naval deployments in Cuban waters. The two men exchanged charges of arrogance and aggravation but not respective messages from Bonn and Hanoi.¹⁷ This "chilly atmosphere" did not last long. Although he apparently received no explanation on Cuba, Kissinger indicated on February 22 that the United States was willing to accept a unilateral Soviet declaration on access, which Dobrynin called a "considerable step forward." When Kissinger offered to prepare talking points on federal presence, Dobrynin even expressed "extreme eagerness to come to an understanding on the question of Berlin."¹⁸

The Americans were also eager for an agreement. On February 12, Kissinger urged Rush to send proposals to the White House rather than the Department of State. "[The] President for other reasons," he noted, "seeks to be forthcoming but sensible."¹⁹ Kissinger neglected to specify the "other reasons." The Soviet ambassador understood even if the American ambassador did not. On February 4, Dobrynin assured Kissinger that a Berlin settlement would make "a very positive contribution to the Summit that we were planning."²⁰ The Soviets, in other words, were practicing linkage, tying progress on the summit to progress on Berlin. Kissinger, meanwhile, told Nixon on February 23 that his talks with Dobrynin on Berlin might lead to an agreement by the end of April, "depending on how quickly we can move the Germans." "The only pity is," he remarked, "you won't get the credit." Nixon, however, needed credit on Berlin to get a summit in Moscow. He, therefore, demanded that Rush inform Brandt of the president's "personal role in these negotiations."²¹ Three weeks later little had changed: the White House offered

formulations on Berlin but the Kremlin deferred a summit announcement. Even Kissinger's messages remained the same. "For a variety of reasons," he reminded Rush, "the President is anxious to keep this channel open."²²

The talks in the channel were not insulated from developments elsewhere. On February 24, Rush reported that politics in Bonn precluded too much diplomacy in Berlin, particularly on federal presence. The Allies, therefore, adopted a strategy to force the Soviets to focus on access first. "Until we have a good tentative access agreement," Rush explained, "Brandt cannot move on federal presence, nor can we."²³ Two days later, Kissinger followed this advice with predictable results. Although Kissinger delivered a proposal on access, Dobrynin refused to reciprocate on federal presence. For three weeks, Kissinger waited for Dobrynin to respond, while Dobrynin waited for Kissinger to offer something else. As Kissinger informed Rush: "We seem to have reached the same deadlock you have in Berlin."²⁴ Dobrynin finally relented on March 15 by raising another issue. Moscow might approve access procedures, he suggested, if Washington supported an increase of Soviet presence in West Berlin.²⁵ After the meeting, Kissinger and Rush agreed that the suggestion merited further consideration.²⁶

On March 18, Dobrynin gave Kissinger something no one else in the West had: a Soviet draft agreement on Berlin. The gift brought responsibility as well as opportunity. When Kissinger requested permission to consult Rush, Dobrynin agreed but insisted on secrecy since Abrasimov, who planned to table the draft on March 25, had not yet seen the text.²⁷ Although he later claimed that it "withdrew most of the concessions made during the previous month," Kissinger informed the president at the time that the draft "on first reading, is acceptable." "I think we should use Berlin," he told Nixon, "just to keep [Dobrynin] talking."²⁸ Rush saw the Soviet move in a more positive light, particularly the decision to use the channel before tabling the draft at the talks. "This action strengthens my own feeling," he explained in a message to Kissinger on March 21, "that the Soviets desire to reach a Berlin agreement in order to obtain ratification of the German-Soviet treaty."²⁹

During a meeting the next day, Kissinger told Dobrynin that the Soviet draft reflected progress on some points but presented problems on others. Rather than discuss matters in detail, Kissinger promised to give Dobrynin a list of general and specific comments, which Rush had enumerated in his latest message.³⁰ Kissinger also brought Rush's formulations on several issues to a meeting on March 25.³¹ Upon examination, Dobrynin complained that the channel had evidently not encouraged flexibility. Kissinger retorted that Washington had already been more forthcoming than Moscow. "[A]ll the channel guaranteed," he explained,

“was greater speed, not greater concessions.” Dobrynin did not contest the point but tested the waters instead, asking repeatedly whether, except for Rush’s reservations, the draft was acceptable. Although he disclaimed interest in negotiation, Kissinger promised to check on several issues, including Soviet and West German presence in West Berlin.³²

As Dobrynin returned to Moscow, the Four-Power ambassadors met in Berlin for formal talks on the Soviet draft. The French and British did not know about the informal talks in Washington; but the Soviet ambassador nearly revealed the secret. Kissinger and Dobrynin had agreed that Abrasimov and Rush should meet privately in Berlin to discuss the draft in detail.³³ During a conversation with an American official on March 23, the Soviet representative requested a private meeting by alluding to recent contact between their respective governments. Rush feared that Abrasimov, who was suddenly recalled to Moscow instead, was trying to torpedo the talks in Washington.³⁴ Although each side blamed the other, both agreed that Abrasimov and Rush should try again. The result, however, was the same. In spite of the arrangements, Abrasimov failed to meet Rush on April 16, leading to another round of recrimination. Rush again suspected Abrasimov of sabotage but speculated that the Soviets had decided that “private talks are useless until the Western reaction to their draft agreement is received.”³⁵

The Soviets were preoccupied with other decisions. The 24th Party Congress, which met in Moscow from March 30 to April 9, was an important turning point for the Soviet Union. During the congress, Brezhnev finally established his authority in foreign policy as well as domestic politics.³⁶ In his report to the delegates, Brezhnev outlined a program to implement the “principle of peaceful coexistence”—and to complement the Moscow Treaty by negotiating a Berlin agreement.³⁷ Policy-makers in Washington closely followed the proceedings in Moscow. On March 31, Kissinger told Nixon that Brezhnev not only indicated his commitment to détente but also acknowledged that the Moscow Treaty and a Berlin agreement were linked. “There could be a nuance here,” he suggested, “reflecting recent talks in our channel.”³⁸ Not known for such subtlety, the Soviets reached a different conclusion. After the party congress, Brezhnev convened the Politburo to review the tactics of Soviet diplomacy. According to Dobrynin, Gromyko convinced his colleagues that a four-power agreement was more important than a superpower meeting.³⁹ Without the nuance of diplomatic parlance, the Soviet message was clear: a Berlin settlement must come before a Moscow summit.

On April 23, Kissinger and Dobrynin met at the White House to resume their secret talks. Dobrynin delivered a “draft letter” on SALT, which Kissinger accepted as the basis for further discussion. The two men also agreed to solve the Abrasimov problem by having Rush meet pri-

vately instead with Valentin Falin, who would soon present his credentials as Soviet ambassador in Bonn. The atmosphere changed, however, when Dobrynin stated that "he did not think a visit [to Moscow] was likely until after the Berlin question was settled." Kissinger, who recognized the tactic, rejected the message out of hand: Nixon would accept no conditions on the summit. Dobrynin tried in vain to explain the difference between reality and requirement in his statement. "I [am] familiar with that formulation since I [have] used it very often to justify the theory of linkage," Kissinger replied, "and I simply [want] to stress that it [is] an unacceptable formulation to use towards the President."⁴⁰ Later that afternoon, Kissinger briefed Nixon, who approved his handling of Dobrynin. In spite of the approval, Kissinger was not optimistic. "The Germans have screwed it up to such a fare-thee-well," he told Nixon, "that they may not be prepared to yield anything."⁴¹

The Germans were busy with preparations of their own. On April 24, Bahr met Kissinger in Vermont to deliver a draft agreement on Berlin. Where the Allies and Soviets had asserted principles, the Germans emphasized practicalities. According to Kissinger, Bahr suggested that "both sides drop the legal justifications for their positions and work instead on describing their practical responsibilities and obligations."⁴² After giving Bahr support for his "ingenious suggestion," Kissinger secured Nixon's approval by pointing out the political benefits. "[T]his has the great advantage," he explained, "that if [the Soviets] don't play ball, we just tell Rush not to come to any meetings."⁴³ The Soviets did not want to be left on the sidelines. When Kissinger reported on April 26 that Bahr proposed to limit the agreement to "juridically neutral formulations," Dobrynin accepted in principle, pending approval from his superiors.⁴⁴ The two men agreed that Falin, Rush and Bahr could meet secretly in Bonn to work out the details. The next day, Kissinger also gave Dobrynin a copy of the German draft. Kissinger, however, noted a dichotomy in Soviet decision-making between "the rapidity of their responses on Berlin and the slowness of their responses on SALT." Dobrynin conceded that the Soviets were more interested in the quadripartite than the strategic arms limitation talks. The Soviets were also concerned about Ping-Pong diplomacy. If the United States was using China to blackmail the Soviet Union, he warned, the reaction in Moscow would be "very violent." Kissinger assured Dobrynin that nothing could be further from the truth.⁴⁵ Three hours later, Kissinger received the message inviting him for a "direct discussion" of Sino-American relations in Beijing.⁴⁶

Unaware of the Chinese invitation, the Soviets approved the German initiative on May 3.⁴⁷ The stage was now set for informal talks in Bonn; but Kissinger first arranged a more formal meeting in Washington. On May 4, Alexander Haig, Kissinger's deputy, demanded that Dobrynin

explain why the Soviet SALT delegation recently floated a proposal that Kissinger had rejected six weeks earlier. The American delegation thought the Soviet move was a possible breakthrough; Kissinger thought it might lead to a breakdown of the channel.⁴⁸ Rather than introduce the Soviet proposal, Haig began the meeting by handing Dobrynin a recent message from Rush, which, he believed reflected a constructive approach. “[B]oth the President and Dr. Kissinger were now, however, beginning to question the value of this special channel,” he reported, “because of various actions taken on the Soviet side.”⁴⁹ Dobrynin may have thought Haig was bluffing. Kissinger, therefore, called him on May 11 to demand that the Kremlin negotiate only in the channel; otherwise, the White House would allow both SALT and Berlin to languish in official negotiations.⁵⁰ To strengthen his hand, Kissinger then instructed Rush not only to cancel private meetings with Falin but also to “cool matters” with Bahr.⁵¹ The next day, Dobrynin gave Kissinger a new draft letter on SALT, clearing the way for the “breakthrough” one week later.⁵²

Although the obstacles in Washington had been “substantially removed,” Kissinger notified Rush on May 12 that any postponement of the secret talks in Bonn would still be “very helpful.”⁵³ His instructions resulted in a one-week delay of the second meeting. By all accounts, the first meeting, which took place as scheduled on May 10, was successful.⁵⁴ Falin, Rush and Bahr all agreed to emphasize neutrality over legality in revising the German draft. According to Rush, Falin was much more flexible than Abrasimov and clearly wanted to expedite a satisfactory settlement on Berlin. “A continuation of this type [of] approach,” he informed Kissinger, “could lead to substantial progress and possibly a final agreement in the near future.”⁵⁵ During the next several weeks, the trio focused on a pair of issues: federal presence and access. Bahr, for instance, accepted that ties between West Berlin and West Germany need not be “special” and that transit could proceed on the basis of “international practice,” thereby addressing political concerns in East Berlin. Falin, meanwhile, conceded that the agreement could refer to the “western sectors of Berlin” rather than “Berlin (West),” thereby addressing political concerns in Bonn.⁵⁶ Without the usual obstructionism, Rush remained unusually optimistic. “[T]here is a fair probability,” he reported to Kissinger on May 28, “that the Berlin talks [will] move ahead quite rapidly by virtue of the Russians taking an easy position on all the remaining issues.”⁵⁷

Kissinger watched these developments with a mixture of approval and apprehension. The White House hoped to exploit the linkage the Kremlin had established between a Berlin settlement and a summit agreement. According to Kissinger, this strategy required a two-pronged approach on Berlin: to delay the talks as insurance for SALT and to expedite

the talks as incentive for the summit. Although these maneuvers appeared contradictory, Kissinger could only advise Rush "to avoid being stampeded into too rapid a pace."⁵⁸ The news from Bonn, therefore, was both good and bad. Kissinger told Nixon on May 29 that the secret talks were going so well that an agreement was possible by the middle of July. The president, however, did not want success in one European capital to upset his plans to visit another. "Can we keep Berlin from breaking," he asked, "if they don't agree with the summit?" Kissinger not only reassured Nixon but also resolved to give Dobrynin an ultimatum at their next meeting: If Moscow did not agree on the summit, Washington would not agree on Berlin.⁵⁹ The denouement was not so dramatic. When they met on June 8, Dobrynin raised the issue by commenting that "it would be better to have the Summit after the Berlin negotiations were concluded." Kissinger, who was already preparing for Beijing, did not threaten to torpedo the Berlin talks; he merely stated that if the Soviets did not agree to the summit by the end of the month, the Americans would defer the decision until the end of the year.⁶⁰

After the session on June 6, Rush and Bahr went to Washington to accompany Brandt during a visit to the White House. Nixon and Kissinger first met Rush on June 14 to review the role of Berlin in their strategy. Without revealing his plans to visit Moscow and Beijing, the President confided that Berlin was part of "a game at the very highest level with the Russians." The name of the game was politics not diplomacy. "Berlin is something they need from us a hell of a lot more than we need it from them," Nixon declared. "We're going to make them pay."⁶¹ Before his meeting the next morning, Nixon was more circumspect, asking Kissinger to give Brandt "the line that he needs to hear." "I don't know what the hell I'm talking about," he remarked, but "I don't want to say that we're enthusiastic about *Ostpolitik*."⁶² Nixon not only tempered his views for Brandt, however, but also tendered his support, promising to take a strong stance in order to achieve a satisfactory settlement on Berlin. "What is at stake," he stated, "is the whole Federal Republic, and its future and its position, your position as a leader, your whole *Ostpolitik*, etc. I mean, Berlin is the key."⁶³ At a meeting with Rush and Dobrynin on June 21, Kissinger approved procedures for the final round: Falin, Rush and Bahr would finish the agreement in Bonn; then Rush and Abrasimov would introduce the text in Berlin. "[I]f nothing new happened," he told Dobrynin, "the three would agree by the end of July on a Berlin solution and the Four Powers by the end of August."⁶⁴

Before the talks resumed in Bonn, however, Rush reported that the channel had been compromised at a working-level meeting in Berlin on June 9. During the meeting, Jonathan Dean, the American adviser, had opposed an attempt by Yuli Kvitsinsky, the Soviet adviser, to introduce

draft language from the secret talks in Bonn. Kvitsinsky then revealed what he assumed Dean already knew: that there was “a direct, very high-level link between Moscow and Washington on the subject of the Berlin talks.” Although he suspected sabotage at first, Rush surmised that the incident might have been accidental. He, therefore, suggested that Kissinger do nothing to harm either of the advisers, who had established a close relationship.⁶⁵ When they met to discuss this “impossible situation” on June 28, Dobrynin assured Kissinger that the indiscretion was not deliberate but agreed that some rectification was necessary.⁶⁶ On the same day, Falin told Rush that, in his view, Abrasimov was trying to torpedo the talks.⁶⁷ After summoning the Soviet principals to Moscow, Gromyko concluded instead that Kissinger was brewing a tempest in a teapot. The foreign minister reprimanded his adviser for the record but, as a practical matter, told him to forget the channel and forgo its formulations.⁶⁸

On June 28, Falin, Rush, and Bahr returned to Bonn for another month of secret talks on Berlin. The three men made up for lost time by first tackling the sections on access and federal presence; both were substantially resolved by July 6, including the controversial provision precluding “constitutional and official acts” in West Berlin. The talks also produced considerable progress on the travel and communications of West Berliners, formulations complicated by the legal status of the East German capital. According to Rush, Falin was largely responsible for concessions on these issues, lobbying the leadership not only in Moscow but also in East Berlin. The Soviets, if not the East Germans, were clearly determined to settle with the Allies. Falin reported that even Gromyko was eager for an agreement, making an appeal to Brezhnev unnecessary.⁶⁹ The West Germans, well aware of Soviet willingness to cooperate, were also anxious to finish as soon as possible. Rush noted this anxiety with alarm: Bonn might blame Washington if something went wrong on Berlin. As Rush reported on July 14: Brandt and Bahr already had “a deep fear that the Russians may change their minds and attitude for some reason, such as suspicion that the United States does not want an agreement.”⁷⁰

Kissinger wanted an agreement on Berlin—but not before the announcement of his secret trip to Beijing. For three weeks, the White House sent messages to the Ambassador in Bonn, urging him to delay the talks but providing little in the way of explanation or suggestion. Before the final round even began, Kissinger informed Rush that he was “a little bit disturbed by the pace of your negotiations.” “It is imperative,” he insisted, “that you do not come to a final agreement until after July 15 for reasons that will become apparent to you.”⁷¹ Rush followed these instructions carefully, managing, in particular, to defer consideration of two major issues—West German representation and Soviet presence—until

the end of July. The White House, however, was not satisfied. Four days before Kissinger arrived in China, Dobrynin delivered the latest Soviet response on the summit. Haig notified the president and Kissinger that the response appeared to be “a holding action seeking both delay and further progress in areas of interest to the Soviets.”⁷² Haig then directed Rush, not once but twice, to employ delaying tactics on Berlin.⁷³ After the announcement of his trip, Kissinger modified his instructions. “You can proceed with deliberate speed,” he told Rush on July 19, “but leave a little margin as long as you can. We still do not have Moscow’s reaction to the Peking caper.”⁷⁴ Dobrynin gave Kissinger his personal reaction that afternoon. Although uncertain about the impact of China, Dobrynin expressed confidence in Soviet-American relations, including the prospects for agreement on the summit and Berlin. In an effort to avoid further misunderstanding, the Soviet ambassador also announced his intention to remain in Washington for most of the summer to “work on our relationship.”⁷⁵

For the next ten days, Rush worked to finish the Berlin agreement with little or no interference from Kissinger. By mid-July, the only outstanding issues were West German representation and Soviet presence. Moving beyond legal questions to more practical matters, the final round involved the trade of West German passports for a Soviet consulate general. Bonn and Moscow were both eager for an agreement but not for the abandonment of their respective positions. The Soviets, however, were more inflexible. Rush reported on July 23 that Falin and Abrasimov were taking a “strong and unyielding” stance for the consulate general.⁷⁶ He, therefore, requested authorization, in both official and back channels, to exploit the proposal as “a source of leverage in the Berlin negotiations.”⁷⁷ The White House never responded but the Department of State did, denying the request.⁷⁸ Rush, meanwhile, did not hesitate. Before receiving either Kissinger’s approval or Rogers’ denial, Rush conceded the issue to Falin on July 27. “Without the consulate general,” he explained to Kissinger, “it is questionable whether any agreement could be secured, certainly not one having the strength that has been tentatively agreed upon.”⁷⁹ The next day, after reviewing the entire text—including draft provisions on West German representation and Soviet presence—Falin, Rush, and Bahr reached the “final tentative agreement.”⁸⁰ The “Bonn triangle” had concluded the political settlement; the quadripartite talks in Berlin would attend the diplomatic details.

