

RICHARD NIXON'S DÉTENTE AND WILLY BRANDT'S *OSTPOLITIK*:  
THE POLITICS AND ECONOMIC DIPLOMACY OF ENGAGING THE EAST

By

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## DEDICATION

To my beloved wife, Carola, for her infinite support and encouragement.

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## INTRODUCTION

Western strategies of rapprochement with the Communist bloc during the Cold War, often referred to as *détente*, permeated diplomatic discourse from the 1960s through the fall of the Soviet Union in 1991. Thereafter, the United States became the sole remaining superpower amidst multiple, if considerably weaker regional power centers throughout the world. Former Cold War strategies such as *détente* now bear little significance to the emerging new world order.

Yet one often-overlooked side effect of the *détente* era was the permanent alteration of relationships among allies of the Western Bloc. Probably no European country was more deeply affected by the shift in U.S. policy than the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG, West Germany). Ever since the formation of the Federal Republic of Germany in 1949, West German foreign policy had relied on the military strength of the United States to contain the Soviet Union. West Germany's first chancellor, Konrad Adenauer, argued that ties with the United States and North Atlantic Treaty Organization (NATO) were designed to bring about a position of strength—political, military, and economic superiority—which would eventually allow for a reunified, democratic Germany. However, with the prospect of a superpower *détente* in the 1960s and an increasingly apparent U.S. acceptance of the status quo in Europe, Adenauer's strategy of forcing the Soviet Union to concede to German reunification seemed flawed. Furthermore, declining U.S. interest in Europe meant, for West Germans, less security vis-à-vis the Soviet Union. When, in the 1960s, the American military and political strength seemed to increasingly weaken and German reunification less and less likely, a

fundamental shift in German foreign policy occurred. Rather than being subservient to American diplomatic initiatives, West Germany, under the auspices of Foreign Minister and later Chancellor Willy Brandt, choose to implement its own détente with the Communist bloc in pursuit of German national interests.

German assertiveness, however, remained covered under the rhetoric of German-American solidarity. Diplomatic necessity demanded that any crisis between such close allies remain below the surface. This concealed crisis leads to one of the central conclusions of this work: that Brandt's *Ostpolitik* was the first truly independent, if not clashing, foreign policy for the new German republic vis-à-vis the United States.

The historiography of such a recent topic must nevertheless be viewed in its historical context. I have identified three trends in the historiography on *Ostpolitik*; the 1970s, the 1980s, and the post-Cold War literature. The 1970s are marked by great enthusiasm for Brandt and *Ostpolitik*. Clearly enthralled by the aura of charismatic and visionary Brandt, works such as William Griffith's *The Ostpolitik of the Federal Republic of Germany* see Brandt's policies as a huge success story. To these writers, Brandt was seen as the German Abraham Lincoln, who implemented this visionary, long-term policy from an inferior position. Forced to act by the lack of leadership and reliability on the part of the U.S., he single-handedly reconciled not only the leftist and Atlanticist wings in the working-class Social Democratic Party (SPD) but also pushed for a proper amount of West European integration, negotiated treaties in which everybody won, and led the West in implementing détente with the Soviet Union.<sup>1</sup> Clearly, the popularity of Nixon in the wake of Watergate was at an all-time low while German

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<sup>1</sup> William E. Griffith, *The Ostpolitik of the Federal Republic of Germany* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 1978), 176-185.

détente had succeeded not only in increasing normalization between the two German states but also seemed to have curtailed Soviet aggression. Germans in the 1970s believed this “optimal” policy could neither be discredited by the Communist coup d’etat in Angola (which they blamed on the “inherent instability of the underdeveloped world”), nor the inter-German border conflicts (which were caused by Hans-Dietrich Genscher’s attempts to gain a higher profile for his party, the Free Democratic Party (FDP)).<sup>2</sup> The ingenuity of *Ostpolitik* is also portrayed in Richard Löwenthal’s *Vom kalten Krieg zur Ostpolitik*.<sup>3</sup> Here, Brandt’s policies are depicted as a necessary and overdue de-escalation of global conflict. More reasonable analyses, such as Peter Merkl’s essay, “The German Janus,” do not glorify Brandt, but nevertheless see his policies as spearheading a new era of Western integration.<sup>4</sup>

The Soviet invasion of Afghanistan, President Ronald Reagan’s dubbing of the Soviet Union as the “evil empire,” and the re-escalation of conflict in the 1980s caused a considerable shift in the debate surrounding *Ostpolitik*. Authors reconsidered the portrayal of Brandt as the lonely forerunner of a new era. Instead, scholars began to emphasize the parallels between *Ostpolitik* and American détente, noting that Nixon supported Brandt, and that *Ostpolitik* was just another stage of détente led by a visionary Brandt, albeit under American pressure. Here, the impact of Kissinger’s memoirs, published in 1979 and 1982, cannot be underestimated.<sup>5</sup> His detailed accounts, whether totally accurate or not, portray Kissinger (and Nixon) in charge of détente, controlling—

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<sup>2</sup> Griffith, 228-234.

<sup>3</sup> Richard Löwenthal, *Vom kalten Krieg zur Ostpolitik* (Stuttgart: Seewald, 1974).

<sup>4</sup> Peter H. Merkl, “The German Janus: From Westpolitik to *Ostpolitik*,” *Political Science Quarterly* 89, no. 4 (Winter 1974–1975): 803-824.

<sup>5</sup> Henry A. Kissinger, *White House Years* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1979); idem, *Years of Upheaval* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1982).

more or less—all their allies’ political moves. In *Détente and Confrontation*, Raymond Garthoff contradicts this Kissinger–centric portrayal by arguing that Nixon and Kissinger implemented détente in an attempt to maintain western unity in the context of German *Ostpolitik*.<sup>6</sup> Either way, the Kissinger memoirs placed agency back into the White House. Stephen Ambrose’s biography of Nixon, for example, portrays the president as a pragmatic leader who embraced détente because it could not be stopped.<sup>7</sup> Helga Haftendorn, in *Sicherheit und Stabilität*, maintains that the Nixon/Kissinger and Brandt policies complemented each other and in *Neue Ostpolitik* Peter Bender links *Ostpolitik* and détente to such an extent that he suggests Kissinger envied Brandt’s successes in formalizing détente with the East.<sup>8</sup> These scholars focused on analyzing Germany’s relationship with Eastern Europe with no access to inside information from the Nixon White House and simply worked under the accepted paradigm that Germany’s position within the Western alliance remained constant. In doing so they have overlooked how *Ostpolitik* fundamentally altered Germany’s status within, and relationship with, the Western alliance.

Scholars of the post–Cold War period, then, fall into two basic categories. They either promote a picture of Willy Brandt and *Ostpolitik* that is very much shaped by his political comeback as a man of peace and vision or one that is critical, portraying him as someone who effectively compromised his democratic mainstream position for a leftist

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<sup>6</sup> Raymond L. Garthoff, *Détente and Confrontation: American-Soviet Relations from Nixon to Reagan* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 1985), 109.

<sup>7</sup> Stephen E. Ambrose, *Nixon*, vol 2, *The Triumph of a Politician, 1962–1972* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1989), 387.

<sup>8</sup> Helga Haftendorn, *Sicherheit und Stabilität: Außenbeziehungen der Bundesrepublik zwischen Ölkrise und Nato-Doppelbeschluß* (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1986), 134; Peter Bender, *Neue Ostpolitik: Vom Mauerbau bis zum Moskauer Vertrag* (München: Deutscher Taschenbuch Verlag, 1986), 183-184.

pan-European vision. Accordingly, Peter Merseburger, a representative of the former group, in his recent biography of Brandt sees the German leader in unwavering and full support of U.S. policies.<sup>9</sup> The comprehensive work by Wolfgang Schmidt, *Kalter Krieg, Koexistenz und kleine Schritte*, must also be mentioned in this category, as Schmidt sees Brandt's "successful" *Ostpolitik* already rooted in his vision of a united Europe, expressed in exile in Norway.<sup>10</sup> Timothy Garton Ash's *In Europe's Name: Germany and the Divided Continent*, on the other hand, even doubts that the Berlin crisis of 1961 led to a disillusionment with the United States. Rather, he believes Brandt, a leftist radical in search of a united Europe, was thwarted in his objective more by the Communists than by the Western powers with the Berlin crisis of 1961.<sup>11</sup>

These differences in interpretation may in part arise from the fact that the historiography on the decision-making process within the Nixon administration has been rather contradictory. One opinion holds that Nixon had surrendered his foreign policy to Kissinger, who in turn conducted American foreign policy focusing on pragmatic power politics rather than cold war ideology. This view, advanced by William Burr and Mary E. Sarotte, interprets US-Soviet détente much like *Ostpolitik*—i.e. as a pragmatic policy with few ideological conflicts.<sup>12</sup>

A more frequently cited view is the complementary nature of Nixon and Kissinger, in which the introverted, withdrawn, and aloof Nixon set foreign policy on a

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<sup>9</sup> Peter Merseburger, *Willy Brandt 1913–1992: Visionär und Realist* (Stuttgart, München: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 2002), 371–372.

<sup>10</sup> Wolfgang Schmidt, *Kalter Krieg, Koexistenz und kleine Schritte: Willy Brandt und die Deutschlandpolitik 1948–1963* (Wiesbaden: Westdeutscher Verlag, 2001).

<sup>11</sup> Timothy Garton Ash, *In Europe's Name: Germany and the Divided Continent* (New York: Random House, 1993).

<sup>12</sup> William Burr, ed., *The Kissinger Transcripts: The Top Secret Talks with Beijing and Moscow* (New York: New Press, 1999), 7–9; Mary E. Sarotte, *Dealing with the Devil: East Germany, Détente, and Ostpolitik, 1969–1973* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

general level and let the extroverted, personable, and detail-minded Kissinger fine-tune the workings of American foreign policy within his master's framework.<sup>13</sup>

According to a revisionist interpretation by Joan Hoff, Nixon and Kissinger were both very engaged in concrete foreign policy decisions, with their policymaking process so intertwined that she refers to it as "Nixinger" diplomacy. She attributes a certain wisdom and consistency to Nixon's foreign policy approach but sees this watered-down by his interaction with an opportunistic and pessimistic Kissinger who was still mired in the foreign policy concepts of the 1950s and 1960s. Feeding each other's obsession with secrecy and "personalized executive control brought out the worst" in both statesmen and ultimately led to a failed foreign policy.<sup>14</sup> It is important to note that the latter two approaches to U.S. foreign policy beg the question of how much of Nixon's ideology filtered into American policies of détente and how much those policies therefore differed from Brandt's more pragmatic approach.

Results of this study do not only have implications for German-American relations, they enrich the traditionalist/revisionist debate on American foreign policy. Revisionist critics of American foreign policy, such as Joyce and Gabriel Kolko, have seen American foreign policy as a means to expand American capitalism. To protect U.S. economic interests, the United States allied itself with conservative parties, exerted influence on the advancement of U.S. national interests, and undermined the development of Socialism.<sup>15</sup>

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<sup>13</sup> Walter Isaacson, *Kissinger: A Biography* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1992), 141; Richard C. Thornton, *Nixon-Kissinger Years: Reshaping America's Foreign Policy* (St. Paul, Minnesota: Paragon House Publishers, 2001), 146.

<sup>14</sup> Joan Hoff, *Nixon Reconsidered* (New York: Basic Books, 1994), 149-157.

<sup>15</sup> Joyce and Gabriel Kolko, *The Limits of Power: The World and United States Foreign Policy, 1945-1954* (New York: Harper & Row, 1972), 709-713.

Even critics of American foreign policy with less of a Marxist approach to history, such as George F. Kennan, have voiced concern about the unwillingness of the United States to accept the interests of other states that were at odds with her own. As Kennan argues,

behind all this, of course, lies the American assumption that the things to which other peoples in this world are apt to contend are for the most part neither credible nor important and might justly be expected to take second place behind the desirability of an orderly world.<sup>16</sup>

The ascension of Willy Brandt into the foreign ministry in 1966 and as chancellor in 1969, therefore, marks a crucial time in American foreign relations. With Brandt's campaign promise to focus on German reunification, the United States and Germany not only faced conflicts over ideology and the empowerment of the working class, but also a conflict involving the German foreign policy agenda, which ran contrary to American interest in the "orderly world" of the status quo.

Recent scholarship, which makes heavy use of declassified documents, also suggests a more critical view of Brandt's policies. One example is William Gray's analysis of the Hallstein Doctrine, which revises some of the general assumptions on the priorities of the Communist governments. He postulates that the Hallstein Doctrine was an effective tool for West Germany. Brandt, however, abandoned this policy when he came into office for the sake of a friendship with the East, thus making the price he had to pay to implement his policies of goodwill much higher than previously thought.<sup>17</sup> Sarotte also illuminates the Soviet Union's need to achieve a status quo in Europe in order to focus on confronting the Chinese. In addition, she argues that both superpowers, but especially the Soviet Union, mistrusted their respective German allies for fear of re-

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<sup>16</sup> George F. Kennan, *American Diplomacy* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1984), 83.