“The White House—Bonn—Kremlin backchannel,” Kissinger declared in his memoirs, “made possible the conclusion of the four-power negotiation on access to Berlin.”⁸¹ This statement, like others in his published recollections, contains elements of both fact and fiction. In spite of vague references to the “relevant area,” the quadripartite agreement was

about Berlin; but it covered much more than access. The final settlement rested on a two-part trade: improved access procedures for reduced federal presence; and West German passports for a Soviet consulate general. The "treaty complex" fully earned its designation. Even Martin Hillenbrand, who, as Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs, directed the formal negotiations, was impressed with its complexities. "[O]ne cannot help but be struck," Hillenbrand remarked, "by the peculiar juxtaposition of umbrella agreements with a congeries of subordinate agreements not negotiated or signed by the same parties who signed the basic Agreement."⁸² Whether Kissinger himself understood its "intricacy and esoteric jargon" is questionable.⁸³ Rush, at any rate, thought that Kissinger "really didn't understand the Berlin agreement very much, because he was spread so thin."⁸⁴

Kissinger's claim that his diplomacy "made possible" the Berlin agreement remains controversial. That the agreement was negotiated by back channel is a matter of historical record. Less historical is the assertion that it could not have been otherwise. Jonathan Dean, who played a key role on both levels, recently argued that the distinction between formal and informal negotiations was artificial. "As far as Ambassador Rush was concerned," Dean noted, "I believe that he used in the back channel and in the front channel the material that we prepared for him on all of the aspects of the Berlin agreement."⁸⁵ James Sutterlin has also pleaded for some perspective. "There was an enormous amount of negotiation that went on outside of the back channels," Sutterlin explained. "What I want to emphasize here is that it had its importance."⁸⁶ Not every critic of Kissinger has been as diplomatic. David Klein, the U.S. Minister in Berlin, spoke for many of his colleagues when he countered: "We didn't need the back channel. The deal would have come out not a great deal differently."⁸⁷

Whether or not the Department of State could have negotiated a settlement on Berlin by itself is a matter of speculation. Whether or not the White House made it possible, on the other hand, is a subject for scrutiny. Nowhere is such scrutiny more necessary than of the apparent connection between the quadripartite agreement and triangular diplomacy. Rush, after all, reached his secret agreement on Berlin two weeks after Kissinger returned from his secret trip to Beijing. According to Nixon and Kissinger, this was not a coincidence; this was the result of their calculations. The "China announcement," Nixon declared in his memoirs, led to "progress on a Berlin settlement."⁸⁸ Kissinger likewise claimed that Berlin and other issues in Soviet-American relations "began magically to unfreeze" after his return from Beijing.⁸⁹ Kissinger's subordinates were also impressed with the importance of this connection. "Playing the China card was clearly a success," William Hyland argued.

“Within a few weeks, there was a breakthrough in the Berlin talks.”⁹⁰ The evidence supports a different conclusion. From May to July, Bahr and Falin constantly pressed Rush to expedite their talks in Bonn. Kissinger, however, deliberately delayed an agreement on Berlin until after his trip to Beijing. When the talks then resumed in Bonn, the Soviets were inflexible, conceding nothing that had not already been conceded before. Kissinger, in other words, could have had a “satisfactory” settlement in June—before the announcement of his secret trip. Playing the China card may have been a success; but it did not lead to a breakthrough on Berlin.

Kissinger did not use China as leverage to get a better deal on Berlin; he used Berlin as leverage to get a better deal elsewhere. Berlin was always a means and never the ends in Soviet-American relations. Whatever his diplomacy may have “made possible,” the *Junktim* between ratification of the Moscow Treaty and a “satisfactory” settlement on Berlin allowed Kissinger to practice linkage with the Soviets. Kissinger recalled one example of how he used this tactic in his memoirs: “Whereas I held out on Berlin to speed progress on SALT, Gromyko slowed up SALT to accelerate the discussions on Berlin.”⁹¹ Although they often discussed both SALT and Berlin, neither Kissinger nor Dobrynin made progress in one dependent on progress in the other. SALT was too important, and too impervious, for such treatment. For Kissinger, the price of an agreement on Berlin was instead a summit in Moscow. While both sides began to link the two issues in February, the Soviets formally decided in April that the White House must settle on Berlin before the Kremlin would agree to a summit. Dobrynin, who initially doubted the wisdom of this decision, later judged that “progress in the Berlin talks was also the result of the implicit linkage with the summit.”⁹² The announcement of agreements on Berlin in September and on the summit in October, however, looked like the consequence of the announcement in July of Nixon’s trip to China. This was hardly conducive to the image of Soviet foreign policy. Kissinger, meanwhile, had discovered a source of diplomatic weakness in Moscow—a source that he would continue to exploit for another year. After two years of stalemate, Berlin had replaced Vietnam to become the “missing link” in Kissinger’s strategy to improve relations between the superpowers.

Notes

¹ Memorandum of Conversation, September 29, 1969. National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Nixon Presidential Materials Project (NPMP), NSC Files, Box 489, President’s Trip Files, Dobrynin/Kissinger, 1969 [Part 1].

² Memorandum of Conversation, October 20, 1969. NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, Box 489, President’s Trip Files, Dobrynin/Kissinger, 1969 [Part 1].

³ Richard Nixon, *RN: The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, (New York, 1978), 413.

⁴ Memorandum of Conversation, January 30, 1970; *Akten zur Auswärtigen Politik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland* (hereafter *AAPD*), 1970, Vol. 1, eds. Hans-Peter Schwarz et. al. (München, 2001), No. 28, 108. See also Boris Meissner, ed., *Moskau-Bonn: Die Beziehungen zwischen der Sowjetunion und der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, 1955–1973: Dokumentation*, 2 Vols., (Köln, 1975), Vol. 2, 1475.

⁵ Willy Brandt, *My Life in Politics*, translated by Anthea Bell, (New York, 1992), 189–190; and *AAPD*, 1970, Vol. 2, No. 388, 1462–1463. See also Willy Brandt, *People and Politics: The Years 1960–1975*, translated from German by J. Maxwell Brownjohn, (Boston, 1976), 327–328, 339–340.

⁶ Arnulf Baring, *Machtwechsel: Die Ära Brandt-Scheel*, (Stuttgart, 1982), 349. See also Brandt, *My Life in Politics*, 190.

⁷ Memorandum of Conversation, December 22, 1970. NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, Box 490, President's Trip Files, Dobrynin/Kissinger, 1971, Vol. 3. See also, Henry Kissinger, *White House Years*, (Boston, 1979), 801.

⁸ See, for instance, Raymond Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan*, revised edition, (Washington, 1994). For a more balanced account in this regard, see William Bundy, *A Tangled Web: The Making of Foreign Policy in the Nixon Presidency*, (New York, 1998).

⁹ Anatoly Dobrynin, *In Confidence: Moscow's Ambassador to America's Six Cold War Presidents*, (New York, 1995), 209–211.

¹⁰ Memorandum of Conversation, January 23, 1971. NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, Box 490, President's Trip Files, Dobrynin/Kissinger, 1971, Vol. 4 [Part 2]. See also Kissinger, *White House Years*, 804–805, 833; and Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, 211.

¹¹ Memorandum from Fazio to Kissinger, no date; NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, HAK Office Files, Box 59, Country Files, Europe, Ambassador Rush—Berlin, Vol. 1 [2 of 2]. See also Kissinger, *White House Years*, 807.

¹² Memorandum for the President's File from Kissinger, January 31; NARA, Presidential Materials, NSC Files, HAK Office Files, Box 58, Country Files, Europe, Berlin, Vol. 1 [1 of 2]. See also Kissinger, *White House Years*, 806–809; and Egon Bahr, *Zu meiner Zeit*, (München, 1996), 354–355.

¹³ Memorandum of Conversation, February 2; NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, Box 490, President's Trip Files, Dobrynin/Kissinger, 1971, Vol. 4 [Part 2].

¹⁴ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 825, 805–810. See also Kenneth Rush, "An Ambassador's Perspective," in Kenneth W. Thompson, ed., *The Nixon Presidency: Twenty-Two Intimate Perspectives of Richard M. Nixon*, (Lanham, MD, 1987), 337–339; Bahr, *Zu meiner Zeit*, 349, 354–356; and Valentin Falin, *Politische Erinnerungen*, translated from Russian by Heddy Pross-Weerth, (München, 1993), 165–179.

¹⁵ Message from Kissinger to Rush, February 12; NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, HAK Office Files, Box 59, Country Files, Europe, Ambassador Rush, Berlin, Vol. 1 [2 of 2].

¹⁶ Memorandum of Conversation, February 10; NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, Box 490, President's Trip Files, Dobrynin/Kissinger, 1971, Vol. 4 [Part 2]. See also Kissinger, *White House Years*, 825–826.

¹⁷ Memorandum of Conversation, February 16; NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, Box 490, President's Trip Files, Dobrynin/Kissinger, 1971, Vol. 4 [Part 2]. See also Kissinger, *White House Years*, 651.

¹⁸ Memorandum of Conversation, February 22; NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, Box 490, President's Trip Files, Dobrynin/Kissinger, 1971, Vol. 4 [Part 2]. See also Kissinger, *White House Years*, pp. 814, 826.

¹⁹ Message from Kissinger to Rush, February 12; NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, HAK Office Files, Box 59, Country Files, Europe, Ambassador Rush, Berlin, Vol. 1 [2 of 2].

- ²⁰ Memorandum of Conversation, February 4; NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, Box 490, President's Trip Files, Kissinger/Dobrynin, 1971, Vol. 4 [Part 2].
- ²¹ NARA, NPMP, White House Tapes, Conversation between Nixon and Kissinger, February 23, 1971, 10:52–11:30 a.m., OVAL 456–5.
- ²² Message from Kissinger to Rush, March 15; NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, HAK Office Files, Box 59, Country Files, Ambassador Rush, Berlin, Vol. 1 [2 of 2].
- ²³ Message from Rush to Kissinger, February 24; NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, HAK Office Files, Box 59, Country Files, Europe, Ambassador Rush, Berlin, Vol. 1 [2 of 2].
- ²⁴ Message from Kissinger to Rush, March 3; NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, HAK Office Files, Box 59, Country Files, Europe, Ambassador Rush, Berlin, Vol. 1 [2 of 2]. See also Kissinger, *White House Years*, 826.
- ²⁵ Memorandum of Conversation, March 15; NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, Box 491, President's Trip Files, Dobrynin/Kissinger, 1971, Vol. 5 [Part 2]. See also Kissinger, *White House Years*, 826.
- ²⁶ Messages from Kissinger to Rush, March 15 and 16, and Message from Rush to Kissinger, March 17; NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, HAK Office Files, Box 59, Country Files, Europe, Ambassador Rush, Berlin, Vol. 1 [2 of 2].
- ²⁷ Message from Kissinger to Rush, March 18; NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, HAK Office Files, Box 59, Country Files, Europe, Ambassador Rush, Berlin, Vol. 1 [2 of 2].
- ²⁸ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 826; NARA, NPMP, White House Tapes, Conversation between Nixon and Kissinger March 18, 1971, 6:25 p.m., OVAL 469–13.
- ²⁹ Message from Rush to Kissinger, March 21; NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, HAK Office Files, Box 59, Country Files, Europe, Ambassador Rush, Berlin, Vol. 1 [2 of 2]. Rush added that the move also reflected the Soviet desire to “move towards a conference on European security.”
- ³⁰ Memorandum of Conversation, March 22; NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, Box 491, President's Trip Files, Dobrynin/Kissinger, 1971, Vol. 5 [Part 1]. See also Kissinger, *White House Years*, 826–827.
- ³¹ Oral Note from Kissinger to Dobrynin, March 23; NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, HAK Office Files, Box 59, Country Files, Europe, Ambassador Rush, Berlin, Vol. 1 [1 of 2].
- ³² Memorandum of Conversation, March 25; NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, Box 491, President's Trip Files, Dobrynin/Kissinger, 1971, Vol. 5 [Part 1]. See also Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, 216–217.
- ³³ Memorandum of Conversation, March 22; NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, Box 491, President's Trip Files, Dobrynin/Kissinger, 1971, Vol. 5 [Part 1]; and Message from Kissinger to Rush, March 22, 1971, *ibid.*, HAK Office Files, Box 59, Country Files, Europe, Ambassador Rush, Berlin, Vol. 1 [2 of 2]. See also Kissinger, *White House Years*, 827.
- ³⁴ Messages from Rush to Kissinger, March 24 and 28; NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, HAK Office Files, Box 59, Country Files, Europe, Ambassador Rush, Berlin, Vol. 1 [2 of 2].
- ³⁵ Message from Rush to Kissinger, April 19; NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, HAK Office Files, Box 59, Country Files, Europe, Ambassador Rush, Berlin, Vol. 1 [2 of 2].
- ³⁶ See Kissinger, *White House Years*, 833–834; William Bundy, *A Tangled Web: The Making of Foreign Policy in the Nixon Presidency*, (New York, 1998), 255; and Raymond L. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan*, Revised Edition, (Washington, 1994), 16, 46.
- ³⁷ “Brezhnev's Report to the 24th Congress (Part I),” *Current Digest of the Soviet Press*, Vol. XXIII, No. 12 (April 20, 1971), 3–13.
- ³⁸ Diary Entry, March 31; H.R. Haldeman, *The Haldeman Diaries: Inside the Nixon White House, the Complete Multimedia Edition*, (Santa Monica, CA, 1994); and Memorandum from

Kissinger to Nixon, March 31; NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, Box 714, Country Files, Europe, USSR, Vol. XII.

³⁹ Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, 218.

⁴⁰ Memorandum of Conversation, April 23; NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, President's Trip Files, Dobrynin/Kissinger, 1971, Vol. 5 [Part 1]. See also Kissinger, *White House Years*, 817, 827–828, 834; and Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, 220–221.

⁴¹ NARA, NPMP, White House Tapes, Conversation between Nixon and Kissinger April 23, 1971, 2:52–3:36 p.m., OVAL 487–21.

⁴² Kissinger, *White House Years*, p. 828. See also Bahr, *Zu meiner Zeit*, 360–361.

⁴³ NARA, NPMP, White House Tapes, Conversation between Nixon and Kissinger, April 26, 1971, 2:57–4:12 p.m., OVAL 489–17.

⁴⁴ Memorandum of Conversation, April 26; NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, President's Trip Files, Dobrynin/Kissinger, 1971, Vol. 5 [Part 1]. See also Kissinger, *White House Years*, 828.

⁴⁵ Memorandum of Conversation, April 27; NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, President's Trip Files, Dobrynin/Kissinger, 1971, Vol. 6 [Part 2]. See also Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, 221.

⁴⁶ See Kissinger, *White House Years*, 713–714.

⁴⁷ Message from Kissinger to Rush, May 3; NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, HAK Office Files, Box 59, Country Files, Europe, Ambassador Rush, Berlin, Vol. 1 [1 of 2].

⁴⁸ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 817–818; see also, Gerard Smith, *Doubletalk: The Story of the First Strategic Arms Limitation Talks*, (Garden City, 1980), 218–223; and Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation*, 181–182.

⁴⁹ Memorandum of Conversation, May 4; NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, HAK Office Files, Box 59, Country Files, Europe, Ambassador Rush, Berlin, Vol. 1 [1 of 2].

⁵⁰ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 818–819. See also Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, 215.

⁵¹ Message from Kissinger to Rush, May 11; NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, HAK Office Files, Box 59, Country Files, Europe, Ambassador Rush, Berlin, Vol. 1 [1 of 2].

⁵² Memorandum of Conversation, May 12; NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, President's Trip Files, Dobrynin/Kissinger, 1971, Vol. 6 [Part 1].

⁵³ Message from Kissinger to Rush, May 12; NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, HAK Office Files, Box 59, Country Files, Europe, Ambassador Rush, Berlin, Vol. 1 [1 of 2]. See also Kissinger, *White House Years*, 817–818, 829.

⁵⁴ Message from Bahr to Kissinger, May 11; *AAPD, 1971*, Vol. 2, eds. Hans-Peter Schwarz et al., (München, 2002), No. 163, p. 744. See also Bahr, *Zu meiner Zeit*, 362–364; and Falin, *Politische Erinnerungen*, 165–179.

⁵⁵ Message from Rush to Kissinger, May 11; NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, HAK Office Files, Box 59, Country Files, Europe, Ambassador Rush, Berlin, Vol. 1 [1 of 2].

⁵⁶ Messages from Rush to Kissinger, May 14, June 4 and June 6; NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, HAK Office Files, Box 59, Country Files, Europe, Ambassador Rush, Berlin, Vol. 1 [1 of 2].

⁵⁷ Message from Rush to Kissinger, May 28; NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, HAK Office Files, Box 59, Country Files, Europe, Ambassador Rush, Berlin, Vol. 1 [1 of 2]. Message from Bahr to Kissinger, June 6; *AAPD, 1971*, Vol. 2, No. 198, 918–919.

⁵⁸ Message from Kissinger to Rush, May 24; NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, HAK Office Files, Box 59, Country Files, Europe, Ambassador Rush, Berlin, Vol. 1 [1 of 2].

⁵⁹ NARA, NPMP, White House Tapes, Conversation between Nixon and Kissinger, May 29, 1971, 9:08 a.m., OVAL 507–4.

⁶⁰ Memorandum of Conversation, June 8; NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, Box 491, President's Trip Files, Dobrynin/Kissinger, 1971, Vol. 6 [Part 2]. See also Kissinger, *White House Years*, 834.

- ⁶¹ NARA, NPMP, White House Tapes, Conversation between Nixon and Rush, June 14, 1971, 6:10–6:45 p.m., OVAL 519–15.
- ⁶² NARA, NPMP, White House Tapes, Conversation between Nixon and Kissinger, June 15, 1971, 10:39–10:59 a.m., OVAL 520–4.
- ⁶³ NARA, NPMP, White House Tapes, Conversation between Nixon and Brandt, June 15, 1971, 11:02 a.m.–12:34 p.m., OVAL 520–6. See also Memorandum of Federal Chancellor Brandt, June 15/16; *AAPD, 1971*, Vol. 2, No. 208, pp. 966–967; and Willy Brandt, *People and Politics: The Years 1960–1975*, translated from German by J. Maxwell Brownjohn, (Boston, 1976), 292–293.
- ⁶⁴ Memorandum of Conversation, June 21; NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, Box 491, President’s Trip Files, Dobrynin/Kissinger, 1971, Vol. 6 [Part 1].
- ⁶⁵ Message from Rush to Kissinger, June 26; NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, HAK Office Files, Box 59, Country Files, Europe, Ambassador Rush, Berlin, Vol. 1 [1 of 2].
- ⁶⁶ Memorandum of Conversation, June 28; NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, HAK Office Files, Box 57, Country Files, Europe, Berlin and European Security, Vol. II [1 of 2].
- ⁶⁷ Message from Rush to Kissinger, June 29; NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, HAK Office Files, Box 59, Country Files, Europe, Ambassador Rush, Berlin, Vol. 1 [1 of 2].
- ⁶⁸ Julij A. Kwizinskij [Yuli A. Kvitsinsky], *Vor dem Sturm: Erinnerungen eines Diplomaten*, (Berlin, 1993), 244–245.
- ⁶⁹ Messages from Rush to Kissinger, June 29, June 30 and July 7; NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, HAK Office Files, Box 59, Country Files, Europe, Ambassador Rush, Berlin, Vol. 1 [1 of 2]. Message from Bahr to Kissinger, June 30; *AAPD, 1971*, Vol. 2, No. 224, 1035–1037. See also Kissinger, *White House Years*, 829–830.
- ⁷⁰ Message from Rush to Kissinger, July 14; NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, HAK Office Files, Box 59, Country Files, Europe, Ambassador Rush, Berlin, Vol. 2.
- ⁷¹ Message from Kissinger to Rush, June 28; NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, HAK Office Files, Box 59, Country Files, Europe, Ambassador Rush, Berlin, Vol. 1 [1 of 2].
- ⁷² Memorandum from Haig to Nixon, July 6, and Message from Haig to Kissinger, July 5; NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, Box 492, President’s Trip Files, Dobrynin/Kissinger, 1971, Vol. 7 [Part 2]. See also Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, 225.
- ⁷³ Messages from Haig to Rush, July 6 and 8; NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, HAK Office Files, Box 59, Country Files, Europe, Ambassador Rush, Berlin, Vol. 1 [1 of 2]. See also Kissinger, *White House Years*, 834–835.
- ⁷⁴ Message from Kissinger to Rush, July 19; NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, HAK Office Files, Box 59, Country Files, Europe, Ambassador Rush, Berlin, Vol. 2.
- ⁷⁵ Memorandum of Conversation, July 19; NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, Box 492, President’s Trip Files, Dobrynin/Kissinger, 1971, Vol. 7 [Part 2]. See also Kissinger, *White House Years*, 835–836; and Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, 226–228.
- ⁷⁶ Message from Rush to Kissinger, July 23; NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, HAK Office Files, Box 59, Country Files, Europe, Ambassador Rush, Berlin, Vol. 2.
- ⁷⁷ Messages from Rush to Kissinger, July 23 and July 28; NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, HAK Office Files, Box 59, Country Files, Europe, Ambassador Rush, Berlin, Vol. 2; and Telegram 9190 from Bonn, July 28; NARA, RG 59, Central Files, POL 38–6.
- ⁷⁸ Telegram 138285 to Bonn, July 29; NARA, RG 59, POL 17 USSR-GER B.
- ⁷⁹ Message from Rush to Kissinger, July 28; NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, HAK Office Files, Box 59, Country Files, Europe, Ambassador Rush, Berlin, Vol. 2.
- ⁸⁰ Message from Rush to Kissinger, July 29; NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, HAK Office Files, Box 59, Country Files, Europe, Ambassador Rush, Berlin, Vol. 2.
- ⁸¹ Henry Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, (New York, 1999), 604.

- ⁸² Martin J. Hillenbrand, "The Legal Background of the Berlin Situation," in *The Future of Berlin*, edited by Martin J. Hillenbrand, (Montclair, NJ: Allanheld, Osmun, 1980), 56.
- ⁸³ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 823.
- ⁸⁴ Seymour Hersh, *The Price of Power: Kissinger in the Nixon White House*, (New York, 1983), 420, fn. *.
- ⁸⁵ Transcript from Conference on American Détente and German Ostpolitik, German Historical Institute, Washington, DC, May 10, 2002. See the "Statements and Discussion" section of this volume.
- ⁸⁶ Transcript from Conference on American Détente and German Ostpolitik, German Historical Institute, Washington, DC, May 10, 2002. See the "Statements and Discussion" section of this volume.
- ⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 421. See also Martin J. Hillenbrand, *Fragments of Our Time: Memoirs of a Diplomat*, (Athens, GA, 1998), 287; and Sutterlin and Klein, *Berlin*, 108–122.
- ⁸⁸ Nixon, *Memoirs*, 523.
- ⁸⁹ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 766–767.
- ⁹⁰ William G. Hyland, *Mortal Rivals: Superpower Relations from Nixon to Reagan*, (New York, 1987), 35.
- ⁹¹ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 814.
- ⁹² Dobrynin, *In Confidence*, 223.

“WASHINGTON AS A PLACE FOR THE GERMAN CAMPAIGN”: THE U.S. GOVERNMENT AND THE CDU/CSU OPPOSITION, 1969–1972

Bernd Schaefer

I.

In October 1969, Bonn's Christian Democrat-led "grand coalition" was replaced by an alliance of Social Democrats (SPD) and Free Democrats (FDP) led by Chancellor Willy Brandt that held a sixteen-seat majority in the West German parliament. Not only were the leaders of the CDU caught by surprise, but so, too, were many in the U.S. government. President Richard Nixon had to take back the premature message of congratulations extended to Chancellor Kiesinger early on election night. "The worst tragedy," Henry Kissinger concluded on June 16, 1971, in a conversation with Nixon, "is that election in '69. If this National Party, that extreme right wing party, had got three-tenths of one percent more, the Christian Democrats would be in office now."¹

American administrations and their embassy in Bonn had cultivated a close relationship with the leaders of the governing CDU/CSU for many years. The two sister parties were perceived as allies and mostly loyal followers of American policy, regular transatlantic bickering over various issues notwithstanding.² This predisposition survived the 1969 change of government in West Germany, particularly as Brandt's slim majority gradually eroded. For almost three years, right from the beginning of Brandt's tenure, a return of the CDU/CSU to power never seemed to be out of reach. Concluding an embassy report from October 12, 1969 on a conversation with designated CDU floor leader Rainer Barzel shortly before the Bundestag formally elected Brandt chancellor, U.S. Ambassador Kenneth Rush contended it would be in the American interest to further any tendencies of bipartisanship in the Federal Republic's foreign policy: "We also consider that while fully meeting the requirements of a close relationship with the new coalition, we should in our own interest extend to the CDU the kind of rough equality of treatment Barzel is proposing."³

When Kissinger stated in a memorandum to Nixon in July 1970 that the U.S. should avoid being held responsible for a possible collapse of the SPD-FDP coalition, the president wrote in the margin "I do not agree—any non-socialist government would be better."⁴ Learning his lesson from the Oval Office, on September 13, 1970, in another memorandum to

Nixon, Kissinger called the CDU “our friends” whom the U.S. must not “demoralize” by openly supporting the policy of the SPD-led government.⁵ In a taped conversation in the Oval Office with Kissinger on May 29, 1971, the president expressed his preference for the CDU over Brandt in his own distinctive style: “I don’t want to hurt our friends in Germany by catering to that son of a bitch.”⁶ According to Barzel, Nixon reiterated that stance in January 1972 in a more polite manner when the former was on official visit to the U.S., telling him off the record, “We stand by our old friends.”⁷

Such epithets were rarely used at that time for the members of the SPD leadership, aside from a few individuals such as Helmut Schmidt. Old loyalties notwithstanding, however, after October 1969 the U.S. government was forced to some extent to trade political or even personal friendships for overarching U.S. interests. Upholding these interests required a smooth working relationship with the Bonn government, regardless of which parties sat in it. At the same time, though, Washington maintained close contacts with the opposition parties, treating them as a kind of “shadow government.” More than once between 1970 and 1972, CDU/CSU leaders expressed firm convictions to U.S. officials on how they might be able to bring down the Brandt government at any time via parliamentary defeat or a non-confidence motion.⁸ Until late 1971, this might have been more bluff or self-delusional, wishful thinking on the part of an opposition still not ready to accept its loss of power after the electoral defeat of 1969.

When CDU envoy Kurt Birrenbach returned from a special mission to Washington in November 1971, he reported to his party that the U.S. government expected Brandt’s coalition to maintain its parliamentary majority and pass the Eastern treaties. Washington considered it impossible to interfere in the sovereignty of West Germany by taking sides in its internal political debates, which Birrenbach understood as part of the alleged American desire to keep a “low profile” in its foreign policy in the wake of a retreat from Vietnam.⁹ By early 1972, however, the CDU/CSU’s hope of splitting the governing coalition by additional defections from the FDP and SPD parliamentary caucuses had soared. In February of that year, Barzel was looking forward to overthrowing Brandt. At this time, he revealed his shadow cabinet to departing Ambassador Rush.¹⁰

II.

The U.S. government’s attempt to have things both ways with regard to the FRG was bound to cause tension. It attempted to display “neutrality” toward the domestic political conflicts in West Germany, following the White House double strategy of “no public endorsement of Brandt’s

policy” and “no public support for his CDU rivals.” Furthermore, there were differences of perception of German Ostpolitik within the administration itself. German politicians, from government and opposition alike, attempted to exploit such differences and were always eager to claim U.S. sympathy for their own foreign policy positions in appealing to the domestic audience.

At the pragmatic State Department, there was a lot of goodwill and also some strong endorsements of the Brandt government to be found. Secretary William Rogers and his deputy Elliot Richardson backed the Bonn chancellor and trusted him fully. In his first meeting with Brandt after the December 1969 German election, Rogers told him that the American government would welcome West German initiatives towards the East: “In Washington there haven’t been the slightest doubts about German intentions at any time.”¹¹ In the White House, however, the positions of German-born NSC officials Henry Kissinger and Helmut Sonnenfeldt ranged initially from skeptical to highly suspicious, albeit for personal and ideological reasons. Without leaving tracks or denying any involvement or instructions when asked, the White House capitalized on criticism by U.S. Embassy Minister Russell Fessenden in Bonn and occupation-era figures such as Dean Acheson, John J. McCloy, and Lucius D. Clay to sow doubts and express mistrust towards aspects of Brandt’s policy and his alleged lack of consultation with Washington.¹²

Undoubtedly, U.S. officials tried very hard not to be openly dragged into foreign debates and publicly favor partisan German interests. In many situations, they resisted the temptation to follow personal inclination. With National Security Decision Memorandum (NSDM) 91, neutrality towards partisan German positions had been adopted as a binding commitment for all departments and agencies within the U.S. government.¹³ When talking to Brandt during consultations in Key Biscayne on December 28 and 29, 1971, Nixon scrupulously avoided any hint of support for the forthcoming ratification of the Eastern treaties, and he also abstained from voicing any criticism. He only embraced the Berlin Agreement and told Brandt that he would also be seeing Barzel next week.¹⁴ Even during the heated political atmosphere in the FRG in April and May 1972, the Nixon administration showed remarkable self-discipline and did not “take sides,” at least before the failed no-confidence vote in the Bundestag on April 27, 1972. But then, according to a note from Sonnenfeldt to Kissinger, “we expressed gratification to Brandt on his defeat of the no-confidence motion (which we did in the back channel to Bahr reporting on your Moscow trip).”¹⁵

The U.S. considered the embittered, divisive, and vicious debate in West Germany over Ostpolitik worrisome. Not surprisingly, it was Kissinger who, in a February 16, 1970, memorandum to Nixon, invoked the

German past when observing the domestic debate in the FRG. He stated that it "could in time produce the type of emotional and doctrinaire political argument that has paralyzed political life in Germany and some other West European countries in the past." Fearing the alleged loosening of Germany's Western ties, the National Security Adviser darkly alluded to a shaking of the FRG's domestic stability and an unhinging of its international position if Ostpolitik succeeded. "A very perceptive piece," Nixon wrote on the margins of this memorandum.¹⁶ When Barzel met with the American president on September 4, 1970, and April 18, 1971, Nixon delivered strong appeals to the German CDU politician to maintain the political stability of West Germany and preserve the post-1945 democratic achievements by responsible behavior and political restraint on the part of the parliamentary opposition.¹⁷

III.

In fact, however, the global foreign policy of Richard Nixon and Henry Kissinger allowed the government in Bonn to pursue its Eastern policy with silent American endorsement. When Nixon decided to take public credit for the 1971 Berlin Agreement and hailed it as an important milestone in U.S.-Soviet relations, Moscow linked its consummation to the ratification of the Eastern treaties in Bonn, leaving hardly any alternative for the U.S. but to favor ratification. Much as Nixon and Kissinger might have wanted to believe the opposite, ratification was far from being just a German domestic problem whose outcome was of little interest to Washington. Under Secretary of State John Irwin was absolutely to the point when, on November 30, 1971, he defined the consequences of non-ratification as "chaos."¹⁸ The active U.S. involvement in the Berlin negotiations and the subsequent Soviet linkage to the Moscow Treaty's ratification had severely limited the American options in dealing with West Germany.

After its initial reluctance, the U.S. reserved for itself the dominant role of placing the capstone of the Quadripartite Agreement on Berlin into the construction of the FRG's new policy toward the East. A case study of how government and opposition in Germany were involved by the U.S. to negotiate and finalize this agreement would easily demonstrate the futility of the CDU/CSU in using its undoubtedly more cordial U.S. ties for partisan gains. Even more than the State Department, the German political opposition had been kept in the dark about the highly secret back channel negotiations among the White House, the USSR, and the Bonn government. When CDU leaders at one point complained to the U.S. embassy in Bonn about certain "unacceptable" drafts of the Berlin agreement and blamed Brandt for them, even some American officials

did not know that the drafts were actually of American origin and had already been approved by the White House. The very few U.S. representatives who knew better were not authorized to enlighten CDU representatives on what was going on. For instance, in February 1971, Helmut Sonnenfeldt wrote, "This is tricky business," regarding a plea from CDU envoy Kurt Birrenbach for a meeting between Barzel and Nixon so that the former could express his grievances with a recent Brandt plan for the Berlin negotiations. The NSC official continued: "A CDU attack on the SPD in regard to the Berlin plan is also an attack on us, since we tabled it."¹⁹

IV.

After the electoral defeat in 1969, the CDU/CSU leadership was in disarray. Soon the rivals for the party's leadership began to compete with each other. Nominal leaders, like the party chairmen Kurt Georg Kiesinger (CDU) and Franz-Josef Strauss (CSU), did not want to conceal their highly confrontational attitude towards the new government and its policy. For a while, former Foreign Minister Gerhard Schröder (CDU) continued a statesmanlike and rather bipartisan approach. Rumors had it that he would be ready for the chancellorship in a future grand coalition between the CDU/CSU and the SPD. However, the new rising star of the political opposition was a strategist who aspired to become Brandt's successor as chancellor. This was Rainer Candidus Barzel, CDU/CSU caucus leader in the Bundestag. In 1971, he inherited Kiesinger's position as CDU party chairman with a clear victory over his opponent Helmut Kohl at the party's national conference in Saarbrücken on October 4, 1971.