<sup>17</sup> William Glenn Gray. *Germany's Cold War: The Global Campaign to Isolate East Germany, 1949-1969* (Raleigh, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

igniting German nationalism and destabilizing the status quo of. The Czechoslovakian uprising and the inter-German summit meeting in Erfurt demonstrated the volatility of Soviet rule in Eastern Europe and highlighted the Soviet search for any policies that stabilized the status quo. She implicitly questions whether Brandt did not implement political and economic “goodwill gestures” the Soviets had every interest of pursuing anyway.<sup>18</sup> Jeremi Suri, in *Power and Protest*, discredits Brandt as a visionary by suggesting that Brandt and other leaders were driven to détente by a fear of domestic social upheaval. In order to placate popular discontent several national leaders, including Brandt and Nixon, engaged in a show of foreign policy détente and thereby managed to maintain a conservative order domestically.

Sarotte’s assertion that the U.S. was somewhat concerned about the reemergence of German nationalism brings up another central point of debate, namely the question of how strong the German-American alliance really was. Here, the conventional wisdom, as expressed by Thomas A. Schwartz, is that the German-American alliance is an American foreign-policy success story par excellence.<sup>19</sup> This conflicts with Wolfram Hanrieder, who sees German-American interests diverging in the 1970s as a result of structural changes in which “their dissimilar socioeconomic conventions inevitably inclined them toward divergent political values, in domestic policy as well as in foreign policy.” More importantly, when American economic and military influence appeared to wane, “a deeply rooted cultural European arrogance toward the United States [...] reemerged and

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<sup>18</sup> Jeremi Suri, *Power and Protest: Global Revolution and the Rise of Détente* (Cambridge, Mass: Harvard University Press, 2003).

<sup>19</sup> Thomas A. Schwartz, “The United States and Germany after 1945: Alliances, Transnational Relations, and the Legacy of the Cold War,” *Diplomatic History* 19, no. 4, (1995): 549-568.



led to a somewhat disdainful European attitude toward what it perceived as America's economic, political, and cultural inferiority."<sup>20</sup>

On the economic side, one of the few works that deals extensively with the German trade with the East is Angela Stent's *From Embargo to Ostpolitik*, in which she attests to the impetus that Willy Brandt's policies provided for West Germany's trade with the East. Unfortunately, Stent completely ignores the effects eastern trade had on German-American relations and hints only once that the U.S. might have pushed the Soviet Union to seek a rapprochement with West Germany.<sup>21</sup> Alan Dobson advances this point in *US Economic Statecraft for Survival, 1933–1991: Of Sanctions, Embargoes, and Economic Warfare*, by arguing that the Nixon administration was uncertain whether sanctions worked in the absence of hard economic data. In his analysis, sanctions therefore became a political issue in which the U.S. could not simply surrender.<sup>22</sup>

Methodologically, writing a historical analysis of the 1970s is difficult in many ways. Because the history so recent, it is difficult to get the "big picture" when governmental records are still classified (be it intelligence estimates or nuclear power negotiations). Moreover, enthusiasm or opposition to the policies from contemporaneous political figures still influence the historiography, and statesmen still alive from that period, intentionally or unintentionally, forget their former impressions and actions. All this leads to the fundamental problem of a teleological interpretation of the period, which most people can still remember and of which the majority is convinced that they have an

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<sup>20</sup> Wolfram F. Hanrieder, *Germany, America, Europe: Forty Years of German Foreign Policy* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1989), 371.

<sup>21</sup> Angela E. Stent, *From Embargo to Ostpolitik: the Political Economy of West-German-Soviet Relations, 1955-1980* (Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press, 1985).

<sup>22</sup> Alan P. Dobson, *US Economic Statecraft For Survival, 1933-1991: of Sanctions, Embargoes, and Economic Warfare* (New York: Routledge, 2002).

accurate, unbiased view, when it is in fact fundamentally shaped by the events that happened since then.

This is certainly the case with *Ostpolitik*. Egon Bahr, Brandt's assistant, portrayed *Ostpolitik* as the political process that culminated in the fall of the Berlin wall; opinions such as his are teleological arguments that fundamentally shaped the assessment of *Ostpolitik* as a highly successful policy. Public excitement over the possibility that Brandt's *Ostpolitik* offered a thaw in the cold war has translated into unquestioned acceptance of this assessment.

To gain a more realistic understanding of *Ostpolitik*, it is critically important to remember the West German conviction that the Soviet Union would eventually be the stronger power, the ideological motivations of the statesmen, the relative economic weakness of the U.S. economy, a perceived weakness of the untrained U.S. military forces stationed in Germany, and, in particular, the ongoing fighting in Vietnam. Perhaps more important than the actual military strength, in the context of the Mansfield amendment pending in the U.S. Congress, was the perception that the U.S. lacked the commitment necessary to fulfill its military commitments overseas.

Rather than again simply looking at the diplomatic aspects of *Ostpolitik*, this analysis also takes economic factors and the political culture of the time into account. By recognizing the significant role trade played in bringing about *Ostpolitik*, as well as shaping the political culture of Germany, I offer a revisionist interpretation of *Ostpolitik* that sees compatibilities with American détente only on a superficial level. My argument is that the economic ties Willy Brandt initiated between the FRG and the Soviet Union in order to facilitate *Ostpolitik* improved the perceptions of the Soviet Union not just with

West German industry but with the West German public as a whole. The Nixon administration, on the other hand, failed to recognize the paramount importance of trade and thus failed to limit the effects of Brandt's *Osthandel* or ensure sufficient domestic support for a similar degree of engagement with the Soviets. Consequently, Nixon was not able to assert strong leadership in the pursuit of détente, leaving NATO members on the two sides of the Atlantic with profoundly differing visions and interests. These differences continue to underlie the conflicts of today.

To analyze the differing approaches to rapprochement with the Soviet Union, this project will focus on the attitudes and actions of German chancellor Willy Brandt, his American counterpart, President Richard Nixon, as well as their closest advisors, Egon Bahr and Henry Kissinger. Since both national leaders tended to rely heavily on their respective advisor in key diplomatic negotiations with little input from their own foreign offices, focusing on these four statesmen will provide an accurate account of motivations and developments as they pertain to the topic. The crucial timeframe for this study will be the years 1969 through 1974, when both Nixon and Brandt were in leadership positions and exerted enough influence to implement the policies they chose. While the idea of détente had already borne some fruit in the early 1960s with a direct Washington-Moscow line of communication and limitations on nuclear weapons research, the most significant advancements of détente with regard to Germany—such as the Nuclear Non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), Moscow Treaties, SALT I and II, and the Berlin Accords—went into effect during the years 1969–1974. Yet to outline both ideological changes and continuity in Brandt's stance toward the United States and illustrate trends in Germany's foreign trade policies, it also seems imperative to include a brief examination of the years

1957 through 1968. In addition, my examination of President Nixon personal attitudes toward West Germany from his vice presidency in 1953 until his resignation in 1974 will play a role.

The sources covered in this work range from diplomatic correspondence and internal memos to newspaper coverage, voice recordings, Kissinger TELCONS, and the published reflections of the individual actors, where available. Trade statistics and opinion polls allowed me to gage the mood of the time. While this research is primarily an analysis of German-American relations, Soviet motivation and intentions played a key role in influencing transatlantic relations. Herein lays possibly the greatest strength and weakness of this project. Few works have analyzed German-American relations as part of a triangular relationship with the Soviet Union. Even fewer have included economic diplomacy as a central aspect of their research. Yet my research illustrates how vital these interrelated aspects are.

Involving the Soviet Union in a diplomatic analysis of the 1970s, however, poses difficulties. Few well-researched studies on the Brezhnev years have been written since the 1980s. While the conclusions on Soviet foreign policy work well with my findings, more research on primary sources would go a long way to substantiate some of the historiography's claims. This oversight is in large part methodological. In the rush to shed light on the most contentious mysteries of Soviet policy thanks to the flood of new material, scholars have understandably focused upon a highly circumscribed range of themes and sources. The result has been a fixation on crisis during the Stalin, Khrushchev, and Gorbachev years, as well as a heavy reliance upon the comments of a few key figures, negotiations among the great powers, and the archival documentation of

these encounters. Moreover, while only a few works have sought to explain Soviet foreign policy in the 1970s, still fewer have placed policymaking in a larger institutional context. With the Soviet archives inaccessible for the time being, I tried to be cautious about sweeping generalizations on Soviet policy and limited myself to the most obvious of conclusions.

Regarding German-American relations, I tried to follow the chronological order whenever possible. At times, though, parallel developments of economic and political aspects did not allow me to develop my argument coherently without somewhat breaking the chronological order.

Lastly, despite William A. Williams School's dedication to the primacy of economic interests in U.S. foreign relations, I found the secondary literature scarce, at best, and the archivists enthused about me being "one of a handful" of scholars to use their material within the last ten years. The absence of a detailed historiography with which to argue proved more difficult, not less, and I trust that, despite the absence of standard works, I was still able to place it in the broader framework of historical discussion.

Throughout this work I had to resist the temptation to extrapolate from current findings about the effectiveness of *Ostpolitik* or détente during the latter half of the 1970s. In my opinion neither the liberal view—that *Ostpolitik* through the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) undermined the Communist system and thus aided in its demise, nor the conservative view—that *Ostpolitik* provided the Soviet Union with the economic capability to sustain its system longer than otherwise possible, can be substantiated from the sources currently available. Consequently, I thought it sensible to

end my analysis with the fall of Brandt and Nixon from power and not continue to trace the effect of their policies to the CSCE or the Marxist revolution in Angola.

In structuring my project, I have divided the events into four chapters. I explore the underpinnings of *Ostpolitik* and U.S. détente in chapter one. The conclusion here is that *Ostpolitik* was different from U.S. détente efforts in ideology, ambition, and strategy. While a superpower détente would accept and even strengthen the status quo as well as keep the ideological confrontation alive, *Ostpolitik* ultimately sought to lessen ideological conflict, as well as eliminate superpower confrontation and thus a considerable amount of superpower influence. Only through a united Europe, contained in a bubble that isolated it from superpower confrontation, could a peaceful coexistence be created that would eventually allow for German reunification.

With *Ostpolitik* entailing a deliberate attempt to free West Germany from American hegemony by establishing closer ties with East European regimes, I portray Willy Brandt less as a visionary who managed to succeed through appeals to peace and a united Europe, but more as a pragmatic leader who, disillusioned with American tutelage, saw an independent West German foreign policy as a necessary means of achieve German reunification. His complementary *Westbindung*, which he has been widely applauded for, followed a strengthening of ties with Western Europe, for the ultimate purpose of uniting Europe against superpower conflict. Ultimately, this argument rests on the premise that in a bipolar world, the FRG was unable to draw closer to the Soviet Union without moving further away from the United States.

U.S. détente, on the other hand, much more resembled Soviet ambitions. While both President Nixon and Soviet leader Leonid Brezhnev pursued a policy of nuclear de-

escalation for safety as well as fiscal sanity, they remained entrenched in their Cold War ideology. Defeating the opposing system remained the ultimate goal, though it now would be done through peaceful means. The greatest challenge for both superpowers was to engage in a normalization of relations without losing the strategic edge or, for the Soviets, their *raison d'être* for being in Central Europe.

Chapter two covers the implementation of respective *détente* policies by both statesmen during 1969 and the spring of 1970. It discusses Nixon's attempts to have his West European allies assume more geopolitical responsibilities by giving them more power, despite Europe's unwillingness to be involved in quagmires such as Vietnam. It also covers Brandt's initial hundred days in office, during which he—contrary to American beliefs—successfully established a dialogue with the East. Key aspects of this chapter are the first gas pipeline deal and the inter-German summit meeting at Erfurt.

Chapter three analyzes superpower reactions to Brandt's overtures, the continued successes of *Ostpolitik* through the summer of 1972, and American reservations and concerns. The particular focus of this time-period rests not so much with the already thoroughly debated Eastern Accords but more with the intensification of trade and the accompanying paradigm shift in how the Soviet Union was perceived by the West German public. This chapter also emphasizes the contrasting manner in which foreign trade concessions were to be used, i.e. American efforts to obtain concrete political concessions for trade agreements with the Soviets *vis-à-vis* Brandt's engagement with the Soviet Union on the basis that increased interaction would eventually lead to Soviet goodwill.

Chapter four addresses the shift in Soviet attitudes toward *Ostpolitik* and détente. Internal factors, a lingering fear of Germany, and the attractive alternative of a superpower détente brought the differences between *Ostpolitik* and Soviet or American détente to the forefront. I also cover Kissinger's failure to recognize economic diplomacy as a vital part of U.S. foreign policy and the consequences that Watergate, and with it a stronger U.S. Congress, had on the international posture of the United States. The Yom Kippur War is portrayed as a turning point that finally undermined American leadership of Western détente efforts, leaving a permanent rift in the Western alliance.

The conclusions of this analysis engage the major historiographical contributions in several ways. First, it illustrates that German *Ostpolitik* and American détente were substantially different. While their short-term goals may have overlapped during the 1950s, with détente the United States sought to solidify the status quo while the FRG wanted to overcome it. Yet the historiography is strikingly devoid of this underlying tension between Brandt's *Ostpolitik* and the American version of détente. Most accounts portray *Ostpolitik* as a German version of American détente that differed in speed but not nature.