Referring to these years in one of his three memoirs, Barzel later described Washington as another place for fighting the German electoral campaign.²⁰ If the West German elections could have been decided by the U.S. government alone, Barzel might have had a better chance of winning. Despite his only fair command of English, no German politician from the government or the opposition maintained such a close relationship with the U.S. He sought advice regularly and wanted to share his thoughts and concerns with American officials. In general, he presented himself as a politician desperate for bipartisanship in German foreign policy and as being much closer to Brandt's Eastern policy than most in his own party. On the other hand, he became increasingly embittered about Brandt's lack of consultation and trust in their personal relations. Brandt indeed did not want to share the potential political benefits and personal glory of Ostpolitik with Barzel. The Christian Democratic leader wanted to become an internationally respected statesman; he supported what he considered the sensible elements of Ostpolitik and hoped to get

credit for correcting its flaws. Within his parliamentary caucus, he wanted to keep at arms length the “two wild stallions” (Kiesinger and Strauss) and the many “unbroken mustangs,” the fervent anti-Ostpolitik deputies spoiling for a fight with the SPD. At least so he confided to Ambassador Rush on October 10, 1969, in Bonn. According to Rush’s report, Barzel “was sure that if his views were not followed, the result would be a stampede of the wild horses, to the detriment of German parliamentary democracy and of the standing of the CDU.”²¹ Had the CDU chairman voiced some of those thoughts even in closed party meetings, his colleagues might have dumped him from leadership positions immediately.

Jointly harvesting the fruits of an Ostpolitik he helped shape, Barzel initially hoped to bring Brandt down eventually on domestic policy issues and to succeed him in office. But continuing defections by SPD and FPD Bundestag deputies and, in particular, CDU exuberance following its electoral victory in Baden-Württemberg on April 24, 1972, prompted the CDU/CSU leadership to follow the lead of Barzel’s rivals: Helmut Kohl, Gerhard Schröder, and Franz-Josef Strauss. They pushed for a constructive no-confidence vote in the Bundestag on April 27 that might have replaced Brandt with Barzel immediately. Barzel himself was reluctant but went along. “The prospect of governing the FRG gave him little enthusiasm,” reported a U.S. embassy officer on April 24, “however, he did not believe there was another course.”²²

After vote-buying on both sides, a tie vote in the Bundestag left Brandt in office. The GDR Stasi’s foreign intelligence department might have given the edge to Brandt by placing at least two CDU/CSU deputies on its payroll. In any event, the opposition’s failed maneuver was rather unpopular with the West German public. Barzel paid the price with his defeat in the November 1972 national election. North Rhine-Westphalia state CDU chairman Heinrich Köppler told the American consul in Düsseldorf on December 13, 1972, that the April no-confidence motion was “a serious and dangerous mistake” on the part of the CDU/CSU. He “claimed he was the only one in the CDU executive who argued that a no-confidence vote should only be taken in connection with a government defeat on a major issue.” April 27, 1972, according to the CDU politician, constituted “the Federal Republic’s most serious political crisis.”²³

More than thirty years later, Rainer Barzel still claimed, “I modified the Eastern treaties! For them I put my political career at stake.”²⁴ It was a high-risk gamble he was ultimately to lose on two fronts—against Willy Brandt and against his inner-party rivals. In 2002, the 78-year old confessed: “Certainly I would have liked to become Federal Chancellor. I really believe I would have been able to do this job. I would have loved to do that.”²⁵

From early 1970 to the narrowly failed no-confidence motion of April 27, 1972, Barzel had either adopted the increasingly militant tendencies of his party or followed his U.S. partners' concerns and attempted to restrain his peers. Differing views on Ostpolitik in the CDU faction and the Bavaria-based CSU, led by constant irritant Franz Josef Strauss (who had ambitions for the chancellorship himself²⁶), made it difficult for the CDU leader to exercise his authority. Without being able to articulate a coherent CDU/CSU alternative to Brandt's Ostpolitik backed by a wide majority of his own party, or to envision a compelling alternative to the SPD-FDP approach, Barzel had to adopt the lowest common denominator. He welcomed treaties with the East in general but called the SPD-FDP agreements unduly hasty, sloppily negotiated, inattentive to vital West German positions, and certain to be modified by a FRG government led by himself.

Barzel's private statements made to his American conversation partners over the years were devoted to complaints about his own party, his personal rivals, and the best CDU line to pursue. But since he was the chairman of the CDU, he had to willingly follow a principle of Mahatma Gandhi, which the U.S. ambassador in Bonn, Kenneth Rush, nicely summed up on March 26, 1970: "I have to catch up to my people, for I am their leader." In the same embassy report, titled "The CDU's Increasing Militancy," Rush described Barzel as "ambitious and alert but possessed of no overwhelming conviction."²⁷

In his memoirs, former U.S. Assistant Secretary of State and Ambassador to Germany Martin Hillenbrand called Barzel "my friend" and portrayed him as "a much troubled man anxious not to appear too negative but bound by the majority sentiment in the party he led." The astute American observer came close to the truth in arguing how Barzel would have taken the Eastern treaties "pretty much as they were," if it had not been for his party and the CSU under Franz Josef Strauss.²⁸ When Barzel was forced out of his CDU leadership positions by his rivals in 1973, Hillenbrand stated, "I and hence the U.S. government were losing a good source of information about the inner workings of the legislature and his party."²⁹ That was indeed the case. The many memoranda of conversations between Barzel and U.S. officials in Bonn and Washington between 1969 and 1973 may tell a true story about this politician, who ended up being soundly defeated at the West German polls and soon afterwards by partisan rivals, led by his successor Helmut Kohl, whom he heartily disliked. Unlike Kohl, who would master and lead his party for twenty five years along paths straight and crooked, the scrupulous Rainer Barzel was brought down by rival personalities within the CDU and CSU and a prevailing shortsightedness within his own party. Barzel was aware of these destructive features, but he could not overcome them with his

personal authority. This he painfully realized, and it embittered him deeply and led him to constantly complain of backstabbing.³⁰

Barzel was barely aware of his role as a comparatively minor player at that time in U.S. attempts at Realpolitik, which were crafted almost exclusively by the White House. Details of policy and Washington's secret diplomacy were hidden to him as much as they were to most of his American confidants. U.S. Realpolitik never offered him a genuine chance of gaining the level of support he sought in Washington for his political fight against Willy Brandt and his government. To the contrary, in many cases he damaged his leadership position in the CDU when he followed American advice and attempted to restrain or overcome opposition within his party on certain elements of the Eastern treaties and the Berlin agreement.³¹ Barzel insisted to the U.S. embassy in June 1972 that "he had been able to leave behind a situation where Eastern policy might have become an enduring political battlefield in the FRG, undermining the political stability of the Federal Republic. He believed that these were sizeable achievements in the common Western interest."³² The CDU leader thought he might have deserved outright American acknowledgement for such efforts in the aftermath, but his frequent pleas to U.S. officials went largely unheard.³³

Pursuing his personal ambitions to return the CDU/CSU to power in Bonn and to advance himself into the Chancellery, Barzel had to rely solely on domestic instruments of public partisan warfare and campaigning. Whereas the government of the United States of America conveyed to him the realities of Realpolitik, his domestic rival Willy Brandt taught him a painful lesson in how an united party could run an efficient and attractive campaign. Neither in Washington nor in West Germany was Rainer Barzel to gain electoral success. These failures, regardless of whether he deserved to be blamed for them, forced his own party to drive him out of his opposition leadership positions in 1973.

Notes

¹ Recording of conversation between Nixon and Kissinger, June 16, 1971. National Archives and Records Administration (NARA), Nixon Presidential Materials Project (NPMP), White House Tapes, Conversation 523-4. Kissinger referred to the National Democratic Party of Germany (NPD), an openly neo-Nazi party, which gained 4.3 percent of the national vote and fell actually seven-tenths of a percent short of the constitutional five-percent-hurdle required to obtain seats in FRG parliament. With four instead of three parties in parliament, Willy Brandt could not have formed a coalition against the CDU/CSU, which still had emerged as the strongest single party from the September 1969 election. During a talk with Chancellor Kiesinger in Washington on August 8, 1969, Henry Kissinger had defined the contemporary student protest movements as "more Nazi" than the NPD (AAPD 1969, Vol. II, p. 907).

² Thomas A. Schwartz, *Lyndon Johnson and Europe: In the Shadow of Vietnam* (Cambridge, Mass., 2003).

³ American Embassy Bonn to Secretary of State, October 12, 1969. Subject: CDU Leader Barzel on Future Political Situation. NARA, Record Group (RG) 59, Central Policy Files, 1967–69, Box 2125.

⁴ Memorandum for the President from Henry A. Kissinger. Undated. NARA, NPMP, National Security Council (NSC) Files, Country Files—Europe, Box 684.

⁵ Memorandum for the President from Henry A. Kissinger, September 3, 1970. Subject: Your meeting with Rainer Barzel. NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, Country Files—Europe, Box 684.

⁶ Recording of conversation between Nixon and Kissinger, May 29, 1971. NARA, NPMP, White House Tapes, Conversation 507–4.

⁷ Rainer Barzel, *Im Streit und umstritten. Anmerkungen zu Adenauer, Erhard und den Ostverträgen* (Frankfurt/Berlin, 1986), 172.

⁸ See e.g.: American Embassy Bonn to Secretary of State. June 2, 1970. Subject: CDU Efforts to Unseat Brandt Government and Block Eastern Policy. NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, Country Files – Europe, Box 684.

⁹ Kurt Birrenbach, *Meine Sondermissionen. Rückblick auf zwei Jahrzehnte bundesdeutscher Außenpolitik* (Düsseldorf/Wien, 1984), 336–7.

¹⁰ U.S. Mission Berlin to Secretary of State. February 14, 1972. Subject: Ambassador's Farewell Call on CDU Leader Barzel. NARA, RG 59, Lot 74 D 430, Records of Kenneth Rush, Box 13. The CDU leader named Manfred Wörner as Defense Minister, Gerhard Schröder as Minister for Foreign Affairs, and proposed split Ministries of Economic and Finance, to be headed by the CSU (Franz-Josef Strauss) and CDU (presumably Kurt Birrenbach) respectively.

¹¹ *Akten zur Auswärtigen Politik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (AAPD) 1969, [Files on the Foreign Policy of the Federal Republic of Germany]*, eds. Hans-Peter Schwarz et al. (München, 2000), Vol. II, 1384 (Notes from Egon Bahr from December 8, 1969 on the meeting between Brandt and Rogers on December 6). See also the remarks of James S. Sutterlin, Director of the Office of German Affairs in the Department of State, from February 16, 1970: *AAPD 1970* (München, 2001), Vol. I, 264–5 (Notes from German Ambassador to the U.S., Rolf Pauls, of February 17, 1970, on meeting with Elliot Richardson and John Sutterlin on February 16).

¹² Cf. *AAPD 1969*, Vol. II, 1338–41 (Notes from Ministerialdirektor Ruete from November 27, 1969 on conversation with Fessenden on November 26); *AAPD 1969*, Vol. II, 1347–48 (Notes of Egon Bahr from November 28, 1969 on conversation with Fessenden); *AAPD 1970*, Vol. III, 2293–95 (Notes from Rolf Pauls of December 18, 1970 on conversation with Henry Kissinger on December 17, regarding remarks by Dean Acheson 'to slow down the mad race to Moscow' after the latter's meeting with President Nixon); *AAPD 1970*, Vol. III, 2305–06 (Notes from Pauls of December 22, 1970 on the meeting of Minister of State, Horst Ehmke, with Henry Kissinger on 21 December), see also: Horst Ehmke, *Mittendrin. Von der Großen Koalition zur deutschen Einheit* (Reinbek, 1996), 140–41.

¹³ NSC, NSDM 91, Subject: United States Policy on Germany and Berlin, November 6, 1970. NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, Country Files—Europe, Box 685.

¹⁴ See the records of conversation between Nixon and Brandt from December 28 and 29, 1971 in *AAPD 1971*, Vol. III, 1980–97, 2008–19. See for quotations on the subject of Eastern treaties: 1989, 2013–14.

¹⁵ Note from Sonnenfeldt to Kissinger, April 28, 1972. NARA, RG 59, Central Files, POL15, GER W.

¹⁶ Memorandum for the President from Henry A. Kissinger, February 16, 1970. NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, Country Files—Europe, Box 683.

¹⁷ Memorandum of conversation. Rainer Barzel, Ambassador Rush, Jonathan Dean, April 18, 1971. NARA, RG 59, Lot 74 D 430, Box 13.

¹⁸ Record of conversation between State Secretary Paul Frank and Under Secretary of State John Irwin in Washington on November 30, 1971. *AAPD 1971* (München, 2002), Vol. III, 1861.

¹⁹ Note from Sonnenfeldt to Kissinger, February 26, 1971. NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, Henry A. Kissinger (HAK) Office Files, Box 60.

²⁰ Barzel, *Im Streit und umstritten*, p. 173. See also: Rainer Barzel, *Ein gewagtes Leben. Erinnerungen* Stuttgart/Leipzig, 2001); Rainer Barzel, *Auf dem Drahtseil* (München, 1978).

²¹ American Embassy Bonn to Secretary of State. October 12, 1969. Subject: CDU Leader Barzel on Future Political Situation. NARA, Record Group (RG) 59, Central Policy Files, 1967–69, Box 2125. For details on the CDU/CSU Bundestag faction and *Ostpolitik* in the 1960s and 1970s, see Daniela Taschler, *Vor neuen Herausforderungen. Die außen- und deutschlandpolitische Debatte in der CDU/CSU-Bundestagsfraktion während der Großen Koalition (1966–1969)* (Düsseldorf, 2001); Anselm Tiggemann, *CDU/CSU und die Ost- und Deutschlandpolitik 1969–1972: Zur "Innenpolitik der Außenpolitik" der ersten Regierung Brandt/Scheel* (Frankfurt, 1998); Michael Lemke, *CDU/CSU und Vertragspolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland in den Jahren 1969–1975: Kontinuität und Wandel christdemokratischer Ost- und Deutschlandpolitik* (Saarbrücken, 1992); Clay Clemens, *Reluctant Realists: The CDU/CSU and West German Ostpolitik* (Durham, 1989). See also a reflective review essay: Noel D. Cary, "Reassessing Germany's Ostpolitik. Part 1: From Détente to Refreeze," in *Central European History*, 33 (2/2000): 235–262.

²² American Embassy Bonn to Secretary of State. April 24, 1972. Subject: CDU Decides to Attempt to Unseat Brandt Government. NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, 1969–1974, Country Files—Europe, Box 686.

²³ American Consul Düsseldorf to Department of State, December 15, 1972. Subject: NRW Opposition Leader Koeppler Comments on Election Results and CDU Future. NARA, RG 59, Central Files, POL 12–6, GER W.

²⁴ Interview with Rainer Barzel. *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, 166 (July 20/21, 2002), Weekend Section, VIII.

²⁵ *Ibid.*

²⁶ Of a conversation with CSU Chairman Strauss on June 26, 1970, U.S. Embassy Officer John Dean reported that Strauss was very frank. "He realized his only real chance to become Chancellor of Germany was in the event of a severe national crisis. 'Sometimes I say to myself,' he said, 'that I do not wish myself on Germany as its Chancellor, because I know what that would mean in terms of the situation for the whole country which would have resulted in this outcome.' 'Nevertheless,' he said, 'the CSU is the most homogenous group in the entire German political system and I am fully in charge of it. No CDU leader can be named Chancellor candidate without my approval. I am the kingmaker of the CDU and cannot be deprived of this role except in the very unlikely event of a split in the party and the coalition between the left wing and the SPD.'" Memorandum of Conversation Strauss-Dean. June 26, 1970. Subject: German Political Situation. NARA, RG 59, Lot Files 74 D430, Records of Kenneth Rush, Box 13.

²⁷ American Embassy Bonn to Department of State. Subject: The CDU's Increasing Militancy. March 26, 1970. NARA, RG 59, Central Files, POL 12 GER W.

²⁸ Martin J. Hillenbrand, *Fragments of Our Time. Memoirs of a Diplomat* (Athens, 1998), 303–04.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, 319.

³⁰ To this day, Rainer Barzel feels bitter about both Helmut Kohl and Franz Josef Strauss in particular, albeit for different reasons. See the 2002 interview with the *Süddeutsche Zeitung* quoted above, headlined "Rainer Barzel about Treason." See also his three memoir books cited above.

³¹ Cf. Barzel's claim to the U.S. Embassy that he criticized exclusively the Brandt government, but not the Allies, for certain aspects of the Berlin Agreement, although this was distorting the real responsibilities. American Embassy to Secretary of State, August 24, 1971. Subject: Berlin Talks—Initial CDU Reactions to Berlin Agreement. NARA, RG 59, Lot Files 74 D430, Records of Kenneth Rush, Box 12.

³² American Embassy Bonn to Secretary of State, June 1, 1972. Subject: Intentions of CDU Leader Barzel. NARA, NPMP, NSC Files, Country Files—Europe, Box 687.

³³ American Embassy Bonn to Secretary of State, January 15, 1972. Subject: Barzel Visit to the U.S.—Suggested Topics for Discussion. NARA, RG 59, Lot 74 D 430, Records of Kenneth Rush, Box 13.

“TAKE NO RISKS (CHINESE)”: THE BASIC TREATY IN THE CONTEXT OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS

Mary Elise Sarotte

Only the two Germanies signed the Basic Treaty at the end of 1972; yet the origins of this treaty were anything but bilateral. Like so much else in the Cold War, this accord represented the interaction between many layers: the local grievances of Berliners concerned with issues of family reunification and transit rights; the ambitions of the leaders of both halves of divided Germany; and the pressures of global superpower competition. In order to understand the Basic Treaty, it is necessary to understand all of these levels. This essay will, first, provide an overview of what the treaty accomplished on a practical level; second, discuss one particularly illuminating controversy, the question of emigration; and finally, show how this controversy reveals the impact of the international context on the Basic Treaty.

I. The Treaty

On December 21, 1972, the lead GDR negotiator, Michael Kohl, and Chancellor Willy Brandt's close aide, Egon Bahr, signed the Basic Treaty in East Berlin. It would be misleading to describe the signing, which was soon overshadowed by the United States' Christmas bombing of Hanoi, as a joyous occasion and a great triumph. Plans to have more senior figures—such as Brandt himself and SED leader Erich Honecker—sign the accord had fallen victim to squabbling. The treaty itself, rather than representing a new breakthrough, instead instituted acceptance of the sad realities of the Cold War.