Secondly, this project strengthens the argument of Cold War revisionists who interpreted U.S. policies in opposition to European Socialist and leftist politicians, such as Brandt. Nixon's distaste for Brandt was far more ideological than is generally recognized. Nevertheless, I also support some traditional interpretations, such as the argument that Nixon genuinely believed in the Cold War as an ideological conflict with Communism and his willingness to sacrifice American economic advantages in that



struggle. He distrusted Brandt not only because he was a Socialist but because he weakened the ideological unity of the West.

Third, this study questions the effectiveness of the Western alliance. If West Germany was willing to weaken the cohesion of the Western bloc by pursuing bilateral negotiations, transferring critical technology, and undermining the American policy of linking Soviet political concessions with Western technology outflow, then this would seriously undermine the value of the alliance. With allies like these, who needs enemies?

Within the Western alliance, the perceived loss of American power in the 1970s created a power vacuum in Europe. The degree to which West European countries perceived this power vacuum is crucial to understanding the German-American alliance. The emergence of alternative theoretical models such as the “Third Way,” the strong impetus of Western European cooperation, and the creation of a European power bloc certainly indicated that the Europeans felt that their interests were not sufficiently respected by the United States. The increased cohesion within the European Community (EC) not only fostered European cooperation but also afforded protection from American criticism, as one could conveniently blame the other European partners.

Fourth, the era of détente, 1969–1975, is periodized with three previously unidentified turning points in the German-American relationship. The first occurred during the inter-German summit meeting of March 1970, when Nixon and Kissinger realized that Brandt’s utopian idealism might just succeed with the Soviets; the second in the autumn of 1972, when Brezhnev began to shift from a selective détente with Western Europe to a superpower détente and subsequently chose to re-invigorate the hard-line anti-German rhetoric within the Soviet Union. A third, rather obvious turning point is the

Yom Kippur War. Since the war prompted Congress to decisively shelve the Soviet bid for Most Favored Nation (MFN) status, it signaled to the Soviet leadership that their economic objectives in superpower détente had not succeeded.

Lastly, this study also provides insight into contemporary issues in United States-European foreign relations. The German-Soviet economic ties that developed during the Brandt years led to a more extensive reevaluation of the Soviet Union within German society and politics than in the U.S. This disparity triggered a profound conflict in interpretation over how the West should behave vis-à-vis the Soviet Union in the Cold War context of the late 1970s and 1980s.

## CHAPTER I

### THE EMERGENCE OF DÉTENTE

In 1959, United States secretary of state John Foster Dulles unofficially suggested to West German chancellor Konrad Adenauer that a more open dialogue with the Communist states of Eastern Europe might be in the best interest of the Federal Republic of Germany.<sup>23</sup> Even though the ambiguous catchphrase “détente” would not be coined until a few years later by a Russian, the previously inconceivable concept of a rapprochement with the East was born. In a looming conflict Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev threatened to turn control of East Berlin over to the East Germans, should American, British, and French protective forces not withdraw from West Berlin within six months for the sake of demilitarizing and transforming the Western sectors of the city into a "free city." Faced with this Soviet threat, the position of the FRG and the U.S. was linked, yet different.

With the American strength already challenged with the launch of Sputnik in 1957 and the then-apparent Soviet ability not only to produce nuclear warheads but also to deliver them to the American mainland, a shift of power in East Berlin would further undermine the projection of American strength and influence. The FRG would be confronted with direct consequences, such as the harassment of its citizens at checkpoints or a possible repeat of the Berlin blockade. German and American interests were thus

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<sup>23</sup> Interestingly enough, Brandt's recollection on this American prodding is not a positive one. See Willy Brandt, *Erinnerungen* (Zürich: Propyläen, 1989), 167. Dulles suggestions were quoted in Konrad Adenauer, *Erinnerungen* (Frankfurt a.M.: Fischer Bücherei, 1967), 466-467. All translations of German primary sources (published or unpublished) were done by the author.

interlinked, but not always identical. Dulles' suggestion for a shift in West German relations with the Soviet Union was a sensible one, which Adenauer unsuccessfully tried to implement in a discussion with Soviet ambassador Andrei Smirnov.<sup>24</sup> For the FRG, this would have been a substantial change in its foreign policy, as Adenauer had relied not only on the United States in matters of military security but had also conducted foreign policy using American strength in dealings with the East. Despite what Dulles preached to Adenauer in 1959, it would take another three years for an American president, John F. Kennedy, to come to the same conclusion, albeit under different circumstances. The difference between the two situations was that President Kennedy was able to threaten the escalation of the Cuban Missile Crisis to a global nuclear war while Adenauer could only throw around limited political and economic weight. Herein lay the fundamental difference between the strategic position of the U.S. and the FRG: the U.S. could be content with the status quo as it preserved its hegemony over the Western world. For the FRG, the status quo preserved its impotence.

At the time Adenauer entertained Dulles' suggestion of a *détente* with the East, Brandt became more outspoken in his support and reliance on American support. As mayor of Berlin, Brandt was adamant about the necessity of discarding the ultimatum before any discussions between the Western powers and the Soviet Union could begin.<sup>25</sup> The SPD leadership, on the other hand, was willing to begin negotiations right away and criticized Brandt severely for not embracing the party line.<sup>26</sup> Yet the party line would

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<sup>24</sup> On June 6, 1962, Adenauer suggested that the Soviet Union and the FRG should de-escalate aggression for ten years in order to build up normalized relations. See Wjatscheslaw Keworkow, *Der geheime Kanal: Moskau, der KGB und die Bonner Ostpolitik* (Berlin: Rowohlt, 1995), 103-106.

<sup>25</sup> Erich Böhme and Klaus Wirtgen, ed., *Willy Brandt: Die Spiegel-Gespräche 1959–1992* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1993), 13.

<sup>26</sup> Peter Merseburger, 371-372.

soon change, allowing the SPD to become moderate enough to share political power in 1966.

### Bad Godesberg and the pro–American Brandt

On November 15, 1959, the Social Democratic Party approved a new platform that altered the fundamentals of SPD policy. It rejected Marxist philosophy, condemned the oppression of the communist dictatorships in Eastern Europe, supported democratic principles with free elections, and embraced a market economy with social responsibilities. This transition from a worker’s party to a people’s party also altered SPD foreign policy goals. Previously, the SPD had opposed a strong alliance with the West in the vague hope that Germany could better achieve unification by playing the superpowers against each other, which had caused numerous conflicts between the SPD leadership and the then–mayor of Berlin, Willy Brandt.

After the Bad Godesberg congress, the SPD leadership seemed to embrace Brandt’s (and the ruling Christian Democratic Union (CDU) government’s) position of an uncompromising Western integration with the Atlantic alliance as the basic framework for German foreign policy.<sup>27</sup> While Brandt had little input in the creation of the new party platform, he did endorse it during the party congress in Bad Godesberg. This shift in internal party politics overnight transformed him from an outsider to the most favored candidate for chancellor in the upcoming elections.<sup>28</sup>

More than the party position had shifted, however. Most likely, Brandt’s tenure as mayor of Berlin had shifted his views on NATO. Having voted against German

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<sup>27</sup> Reiner Marcowitz, *Option für Paris? Unionsparteien, SPD und Charles de Gaulle 1958 bis 1969* (München: Oldenbourg Verlag, 1996), 86-87.

<sup>28</sup> Merseburger, 375-378.

participation in NATO in 1955, at Bad Godesberg Brandt's support for NATO and the United States' hegemonic role within it was complete. He rejected political considerations that would limit the role of NATO or involve German troops in more Europe-focused defense initiatives.<sup>29</sup> He even went so far as to indicate during his election campaign in 1960 that, as chancellor, he might override party policy and allow tactical, albeit no strategic, nuclear weapons for the German army.<sup>30</sup>

Brandt's criticism of the Western allies was limited to France, which, in his view, had rejected the integration of West Berlin into the Western zone in the years 1949–1952.<sup>31</sup> Otherwise, in a 1959 speech he gave the Western allies unconditional support for their actions and even advocated German inactivity as a way to not undermine Western policy.

In this round of arguments over Berlin, one must realize that you cannot tie the Western powers to supporting Berlin and on this other issue [technical contacts between the FRG and the GDR] just plow forward. [...] We must be careful not to believe that Bonn and East Berlin could solve something that cannot be solved on this level. [...] Furthermore, despite much concern in regards to politics in Bonn, I find it imperative not to veer away from the Western community. Instead, we must wrestle for changes within the policies of the West. We can only strive for those solutions in clear conscience, which do not weaken the overall position of the West.<sup>32</sup>

Such concern for the cohesion of Western unity, absolutely unthinkable only a decade later, also informed his stance on a rapprochement with the East. In adhering to Adenauer's foreign policy, which was based on Western strength, Brandt opposed Khrushchev's backchannel overtures for a meeting in March 1959. In a teleological explanation, Merseburger attributes Brandt's refusal to Adenauer's political power plays, yet Brandt's refusal at the time was more in line with his deference to American foreign

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<sup>29</sup> Böhme, 38.

<sup>30</sup> Böhme, 37, 39.

<sup>31</sup> Böhme, 20-21.

<sup>32</sup> Böhme, 27.

policy initiatives.<sup>33</sup> In a clear sign of his pro–American stance, in 1961 he rejected numerous suggestions that would later become part of his *Neue Ostpolitik*. While he tried to bring about an Allied Four Power Conference on Berlin, he did this not through unilateral initiatives or by contacting the Soviets but by prodding the Western allies in the summer of 1961 to begin such negotiations. He criticized suggestions by his own party members to establish non-political contacts, in order to alleviate the division between the two Germanies and possibly establish political contacts in the long run. He even eschewed his later visionary model of a confederation between the two German states, as negotiations leading up to such a solution could hinder allied dialogue or hurt the position of the West.<sup>34</sup>

By 1961, Brandt embraced a decidedly pro–Western policy.<sup>35</sup> In the realm of foreign policy, he clearly subordinated Germany to the tutelage of the United States, be it in regards to inter–German dialogue, reunification, or nuclear armament. He also expressed no interest in dealing with the Soviets directly, for fear of weakening the Western alliance and out of ideological disregard for Soviet sincerity in negotiations.

Nixon could not have been happier with the “Socialist” mayor of Berlin. As vice president under President Dwight Eisenhower, he must have appreciated the staunch support from Brandt. Despite the obvious correlations between U.S. Democrats and German Social Democrats, Brandt expressed sympathies for both presidential candidates, Richard M. Nixon and John F. Kennedy, for supporting “allied responsibility in the

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<sup>33</sup> Merseburger, 372-375.

<sup>34</sup> Böhme, 27.

<sup>35</sup> This is in sharp contrast to the argument by Timothy Garton Ash, who sees Brandt as a leftist radical in search of a united Europe, only to be disillusioned by the Berlin crisis of 1961. Ash, 59. Merseburger also sees Brandt in full support of the Americans. See Merseburger, 387.

Berlin and German questions.”<sup>36</sup> In a sense Brandt, like Adenauer, would most likely have preferred to see Nixon succeed President Eisenhower as Nixon conveyed a firmer stance on confronting Communism head-on. Probably most well known in the history books for his “kitchen-debate” with Soviet Premier Nikita Khrushchev, his compassion for strengthening the democratic cause worldwide was widely apparent. New York Times publisher C. L. Sulzberger recalled the firmness of Nixon’s anti-communist convictions in his conversation from July 25, 1958.

Until the time when the imperialist Communist movement began to be effective – since the latter part of World War II, I think – [U.S. foreign] policy was relatively adequate to protect our security. But now we find that the Communists have developed to a degree never before reached using the tactics of indirect aggression. Therefore we must expand our concepts. [...] And there is an important ingredient of our foreign policy which we have not adequately conveyed abroad: We are not wedded to the status quo. We recognize that the world, above all the world outside the West, is in a process of change and that the popular masses want a better way of life. [...] We must get across to other nations that ours is the true revolution. We should talk more about the promise of the American Revolution and less of the menace of the Communist revolution.<sup>37</sup>

With West Berlin under the constant threat of Soviet invasion or even a disruption of life for the inhabitants of Berlin, it seems reasonable that Brandt’s interest in consistency and American strength would have him gravitate toward the presidential candidate who already had been vice president in the current administration and, if anything, stood for a greater show of military strength and political involvement over Berlin.<sup>38</sup> Practical considerations, such as these, must have prevailed over any ideological similarities that might have existed between Brandt and Senator Kennedy.

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<sup>36</sup> “Brandt is Grateful: Thanks Both U.S. Candidates for Berlin Statements,” *The New York Times*, October 26, 1960, 31.

<sup>37</sup> Quoted in C. L. Sulzberger, *The World and Richard Nixon* (New York: Prentice Hall Press, 1987), 192.

<sup>38</sup> Stephen Ambrose, *Nixon*, vol 1, *The Education of a Politician 1913–1962* (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1987), 536.



On November 11, 1960, Brandt publicly criticized President-elect Kennedy over his friendly overture with Soviet Premier Khrushchev.<sup>39</sup> He sought Western strength, not dialogue with the East at the time. Nixon would most likely have delivered this strength, as he criticized Kennedy for not having a “firmer and tougher United States policy toward the Soviet Union.”<sup>40</sup> In an ironic twist of fate, Brandt, at that time, would have preferred a President Nixon living in the White House.