Nonetheless, the merits of the Basic Treaty deserve recognition. The details of the treaty itself have been analyzed elsewhere. The question here is: what was its overall significance in terms of international relations?¹ Through complex and often contentious talks, the two states on either side of the Cold War front line had effectively reached a *modus vivendi*. With this accord, Bonn and East Berlin recognized that the division of Germany would remain in place for the foreseeable future (even if West Germany avoided including any formal recognition of the GDR as a sovereign state) and established a basis for regulating the practical problems caused by that division.

The Basic Treaty also decreased the chance for conflict between the two Germanies by codifying a number of contentious issues. It formally

stated the commitment of both Germanies to the principle of non-violence in their dealings with one another. It indicated both sides' willingness to try to promote peaceful relations in Europe as a whole. Both Germanies agreed generally to respect each other's autonomy in internal issues. Various appendices indicated more specific intentions, such as to increase trade and ease traffic and postal flows. The two states also agreed to exchange "permanent representations," or missions, that would essentially be quasi-embassies. For all its shortcomings, the treaty provided a framework and institutions for resolving German-German conflicts in the future, thereby reducing the chances that such conflicts would escalate.

Strangely, the signing of the Basic Treaty did not signal the end of the negotiations surrounding it. Follow-up talks continued throughout 1973. Ostensibly, these talks were to discuss remaining technical questions. However, they did not confine themselves to minor issues. Instead, these post-Basic Treaty follow-up talks revealed the impact of the international context. They did so by exposing the darker aspects of questions of human rights, and of trade and financial transfers between the FRG and GDR.

II. Controversy over Emigration

In the 1960s, West Germany had established a practice of essentially buying the freedom of political prisoners and other would-be émigrés from the GDR. By the time the Wall came down, the FRG had spent over DM 3.5 billion to secure the release of roughly 34,000 prisoners along with reuniting approximately 250,000 families divided by the Wall.² Until the time of the Basic Treaty, such dealings occurred primarily along a shadow back channel. Both West and East German negotiators referred to this channel as the "lawyer level" because of the involvement of attorneys such as Wolfgang Vogel of East Berlin.³ The East German secret security service, the Stasi, was heavily involved in this matter as well. On the West German side, such dealings were largely the responsibility of the Ministry for All-German (*Gesamtdeutsch*)—later Intra-German (*Innerdeutsch*)—Affairs.⁴

In all such dealings, two SED concerns—worry about the effects of increased humanitarian concessions and desire to secure economic gain—stood in conflict with one another. Eventually, the latter gained the upper hand. East Berlin decided to use humanitarian concessions as bargaining chips. For example, when Basic Treaty talks had bogged down, the GDR announced its willingness to issue an amnesty to some prisoners on or near its anniversary holiday, October 7, 1972. It also offered to release from GDR citizenship those East Germans who had fled to the West and had become FRG citizens; such a move would enable them to travel back into the East without fear of being repatriated against their will.

In one of its most cynical moves, the SED also used children as bargaining chips. East German negotiator Michael Kohl made an offer to Bahr in October 1972 to allow roughly three hundred children and minors to join family members in the West. SED documents show that Bahr knew this was not a gift. He replied that, "in conjunction with the exit of the children, certain transfer payments probably should be made."⁵ Yet problems became apparent just before the signing. According to Kohl, in a conversation on December 12, 1972, Bahr complained that not all of the children on the list were actually being allowed to emigrate. Showing that he knew where to apply pressure, Bahr pointed out that the FRG had a sum of about DM 60–70 million "on ice," but that its release to the GDR was dependent on a satisfactory resolution to the issue of the children's emigration.⁶

In the same conversation, Bahr also complained about the hindrance of the emigration to West Germany by GDR citizens who had previously received permission to leave. In some cases, these would-be émigrés had already sold their worldly possessions and literally sat on packed suitcases. Stories of their plight made it into the West German press, where they became colloquially known as the *Kofferfälle*, or "suitcase cases."⁷ The extent of the problem was made clear in a telegram to Kohl from the head of the West German chancellery, Horst Ehmke. In it, Ehmke complained that there were 2,700 to 3,000 cases in which individuals with exit visas suddenly found themselves unable to leave.⁸

Even more mysteriously, by the end of June 1973, this issue had suddenly evaporated.⁹ What had happened between the end of April, when the blockage seemed to be an intractable problem, and the end of June? SED documents strongly suggest that one must look beyond German-German politics to find all the factors involved in bringing about an end to the emigration blockages.¹⁰ It was not only the West Germans who were getting the impression that the SED regime was trying to use the would-be émigrés as pawns in its effort to secure Basic Treaty ratification as well as secure UN membership for the GDR. The Soviets seem to have felt the same way.

Surveying the political horizon from a different perspective, Moscow had other concerns that it considered to be more important. Détente with the United States had become increasingly problematic. Despite strong internal resistance from Henry Kissinger, the American senator Henry Jackson insisted in late 1972 and early 1973 on linking trade relations with the USSR, specifically the grant of Most Favored Nation (MFN) status, to an easing of restrictions on Jewish emigration. The legislative manifestation was the Jackson-Vanik amendment.¹¹ As a result, the Soviets did not receive MFN status; officially, they withdrew their request.

More importantly, the Soviets continued to express worry to the SED about China throughout the spring of 1973.¹² Only two months before SPD parliamentary faction leader Herbert Wehner's May 1973 visit to Honecker, Brezhnev told East German Chairman of the Council of Ministers, Willi Stoph, that "the Chinese are conducting politics that are dangerous and harmful to us all."¹³ He added cryptically, "they are threatening us with reference to the American fleet."¹⁴ Brezhnev then made clear that the Soviets were also worried about the situation in Vietnam, which remained unsettled despite the Paris Accords between the United States and the North Vietnamese, and also about the stability of the Brandt government.¹⁵ Brezhnev himself argued that "one must support Brandt."¹⁶

As a consequence of all of these concerns, Brezhnev made it perfectly clear that the SED needed to be more forthcoming in its dealings with the West Germans. Brezhnev told the SED in late March 1973 that the party had to "re-think the issue [. . .] of allowing families to reunite." Essentially, he created a direct link between the global concerns of the country he headed and the fate of a few hundred families divided by the German-German border.¹⁷

Soviet Foreign Minister Gromyko found it necessary to remind the SED of these concerns in mid-May during a visit to East Berlin with Brezhnev. He told the GDR to re-think its hard-line stance. The Stasi summary of his reasoning is quite brief: "take no risks (Chinese)."¹⁸

A note from Egon Bahr to Willy Brandt at this time reported that, according to Bahr's informants from the Soviet Union, Moscow had given up hope of improving relations with the Chinese.¹⁹ Brezhnev himself, en route to visit Bonn, spoke at length with Honecker about the long list of Soviet geopolitical concerns.²⁰ As he told Honecker, the most frightening aspect about China was not merely its possession of nuclear weapons; after all, the United States had them as well, and the USSR had its own arsenal. Rather, "the most horrible, frightening, and dangerous thing is that the current Maoist leadership has wholly and completely betrayed Marxism-Leninism and will sign a treaty with any old imperialist state, with Bonn and France, with the main goal of harming the Soviet Union."²¹ In other words, Brezhnev was more worried about the *Chinese* because of their hostile intentions than he was about the Americans.

III. The International Context

Brezhnev's comments about China in this context were the most blunt that he had ever made. Yet, by taking a longer view of the German-German relations, it becomes apparent that Soviet fear of China had been building for years. It had made a significant impact on its conduct of foreign policy toward Europe for much of the *détente* era.

In fact, to an extent not appreciated until archival documentation became available, there was a striking parallel between the superpowers' attitudes towards Europe. Nixon and Kissinger wanted to stabilize international relations in Europe so that they could turn their attention toward the goal of withdrawing from Vietnam with honor; Brezhnev similarly sought stability in Europe due to his own worry over conflict in Asia, namely fear of armed combat with China.

The parallel nature of these "Asian worries" had striking practical effects. Both superpowers worried about their respective German ally showing too much initiative at a time when stability in Europe was at a premium. For example, after the SED leadership agreed in 1970 to allow Willy Brandt to travel on to GDR soil for a meeting in Erfurt, it then watched in horror as he was warmly welcomed by East German crowds. Because of the reception accorded to Brandt, Moscow began to get more actively involved in the conduct of German-German relations, with the goal of preventing a repetition. President Nixon rightly surmised that the Brandt visit had "scare[d] hell out of the Soviets."²²

However, these events caused not a little anxiety in Washington as well. Willy Brandt's eager outreach to East European nations deeply worried Kissinger and Nixon.²³ In the 1960s, United States leaders had accused the Germans of not keeping pace with détente developments and of "obstructing or retarding the solution of important East-West issues."²⁴ Hence, when the new Brandt government evinced willingness to implement détente measures of its own, the West could hardly complain. On top of this, Brandt claimed to view the division of Germany not as a territorial but rather as a human rights issue, thereby offering "an unobjectionable political and moral rationale" for his Eastern policies.²⁵

However, during the early 1970s, Henry Kissinger was involved in an incredibly complicated game of international political chess. Via shuttle diplomacy, with only a small staff, Kissinger was trying to manage simultaneously policy toward the Soviet Union, China, the Middle East, and Vietnam. Moreover, rather than seeking help from the State Department or the Joint Chiefs, he was going out of his way to exclude them from the decision-making process. The Joint Chiefs were actually reduced to spying on him to find out what he was doing.

As a result, Kissinger did not want Willy Brandt causing any unnecessary complications for his plans. Kissinger's worry was not so much that Brandt would intentionally destroy the Western alliance. Rather, he was concerned about what Brandt might unintentionally do. Brandt's one brief visit to the GDR had caused large protests. If he continued his policy of Ostpolitik, might it lead to massive outbursts of nationalism? What would they imply for the status quo? Would Soviet tanks roll into divided Germany? What would the Western response be?

Kissinger did not want to open that can of worms at a time when he had, in his view, more pressing issues in Vietnam and China to manage. He wanted to “checkmate” the Soviet Union by setting up an alliance with China, and, thus secured, withdraw from Vietnam from a position of strength. However, if Brandt were to conduct policy toward the Soviet Bloc on his own, that might imply weakness in the Western alliance.

The story of Kissinger’s diplomacy is well known; what has been less well known is the Soviet counterpart to it. Moscow was horrified to find in March 1969 that the Chinese would not shy away from actual combat over border disputes.²⁶ Fighting broke out at the Ussuri River and continued throughout the year. China was also willing to fight a war of words. During the 24th Party Congress of the Communist Party of the Soviet Union, held from March 30 to April 9, 1971, the Chinese press launched an astonishingly hostile press campaign against the USSR. Moreover, Kissinger would soon, on his own visit to China few months later, discover that the Chinese leadership had built underground shelters in Peking because of their anxiety about the Soviet aggression.²⁷ Meanwhile, Soviet rhetoric matched the Chinese press in its escalatory language. The informational material for the Soviet party congress, distributed to the heads of Warsaw Pact delegations in attendance in Moscow, painted a grim picture. It reported that “the atomic bomb” was hanging over Chinese-Soviet relations.²⁸

As a result, Henry Kissinger’s strategy of “checkmating” the Soviet Union by strengthening ties with China turned out to be very beneficial for Europe. Concerned that it would soon be facing war in Asia, Moscow was eager to maintain quiet on the European “front” via treaties and negotiations. The example cited above (of Brezhnev’s intervention in the German-German emigration debate surrounding the Basic Treaty) was far from unique. Right from the beginning of the German-German negotiations, Soviet attitudes toward China had been a factor.

One of the clearest examples of the impact is to be found in a private communication between Brandt and Egon Bahr. At the time of writing this letter, Bahr was in Moscow, negotiating what would become the 1970 accord between West Germany and the Soviet Union. He took time to write a very telling letter to Brandt, which he had hand-carried back to Bonn from Moscow. The letter concluded with the sentence “I would prefer that you destroy this.”

Bahr informed Brandt that he had discovered a raw nerve. He had mentioned China in a discussion and suddenly floodgates of insecurity opened. Moscow was “absolutely convinced that the Chinese want war.” As Bahr saw it, the Soviets believed the Chinese *needed* war because “they have too many people.” A complete lack of any kind of intelligence operation in China, reported Bahr, exacerbated Moscow’s fears. His So-

viet counterparts were also telling him that “the Americans are probably much further along with the Chinese than either of us [the USSR and FRG] suspect.” Bahr concluded that the Chinese situation clearly made the Russians interested in a rapprochement with the West.²⁹

IV. Conclusion

From the initial contact of the new Brandt government with the Soviets in early 1970, until the signing of the Basic Treaty, Soviet fear of China remained an important factor in shaping German-German relations. Due to the brevity of space, only a few examples of this dynamic have been cited above. Interested readers may wish to read about these examples at greater length.³⁰

As a result, when considering this supposedly bilateral Basic Treaty, it is essential to place it in the context of Cold War international politics. Without the Soviet Union (paradoxically) supporting West German calls for greater SED flexibility, Brandt and Bahr would have had a much more difficult time extracting concessions from the East Germans. The Basic Treaty is a case study of the way in which local and even individual concerns, such as the desire of a family to win their child back, intersect with global concerns – such as the Sino-Soviet rivalry. This tight inter-connection was, I would submit, one of the defining characteristics of the Cold War, and it is clearly visible in the case study of the Basic Treaty.

Notes

¹ Readers interested in a detailed overview of the entire Basic Treaty should see Benno Zündorf, alias Antonius Eitel, *Die Ostverträge* (München, 1979), 211–319; and Ernest D. Plock, *The Basic Treaty and the Evolution of East-West German Relations* (Boulder, 1986). For a text of the treaty, see Bundesministerium für innerdeutsche Beziehungen, ed., *Zehn Jahre Deutschlandpolitik: Die Entwicklung der Beziehungen zwischen der Bundesrepublik Deutschland und der Deutschen Demokratischen Republik 1969–1979* (Bonn, 1980), 205–16.

² Hans-Hermann Hertle, *Chronik des Mauerfalls: Die dramatischen Ereignisse um den 9. November 1989* (Berlin, 1996), 45.

³ The original German term was “Anwaltsebene.” On Vogel, see Craig R. Whitney, *Spy Trader: Germany’s Devil’s Advocate and the Darkest Secrets of the Cold War* (New York, 1993).

⁴ See the memoirs of the state secretary in the ministry responsible for the operative management of the dealings: Ludwig A. Rehlinger, *Freikauf: Die Geschäfte der DDR mit politisch Verfolgten 1963–1989* (Frankfurt, 1991). The FRG usually tried to pay in kind rather than in cash; on the means by which the GDR turned the goods back into cash, see Thomas Kleine-Brockhoff und Oliver Schröm, “Das Kirchengeschäft B,” *Die Zeit*, August 28, 1992.

⁵ “Niederschrift aus dem Gedächtnis über eine persönliche Unterredung mit Staatssekretär Bahr am Abend des 25. Oktober 1972,” 2–3, in: Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv Berlin (hereafter SAPMO-BA), formerly “Sekretariat Kohl”, DC 20–5596.

⁶ "Niederschrift aus dem Gedächtnis über persönliche Unterredungen mit Staatssekretär Bahr am 12. Dezember 1972," 10–16, in SAPMO-BA, DY 30, J IV 2/2 J/4455.

⁷ On the Kofferfälle, see Carsten Tessmer and Klaus Wiegrefe, "Deutschlandpolitik in der Krise. Herbert Wehners Besuch in der DDR 1973," *Deutschland Archiv* 6 (June 1994): 600–627.

⁸ Telegramm von Chef des Bundeskanzleramts Horst Ehmke an Michael Kohl, vom 30. November 1972, 43–5, in: Bundesbeauftragter für die Unterlagen des Ministeriums für Staatssicherheit (BStU), Berlin, Zentrales Archiv (ZA), Sekretariat des Ministers (SdM), 1837.

⁹ "Niederschrift aus dem Gespräch über eine persönliche Unterredung mit Minister Bahr am 29. Juni 1973", 1, in SAPMO-BA, DY 30, J IV 2/2J/4785.

¹⁰ This is the central argument of M.E. Sarotte, "Vor 25 Jahren: Verhandlungen über den Grundlagenvertrag. Zum internationalen Kontext der deutsch-deutschen Gespräche," *Deutschland Archiv* 6 (Nov/Dez. 1997): 901–11.

¹¹ For further information on the Jackson-Vanik amendment, see Raymond Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan*, revised ed. (Washington, DC, 1994), 347ff.

¹² See, for example, in the files of Hermann Axen, the Politbüro expert for foreign affairs, "Vermerk über ein Gespräch des Genossen O.B. Rachmanin, Mitglied der Zentralen Revisionskommission der KPdSU und stellvertretender Leiter einer Abteilung des ZK der KPdSU, am 28. Februar in Moskau," 28–9, in SAPMO-BA, DY 30, J IV 2/2.035/55.

¹³ "Niederschrift über ein Gespräch zwischen dem Generalsekretär des ZK der KPdSU, Genossen Leonid I. Breschnew, und dem Mitglied des Politbüros des ZK der SED und VdM der DDR, Genossen Willi Stoph, am 21.3.1973 im Kreml von 11.00–13.15 Uhr," 4, in SAPMO-BA, DY 30, formerly "Sonderablage Stoph", DC 20–4415.

¹⁴ "Niederschrift über ein Gespräch zwischen dem Generalsekretär des ZK der KPdSU, Genossen Leonid I. Breschnew," 6.

¹⁵ "Niederschrift über ein Gespräch zwischen dem Generalsekretär des ZK der KPdSU, Genossen Leonid I. Breschnew," 3.