### The Berlin Crisis of 1961 as the Turning Point

The Berlin crisis of 1961 represents the first major American disillusionment with the previously trusted leadership for Mayor Brandt.<sup>41</sup> When the first strands of barbed wire were rolled to divide the western and eastern halves of Berlin, West Berliners were shocked by this unbelievable act. Brandt’s facial expression of sheer disbelief and helplessness when first observing the events was preserved through video footage that quickly spread throughout the world. Yet Western allied presence was conspicuously absent. It took twenty hours for the first American military patrols to arrive at the scene of construction, two days lapsed before the Soviet commander of East Berlin received a protest note, and only after three days did the three Western allies register their protests with Moscow.<sup>42</sup> The frustration Brandt experienced from the lack of allied support burst forth upon receiving word that U.S. military patrols finally had arrived. Brandt angrily

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<sup>39</sup> “Brandt is Critical: West Berlin Major Is Cool to Kennedy-Soviet Note,” *The New York Times*, November 12, 1960, 3.

<sup>40</sup> “News Summary and Index: International,” *The New York Times*, May 10, 1961, 47.

<sup>41</sup> Ash, 59.

<sup>42</sup> President Kennedy, De Gaulle, and Prime Minister Harold Macmillan all spent the crisis vacationing at their respective retreats.

commented, “These shitheads are at least finally sending some patrols to the sector borders so that the Berliners won’t think they are totally alone.”<sup>43</sup>

Allied response to this new Berlin crisis was certainly not as swift or sweeping as it had been in past crises. Ultimately, the actions of the Western allies signaled to Brandt that the fate of the East Germans had little priority.<sup>44</sup> Rumors that the allies had been warned in advance by the Soviets of this step, or that John J. McCloy might have actually suggested this “solution to the Berlin Crisis” to Khrushchev, probably further underscored the fact that the Western powers were content with the status quo and were not seeking to promote the primary goal of German foreign policy: German reunification.<sup>45</sup> In this context, much has been made about recent scholarship by Wolfgang Schmidt, who sees the “conceptual foundation” of Brandt’s new *Ostpolitik* not rooted in the Berlin crisis but rather in ideas that originated in the early 1950s.<sup>46</sup> This argument is one over semantics and primarily rooted in a political motivation to ascribe visionary attributes to the man who was once ranked as the fourth on a survey of the greatest Germans of all time.<sup>47</sup> Ultimately, Schmidt concedes that “only the 13<sup>th</sup> of August 1961 made the failure of the old formulas [on Western strength] apparent to everyone and underscored the necessity of a new approach to the politics over

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<sup>43</sup> Egon Bahr, *Zu meiner Zeit* (München: Karl Blessing Verlag, 1996), 131. Original: “Diese Scheißer schicken nun wenigstens Patrouillen an die Sektorengrenze, damit die Berliner nicht denken, sie sind schon allein.”

<sup>44</sup> Ernst-Otto Czempel, “Auf der Suche nach neuen Wegen: Die deutsch-amerikanischen Beziehungen 1961–1969,” in *Die USA und die Deutsche Frage: 1945–1990*, ed. Wolfgang-Uwe Friedrich (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 1991), 172. Also Ash, 60. In an interesting side note, Ambrose suggests that Nixon in this situation would have most likely taken up Eisenhower’s suggestion “to send bulldozers that afternoon and tear the damn thing down.” See Ambrose, *Nixon: The Education of a Politician*, 623.

<sup>45</sup> Bahr, 134. See also Manfred Gortemaker, *Geschichte der Bundesrepublik Deutschland von der Gründung bis zur Gegenwart* (München: Beck, 1999), 364.

<sup>46</sup> Wolfgang Schmidt, 541.

<sup>47</sup> “Unsere Besten Deutschen” Survey conducted by the public television station, ZDF, in late 2004 issued the following Top Ten in descending order: Konrad Adenauer, Johann Sebastian Bach, Otto von Bismarck, Willy Brandt, Albert Einstein, Johann Wolfgang von Goethe, Johannes Gutenberg, Martin Luther, Karl Marx, and Sophie and Hans Scholl.

Germany.”<sup>48</sup> Whether Brandt already had general visions of peace and a united Europe in the 1950s matters little, as even Schmidt allows for Brandt’s disillusionment with the United States over Kennedy’s soft stance on Berlin.<sup>49</sup> The crisis of 1961 demonstrated that U.S. foreign policy goals and those of West Germany no longer overlapped completely. The Berlin crisis of 1961 had opened Brandt’s eyes to the fact that there was little chance of German reunification under American leadership.<sup>50</sup> Kennedy had declined to appeal to the United Nations on behalf of West Berlin and the United States was even willing to make the foundation of the FRG’s foreign policy, the non-recognition of the German Democratic Republic (GDR, East Germany) subject to talks with Moscow.<sup>51</sup>

Despite his anger and frustration, Brandt realized the continued importance of American military presence in Berlin and the FRG. He continued to push for a solution of West Berlin issues and the division of Germany through the Western alliance. In contrast to the subservient approach from before, however, he rather bluntly suggested appropriate Allied countermeasures in a letter to President Kennedy. If Brandt had any doubt as to the position of the Americans, these would have been laid to rest after receiving Kennedy’s response. Rather than promising to support the actions Brandt had asked for, Kennedy implied that this was not a threatening crisis and twice suggested that further communications should remain within the proper channels, as well as telling

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<sup>48</sup> Schmidt, 541.

<sup>49</sup> Schmidt, 539-542.

<sup>50</sup> Diethelm Prowe, “Der Brief Kennedys an Brandt vom 18. August 1961: Eine zentrale Quelle zur Berliner Mauer und der Entstehung der Brandtschen Ostpolitik,” *Vierteljahrshefte für Zeitgeschichte*, 33, no. 2 (1985): 373-383.

<sup>51</sup> Czempiel, 173.

Brandt that there was nothing the United States was willing to do as long as its power base in West Berlin was not threatened.<sup>52</sup>

Kennedy's distant attitude was complemented the fact that Brandt was not even allowed to study the letter before he had assisted the bearer, Vice President Johnson, in purchasing the same slippers that he was wearing when Johnson handed over Kennedy's letter.<sup>53</sup>

There has also been an effort by Diethelm Prowe to read Kennedy's letter as a suggestion to implement a new *Ostpolitik*. Yet this is a teleological argument as such a claim cannot be substantiated from the text. Quite to the contrary, Kennedy urged Brandt to tie West Berlin closer to the FRG and to continue with a policy of strength.<sup>54</sup> Brandt himself certainly recalls these events as a turning point in cold war history and his personal perception of the Western powers.<sup>55</sup> Yet there is no mention of American suggestions for a détente with the East.

I said later that in 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.<sup>56</sup>

For Brandt, the Berlin crisis of 1961 demonstrated the unwillingness of the Western allies to risk military escalation for the sake of all Germans. American interest was limited to the Western part and thus not identical with that of Brandt. While it may, indeed, be a tall order for any country to demand that another country risk a nuclear confrontation to

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<sup>52</sup> Prowe, 377. Merseburger sees Kennedy's note as 'friendly but cold.' See Merseburger, 402.

<sup>53</sup> Bahr, 136.

<sup>54</sup> Prowe, 379-382.

<sup>55</sup> Merseburger, 405f.

<sup>56</sup> Willy Brandt, *People and Politics: the Years 1960–1975* (Boston: Little& Brown, 1978), 20.

defend interests that are not its own, it seems futile to explore whether it was the Germans or the Americans who were unreasonable in their expectations, especially given that the latter were unclear about their intentions. What is significant, however, is that this crisis destroyed the paradigm that had bolstered German-American postwar relations, namely America's role as the advocate of West German military and political interests in international diplomacy, in return for the FRG being a loyal ally of the United States.<sup>57</sup>

Once Brandt returned to Berlin after being defeated in the federal elections of 1961, his continued service as mayor of West Berlin must have caused him to view West Berlin's occupational forces even more negatively. It is therefore not surprising that rather than appreciating American military strength during the showdown at Checkpoint Charlie during October 1961, his close confidante Bahr remembered the American military during this incident as reactive, not proactive. When American soldiers turned their backs on an East German refugee who was bleeding to death on East German territory, with the comment that this is "not our problem," the disparity between a protective power and a friend became even more distinct.<sup>58</sup> All of a sudden West Berliners realized that the Four Power Agreements were "nothing but empty words."<sup>59</sup>

Brandt's outrage was not limited to the Western side, however. His anger at the Soviet Union was also evident in his speech on August 13, 1961. He criticized the GDR as well as the supporting Communist bloc nations by protesting against the "illegal and inhumane acts of the peoples dividing Germany, oppressing East Berlin and threatening

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<sup>57</sup> Brandt began to understand the tacit agreement of the superpowers to respect the spheres of influences established at Yalta. See Brant, *People and Politics*, 29-30.

<sup>58</sup> The name of the refugee was Peter Fechtters; on August 17, 1962 he was left bleeding at the Berlin wall while West Berliners watched, helplessly, for 45 minutes before an East German ambulance arrived.

<sup>59</sup> Bahr, 138.

West Berlin.”<sup>60</sup> That he mostly targeted the Soviet Union can be seen in his speech before the German parliament the following week. In it he implicitly placed the need for a response to the security of the status quo since “the Soviet Union may not believe that she can slap us in the face and we smile in response. [...] The government of the Soviet Union must be reminded how dangerous it is to insist on breaking the Four-Power-Agreements.”<sup>61</sup> Yet herein lay the problem: West Germany and West Berlin were secure, but not able to respond in any way. What Brandt had supported before now became untenable: West Germany relied solely on the Western allies for advocating its foreign policy interests. Apart from them, Germany was helpless.

#### Kennedy’s Initiatives: Exploring Alternatives

To overcome this *Ohnmacht* that Germany faced within the Cold War setting, Brandt pursued changes where changes were possible. In a foreshadowing of his future strategy of compartmentalizing different areas of international relations, he accepted the military status quo but fostered change diplomatically. To counter the Soviet military threat, the United States had to remain the protector of the FRG and West Berlin.<sup>62</sup> West Germans, therefore, had to embrace NATO. As he indicated in one of his speeches, “we may not succumb to the temptation of anti-Americanism; we need the Atlantic partnership and

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<sup>60</sup> Brandt in the Berlin Senate on August 13, 1961, quoted in: Boris Meissner, ed., *Moskau Bonn: Die Beziehungen zwischen der Sowjetunion und der Bundesrepublik Deutschland. 1955–1973. Dokumentation*, vol. 2 (Köln: Verlag Wissenschaft & Politik, 1975), 861.

<sup>61</sup> Brandt on August 18, 1961, quoted in Horst Günther Link. *Quellen zu den deutsch-sowjetischen Beziehungen: 1945–1991* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1999), 120-121.

<sup>62</sup> A revealing aspect of Brandt’s conviction that the United States was needed to protect Germany militarily can be seen in his rejection of a Gaullist Europe and his fear of offending the Americans by intensifying German relations with an independent-minded France under de Gaulle. For this see Marcowitz, 104-108.

must help to realize it.”<sup>63</sup> In a more revealing endorsement in a speech in May 1962 before the SPD party he promised to “further nurture and develop the relationship of trust with the United States” since there was no alternative.<sup>64</sup> Underlying this continued solidarity with the transatlantic alliance was the continued view of the Soviet Union as an inherently aggressive state. “Soviet coexistence is thus not coexistence in its proper meaning—not really peaceful but, on the contrary militant [...] To this day, Khrushchev and his followers still believe in total victory.”<sup>65</sup>

Yet within the framework of superpower confrontation, a change had occurred that Brandt was able to harness for his own ambitions. After the Cuban Missile Crisis had brought the superpowers to the brink of nuclear war, détente became an important means of easing the tensions between the two blocs. For President Kennedy, détente meant transparency of the Iron Curtain to the Communist bloc for the sake of propagating Western values. In a sense, he sought to continue the Cold War with ideological and political rather than military means. As Kennedy points out in a speech given at the University of Berlin, it is the personal contacts between the people, and not the military, that should now facilitate regime change.

Nor can the West ever negotiate a peaceful reunification of Germany from a divided and uncertain and competitive base. In short, only if they see over a period of time that we are strong and united, that we are vigilant and determined, are others likely to abandon their course of armed aggression or subversion.

It is important that the people on the quiet streets in the East be kept in touch with Western society. Through all the contacts and communication that can be established, through all the trade that Western security permits, above all whether they see much or little of the West, what they see must be so bright as to contradict the daily drum beat of distortion from the East.<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>63</sup> Willy Brandt, *Bundeskanzler Brandt: Reden und Interviews* (Hamburg: Hoffmann und Campe Verlag, 1971), 23. See also Merseburger, 440.

<sup>64</sup> Marcowitz, 170.

<sup>65</sup> Willy Brandt, *The Ordeal of Coexistence* (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1963), 65.

<sup>66</sup> Public Papers of the President of the United States, John F. Kennedy, 1963. United States Government Printing Office (publ). 1964, 3.