¹⁶ "Niederschrift über ein Gespräch zwischen dem Generalsekretär des ZK der KPdSU, Genossen Leonid I. Breschnew," 7.

¹⁷ "Niederschrift über ein Gespräch zwischen dem Generalsekretär des ZK der KPdSU, Genossen Leonid I. Breschnew," 7.

¹⁸ "Vermerk über Gespräche des Genossen Winzer mit Genossen Gromyko am 12./13. Mai 1973," 123, in BStU, ZA, Rechtsstelle 128/2.

¹⁹ "Vermerk," (author unclear but probably Bahr), 7 May 1973, in: Archiv der sozialen Demokratie der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung (AdsD), Bonn, Depositum Bahr, 432.

²⁰ For a summary of Brezhnev's visit in the FRG, see document without title, dated May 31, 1973, from content seems to be Soviet summary of visit, in SAPMO-BA, DY 30, J IV 2/202/493.

²¹ "Stenografische Niederschrift der offiziellen Gespräche mit dem Generalsekretär des ZK der KPdSU, Genossen L.I. Breschnew, am 12. und 13.5.1973 in Berlin," identified in catalogue as conversation with Honecker, 24–5, in SAPMO-BA, DY 30, J IV 2/1/472.

²² Stephen E. Ambrose, *Nixon: The Triumph of a Politician, 1962–1972* (New York, 1989) 386.

²³ Ambrose, *Nixon*, 385. "The big news in Europe, relatively unnoticed by most Americans in the late sixties and the beginnings of the seventies because of American preoccupation with Southeast Asia, was the development of détente."

²⁴ Wolfram Hanrieder, *Germany, America, Europe: Forty Years of German Foreign Policy* (New Haven, 1989) 199. For further information on the history of the American occupation of Western Germany, see Carolyn Eisenberg, *Drawing the Line: The American Decision to Divide Germany: 1944–1949* (Cambridge, 1996).

²⁵ Hanrieder, *Germany, America, Europe*, 200.

²⁶ For a sample of some of the materials on the Sino-Soviet conflict that have become available since 1969, see Christian F. Ostermann, "New Evidence on the Sino-Soviet Border Dispute, 1969–1971," *Cold War International History Project Bulletin* 6/7 (Winter 1995/1996).

²⁷ William Burr, ed., *The Kissinger Transcripts: The Top Secret Talks with Beijing and Moscow* (New York, 1998): 41.

²⁸ "Information für die Leiter der Delegationen der Bruderparteien zum XXIV. Parteitag der KPdSU über den Stand der sowjetisch-chinesischen Beziehungen," April 8, 1971, 4, in SAPMO-BA, DY 30, J IV 2/202/358. This document also noted, on page 2, that the Chinese were contesting 4,000 km of the border.

²⁹ Letter from Bahr to Brandt, written in Moscow on March 7, 1970 and hand-carried back by Herr Sanne, in AdsD, Depositum Bahr, 429B/1.

³⁰ For my assessment of this issue, see M.E. Sarotte, *Dealing with the Devil* (Chapel Hill, 2001).

OSTPOLITIK: PHASES, SHORT-TERM OBJECTIVES, AND GRAND DESIGN

Gottfried Niedhart

I

International history in the late 1960s and early 1970s was shaped by an enormous amount of worldwide conflict and change.¹ It was a period of transition in many respects. Although the superpowers were still unrivalled in military power, China, Japan, and Europe emerged as new centers of power, heralding a new multipolar structure. There was also the crisis and end of the Bretton Woods system, as well as the protest movements of the 68ers in many countries.² As for East-West relations, both the United States of America and the Soviet Union were interested in relaxing tensions. Neither side could achieve superiority. Furthermore, the events in Vietnam (the Tet offensive in January 1968), Eastern Europe (the questioning of Moscow's control by Romania and Czechoslovakia), East Asia (the Soviet-Chinese clash over the Ussuri border), and the Middle East (the Israeli-Arab conflict) marked the limits of American and Soviet power and the dangers of imperial overstretch. "Is the United States going to continue to be a great nation, number one?" was President Richard Nixon's nervous question in August 1971.³ How could American power be stabilized? Nixon himself had already given the answer in 1969 when he announced his policy of negotiations, which indeed opened up a new kind of relationship with the Soviet Union and China.

Ostpolitik has to be seen in this context. The Federal Republic of Germany, being a regional European power, was only partially involved in world politics. The West German foreign policy-making elite had begun to be interested in East Asian and Middle East affairs, but the Federal Republic did not yet play an active role there or in any part of the Third World. However, the impact of world politics and European affairs was felt in Germany—the Federal Republic of Germany and the German Democratic Republic. From the West German point of view, the traditional approach to the German question had to be substituted by a more flexible attitude toward the post-war order in Europe, which featured two German states and the Soviet Union as the hegemon in Eastern Europe. In a long and often painful process that started during the Berlin crisis (1958–1962), the Federal Republic came to the realization that the solution of the German question was not a precondition for the improvement in East-West relations. Ostpolitik, by accepting the post-war realities in Europe, was an attempt to avoid isolation within the Western alliance and

to create a *modus vivendi* with the East. From its founding in 1949, the Federal Republic had always depended on its ability to adapt to international trends.⁴

At the same time, *Ostpolitik* was not only a reactive policy. It was also a response to the challenge of change and transition. Its protagonists maintained that there was a good chance of influencing the dynamics of change to their own advantage. When in 1963 Egon Bahr, in his capacity as Willy Brandt's press officer in West Berlin, used the then controversial and later famous formula "change through rapprochement" (*Wandel durch Annäherung*), he had exactly this in mind. A period of rapprochement between West and East was to be followed by a period of change in the East. According to Brandt and Bahr, the German lesson that had to be learned as a consequence of the Berlin Wall was a paradox that had originally been formulated by the Kennedy administration: The recognition of the status quo was the initial step to overcoming it.⁵ The acceptance of the territorial status quo was easier for the three Western powers than for the government in Bonn. However, any active Eastern policy had to start from the premise that negotiations with the East would have to include some form of recognition of the existing borders and of the regime in East Berlin.

When Brandt became mayor of West Berlin in 1957, he was convinced that the government in Bonn should broaden the range of its foreign policy. After its creation as a product of the Cold War, the Federal Republic had to achieve one main goal, namely the establishment of friendly relations with the United States and its neighbors in Western Europe. Stopping here, however, would mean standing "on one leg" only. In Brandt's view, Bonn, in agreement with the three powers and firmly adhering to the West, had to put down the other foot too, "and that is called *Ostpolitik*." It seemed to Brandt that the necessity of developing an *Ostpolitik* was felt more strongly in Berlin "than on the left bank of the Rhine."⁶ In March 1958, Brandt regarded "a speedy solution of the German problem unlikely" and pleaded for "active coexistence." He deplored the Western attitude of anxiously staring at the East. "The West has been far too much on the defensive in its dealings with the peoples of Eastern Europe. Even in Western Germany there was for years a fear that we should be affected or even poisoned by our contacts with the other side. This fear and lack of self-confidence has caused us to assume a defensive attitude and to dig ourselves in." The West should advocate an "open door policy" with respect to "human and cultural contacts." It should "strive for a degree of normalization in relations." A more "flexible policy" had nothing to do with "wishful thinking" or with the "idea of capitulation." On the contrary, it meant competition. It would provide a chance to enter the East and to work for peaceful change. Having ruled

out force, “only one course now remains: an unflinching, stubborn struggle for a peaceful solution by political action.”⁷

The concept of Ostpolitik, as distinct from practical steps and operational policy, was outlined before the Berlin Crisis that began in November 1958. The building of the Wall in 1961 forced the West Berlin Senate to implement some elements of a new policy towards the East. The pass agreement of December 1963 was the first result of Brandt’s early Ostpolitik.⁸ Three years later, he left his post in Berlin to become foreign minister in the “grand coalition” government in Bonn formed by the Christian Democrats (CDU/CSU) and the Social Democrats (SPD). The new government under Chancellor Kurt Georg Kiesinger (CDU) took up a number of its predecessor’s initiatives, notably those of Foreign Minister Gerhard Schröder,⁹ and paved the way for what would become known internationally as Ostpolitik.

This paper cannot do justice to the grand coalition, which had a considerable impact on West German politics and foreign policy in particular.¹⁰ Rather, it will concentrate on the phase of Ostpolitik that began after the election of September 28, 1969, brought a new Social Democratic-Free Democratic government, with Brandt as chancellor and Walter Scheel (FDP) as foreign minister, to office. Within a few weeks of the election, German-Soviet negotiations began.

Both sides had been waiting for this moment. Gromyko pointed out to his East German colleague as early as September 1, 1969, that the time when both sides exchanged documents only was over. Now the Soviet government wanted to start negotiations with the Federal Republic.¹¹ The West German side received the same signals. A member of the Soviet embassy in Bonn went to the SPD headquarters on September 15, 1969, and told a party official that the Soviet government wanted to negotiate on all aspects of the issue of the renunciation of force.¹² On September 22, 1969, Brandt met his Soviet counterpart in New York, where Gromyko was attending the General Assembly of the UN. Their exchange of views also pointed in this direction.¹³ Moscow was prepared to talk to any West German government, but it was obviously pleased that Brandt became head of government following the September 1969 election.¹⁴

The German—as well as the international—public was impressed by the speed and the intensity of the German-Soviet talks. Furthermore, Brandt’s recognition of the GDR as a state and the meeting with his East German colleague Willi Stoph in Erfurt on March 19, 1970, indicated that Bonn’s approach to the German question had changed considerably. In the Federal Republic, it provoked a fierce debate. It is interesting how the West German opponents of Ostpolitik differed from observers in the capitals of the Western powers. The CDU/CSU opposition complained that Ostpolitik was a capitulation to Moscow and the final acceptance of

the division of Germany. In London, Paris, and Washington, Ostpolitik was seen from a different perspective. It seemed to be a revolutionary turn that could possibly lead to the dissolution of the postwar settlement, which had provided special rights for the Allied powers in Berlin and in Germany as a whole. This at least was the fear expressed by Claude Arnaud, Director of European Affairs in the French Foreign Ministry, in a long conversation with Martin Hillenbrand, Assistant Under Secretary for European Affairs in the U.S. Department of State. Their conversation on April 6, 1970,¹⁵ is only one example of frequent bilateral and multi-lateral consultations on Ostpolitik among Western diplomats and foreign office officials: West German participants were often included. This example is cited here because it demonstrates both uneasiness about the ultimate goal of Ostpolitik and an impressive insight into its meaning.

For Arnaud, Ostpolitik represented possibly "the biggest event in European politics since the war." Most things no longer seemed "quite the same as they did six months before." It goes without saying that Arnaud agreed with the "positive elements," namely the status quo-oriented elements of Ostpolitik. What made him anxious were its dynamic elements. "Assuming that policies are continued to their logical conclusion, not much will be left of the postwar legal structure in Germany, either from Potsdam (1945) or Paris (1954)." Basically, Arnaud's uneasiness stemmed from the question, "what would be the consequence for Allied rights concerning Berlin and Germany as a whole?" The French were haunted by the possibility of "a German reunification on Eastern terms," however distant ("fifteen to twenty years") this might appear. Hillenbrand agreed that the Four Power rights had to be maintained, and he did not rule out "that the Germans could unwittingly take steps which would tend to undermine the Four Power status." But he quoted Brandt's assurance that the rights of the Allies would be respected and he stressed that he did not see any danger of a "new Rapallo course." "Left-wing elements of the SPD might be thinking in neutralist terms, but the government is not."

Hillenbrand suggested examining "the German rationale concerning the new Eastern policy." He succinctly differentiated between short-term objectives and what he called Brandt's "grand design." An agreement on a modus vivendi with the GDR was timely unless the FRG wanted to lose any control of the obvious trend that was going to end up in the international recognition of the GDR. As to the "grand design," the West Germans "assume that the gradual creation of a more favorable climate in Eastern Europe would permit German reunification as the mellowing process continued." Hillenbrand was absolutely correct in stating that "Brandt cannot articulate his grand design clearly because this might negatively affect its realization. Nevertheless, it cannot be said that this

German design is illogical. John Foster Dulles used to encourage Chancellor Adenauer to radiate more interest in the East. Adenauer felt that this was naive, and that the East would subvert the West. The Germans now are more confident."

II

Hillenbrand's perceptive analysis did not cover all aspects of Ostpolitik, but it can serve as a useful basis for closer consideration. Consequently, I shall deal first with the immediate concerns of the decision-makers in Bonn and the short-term objectives of Ostpolitik, and secondly with the underlying assumptions and ultimate goals of Ostpolitik. The change of government in 1969 was significant in many respects. Probably most important was the vigorous effort of the SPD-FDP coalition to come to terms with the realities of post-war Europe. Certain facts, however unpleasant, could neither be ignored any longer and nor altered within a foreseeable future. Two German states existed on a territory that was much smaller than the territory of the German Reich in 1937. Any hope of "rolling back" the Soviet Union had proven illusory. The events in Czechoslovakia in 1968 and the ensuing proclamation of the "Brezhnev doctrine" demonstrated beyond any doubt that the Soviet Union was not willing to give up the European part of its empire.

The government in Bonn, by acknowledging a Soviet sphere of influence in Central and Eastern Europe without legitimizing it, was in accord with the American view. A few days after the occupation of Czechoslovakia, Under Secretary of State Eugene Rostow called the mutual acknowledgement of spheres of interest the ground rule in East-West relations. Without fulfilling "the promises made at Yalta and Potsdam," the Soviets had subdued Eastern Europe. The United States had failed to intervene.¹⁶ In Brandt's opinion, however, the Germans had to take into consideration an additional aspect. The Soviet empire was rooted not only in the expansionist habit of the Soviet world power, but it was also caused by German aggression in the Second World War and the attempt to reduce the Soviet Union to a non-entity in international affairs. Hence Ostpolitik had to be seen in an international as well as in a specific German context. On the one hand, it was an integral part of the policy of détente, which was shaped by the main actors in East and West. The Federal Republic concurred with this pragmatic definition of détente. On the other hand, Ostpolitik had strong moral implications. It aimed not only at stabilizing East-West relations, but also at reconciliation with the Soviet Union and the other East European countries that had suffered under German occupation and the war of annihilation. Ostpolitik was more than détente. It had to cope with both the legacies of the Cold War

and the Second World War. As to the Cold War, Ostpolitik was a contribution to its de-escalation and its transformation to a less dangerous form of conflict. As to the Second World War, Ostpolitik was the complementary step in Eastern Europe after Adenauer had achieved the reintegration of West Germany into the Western European and Atlantic world. This is why Ostpolitik had to be a policy of peace on two levels and in different places, on the level of inter-state negotiations with the governments in Moscow, Warsaw, Prague, and Bonn as actors, but additionally on the level of transnational relations between the societies in the respective countries, in places like the Kremlin, where the German-Soviet treaty was signed in August 1970, and the Warsaw Ghetto, where Brandt fell to his knees in December 1970.

Many Germans did not endorse Ostpolitik and in particular did not like Brandt's gesture in Warsaw, which reminded them of a painful past. Henry Kissinger, too, criticized Brandt's "enthusiasm and single-mindedness" in showing compassion for the victims of Nazi aggression and in pursuing the aim of conciliation. Kissinger suspected that it weakened Brandt's "bargaining position."¹⁷ In fact, the government in Bonn was not single-minded at all and protected German interests very well. But it was the first West German government to put the anniversary of the capitulation of May 8, 1945, on the agenda of the Bundestag. The message was crystal clear. The occupation of Germany, the subsequent division of the country, the territorial losses in the East, the whole national catastrophe—all had to do with Germany's ruthless policy before and during the war.¹⁸ In December 1970, when the German-Polish treaty was signed, Brandt reminded Germans that the time had come when the "results of history" had to be accepted.¹⁹ The wording of the FDP leadership was similar. It was expressed by Wolfgang Mischnick, floor leader of the Free Democrats in the Bundestag: "We know what the results of the war are like."²⁰

Coming to terms with postwar realities meant not only a growing degree of self-recognition of the Federal Republic as a separate German state but also a new self-confidence with regard to the role of West Germany in international affairs. In the late 1960s, the Federal Republic regarded itself and was perceived from outside as being in a key position in Western Europe, not least because of the steady decline of France's traditional dominance. The assumption of the Foreign and Commonwealth Office in London in May 1969 that "German influence in Western Europe will increase" was shared by most international observers.²¹ The British ambassador in Bonn spoke of a "new trend" in West German policy: "Among its features are a greater self-reliance, a feeling that the period of atonement for the war is over, impatience with restraints on German liberty of action." There was a change of policy if not in sub-

stance but in style that amounted to “a new consciousness of national interest and power.”²² The Federal Republic was “moving slowly out of the era of tutelage and beginning to wonder whether and how she can use in world affairs the strength which her economic development has given her.”²³

This process became even more explicit when Brandt became head of government. He maintained that he was the chancellor not of the defeated but of the liberated Germany.²⁴ Ostpolitik signaled the awareness that the Federal Republic, even if it could not—and did not want to—play an independent role in East-West relations and must not overrate its weight, should not underestimate itself “as a partner of the Soviet Union” either.²⁵ Brandt wanted the Federal Republic to be “more equal,” and Scheel spoke of “maturity.”²⁶ Kenneth Rush, U.S. ambassador in Bonn, was favorably impressed: “The change of government, with the new Ostpolitik of the Brandt government, along with Germany’s new approach to the West, and her also very important new steps in domestic policies, have created an atmosphere of change and excitement even greater than that of the New Deal thirties in our country.”²⁷