Brandt welcomed this new approach, since it coincided with his own changed priorities. Having broken with his previous convictions of subservience to American diplomacy, he advocated a military reliance on the West while developing more diplomatic initiatives with the East.<sup>67</sup>

One hears occasionally that we may not conduct German-Soviet talks about Berlin and Germany because of the responsibility of the Four Powers. On one hand, it is correct, that we may not negotiate with the Soviet Union behind our allies' backs or apart from them. [...] On the other hand we must constantly try to improve our situation in Germany and cannot expect our allies to be more German than the Germans themselves. [...] The Federal government [of Germany] [...] cannot refuse talks with the Soviet Union. In certain respects, it must even seek it out.<sup>68</sup>

Brandt now also seemed willing to criticize Western diplomatic efforts to which he previously had yielded. Frustrated by the lack of movement he criticized that “it seems to me that during the past years the political practice of the West has frequently suffered from an insufficient ability to conduct realistic negotiations.”<sup>69</sup>

His new diplomatic efforts had two components. For one, he now actively sought a dialogue with the East. In Brandt's Harvard lectures of October 1962, he characterized Khrushchev's vision of peaceful coexistence as an ideological weapon to further his influence without risking a nuclear war. To Brandt, coexistence meant peaceful competition between the two blocs.<sup>70</sup> He saw the need to “tear the term coexistence away from Khrushchev and his propaganda” and “make it our [humanity's] innermost aspect.” Yet he did not portray his vision as a relaxation between the East and the West, but more as a global vision of a utopia that incorporated peaceful coexistence between all nations, especially between the industrialized nations of the North and the less developed nations

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<sup>67</sup> See also Sarotte, 12. She supports the argument that Brandt realized, after the allies' response to the building of the wall, that the allies were not willing to advance German interests and that this had to be done by German initiatives.

<sup>68</sup> A statement by Brandt on February 14, 1962, quoted in: Meissner, 890.

<sup>69</sup> Brandt, *Ordeal of Coexistence*, 63.

<sup>70</sup> Willy Brandt, *Erinnerungen*, 68-69.



of the South.<sup>71</sup> In essence, beyond an appeal for humanitarian cooperation, Brandt had not articulated his vision in terms of a practical policy.

This humanitarian vision, however, which he outlined in a later interview, implied that he was not only willing to negotiate with the Soviet Union but also with the previously off-limits government of the GDR.<sup>72</sup> Secondly, he wanted to make the wall more transparent to Berliners from both sides, in a policy of small steps.<sup>73</sup>

This opening towards the East overlapped to a large extent with Kennedy's visions. In trying to overcome CDU opposition to an opening to the East, it helped greatly to have the American president's approval for this new policy.<sup>74</sup> Brandt was able to initiate the first *Passagierscheinabkommen*, a visitation program for East and West Berliner friends and family for Christmas 1963, a perfect example for Kennedy's strategy of bringing down the Iron Curtain. Brandt even implied that Kennedy's assassination spurred him on to complete Kennedy's effort of bringing peace and understanding among nations.<sup>75</sup>

While German and American short-term strategy on dealing with the East concurred in this case, Brandt's emerging *Ostpolitik* was more than a tool to fight the cold war in a peaceful matter. *Ostpolitik* emerged under the realization that the Western allies were not willing to pursue Germany's interests if they did not happen to coincide with their own. Western leaders paid lip service to German reunification, but in reality

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<sup>71</sup> Willy Brandt, *Frieden: Reden und Schriften des Friedensnobelpreisträgers 1971* (Bonn: Verlag Neue Gesellschaft GmbH, 1971), 15-18.

<sup>72</sup> Böhme, 65ff.

<sup>73</sup> Böhme, 66.

<sup>74</sup> Merseburger sees Brandt and Bahr purposely using Kennedy's rhetoric to advance their idea of a *Passagierscheinabkommen*, Merseburger, 445.

<sup>75</sup> Brandt, *Frieden*, 19. It would exceed the scope of this paper to analyze to what extent Brandt misinterpreted Kennedy's goal in this respect. Significant, however, is the fact that Brandt made a transition from being frustrated with Kennedy's military policies toward enthusiasm for an ideological competition with the East. See also Ash, 64.

they were quite content with the status quo.<sup>76</sup> German reunification had been moved to the back burner, the last chain link in a vaguely defined process of possible change that involved a democratic Europe and world. As President Kennedy indicated in his speech before the University of Berlin,

the peaceful reunification of Berlin and Germany will, therefore, not be either quick or easy. We must first bring others to see their own true interests better than they do today. What will count in the long run are the realities of Western strength, the realities of Western commitment, the realities of Germany as a nation and a people.<sup>77</sup>

For *Ostpolitik*, reunification was the ultimate goal of foreign policy and a regime change preferable but not necessary. Driven by the awareness that the Western allies were not interested in such a unification, West Germany was to do everything in its power to achieve more unity between the two Germanies, whether this implied small or drastic steps. Even the concept of one nation in two states was acceptable as long as this did not result in a permanent division of the German nation. Lacking allied enthusiasm, *Ostpolitik* became a “German initiative to change the German situation.”<sup>78</sup> Brandt first advanced his diplomatic initiatives in his landmark 1963 speech in Tutzling: “Maintain the status-quo militarily and transcend it politically,”<sup>79</sup> so the message went.

His assistant, Bahr, fleshed out this transcendence by advocating ideological flexibility. He suggested discarding the policy of

all or nothing. Either free elections or nothing, either all-German self-determination or a categorical No, either elections as first step or rejections, all that is not only hopelessly antiquated and unrealistic but also pointless for a strategy of peace.<sup>80</sup>

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<sup>76</sup> The comment by a French diplomat, that he “liked Germany so well, that he was pleased to have two of them” seems a rather representative thought for at least the European allies. For Americans, it became a non-issue when reunification meant risking a confrontation. Prowe, 382.

<sup>77</sup> Public Papers of the President of the United States, John F. Kennedy, 1963. United States Government Printing Office (publ). 1964, 2.

<sup>78</sup> Bahr, 152.

<sup>79</sup> Bahr, 153.

<sup>80</sup> Horst Gunther Link, *Quellen zu den deutsch-sowjetischen Beziehungen: 1945-1991* (Darmstadt: Wissenschaftliche Buchgesellschaft, 1999), 123.

He further emphasized German interest in avoiding a revolutionary upheaval since this would necessitate Soviet intervention, thereby implicitly legitimizing the Communist regime.<sup>81</sup> Offering an international solution to the German question, rather than an inter-German one, the task would be to create a European environment conducive to reunification through cooperating with—rather than excluding—the Soviet Union.<sup>82</sup> The second principle, change through rapprochement, would be achieved by alleviating the legitimate fear of the East German regime of being swallowed by West Germany to such an extent that the opening of borders and the breakdown of the Berlin wall would not create animosity.<sup>83</sup> In his memoirs, Bahr made clear that this was also Brandt's conviction, but for political reasons they had thought it best for Bahr to float this novel idea as a break with the traditional German policy of non-recognition and isolation of East Germany.<sup>84</sup>

Brandt's movements toward the East were initiated independently from the United States and constitute the first distancing from American diplomatic positions. While in 1960 Brandt had still advocated a unified Western front at all costs, he was now willing to pursue a dialogue with the East independently of the Western allies. This dialogue was limited to humanitarian issues and was in no way meant to offend the United States, as American military protection was still crucial to West Berlin. In this

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<sup>81</sup> Link, 123.

<sup>82</sup> Bahr, 156.

<sup>83</sup> Bahr, 157.

<sup>84</sup> Ash sees most of the elements of *Ostpolitik* in place in Brandt's Tutzing speech. Ash, 67. Yet little more than the conviction that the path to unification had to go through the Soviet Union had been stated. Brandt still emphasized Western military strength, and Western unity in diplomatic and economic efforts. Nor is the linkage with a European peace movement already evident. It is also doubtful whether Bahr and Brandt saw eye-to-eye on the extent to which the West should be open to the East. As Bahr admits, his manuscript on German unity and *Ostpolitik* was turned down by the Klaus Piper Publishing House for ideological reasons. The editors' reasoning was that freedom was an absolute goal and German unity only a subordinated one, and that they perceived Bahr's views as the reverse. Bahr, 186.

undertaking, Brandt benefited greatly from President Kennedy's vision of détente. It is not clear whether Brandt believed in a permanent cooperation with a communist East Germany, or if this was simply Bahr's vision at that moment. Either way, Brandt did not suggest this in other speeches nor did he push the concept of a united, peaceful Europe, in which the two Germanies could be united under the European umbrella. Unlike Wolfgang Schmidt's argument that Brandt was well on his way to implement his visionary policy, much is to be said for a naïve "if we would just understand each other, we could all get along" motivation that led him to seek out the Soviet leadership. In an interview of January 30, 1963, for example, Brandt makes repeated references to the fact that his reasons for meeting with a Soviet delegation were to inform Khrushchev about Western aspects of the Berlin question, of which Khrushchev was not aware. In particular, Brandt takes issue with Khrushchev's statement that the wall caused certain "inconveniences," which for Brandt were profound human tragedies.<sup>85</sup>

#### Johnson's "Ugly American" policy: Friendship Turns to Frustration

During Lyndon B. Johnson's tenure, Brandt's *Ostpolitik* would take its final form. Roughly during Johnson's first term in office, Brandt expanded the self-assigned limits of German *Ostpolitik* from humanitarian issues to include economic and cultural contacts. Frustrated with Johnson's neglect of his European allies in the shadow of Vietnam, Brandt embraced a pan-European peace concept and anchored his *Westpolitik* less and less with the United States and more with the EEC. This also entailed throwing the shackles off German diplomacy once he came into office.

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<sup>85</sup> Böhme, 77, 80. Merseburger also indicates that informing Khrushchev about the "inhumane consequence of the wall" was his goal, 449.

During the mid-1960s it became increasingly clear that the nuclear protection upon which West German security was based was not as strong as in the 1950s. The nuclear parity between the two superpowers that was reached in the mid-1960s created increased tensions in the Western camp. The United States seemed more reluctant to engage in a nuclear war that was “unwinnable.” This reduced the credibility of nuclear deterrence for the European allies, as it was questionable whether the United States would be willing to initiate a nuclear war for Europe.<sup>86</sup> Changes in NATO strategy, which set the benchmark for nuclear escalation increasingly higher, and a strong emphasis on conventional warfare reinforced this German fear. Maintaining a nuclear deterrent, though, was the name of the game in the mid-1960s and Germany’s reliance on a now apparently reluctant United States placed it in an awkward position. Since Germany had renounced building its own nuclear weapons, the creation of the Multi Lateral Force (MLF), a nuclear force manned with troops from various nations under the auspices of NATO, was the preferred method for the FRG to gain nuclear credibility. Thus, more than ever, Brandt had to continue to rely on NATO and the U.S. backing of the MLF proposition.<sup>87</sup>

Brandt also pushed for nuclear sharing during his visit to the Johnson White House in April 1965. After reiterating to Vice President Humphrey that Germany had no interest in becoming a nuclear power, he drove home the point that it “was legitimate for Germans to participate in a strategy involving nuclear arms.”<sup>88</sup> Prevention of future

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<sup>86</sup> Czempiel, 177-178.

<sup>87</sup> Czempiel, 179.

<sup>88</sup> “Telegram From the Department of State to the Embassy in Germany,” Washington, April 15, 1965, U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States* (FRUS) 1964-1968, vol. XV, Germany and Berlin, Doc # 101, [online]; available from [http://www.state.gov/www/about\\_state/history/vol\\_xv/k.html](http://www.state.gov/www/about_state/history/vol_xv/k.html); Internet.

conflicts over the inter-German border was one of Brandt's primary concerns and a German nuclear deterrent would lend credence to West Germany's interest in this regard.<sup>89</sup> It may not have been Johnson's fault that the FRG ultimately had to resign itself to trading in nuclear weapons sharing for a paper tiger, the Nuclear Planning Group. Germany's European allies had little interest in seeing German military in charge of nuclear weapons. Most likely, MLF had already been dead by the time Brandt brought it up with Johnson.<sup>90</sup> Sweet talking the Germans into supporting this dubious trade and the Nuclear non-Proliferation Treaty (NPT), which Schwartz viewed as a successful maneuver by Johnson in that Germany could make a virtue out of their non-nuclear status, might have saved face for the FRG (if not necessarily for Chancellor Ludwig Erhard, himself). For Brandt, however, Johnson's détente policies, of which the NPT certainly was a crucial one, backfired.

For Brandt, the disillusionment over nuclear weapons sharing increased his emphasis on Europe, not the Atlantic, as the central stage for *Ostpolitik*. Again, this was more a structural necessity of détente in general than Johnson's doing. In a sense the military might of the U.S. became less significant to the same degree that détente implied military de-escalation in Europe. Johnson telling the Germans that MLF did not matter was tantamount to belittling one's own strength. Johnson's strategy was probably quite successful with the German conservatives in government, as they were thoroughly immobile in their outdated position of Western strength and Johnson wanted to jolt them in order to move ahead with détente. This would explain the "cooperative and

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<sup>89</sup> Ibid.

<sup>90</sup> Thomas A. Schwartz, *Lyndon Johnson and Europe: In the Shadow of Vietnam* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2003), 52-53, 59.

harmonious” German-American relationship in 1968.<sup>91</sup> To Brandt, however, already disillusioned with the lack of American support over the Berlin crisis of 1961, the failure of the U.S. to meet German interests let him to flesh out his *Ostpolitik* with a Western anchor in Europe and an ambitious German foreign policy.

Consequently, in mid-1964 Brandt incorporated an emphasis on a European role for his *Ostpolitik*. This entailed a pan-European element to include Eastern Europe and a strong emphasis on Western Europe as the anchor.

We may assume that the emerging fusion of free Europe[an states] exudes a strong attraction, despite all its shortfalls and problems, and that a European conscience remained alive or was reawakened in the peoples between Germany and Russia.<sup>92</sup>

Brandt’s initiatives focused on using the nuclear stalemate between the superpowers to Germany’s advantage. While Brandt, as an Atlanticist, clashed with de Gaulle’s vision of a French-led Europe in many ways, he admired the French president for “using the political room that was created by the nuclear stalemate in his own way.”<sup>93</sup> In a speech before an American audience on German self-confidence, he outlined the need for a “healthy self-confidence and real power of the FRG”:

it is inevitable as the sunrise tomorrow morning, that the German people seek its national identity. [...] Who can be surprised if the people of the divided Germany ask for their fatherland, which is bigger than the Federal Republic. In this context no one should be surprised by the question “Why only de Gaulle?”<sup>94</sup>

A strong European Community was of utmost importance for the exercise of this newly-claimed authority, and a pan-European detente the prerequisite for Germany’s

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<sup>91</sup> Schwartz, 231-232.

<sup>92</sup> Memorandum, Mayor Willy Brandt to U.S. Ambassador Rusk, August 1964, quoted in: Meissner, 1021.

<sup>93</sup> Marcowitz, 255. Here Brandt is portrayed as using de Gaulle’s initiatives toward the East as a model for his own visions.

<sup>94</sup> He stood by his convictions despite heavy party opposition, which saw his ‘Why just de Gaulle?’ remark as a break with the Atlanticist stance of the SPD. Marcowitz, 228-232.

reunification.<sup>95</sup> With this linkage, Germany was elevated to a key player in the emerging détente policies with the East.<sup>96</sup>

The peace order is a common goal between Washington, London, Paris and Bonn. It can be solved by varying roles. Germany does not always have to wait for American, French, or British suggestions. Even if Washington, London, or Paris want to get things moving, there is no reason why we cannot tell them 'Here is an idea. Let's check it out.'<sup>97</sup>

Unlike de Gaulle, who pursued a nationalistic policy of strengthening France, Brandt did not wish for his Europe to become a third superpower.<sup>98</sup> Rather, he wished to use de Gaulle's internationally accepted attempts of an independent diplomacy with the East to pursue his axiom from Tutzing of "preserve[ing] the status-quo militarily so it can be overcome politically." In anchoring his diplomacy within Western Europe, one could say he supplemented this axiom with "through an alliance with the United States militarily and European unity politically."

This distinction between military policy on one hand and cultural and economic issues on the other allowed him to pursue a strategy separate from that of the U.S. The novel element here was to assume that the military aspect would remain constant, no matter what developed in cultural or economic areas. And herein lies the heart of Brandt's ability to pursue *Ostpolitik*: the conviction that the United States would not withdraw its troops from Germany and that West Germany would be part of a united Europe.<sup>99</sup>

The incomparable power and might of the United States, which is necessary to the retention of peace, prevents in itself an American disengagement from Europe. The United States cannot withdraw into itself.<sup>100</sup>

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<sup>95</sup> Brandt, *Frieden*, 35-36.

<sup>96</sup> Czempiel sees in the American policy toward Germany as very rough and dominating. Brandt's suggestion, therefore, must have been upsetting the status quo. Czempiel, 177-178.

<sup>97</sup> Brandt, *Frieden*, 36.

<sup>98</sup> See also Marcowitz, 231.

<sup>99</sup> Bahr, 172.

<sup>100</sup> Brandt, *Friede*, 38.



Operating under this assumption, Brandt was able to do exactly what he had rejected in an interview in 1959, namely to “tie the Western powers to supporting Berlin and on other issues just move forward.”<sup>101</sup> He advocated a continued policy of small steps to “structurally change the area of world politics for the better,” but only in economic and cultural respects.<sup>102</sup> In a sense, he widened the area in which German diplomatic initiatives were permissible from humanitarian issues to the area of cultural and economic relations. “Economic and cultural communication with the Soviet occupied zone are primarily a German problem. Agreement and coordination with the three powers are natural.”<sup>103</sup>

When Willy Brandt came into office as the foreign minister in 1967 (as part of a grand coalition with the CDU) it appeared as though Johnson had abandoned Germany’s interest in favor of superpower détente. Nuclear sharing had finally been discarded, largely on the basis of opposition by Western allies but also due to heavy opposition from the Soviet Union. That year, the doctrine of “flexible response” would become official doctrine, making a global nuclear escalation as improbable as possible, thereby arguably exposing the FRG to the threat of invasion, which was winnable by Soviet conventional forces. To save face, Germany had been admitted as a permanent member in the Nuclear Planning Group, therefore granting an increased level of nuclear consultation without any effective military gains for Germany. This policy was in line with general American foreign policy. For the U.S., détente primarily meant an understanding between the two superpowers in military affairs. Détente was therefore considered a bilateral issue between the Soviet Union and the United States, and not a dialogue between all parties

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<sup>101</sup> Böhme, 27.

<sup>102</sup> Memorandum, Mayor Willy Brandt to U.S. Ambassador Rusk, August 1964, quoted in: Meissner, 1024.

<sup>103</sup> Memorandum, Mayor Willy Brandt to U.S. Ambassador Rusk, August 1964, quoted in: Meissner, 1023.

involved. Since Germany was utterly dependent on the backing of the United States, Soviet-American talks led to extreme tensions and doubts within the alliance, and especially so in the German-American relationship. As Bahr put it:

the responsibility for the avoidance of a nuclear war forced a cooperation between Washington and Moscow that went beyond alliances. The vital interests of both made them partners removed from their alliances. If their relationship worked, the alliances did not have to function. NATO and [the] Warsaw Pact became mutual reassurances, to be kept on a short leash and incompetent to disrupt peace seriously or wreak havoc. [...] Because and as long as the protectors in Washington and Moscow guaranteed the law of nuclear peace, the cold war could continue, subordinated, and in accordance to what the subordinated interests of all involved deemed to be correct.<sup>104</sup>

Despite grave concerns over this superpower détente, he indicated to Bahr that he was unwilling to counter it with his own version so as not to “strain the new [coalition] government to the limit.” He had “the realization that the issues, [which] he thought needed to get done, would not get done with this coalition.”<sup>105</sup> Thus limited by the constraints of the coalition partner, the CDU, Brandt was only able to pursue a watered-down version of *Ostpolitik*. The common denominator between the two parties with regard to foreign policy was the goal of creating a collective security system that would overcome the division of Europe as well as any military aggression.<sup>106</sup>

The military situation in Europe had become highly volatile. On one hand, the military security that the United States provided for the FRG was more and more drawn into question. One public opinion poll after another indicated the deterioration of German confidence in the U.S. as an ally. Figure 6 demonstrates this trend. Throughout the 1960s, the desirability of the U.S. as a partner on the international scene had dropped roughly twenty points while that of the Soviet Union had risen by that same amount. Slighting the

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<sup>104</sup> Bahr, 205.

<sup>105</sup> Bahr, 201.

<sup>106</sup> Speech by Foreign Minister Brandt before the Rhein-Ruhr Club, January 11, 1968, quoted in: Peter Maerz, publ., *Dokumente zu Deutschland: 1944–1994* (München: Olzog Verlag, 1996), 166. See also Marcowitz, 266. Czempel viewed Brandt, not Chancellor Kiesinger as the driving force in the *Ostpolitik* pursued under the great coalition. Czempel, 176. Timothy Garton Ash, on the other hand, sees Kiesinger as the initiator of *Ostpolitik* under the great coalition. Ash, 55.

U.S. as an ally resulted from a gradually developing belief that the West Germans had placed themselves on the wrong side of history. Increasingly, German public opinion pointed to the Soviet Union as the more powerful ally in the long run. As can be seen in Figure 2, by 1968 more people believed the Soviet Union would be more powerful superpower within 50 years.

On the other hand, the Soviet Union had recently crushed a democratic movement in Czechoslovakia with brute military force, thereby shattering short-term hopes of rapprochement with the Soviet Union and renewing fears of military conflict. A stronger NATO was called for by the German public while better relations with the Soviet Union would be deemed necessary by the majority of West Germans only one year after the invasion. As Figure 4 illustrates, by 1969, the German threat perception from the Soviet Union had resumed its sharp pre-1968 decline. With still no Western nuclear retaliatory capabilities and a Soviet threat to invade West Germany, the public opinion polls seemed to support the tightrope walk of Brandt's new *Ostpolitik*.

We will place even more emphasis on coordination with our Western Allies, although this cannot be the final solution. There is this tendency to believe that the strengthening of the Western Alliance would be a replacement for *Ostpolitik*. This is nonsense. It is certainly necessary to take the cohesion of the West even more seriously after the events in Czechoslovakia. But this is not a replacement for *Ostpolitik*, but a precondition, at best.<sup>107</sup>

U.S. military presence and NATO, therefore, remained crucial elements in Brandt's policies despite his outreach to the East.<sup>108</sup> Yet this military protection had shifted from being the crucial pillar holding up Germany's independence and future to a necessary geo-political element for the pursuit of other diplomatic goals with much greater flexibility.

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<sup>107</sup> Böhme, 126.

<sup>108</sup> Willy Brandt, *A Peace Policy for Europe* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969), 80.

Our security interests and the necessity of the Atlantic partnership cannot be pursued against the United States but only through an independent policy vis-à-vis the United States, and wherever possible in conjunction with it.<sup>109</sup>

Nothing shows Brandt's disillusionment with the United States better than the issue of German unification. Before, Brandt was in favor of linking German unification to a rapprochement of the United States with the Soviet Union, and had even reminded President Johnson of said linkage during his visit in 1965. Now, Brandt attempted to link it with European unity.

Our policy nowadays is rooted more in the linkage between the European development and the German problem. It is focused on changing the current status quo of mistrust, the tensions, and the controversies for the better.<sup>110</sup>

With the realization that the United States would continue to be a protective presence in Germany, yet not pursue a policy conducive to German reunification, Brandt, as foreign minister, introduced the final element of *Ostpolitik*: a focus away from the superpower conflict and on European cooperation, flanked by a European peace order.

One example where Brandt's shifting attitude toward Western military power is reflected was the restructuring of NATO in 1967–68. Here, he not only welcomed, but actively fostered, the change in NATO doctrine away from a strong emphasis on nuclear deterrent toward an increased emphasis on diplomacy.<sup>111</sup> In the resulting Harmel Report, NATO saw military security and détente as two sides of the same coin, “not contradicting but complementing each other.” The report further called for involving NATO, along with the United States and the Soviet Union, in a policy of détente for the sake of peace and stability in Europe. Lastly, it stipulated that “a final and stable agreement on Europe is not possible without a solution of the Germany question, which constitutes the core of

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<sup>109</sup> Quoted in: Marcowitz, 284.

<sup>110</sup> Quoted in: Link, 130.

<sup>111</sup> Merseburger, 527.

the current tensions in Europe.”<sup>112</sup> This last goal would be reached with a European security conference.<sup>113</sup> To this end, a peaceful Europe, based on cooperation and relaxation of tensions, became of prime importance for Brandt.<sup>114</sup>

The existing European Community played a crucial role in this. It demonstrated a possible role model for a community that was economically integrated enough to be attractive to East European countries and politically powerful enough to transcend the limitations of German foreign policy. As Brandt stated in a speech before the Council of Europe, “the close Franco-German cooperation, which holds a decisive role for the future of Europe, has been revived.”<sup>115</sup>

The purpose of *Ostpolitik*, then, was to lure the East European countries to a close cooperation with the West. Brandt strove for such European cooperation through “the economic, technical, scientific, cultural, and—wherever possible—political contacts with the peoples and states of Eastern Europe.”<sup>116</sup> Brandt, then, aggressively tried to normalize relations with the states of Eastern Europe, as well as to enhance the relationship with the Soviet Union. Much to his credit, the FRG established numerous trade agreements with Eastern European states such as Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia, and even diplomatic ties with Romania.

A détente with the Soviet Union would play a crucial role in this process. Brandt had already mentioned the possibility of a non-aggression pact with the Soviet Union in a

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<sup>112</sup> Hans-Adolf Jacobsen and Tomala Mieczyslaw, *Bonn und Warschau 1945–1991: Die deutsch-polnischen Beziehungen – Analyse und Dokumentation* (Köln: Verlag Wissenschaft & Politik, 1992), 120–121.

<sup>113</sup> Böhme, 128.

<sup>114</sup> Speech by Foreign Minister Brandt before the Council of Europe, January 24, 1967, quoted in: Auswärtiges Amt, publ., *Außenpolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland*, 305.

<sup>115</sup> Ibid. Brandt (and the great coalition) truly believed in pursuing the same goals as de Gaulle in their foreign policy. See Marcowitz, 266.