The Federal Republic wished to be treated as an equal partner that could look after its interests independently. Ostpolitik was an area where this ability could be demonstrated, always in accordance with the general Western course of détente but, as Brandt underscored in his memoirs, as more than just a echo of American initiatives.²⁸ This was exactly the message that Bahr had for Kissinger when he informed the White House beforehand about the foreign policy of the incoming SPD-FDP government.²⁹ He stressed the importance of close U.S.-German relations. The “German-American relationship and the Alliance” were “absolutely central.” At the same time, Bahr added, Bonn did not intend to inquire every two months whether the Americans “still love us.” “Thank God,” was Kissinger’s response. Bahr “was asking not for advice.” Bonn wanted to pursue Ostpolitik “in cooperation and friendship with the U.S.” But the White House was informed rather than consulted. The policy itself was not subject to discussion.³⁰

In response to Bahr’s persuasive performance, Kissinger suggested establishing a “back channel” between the White House and the Chancellery in Bonn. When Bahr left, Kissinger concluded, “Your success will be our success.” Given the structural interdependence of American détente and German Ostpolitik, Kissinger’s statement proved absolutely correct in 1972 when the ratification of the treaties of Moscow and Warsaw, the coming into effect of the Berlin agreement, and the American-Soviet summit diplomacy were linked in a new architecture of East-West relations. At the same time, the global interests of the American superpower and the regional interests of the Federal Republic, although com-

patible, were not always identical, in particular with respect to tactics and timing. In December 1970, Kissinger pointed out to the German ambassador that the German resolution to improve relations with Moscow might lead to a certain dependence of the Federal Republic on the Soviet Union.³¹ Simultaneously, an American diplomat in Bonn warned that Washington was not happy with the speed of Ostpolitik.³² In order to clarify the matter, Horst Ehmke, head of the Chancellery in Bonn, hurried off to see Kissinger.³³ Ehmke was reassured that the U.S. had no principal objections to Ostpolitik. But Kissinger also stressed that the American-Soviet relationship was much more strenuous than the German-Soviet relationship seemed to be. The U.S. wanted to decrease tensions with the Soviets and the Europeans should go on with their policy of *détente*. But the Western allies must not be played off against each other. Not only on this occasion did Kissinger express his obsession that the Soviet Union might be successful in aiming at a "selective *détente*," improving its relations with European countries while remaining tough towards the United States.³⁴ Furthermore, Kissinger claimed the leadership in *détente* policy. "If a course of *détente* is to be pursued, we do it."³⁵ In the event of a race of Western states to Moscow, Kissinger left no doubt who would win.³⁶

The Brandt government was familiar with these anxieties, which could also be heard in Paris and London. Therefore, the Western allies were informed scrupulously about every move in Ostpolitik. At the same time, Bonn insisted that negotiations on Berlin should start immediately and should have absolute priority. From the German point of view, time was running out to reach a reasonable *modus vivendi* on the German question. The Brandt government emphasized right from the beginning that a "main point" should "be kept in mind." The negotiations with the Soviet Union and Poland, the German-German contacts, and the Berlin talks were "all linked together." "If the FRG should succeed in negotiating an agreement with the Soviet Union but the Berlin talks do not succeed, the whole process would be stopped."³⁷ Bonn's policy of linkages ran parallel but not always in complete harmony with Kissinger's efforts to construct linkages. With respect to the Federal Republic's paramount short-term objective, the improvement of relations with the GDR and of the situation in and around Berlin, the West German government tried time and again to put pressure on its allies, which was not always welcome in Washington, London, and Paris. Bonn wanted the Western Powers to speed up the Berlin negotiations.³⁸

In addition to specific issues of the German question, there was a further argument for going ahead with Ostpolitik and striving for a broad agreement with Moscow on East-West relations in Europe. It had to do with the possible implications of the over-commitment of the United

States in world politics. What would be the impact of the Nixon doctrine on Europe? The West Germans were haunted by the possibility that Senator Mike Mansfield's pressure on the Nixon administration to reduce the number of American troops in Europe could have serious consequences for the security of Western Europe, particularly the Federal Republic. According to Defense Minister Helmut Schmidt, it was "not Holy Writ that the U.S. forces will have to remain in Europe at present strength forever and ever."³⁹ Chancellor Brandt suspected the U.S. would stay but would reduce the size of its military commitment.⁴⁰ To avoid unilateral American steps, early negotiations on "mutually balanced force reduction" (MBFR) were vital for the Federal Republic. Faced with Soviet military superiority, an easing of tensions had to be achieved while the United States was still willing to commit to Europe. Because the United States was perceived as an indispensable but somewhat uncertain ally, a feeling which increased in 1971 when the dollar was taken off the gold standard, and because the Federal Republic was confronted with an even less predictable adversary in the East, there was no reasonable alternative to a course of negotiation and hopefully also cooperation with the Soviet Union.

III

Ostpolitik was pursued not only under a certain pressure of time but also under the assumption that time was favorable. The Soviet Union too seemed to be interested in improving its relations with the West. At least this was the strong belief of the Brandt government. This perception was grounded in the numerous contacts between West German and Soviet politicians, diplomats, businessmen, and journalists which had started early in 1969. Preparations for the breakthrough of Brandt's Ostpolitik were well under way while the grand coalition government was still in office. Highlights were the visits to Moscow of two leading politicians who later became members of Brandt's government. In July and August 1969 respectively, Walter Scheel and Helmut Schmidt met with senior Soviet officials in Moscow. Scheel returned with the impression that the Soviet Union was prepared to give up certain maximum demands and to stop its aggressive stance vis-à-vis the Federal Republic.⁴¹ Scheel was confirmed in his view, which he had already given to the U.S. president. Nixon had warned of the implications of a possible West German "understanding with the Soviet Union." "This was a 'spongy road' and great care would have to be taken in going down this road. . . . It was important to keep open the doors to the future, but one must not forget the lessons of the past. The Soviet Union had not yet changed." Scheel's answer was, "But they could change."⁴²

Schmidt's assessment was similar. The Soviet leadership seemed to be developing a "pragmatic" attitude and apparently was seriously interested in closer and more cooperative relations with the Federal Republic, especially in the field of trade relations.⁴³ Soviet interests coincided with the interest of some West German industries. The Federal Republic quickly became the USSR's largest Western trading partner. Although trade with the East formed only a small percentage of total West German trade, the Eastern bloc had potential that could not be ignored.⁴⁴ West Germany's perception of itself as being predominantly a trading state corresponded with the possibility of a gradual change toward a more consumer-orientated economy in the Soviet Union.

The rationale of Ostpolitik can to a large extent be explained by taking into consideration the way the Soviet Union was perceived. Methodologically speaking, the level of perception should be linked with the level of political action. Summarizing the main features of the Soviet Union's image in which the decision makers in Bonn believed, two points are of prime importance.

- (1) Moscow controlled its empire by the rule of force. Soviet armaments were designed according to the global interests of a superpower. This could lead to an acceleration of the already dangerous arms race. At the same time, it seemed perfectly clear that the Soviet Union respected the status quo in Europe and was willing to conclude an agreement on the renunciation of force. West Germany was directly confronted by the troops of the Warsaw Pact, but there seemed to be no danger that the Soviet Union wanted to use them in an offensive way. Moscow wanted and needed stability in Europe.
- (2) The main reason for the Soviet attitude could be found in the difficult relations the Soviet Union had with China, but above all in the structural weakness of the Soviet superpower. It was strong militarily, but weak politically and economically. Its empire was in a state of crisis. In his analysis of Soviet policy after the occupation of Czechoslovakia, Bahr concluded that the Soviet decision stemmed from fear rather than self-confidence.⁴⁵ Brandt concurred with this view and envisaged further conflicts within the Soviet power structure due to the growing feeling of national identity and to the impact of modern technology and economy on the Soviet political system.⁴⁶ To be certain, not all members of the SPD leadership agreed with Brandt's view that the communist countries could not avoid political reforms and a transformation leading to some sort of Westernization. But there is no doubt that the Brandt-Bahr school of thought, which formed the basis of the

operational phase of Ostpolitik in 1969-70, assumed that Moscow could slow down but ultimately not avert the erosion of its empire.⁴⁷

The perception of the Soviet Union as a power that posed no immediate threat to Western Europe and that was even dependent on cooperation with the West was the starting point for Brandt's grand design. He knew very well that one could not expect any linear progress in East-West relations, to say nothing of a Soviet retreat from power in Central Europe. But in a long-range perspective, Ostpolitik could contribute to the change of power structures in the East and launch a process of peaceful change to the advantage of the West and of Germany in particular. Before change could be achieved, rapprochement had to be practiced. Rather than staring at the enemy in the East, the West should try to establish new ways and means of communication. Talking to each other instead of meeting like duelists and confidence building by communication were key elements in Brandt's philosophy. Before he met Brezhnev on the occasion of the signing of the Moscow Treaty in August 1970, Brandt stressed the importance of getting to know each other better.⁴⁸ A more liberal flow of information and a communicative dialogue could help to deconstruct the Cold War paradigm and to overcome the Soviet suspicion towards the West and its general ignorance of the Western world.⁴⁹ Hopefully, the enemy image of the Federal Republic could be removed and the allegedly hostile Federal Republic would no longer be used as an excuse to discipline the member states of the Warsaw Pact.

The Soviet interest in improving the lines of communication became obvious when Moscow proposed to establish a "back channel" in December 1969. In September 1971, Brezhnev invited Brandt to have an exchange of views on bilateral and international issues without any formal agenda.⁵⁰ After the meeting, Brandt was convinced that the Soviet Union and the Federal Republic had entered a phase of normal relations between two independent states that naturally included both conflict and cooperation: "Both sides know where they agree, where a rapprochement is conceivable, and where they have differences."⁵¹

Differences remained unchanged on the ideological level. Détente in international affairs ran parallel to anticommunism in domestic affairs. A strictly anticommunist stance was also helpful in quieting American critics of Ostpolitik such as John McCloy or Dean Acheson, both "distinguished American dinosaurs from the occupation age"⁵² who had shaped post-war policy towards and in Germany. In a long letter to McCloy, Brandt emphasized that Ostpolitik was embedded in the Western policy of détente and did not ignore the conflict "between communism and democracy."⁵³

Change through rapprochement did not mean change in the West. Although he could not say so publicly, Brandt believed that a “normalization” in East-West relations, based on the renunciation of force and the de facto recognition of the territorial status quo, would ultimately “change the Warsaw Pact.”⁵⁴ By undercutting German-Soviet enmity, Ostpolitik might influence Soviet politics for the better. Even a reduction of Soviet armaments seemed conceivable.⁵⁵ As a matter of fact, Ostpolitik did not have such an immediate response. Contrary to Brandt’s somewhat optimistic hopes, the buildup of Soviet arms continued. The “European alliance for peace”⁵⁶ remained on the agenda, but only in a rather vague long-term perspective. As to the impact of the German-Soviet rapprochement on defense and security concepts, Defense Minister Schmidt warned against any illusions. He did not deny that a “new era” in East-West relations might have begun. Nevertheless, any “euphoric propaganda” should be avoided.⁵⁷ Schmidt was in favor of détente but he did not believe in Bahr’s formula “change through rapprochement.” He did not hesitate to show his skepticism in conversations with American officials.⁵⁸ In his view, Ostpolitik had to be a continuation of the balance of power policy by different means.⁵⁹ The Treaty of Moscow had not eased the overall security problem in Europe.⁶⁰

Schmidt’s perception was shaped by his thinking in terms of security whereas Brandt and Bahr tended to look at the Soviet Union as a power that was going to enter a policy of cooperation. By consenting to increasing contacts with the West, Moscow would not be able to avoid reforms and peaceful change. The “transformation of the other side” was a central goal that Brandt had already announced in the early 1960s.⁶¹ The Soviet leadership did not overlook the dynamic and even offensive elements of Ostpolitik, but it did underestimate them. Moscow felt reassured by the de facto recognition of the existing borders. At the same time borders were going to lose their significance. Making them more permeable and opening up the East via the media, modern technologies, and economic cooperation would have severe consequences for Eastern societies. Furthermore, the Brandt government disputed the Soviet view that frontiers in Europe were forever unalterable. There was a “real conflict of interests,” as Bahr put it. “The Soviet goal is to legalize the status quo. Our goal is to overcome it.”⁶²

Ostpolitik aimed at far reaching goals. The Federal Republic had something to offer but at a certain price. It was prepared to respect the postwar realities in Europe but expected something similar from the Soviet Union. Bonn asked Moscow to pay up.⁶³ It had to accept an agreement on Berlin which stabilized West Berlin and its ties with the Federal Republic. The German question was kept open, contrary to the original Soviet and East German wishes. Bahr was right when he qualified the

agreements that his government was striving for as a step to change the status quo rather than cementing it.⁶⁴ What Bahr had in mind was the eventual revision of the postwar order.⁶⁵ Ostpolitik was to induce gradual change in Eastern Europe. Economic and technological cooperation as well as cultural contacts were expected to lead to a gradual change in the East. Trade relations could be interpreted as a contribution to peaceful relations with the East, but also as a lever to transform it. As Bahr wrote to Kissinger in 1973, the expansion of trade with the East would produce frictions within the communist countries and necessarily contribute to their evolution.⁶⁶

With respect to the German Democratic Republic, Ostpolitik went beyond a strategy of just penetrating its society and political system. Realists in the GDR knew that it was an “aggression in felt slippers.”⁶⁷ As the GDR leadership could not avoid “dealing with the devil,” it further fortified the German-German border, built up the Stasi apparatus, and started a campaign for a separate socialist identity for the GDR.⁶⁸ Confronted with the East German fortress mentality, the Brandt government could only pursue its short-term objective, namely the enlargement of contacts between the two German states. At the same time, it never accepted the East German position and only respected, but did not recognize the German-German border. Time and again, it stressed that unification by peaceful means must remain a possibility.⁶⁹ On the one hand, Ostpolitik, as mentioned above, enhanced the self-recognition of the Federal Republic as a separate West German state with interests of its own. On the other hand, Ostpolitik pursued an all-German policy. Earlier than the Christian Democrats, the SPD and FDP decided to accept the existing situation and adapt their language to the political realities by differentiating between the interests of the nation, which was divided into two states, and the interests of those two separate states. Ostpolitik should serve both the interests of the Federal Republic and the interests of the German nation.⁷⁰

Observers in the West understood this very well and often made too much of it. There was a fear that the Brandt government could be seduced by the Soviet leadership into loosening its ties with the West if the Soviets offered concessions with regard to the question of German unity. The way Bonn conducted its policy did not support this uneasiness. Rather it was founded on the underlying perception of the Germans. Was “Rappallo” really dead? How sustainable was the westernization of the Germans? The German self-perception as a country firmly committed to the West and the perception of Ostpolitik in the White House, the Elysée, or 10 Downing Street differed at times. Ostpolitik was never blocked. According to the official wording, the United States supported “the general policy of the FRG.”⁷¹ But Ostpolitik was regarded as a policy full of risks.

Kissinger's view was influenced by the legacy of German nationalism.⁷² Prime Minister Edward Heath put it bluntly, "Close relationships between Germany and the Soviet Union had seldom been to our advantage in the past."⁷³ Nixon, who despised the "socialists" in Bonn, disclosed his thoughts to Heath when he called Ostpolitik "a dangerous affair."⁷⁴ Kissinger, who was asked by Nixon for his opinion, advised that it was important "to distinguish between the things that had already happened in Ostpolitik and the long-term dangers. What had happened up to now was not dangerous. What the long-term change might be was another matter."⁷⁵

Only a few days later Kissinger, in his talk with Ehmke mentioned above, did not voice these reservations. The explanation seems to be quite simple and was given by Ehmke himself when he pointed out to Kissinger that the success of Ostpolitik, including an agreement on Berlin, would also be in the interest of the U.S. Indeed, a year later, when he met Brandt in Key Biscayne, Nixon acknowledged the achievements of Ostpolitik that had smoothed the way to better East-West relations. Consequently, he was most interested in having the Moscow Treaty ratified by the Bundestag prior to his own summit with Brezhnev.⁷⁶ The cooperation between the White House in Washington and the Chancellery in Bonn turned out to be more significant than the subcutaneous images of the Germans and the doubts concerning their reliability. In March 1972, Kissinger proposed meetings with Bahr every three months. "For the first time," Bahr noted, "the conversation with Kissinger could be described as cordial."⁷⁷ Bahr would have been extremely pleased if he had had a chance to read what Helmut Sonnenfeldt, Kissinger's aide in the National Security Council, wrote in November 1972, just before the Basic Treaty was initialed on November 8 and Brandt won the early elections on November 19: "The treaty in effect fully Germanizes the German question, with the Allied role even in West Berlin being relegated to minor importance. It is astonishing in how many areas the East Germans have agreed to open themselves up to dealings with the FRG. Brandt has gone a long way toward achieving the *Annäherung* which Bahr set out as a policy objective a decade ago. The East German regime, to ensure his success at the polls, has decided to take the risk that this will cause some *Wandel* in its internal structure too and in its relations with West Germany."⁷⁸

Notes

¹ Research for this paper was supported by the Fritz Thyssen Foundation. The Foundation is sponsoring a research project on Ostpolitik and Détente at the University of Mannheim. For details see www.ostpolitik.net.

² Carole Fink, Philipp Gassert and Detlef Junker (eds.), *1968: A World Transformed* (Cambridge, 1998).

³ H.R. Haldeman, *The Haldeman Diaries: Inside the Nixon White House* (New York, 1994), 344.

⁴ This argument runs right through Wolfram F. Hanrieder, *Germany, America, Europe: Forty Years of German Foreign Policy* (New Haven, Conn., 1989).

⁵ Willy Brandt, *Begegnungen und Einsichten: Die Jahre 1960–1975* (Hamburg, 1976), 71–100; Willy Brandt, *Erinnerungen* (Frankfurt, 1989), 65–83; Egon Bahr, *Zu meiner Zeit* (Munich, 1996), 142–167; Andreas Vogtmeier, *Egon Bahr und die deutsche Frage: Zur Entwicklung der sozialdemokratischen Ost- und Deutschlandpolitik vom Kriegsende bis zur Vereinigung* (Bonn, 1996), 59–79.

⁶ Brandt in a speech on January 17, 1958. Wolfgang Schmidt, *Kalter Krieg, Koexistenz und kleine Schritte. Willy Brandt und die Deutschlandpolitik 1948–1963* (Wiesbaden, 2001), 219.

⁷ Speech at Chatham House in London, March 13, 1958. Published in *International Affairs* 34 (1968): 297–304.

⁸ On the early origins of the concept of Ostpolitik and the beginnings of Ostpolitik during the Berlin crisis, see Schmidt, *Kalter Krieg* and Peter C. Speicher, *The Berlin Origins of Brandt's Ostpolitik 1957–1966* (Ph.D. diss. Cambridge University, 2000). Both works supersede the older literature.

⁹ Franz Eibl, *Politik der Bewegung. Gerhard Schröder als Außenminister 1961–1966* (Munich, 2001); Torsten Oppelland, *Gerhard Schröder 1910–1989. Politik zwischen Staat, Partei und Konfession* (Düsseldorf, 2002).

¹⁰ See Dirk Kroegel, *Einen Anfang finden! Kurt Georg Kiesinger in der Außen- und Deutschlandpolitik der Großen Koalition* (Munich, 1997); Daniela Taschler, *Vor neuen Herausforderungen. Die außen- und deutschlandpolitische Debatte in der CDU/CSU-Bundestagsfraktion während der Großen Koalition (1966–1969)* (Düsseldorf, 2001). See also the respective chapters in Wilfried Loth, *Helsinki, 1. August 1975. Entspannung und Abrüstung* (Munich, 1998); Timothy Garton Ash, *In Europe's Name: Germany and the Divided Continent* (London, 1993); Helga Haftendorn, *Deutsche Außenpolitik zwischen Selbstbeschränkung und Selbstbehauptung 1945–2000* (Stuttgart, 2001); Klaus Hildebrand, *Von Erhard zur Großen Koalition 1963–1969* (Stuttgart, 1984); Peter Bender, *Die "Neue Ostpolitik" und ihre Folgen. Vom Mauerbau bis zur Vereinigung* (Munich, 1995); A. James McAdams, *Germany Divided: From the Wall to Reunification* (Princeton, N.J., 1993); W.R. Smyser, *From Yalta to Berlin. The Cold War Struggle over Germany* (Houndmills, 1999).

¹¹ Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv (SAPMO), Berlin. Zentrales Parteiarchiv, Büro Ulbricht J IV 2/202/81.

¹² Archiv der sozialen Demokratie der Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Bonn (AdsD). Parteivorstand, Internationale Abteilung 10503.

¹³ Akten zur Außenpolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland (AAPD) 1969 II 1057–1063.

¹⁴ On the Soviet assessment of a government led by the SPD, see Karl-Heinz Schmidt, *Dialog über Deutschland. Studien zur Deutschlandpolitik von KPdSU und SED (1960–1979)* (Baden-Baden, 1998), 200–210. See also Valentin Falin, *Politische Erinnerungen* (Munich, 1993), 55–61.

¹⁵ Memorandum of conversation, National Archives, College Park (NA), Record Group 59, Central Files, Box 2303. On French attitudes toward Ostpolitik, see Andreas Wilkens, "Accords et désaccords. La France, l'Ostpolitik et la question allemande 1969–1974," in Ulrich Pfeil, ed., *La République Démocratique Allemande et l'Occident* (Paris, 2000), 357–378; Gottfried Niedhart, "Partnerschaft und Konkurrenz: Deutsche und französische Ostpolitik in der Ära Brandt und Pompidou," in Ilja Mieck and Pierre Guillen, eds., *Deutschland—Frankreich—Russland. Begegnungen und Konfrontationen* (Munich, 2000), 345–371.

¹⁶ Memorandum from Rostow to Secretary of State Rusk, September 4, 1968: "Of course we had to go through with the Security Council charade in New York. Of course we have to reassure the Germans and our other Allies that we remain committed to the Alliance, whose

mission has always been to defend Western Europe, not to liberate Eastern Europe. And of course we should improve our consultative procedures in NATO with regard to events in Europe, in the Mediterranean, and elsewhere as well.

But the fundamental question, and it is fundamental, lies between us and the Soviets.

At least since the first Czech crisis of 1948–1949, we have not intervened in areas of Europe liberated by Soviet troops. Perhaps we should have insisted in the late forties on Soviet fulfillment of the promises made at Yalta and Potsdam—promises of free elections in Eastern Europe, and in Germany. But we didn't. We didn't press for the elections. We allowed the GDR to be established, and frozen in place. We did nothing about Czechoslovakia in 1949, East Germany in 1953, Hungary in 1956, or the Berlin Wall in 1961. [. . .]

Our policy has been to induce the Soviets to show a similar respect for our interests, on our side of the line—in Greece, Berlin, Iran, Korea, the Middle East and Viet-Nam. To persuade and indeed to require them to accept this rule must continue to be a major goal of policy.

On the basis of that rule—but only on that basis—we can pursue the quest for detente. Our policy of bridge-building is not a matter of sentiment, but of our vital interest—and of world interest—in avoiding nuclear or any other kind of war with the Soviets. It never rested on the premise that the Russians have become gentlemen, but on a bleak recognition of the fact that they are powerful and dangerous, and that their eventual acceptance of the idea of peaceful co-existence is indispensable to the possibility of peace." NA, RG 59, Central Files, Box 1996.

¹⁷ Henry Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston, 1979), 411.

¹⁸ Brandt's statement on May 8, 1970 in *Verhandlungen des Deutschen Bundestags. Stenographische Berichte* 72 (1970): 2564–2567.

¹⁹ Brandt, *Erinnerungen*, 213.

²⁰ Mischnick at a meeting of the party executive of the FDP, April 25, 1970. Archiv des Deutschen Liberalismus, Gummersbach (ADL). Bundesvorstand 161.

²¹ Foreign and Commonwealth Office (FCO) memorandum, May 15, 1969. *Documents on British Policy Overseas*. Third Series I, 146.

²² Despatch to FCO (entitled "Towards a National Foreign Policy"), April 9, 1969. Public Record Office, London (PRO), FCO 33/566.

²³ Minute by Morgan, Head of the Western European Department in the FCO, May 9, 1969. PRO, FCO 33/566.

²⁴ Quoted by Werner Link, "Aussen-und Deutschlandpolitik in der Ära Brandt 1969–1974," in Karl Dietrich Bracher, Wolfgang Jäger and Werner Link, *Republik im Wandel 1969–1974: Die Ära Brandt* (Stuttgart, 1986), 168. It is revealing that Egon Bahr did not miss this point when he traveled to Washington and met Kissinger on October 13, 1969. AAPD 1969 II 1115.

²⁵ Brandt addressing the parliamentary party of the SPD, March 4, 1969. AdsD, SPD-Fraktion, 5. Wahlperiode 119.

²⁶ Brandt, *Erinnerungen*, 189; Scheel at a meeting of a committee of the FDP, September 5, 1970. ADL, A12/92.

²⁷ Rush in a private letter to F.L. Jennings, May 22, 1970. NA, RG 59, Lot Files, Entry 5406, Box 4.

²⁸ Brandt, *Erinnerungen*, 190.

²⁹ Memorandum of the conversation between Bahr and Kissinger, October 13, 1969. AAPD 1969 II 1114–1118. There is also a memorandum by the Department of State for those parts of the talks in which Hillenbrand participated, October 13, 1969, and an assessment by Kissinger in a memorandum to Nixon, October 20, 1969. NA, Nixon Presidential Materials (Nixon), Files of the National Security Council (NSC), Country Files Europe (CF), Box 682. See also Bahr, *Zeit*, 271–272; Kissinger, *White House Years*, 410–412.

- ³⁰ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 410–411.
- ³¹ Ambassador Pauls to Bonn on a conversation with Kissinger, December 17, 1970. AAPD 1970 III 2294.
- ³² Note by Sahm of the Chancellery on a conversation with Fessenden, December 16, 1970. AdsD, Depositum Ehmke, 1/HE AA 000788.
- ³³ Memorandum of the conversation on December 21, 1970 in AAPD 1970 III 2305–2309. There is also a report by Ehmke of December 23, 1970. AdsD, Depositum Ehmke, 1/HE AA 000788. See also Gottfried Niedhart, “The Federal Republic’s Ostpolitik and the United States: Initiatives and Constraints,” in Kathleen Burk and Melvyn Stokes, eds., *The United States and the European Alliance since 1945* (Oxford, 1999), 289–311.
- ³⁴ Kissinger, *White House Years*, 410, 528–529.
- ³⁵ Kissinger’s admonitory remark to Paul Frank, *Staatssekretär* in the German Foreign Office, in June 1970. Paul Frank, *Entschlüsselte Botschaft. Ein Diplomat macht Inventur* (Munich, 1985), 287.
- ³⁶ Note by Bahr on a talk by Kissinger at the Bilderberg Conference, April 24, 1971. AdsD, Depositum Egon Bahr (DB), 439/2.
- ³⁷ Bahr during American-German conversations on the occasion of Brandt’s visit to Washington, April 10, 1970. NA, RG 59, Central Files, Box 2304.
- ³⁸ There is a long series of letters and verbal communications, starting with Brandt to Nixon, March 22, 1970. AAPD 1970 I 507–508.
- ³⁹ Helmut Schmidt, “Germany in the Era of Negotiations,” *Foreign Affairs* 49 (1970/71): 43.
- ⁴⁰ Note by Brandt in June 1970: “US bleiben, aber reduzieren.” Willy-Brandt-Archiv, Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, Bonn (WBA), Bundeskanzler 91.
- ⁴¹ Gottfried Niedhart, “Friedens- und Interessenwahrung: Zur Ostpolitik der FDP in Opposition und sozialliberaler Regierung 1968–1970,” *Jahrbuch zur Liberalismus-Forschung* 7 (1995): 112–113.
- ⁴² Memorandum of the conversation, June 13, 1969, NA, Nixon, NSC, CF 681.
- ⁴³ Report by Schmidt to a party committee of the SPD, August 25, 1969, AdsD, Parteivorstandsprotokolle.
- ⁴⁴ Angela Stent, *From Embargo to Ostpolitik: The Political Economy of West German-Soviet Relations 1955–1980* (Cambridge, 1981), 154–178; Volker R. Berghahn, “Lowering Soviet Expectations: West German Industry and Osthandel During the Brandt Era,” in Volker R. Berghahn, ed., *Quest for Economic Empire: European Strategies of German Big Business in the Twentieth Century* (Providence, R.I., 1996), 145–157.
- ⁴⁵ Notes on various consultations with foreign policy experts who were invited to discuss the matter in the Foreign Office in Bonn in September 1968. AdsD, DB 399/2 and 399/3.
- ⁴⁶ Brandt during a meeting of the party executive of the SPD, November 1–2, 1968. AdsD, Parteivorstandsprotokolle.
- ⁴⁷ Memorandum by Bahr, September 18, 1969. AAPD 1969 II 1050–1051.
- ⁴⁸ Note by Brandt in preparing his first meeting with Brezhnev, August 12, 1970. “Bedeutung: was man daraus macht. Kennenlernen/Reden. Kontakt!” WBA, Bundeskanzler 91.
- ⁴⁹ After having talked to Kossygin Bahr discovered a certain unfamiliarity with the West (“eine gewisse West-Fremdheit”). Bahr to Brandt, March 7, 1970, AAPD 1970 I 403. See also report by Brandt to the party executive of the SPD, September 14, 1970. Brandt used Bahr’s expression and pointed out that Brezhnev had never met any Western statesmen before. “The most Western politician whom Brezhnev had met before was Ulbricht.” AdsD, Parteivorstand der SPD, Sitzungsprotokolle 32.
- ⁵⁰ AAPD 1971 II 1311–1312 and 1354–1356; Brandt to Schmidt September 5, 1971, Privatarchiv Helmut Schmidt, Hamburg (PrivA HS), Korrespondenz Innenpolitik 1971.

- ⁵¹ Notes taken by Brandt, September 18, 1971, WBA, Bundeskanzler 92.
- ⁵² Denis Healy, British Defence Minister 1964–70, in a working paper “The Nixon Doctrine and the Future of Europe,” presented to the Bilderberg Conference, April 23–25, 1971. AdsD, DB 301/4.
- ⁵³ Brandt to McCloy, March 24, 1971. WBA, Bundeskanzler 43.
- ⁵⁴ “Normalisierung verändert WP.” Notes by Brandt when he prepared carefully for a cabinet meeting on June 7, 1970. WBA, Bundeskanzler 91.
- ⁵⁵ Brandt, *Begegnungen*, 397.
- ⁵⁶ “Europäischer Friedensbund.” Brandt to Brezhnev February 9, 1972. WBA, Bundeskanzler 58.
- ⁵⁷ Schmidt to Brandt August 13, 1970. WBA, Bundeskanzler 18.
- ⁵⁸ Privately, he told E.L. Richardson, Under Secretary of State, on April 9, 1970 that, with respect to MBFR, there should be a NATO initiative. “If worthwhile results were not obtained, the effort would at least produce, for the benefit particularly of the new generation, current evidence of hard realities. Indeed, he said, this applies to Brandt’s Ostpolitik generally.” NA, RG 59, Central Files, Box 2304.
- ⁵⁹ Schmidt during a committee meeting of the SPD, November 13–14, 1970. AdsD, Parteivorstand der SPD, Sitzungsprotokolle 32.
- ⁶⁰ Memorandum by the Planning Staff of the Defence Ministry, August 28, 1970. AdsD, Depositum Helmut Schmidt, 1649A; Schmidt to Brandt, October 21, 1970. PrivA HS, NATO 1967–78.
- ⁶¹ See for instance Brandt’s speech in Tutzing, July 15, 1963. *Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik*, Reihe IV, vol. 9, 567.
- ⁶² Memorandum by Bahr, September 18, 1969. AAPD 1969 II 1040. As early as October 1, 1968 Bahr used a similar formulation. AAPD 1968 II 1279. See also Werner Link, “Die Entstehung des Moskauer Vertrages im Lichte neuer Archivalien,” in *Vierteljahreshefte für Zeitgeschichte* 49 (2001): 300, 306–309.
- ⁶³ Bahr in a conversation with journalists, June 18, 1970. AdsD, DB 429B/1.
- ⁶⁴ Ibid.
- ⁶⁵ For a fuller account see Gottfried Niedhart, “Revisionistische Elemente und die Initiierung friedlichen Wandels in der neuen Ostpolitik 1967–1974,” *Geschichte und Gesellschaft* 28 (2002): 233–266.
- ⁶⁶ Bahr to Kissinger, April 14, 1973: “Eine systematische, aber nicht wahllose Erweiterung der wirtschaftlichen Ost-West-Beziehungen wird die Widersprüche in den kommunistisch regierten Ländern steigern und zu weiteren Modifikationen des Systems beitragen. Es liegt auch im westlichen Interesse, daß diese Entwicklung keinen explosiven und nicht kontrollierbaren Umschlag erfährt.” AdsD, DB 439/1.
- ⁶⁷ Manfred Uschner, “Egon Bahr und seine Wirkung auf uns,” in Dieter S. Lutz, ed., *Das Undenkbare denken. Festschrift für Egon Bahr zum 70. Geburtstag* (Baden-Baden, 1992), 129.
- ⁶⁸ M.E. Sarotte, *Dealing with the Devil. East Germany, Détente, and Ostpolitik 1969–1973* (Chapel Hill, 2001).
- ⁶⁹ See, e.g., Brandt to Olof Palme, June 15, 1970; Brandt to Brezhnev, April 24, 1973. WBA, Bundeskanzler 58.
- ⁷⁰ For this differentiation, see a memorandum from Bahr to Brandt, November 10, 1970 and a press release by the SPD, December 14, 1970. AdsD, DB 398B/1 and Pressemitteilung Nr. 477.
- ⁷¹ Memorandum from Kissinger to Rogers, July 7, 1970. NA, RG 59 Central Files, Box 2304.
- ⁷² Henry Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval* (Boston, 1982), 146–147.

⁷³ Cabinet meeting, September 3, 1970. PRO, CAB 128/47. See also Gottfried Niedhart, "The British Reaction towards Ostpolitik. Anglo-West German Relations in the Era of Détente 1967–1971," in Christian Haase and Daniel Gossel, eds., *Debating Foreign Affairs. The Public Dimension of British Foreign Policy* (Berlin, 2003), 140–162.

⁷⁴ Memorandum of conversation, December 17, 1970. PRO, FCO 7/1842. For "grave reservations" about *Ostpolitik*, see also Henry Kissinger, *Diplomacy* (New York, 1994), 735.

⁷⁵ Memorandum of conversation, December 17, 1970. NA, RG 59 Central Files, Box 2657.

⁷⁶ For Brandt's account of the meeting on December 28 and 29, 1971 see Brandt, *Begegnungen*, 395–409.

⁷⁷ Notes by Bahr on a conversation with Kissinger, March 28, 1972. AdsD, DB 439/2. On the relationship between Bahr and Kissinger cf. Stephan Fuchs, "Dreiecksverhältnisse sind immer kompliziert." *Kissinger, Bahr und die Ostpolitik* (Hamburg, 1999).

⁷⁸ Memorandum from Sonnenfeldt to Kissinger, November 7, 1972. NA, Nixon, NSC, CF, Box 687.

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.