<sup>116</sup> Speech by Foreign Minister Brandt before the German Bundestag, October 13, 1967, in Maerz, 161.

conversation with de Gaulle in December 1966 and, as Sarotte argues, the invasion of Czechoslovakia gave Brandt a new conviction that his diplomatic initiatives ultimately had to go through Moscow.<sup>117</sup>

By the end of President Johnson's term, Brandt had moved further away from the U.S. diplomatically and was convinced that Germany's reunification would only be achieved through close cooperation between European states and by entertaining good relations with the Soviet Union. Johnson's superpower détente had not sufficiently accounted for West Germany's interests. Quite to the contrary, West Germany was asked to submit its interests to that of a superpower détente.<sup>118</sup>

#### Nixon's Détente

Richard M. Nixon, returning in 1967 from a five year hiatus from politics, focused on the ABJ (Anything But Johnson) vote. The critique of the Johnson administration focused of course on Vietnam, but also on his ignoring of the needs of America's European allies. West European allies were essential to Nixon's concept of international relations. His ideas were rooted in the Cold War ideology so prevalent during his vice presidency, albeit with a new twist on détente. The proverbial new wine in old wineskins also turned Nixon's new era of negotiation into an adulterated version of detente.

Nixon-style détente focused mainly on an honorable exit from Vietnam, a strengthening of the Western alliance, and curtailing Soviet expansion of Communism. During his address to the Bohemian Club in San Francisco on July 29, 1967, he

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<sup>117</sup> Marcowitz, 267; Sarotte, 14.

<sup>118</sup> One example of this would be the Johnson administration urging the FRG to play down conflicts with East Germany over new restrictions on land travel to and from West Berlin, so as not to imperil American hopes of improving relations with Moscow. "News Summary and Index," *The New York Times*, June 16, 1968, 71.

articulated the need for an American foreign policy that would undo President Johnson's détente policy and bring Western Europe back to a cautious weariness of the Cold War enemy.

Twenty years ago Western Europe was weak economically and dependent on the United States. It was united by a common fear of the threat of Communist aggression. Today Western Europe is strong economically and economic independence has inevitably led to more political independence. The winds of détente have blown so strongly from East to West that except for Germany most Europeans no longer fear the threat from the East. As Harold Macmillan puts it, 'Alliances are kept together by fear, not by love.'<sup>119</sup>

This fear of Soviet aggression was clearly missing in West Europeans. Nixon saw Soviet rhetoric of détente as a symbol of a superficial change, a change "of the head and not the heart – of necessity, not choice."<sup>120</sup> This characterization (which could be equally ascribed to Nixon himself) had implications for U.S. détente in the military, economic, and diplomacy arenas.

The military aspect is a rather telling indication of Nixon's continued struggle for military superiority despite détente. Unlike Brandt's vision of a military de-escalation, Nixon felt that

We must recognize that we have not had a world war for twenty years because of America's clear military superiority. That superiority is now threatened, both because of Soviet progress in missile development and because of an attitude in U.S. policy circles that nuclear parity with the Soviets is enough. Because the primary Soviet goal is still victory rather than peace, we must never let the day come in a confrontation like Cuba and the Mid-East where they, rather than we, have military superiority.<sup>121</sup>

In an even more striking contrast to Brandt's visions and policies as foreign minister, Nixon sought trade only under very limited conditions.

We should have a policy which encourages more trade with the Soviet Union and Eastern European countries. We must recognize, however, that to them trade is a political weapon. I believe in building bridges but we should build only our end of the bridge. For example, there

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<sup>119</sup> FRUS 1969–1972, vol. 1, doc #2, "Address by Richard M. Nixon to the Bohemian Club," July 29, 1967, 3.

<sup>120</sup> Ibid, 7.

<sup>121</sup> "Address by Richard M. Nixon to the Bohemian Club," San Francisco, July 29, 1967, FURS 1969–1972, vol. I., doc #2, p. 8.

should be no extension of long term credits or trade in strategic items with any nation, including the Soviet Union, which aids the enemy in North Vietnam.<sup>122</sup>

On diplomatic issues, Nixon's views most closely matched those of Brandt. But even here, the underlying premise is a different one and would consequently lead to differing judgments on what constituted sensible diplomatic relations.

Diplomatically we should have discussions with the Soviet leaders at all levels to reduce the possibility of miscalculation and to explore the areas where bilateral agreements would reduce tensions. But we must always remember in such negotiations that our goal is different from theirs: We seek peace as an end in itself. They seek victory with peace being at this time a means toward an end.<sup>123</sup>

Ultimately, Nixon's conviction rested on just that premise, namely that the Soviet Union remained an aggressive power and a realistic threat to the world. Détente was just a means to make the conflict of systems more bearable. His conclusion about the quintessence of the Soviet Union underscores this point: "In sum, we can live in peace with the Soviet Union but until they give up their goal for world conquest it will be for them a peace of necessity and not of choice."<sup>124</sup> This kind of détente was a far cry from normalized relations or even cooperation. Ever suspicious of Soviet strategies to resume world conquest and militarily prepared to counter such moves, Nixon's views were more reminiscent of peaceful coexistence than détente policies.

During his 1968 election campaign he did attempt to shift toward a more centrist approach after having been portrayed as overly hawkish from his days as vice president, when he advocated stiff resistance to Communist expansion. Consequently, during a news conference in Miami Beach on August 6, 1968, he gave himself a more dovish window dressing, suggesting that the "era of confrontation with the Communist world

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<sup>122</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>123</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>124</sup> Ibid.



has ended, ushering [in] a new era of negotiations with the Soviet Union.”<sup>125</sup> Despite such rhetoric, Nixon’s view had not substantially changed, and when the Soviet Union invaded Czechoslovakia, the Nixon camp saw this as “a net plus for the candidacy of Nixon” since people would see him “as realistic, tough-minded, skeptical [...] and able to negotiate from strength.”<sup>126</sup> For politics, this was quite convenient, as Nixon could either hold up the new wine, the new era of negotiations, or the old wineskins, a tough anti-Communist stance. For policy, it was quite another matter, as Brandt would take Nixon’s liberal language as indicating support of his own policies.

In summary, it is evident that Brandt underwent a drastic transformation in his ideology throughout the 1960s. While at first he was decidedly pro-Western in every respect, the more he became disillusioned with American support for German foreign policy interests, the more his *Ostpolitik* took shape. This is more obvious in some areas than in others.

The military role of the United States and NATO, as the guarantors of military security of the FRG, changed from a crucial pillar of strength, necessary to the survival of the FRG, to a bargaining chip in negotiations with the East. While Brandt had no interest in rejecting American military power outright, and in fact continued to need it for the security of West Germany, his attitude changed toward the utility of the military. After the unwillingness of the United States to defend Germany’s interests in East Germany, and a subsequent disillusionment with the rejection of nuclear sharing programs by the allies, Brandt simply considered American military presence for what it was: a self-

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<sup>125</sup> Robert B. Semple Jr, “Nixon Says He Has Eased Views on Communist Bloc,” *Special to The New York Times*, August 7, 1968, 1.

<sup>126</sup> Harold Gal, “Czech Crisis Impels Nixon to Reconsider Views on Communism,” *Special to The New York Times*, August 25, 1968, 73.

interested projection of military might by a superpower over a vital territory. This allowed Brandt to pursue an independent course without having to fear a loss of security.

Brandt's unilateralism is mostly reflected in diplomatic initiatives. While in 1959 Brandt was still willing to yield to American diplomatic initiatives as a way to defend German interests, he gradually extended the framework within which Germans should develop own initiatives. What began with humanitarian efforts to overcome the effects of the Berlin wall and was extended to economic and cultural areas a few years later finally reached the level of politics. At first only with consent of the allies, later alone, Brandt gradually moved out from underneath the blanket of American diplomatic tutelage, advocating that in order to achieve Germany unification it would be necessary to shift away from a transatlantic to a European framework.

This shift in Brandt's thinking was only possible because of a changed view of the nature of the Soviet Union. At first an evil empire with which one could and should not negotiate, it became a state with legitimate security interests, however much one was appalled by them. Finally, the Soviet Union became the gatekeeper to a unified Germany and Europe, a neighbor with whom it was essential to have a good relationship. The East European states became acceptable players in an international political game, with the ultimate goal of pacification and cooperation in Europe. This idea of a European peace order had slowly emerged, from a status-quo peace for Berlin to carefully balanced arms reductions, by which the risk of nuclear war could be avoided. Close cooperation on cultural, economic, and political levels between the states of Eastern and Western Europe would make a German unification, if not on a state level, then on a practical level, possible.

Such cooperation, however, firmly contradicted Nixon's version of détente. Entrenched in Cold War thinking, cooperation with Communist states on the lines Brandt envisaged would not be possible for him. As Nixon did not subscribe to the idea of peace-seeking Communists but only Communists using peace as a means to further Communism, Nixon's concurrence with Brandt's vision of close cooperation could only be achieved if the Soviet Union would abandon the Communist philosophy altogether.

Both sides had sound reasons for the kind of détente they pursued. For Brandt and the FRG, American détente offered little chance of seeing a reunified Germany. A rapprochement with the East at least offered this possibility. Furthermore, the strategic position of Germany allowed Brandt to take a gamble on Soviet motivations without having to fear losing American security commitments. Nixon, on the other hand, was quite content with stopping Communist expansion and never suggested a roll-back policy akin to the mid-1950s. Détente would allow him to solidify Western support and contain Communism. Not having any vital American national interest in East Germany, a more confrontational policy over East Germany while still deeply involved in Vietnam was not sensible. Whether Nixon or Brandt had a better read on the Soviet intentions at the time matters less to this study than the fact that the two leaders who would govern their nations in 1969 had views of détente that were quite different and would invariably clash.

## CHAPTER II

### HONEYMOON PERIODS AND INITIAL IDEALISM

The beginning of 1969 through the spring of 1970 marked a period of wishful thinking with respect to cooperation and consultation on both sides of the Atlantic. Nixon's vision of greater European leadership in their own regional affairs in exchange for a greater West European assumption of global responsibility worked for with all parties—in principle. Nixon's assurances of a continued commitment to Western Europe, while giving them greater political flexibility, led to initial enthusiasm about the new American leadership. When, as German foreign minister and later chancellor, Brandt put theory in practice, and became the leading figure in an economic, social, and political détente with the Soviet Union, his "selective détente" generated tremendous conflict between himself and the Nixon administration. While Nixon resented Brandt for his "leftist" ideology and, therefore, was wary of his policies, Kissinger initially appreciated the apparent flexibility that Brandt's détente policies afforded the United States. Brandt's economic policies vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, however, actually undermined the negotiation position of the United States. Only after a surprising display of German nationalism by the German public during the inter-German summit meeting in Erfurt did Kissinger recognize the dangers of Brandt's policies: Brandt's honeymoon period was over.

## Nixon's Vision of a Responsible Europe

When Nixon was inaugurated as president of the United States on January 20, 1969, he had intended to strengthen transatlantic ties. Like most presidential candidates, he had sought to set himself apart from his predecessor's policies. One of his most pointed critiques of Johnson's policies had been of the latter's treatment of the transatlantic alliance. While recent scholarship by Thomas A. Schwartz has demonstrated that Johnson's policies toward Europe had been quite effective, Nixon's election slogan "We have to fix the transatlantic alliance" resonated strongly with the American electorate.

Nixon did not wait long to deliver on this promise. Only two weeks after his inauguration he announced at a press conference on February 6, 1969 that he would take a trip to Europe to "revitalize" the transatlantic alliance.<sup>127</sup> The underlying hope, as Ronald Powaski points out, was to move the European allies away from their European-focused foreign policy toward more responsibility for global Cold War politics. The carrot for such a move was an American promise of more intense consultations.<sup>128</sup> Being only the first of many envisioned trips, the top political priority this time around was undoubtedly to get French president Charles de Gaulle back into the fold of the Western allies. Germany, however, held its own personal challenges for Nixon. He did not fear the relatively easy visit with German chancellor Kiesinger but the obligatory demonstration of American support for West Berlin. As has been illustrated by Ambrose, Nixon's resentment of the East Coast liberals led to a strong aversion against anything reminiscent

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<sup>127</sup> "Statement on the Forthcoming Visit to Western Europe," February 6, 1969: *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States: Richard Nixon, 1969*, Washington, D.C: Government Printing Office, 1970, #35.

<sup>128</sup> Ronald E. Powaski, *The Entangling Alliance: The United States and European Security 1950-1993* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, 1994), 83-84.

of President John F. Kennedy's policies.<sup>129</sup> Not wanting to stand in the shadow of Kennedy's famous visit, Nixon was deeply troubled by the possibility that his reception would be compared unfavorably to the cheering crowds of Berliners, still vividly in the minds of Germans and Americans alike.

Nixon's fears were groundless as the Berliners came through for him. Under chants of "He-He-He—Nixon ist ok," on February 27, 1969 the American president committed himself to "defending the rightful status of West Berlin" and then offered, in concurrence with his campaign promise to inaugurate an era of negotiations, to "view the situation in Berlin as an invocation, a call to end the tension of the past here and everywhere."<sup>130</sup>

In a foreshadowing of future difficulties with France and Germany, certain government representatives were not as easily convinced. In a striking clue of Nixon's ideological underpinnings, he had great admiration for the conservative French president Charles de Gaulle and almost revered him as an idol despite de Gaulle's staunch anti-American policies.<sup>131</sup> De Gaulle held no such inherent respect for Nixon. He boldly told Nixon that Europe must determine its own destiny, not follow Washington or Moscow. Of course, more amicable relations between the United States and the Soviet Union would help in this matter, and thus Nixon was able to leave Europe with a sense of a common transatlantic interest in détente.<sup>132</sup> Upon his return he made two observations that contained harbingers of coming problems.

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<sup>129</sup> Ambrose, *Nixon: The Triumph of a Politician*, 414-417.

<sup>130</sup> "Remarks on Departure from West Berlin," February 27, 1969, *Public Papers: Nixon, 1969*, #83.

<sup>131</sup> Richard M. Nixon, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* (New York : Grosset & Dunlap, 1978), 371.

<sup>132</sup> Memorandum of Conversation [MemCon] President Nixon with French President Charles de Gaulle, 2/28/69, folder: "President's Trip Files, Memcons – Europe (Feb 23, '69 – March 2 '69)," Box 447, NSCF, Nixon Presidential Materials Staff [NPMS], National Archives [NA]. Also see *The New York Times*, "Nixon's European Success," March 2, 1969, E12.

I sensed as I traveled to the capitals of Europe that there is a new trust on the part of the Europeans in themselves, growing out of the fact that they have had a remarkable recovery economically and politically, as well as in their military strength since the devastation of World War II. Also, I think I sensed a new trust in the United States growing out of the fact that they feel that there are open channels of communication with the United States and a new sense of consultation with the United States.<sup>133</sup>

Nixon's assessment of this new European self-confidence was certainly correct as far as Germany was concerned. In opinion poll after opinion poll Germans considered their country to be of increasing importance in the world.<sup>134</sup>

For most historians, including Wolfram Hanrieder, this German self-confidence of the 1970s and 1980s, albeit difficult to reconcile with the image of a submissive and apologetic German foreign policy of the 1950s, was systemic, caused by the "dissimilar socioeconomic conventions which inclined them toward divergent political values."<sup>135</sup> Already during the Truman administration, the West Germans had viewed themselves as more than a political underling to the United States. Popular opinion polls in 1957 showed that at that time, the Germans viewed themselves as contributing as much to the transatlantic alliance as the Americans, if not more.<sup>136</sup> Frank Costigliola also compellingly illustrates that during the Kennedy administration West Germans felt they deserved the right to veto U.S. policy.<sup>137</sup> What has been neglected by the historiography is that Willy Brandt represented a new quality of self-confidence. He not only reiterated the need for U.S. consultation with the Germans on foreign policy but made the FRG the initiator of a foreign policy, independent of the Western superpower.

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<sup>133</sup> "Remarks at Andrews Air Force Base on Returning from Europe," March 2, 1969, *Public Papers: Nixon, 1969*, #94.

<sup>134</sup> See Figure 1.

<sup>135</sup> Hanrieder, 371.

<sup>136</sup> See Figure 1.

<sup>137</sup> Frank Costigliola, "Kennedy, the European Allies, and the Failure to Consult," *Political Science Quarterly*, 110, vol. 1 (Spring 1995): 105-123, 107-108.

This new self-confidence was manifested in the demands of then-Foreign Minister Willy Brandt, who had concrete demands for the advancement of German unity which did not coincide with Nixon's desires. During the summit meeting he suggested that "some real progress toward a stable settlement on Berlin would be highly desirable."<sup>138</sup> The implication was clear: Nixon's vision of detente was not enough to bring about the changes wanted by Brandt.

Yet such implied criticism was easily glossed over in the overall excitement about the success of the trip. Nixon had managed to articulate a new vision for the transatlantic partnership. Undoubtedly, the American statements of support for Germany and attempts at détente were sincere – in theory. As Kissinger wrote to Nixon, with notable enthusiasm, "I am convinced that your trip drove the key message home: we are sensitive to the critical problems; we respect and value the opinions of our Allies, we will approach talks with the Soviets with great prudence and only in full consultation with our friends; and we do not intend to try to dictate solutions to international problems anywhere at any time."<sup>139</sup> Only a little later Kissinger admitted to Secretary of State William P. Rogers, however, that when it came to consulting the European allies, "The Pres[ident] is not so much for consultation in practice as in theory."<sup>140</sup> Heavily relying on his foreign policy experiences during his tenure as vice president in the Eisenhower administration, Nixon wanted to allow for the security and autonomy of the West European allies but within a framework in which the United States retained the moral authority to lead global matters.

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<sup>138</sup> Memo, [n.d.], folder: "Staff Memos: Sonnenfeld, Helmut," Box 834, Name Files, NSCF, NPMS, NA.

<sup>139</sup> Memo, Henry A. Kissinger to Nixon, 3/5/69, folder: "MemCons – Europe (Feb 23, '69 – March 2 '69)," Box 447, President's Trip Files, NSCF, NPMS, NA.

<sup>140</sup> Transcript of Telephone Conversation, 3/12/69, 5:40 pm, folder: "Henry Kissinger Telephone Conversation Transcripts," Box 1, Chronological File, NSCF, NPMS, NA.



This overall leadership, then, pointed to a cautious coexistence with the Communist bloc through tough negotiations, in accordance with the views of German chancellor Kiesinger and not of Brandt's vision of a full-fledged cooperation between Germany and Eastern Europe. In Kissinger's reflections on Nixon's only presidential trip to Germany he asserts that "Kiesinger's views were closer to Nixon's: [and] Brandt's were more comparable with the convictions of our State Department."<sup>141</sup> The fact that Nixon would sympathize with a former Nazi officer who looked toward a strong Franco-German understanding within a new Europe already gives an indication of the strength of his ideological differences with Brandt. The key difference between the Nixon approach to the Soviet Union and Brandt's was that Nixon only needed a Soviet acceptance of the status quo, i.e. a peaceful military coexistence that did not undermine the economic and ideological competition between the two superpowers and their allies. Brandt, on the other hand, saw a true cooperation between Western and Eastern Europe as the only way to achieve the ultimate purpose of West German diplomacy: reunification. To achieve this goal, an ideological acceptance of the Socialist system and close economic ties were necessary, both of which required intensive diplomacy and sacrifices on part of West Germany.

Unfortunately for Nixon, transatlantic relations had changed considerably from the time of his tenure as vice president. Back then, U.S. economic support and military protection against Soviet aggression had assured West European compliance with U.S. foreign policy. As previously outlined, various international developments during the 1960s eroded this need for compliance. The same week that Nixon returned home, German politics began their watershed transition from a conservative to a Socialist/liberal

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<sup>141</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 100.

government. As evidenced by the addresses of the newly elected German president, Gustav Heinemann, Brandt's visions of reconciliation with the East had become popular rhetoric among the left. Upon election to the German presidency, Heinemann unleashed the 1969 parliamentary election campaign rhetoric by declaring his election the beginning of the "changing of the guard."<sup>142</sup> He suggested that membership in NATO could not be "the terminal station of German policy" and that West Germany should work with other states to "get out of this creation of blocs again."<sup>143</sup> Heinemann not only asserted German national interests that were contradictory to American ones, but in doing so also rejected U.S. moral leadership.

#### Money Speaks Louder than Words: Brandt's attempt to reach out to the Soviets

Long before President Heinemann articulated the desire for a German position beyond NATO, Brandt had already initiated attempts to reach out to the Soviet Union. If the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia in August 1968 had demonstrated one thing to Brandt, it was the failure of Western policy to pry Soviet satellite states away from the Soviet Union through trade. To Brandt, political change without the Soviet Union was impossible.<sup>144</sup> Trade with the Soviet Union represented the key avenue to cooperation between Eastern and Western Europe.<sup>145</sup> While historians, most notably Seppain, Stent, and Jacobsen, have identified *Osthandel* as complementary to Brandt's *Ostpolitik*, they have failed to depict *Osthandel* as prerequisite to *Ostpolitik*, nor have they identified

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<sup>142</sup> David Binder, "Germans Begin Political Debate: Heinemann Remark Sets Off Pre-campaign Clash," *The New York Times*, March 10, 1969, 8.

<sup>143</sup> Ibid.

<sup>144</sup> Sarotte, 14.

<sup>145</sup> Willy Brandt, *A Peace Policy for Europe* (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1969), 110-111.

Brandt as the driving force in this development.<sup>146</sup> Brandt, having tried to establish closer German-Soviet ties throughout 1968, had convened a brainstorming session between the German embassy in Moscow and the Economics Ministry undersecretary von Dohnanyi, also a member of the SPD, on January 15, 1969, on how to create more high level contacts between the Soviet Union and the Federal Republic of Germany.<sup>147</sup> There, it had been decided to invite Soviet trade minister Nikolai Patolichev to the 1969 Hanover trade fair.<sup>148</sup> Brandt then followed this up, just two weeks before the Nixon visit, when trying to lure Soviet Ambassador Semen K. Zarpkin into greater economic relations with the FRG by offering close cooperation on cultural, economic, and technical exchange, suggesting nuclear physics, molecular biology, and cybernetics as possible fields.<sup>149</sup>

Despite Brandt's overtures, the Soviet side demonstrated little interest in pursuing economic ties with the FRG. Apart from the 1962 pipeline embargo, which had strained German-Soviet economic relations, it was widely accepted in German government circles that the Soviet Union was deliberately trying to freeze Soviet-German trade. When Brandt raised the issue of East-West trade during the luncheon on February 11, 1969, Zarpkin only rehashed the old line that oil import quotas would need to be increased before German companies could be considered for a sizable contribution in the building

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<sup>146</sup> Helene Seppain, *Contrasting US and German Attitudes to Soviet Trade, 1917–91: Politics by Economic Means* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1992); Stent, *From Embargo to Ostpolitik*; Hans-Dieter Jacobsen, *Die Ost-West-Wirtschaftsbeziehungen als deutsch-amerikanisches Problem* (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlag, 1986).

<sup>147</sup> MemCon, "Niederschrift über das Gespräch zwischen Herrn Staatssekretär Dr. von Dohnanyi und Herrn Leg. Rat I Eggers," January 15, 1969, Bundesarchiv Koblenz [BAK], BA 102 [=Bundeswirtschaftsministerium] /100025.

<sup>148</sup> Ibid.

<sup>149</sup> MemCon, "Gespräch des Bundesministers Brandt mit dem sowjetischen Botschafter Zarpkin," January 10, 1969: Akten zur Auswärtigen Politik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland [AAPD], 1969, #8.

of the auto manufacturing plant Togliatti.<sup>150</sup> This issue of heating oil import quotas, however, was a dead end. The West European market was saturated in this the only area of significant Soviet energy overproduction. In January and February of 1969 the German demand had risen 29% compared to the same two months of the previous year, yet the market was so saturated that the price was below the price level of the summer months the previous year. An increase in Soviet imports was not commercially advisable.<sup>151</sup> Since the West German market had already reached the maximum heating oil imports that it could absorb, continued exports of the only marketable and plentiful Soviet commodity was no basis for any sizable future Soviet-German trade increase. The Soviet Union, therefore, was only willing to expand the existing trade structures that would result in further hard currency gains. No large-scale projects or fundamental reorganization of Soviet-German trade relations was envisioned on the Soviet side.

Even if the Soviets were not convinced of a strengthening of German-Soviet relations, France was persuaded of the value of better relations with the East. In a conversation on March 10, 1969, Brandt and French Foreign Minister Michel Debre agreed that President Nixon had shown little concern for European interests and that Germany and France would need to pursue their economic and political ties with the Soviet Union independently of the United States. Détente with other East European countries should also continue in parallel with the United States, if for no other reason than to “keep the states of Eastern Europe on the right course of a development toward

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<sup>150</sup> MemCon, “Gespräch des Staatssekretärs Duckwitz mit dem sowjetischen Botschafter Zarapkin,” April 8, 1969, AAPD, #117, footnote 2.

<sup>151</sup> Memo, “Mineralöleinführen aus der UdSSR,” April 26, 1969, BA 102/100025, 2.

Europe.”<sup>152</sup> After Brandt showed a certain anxiety over the American reaction toward European initiatives at détente, Debre assured him that de Gaulle had stated the French intention of a continued dialogue with the Soviet Union and Nixon “considered this normal.”<sup>153</sup> This misrepresentation of Nixon’s attitude toward trade with Eastern Europe foreshadowed the many times the Europeans would skillfully claim an inability to coordinate export controls with the United States with reference to EC trade guidelines.

Despite the apparent backing of France and the United States for a new SPD-led orientation of German foreign policy, Soviet willingness to engage West Germany had been less forthcoming.<sup>154</sup> The Warsaw Pact Conference in Budapest on March 17 indicated a possible shift in the Soviet stance. In this summit meeting, widely seen as a defeat for the Soviet Union by its satellite states, the Warsaw Pact leaders failed to agree on a document denouncing the role of the People’s Republic of China in the Sino-Soviet border clashes earlier that month. To strengthen Moscow’s strategic position the Soviet leaders condoned renewed calls for a European Security conference and sanctioned strong economic cooperation between Communist countries and Western Europe. All this was clearly done in the hope that these moves would stabilize the situation in Europe, placate East European demands for more prosperity, and ultimately to place the Soviet Union in a better position to deal with the renegade Chinese sister country, with whom it unfortunately happened to share a rather lengthy border.

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<sup>152</sup> MemCon, “Gespräch des Bundesministers Brandt mit dem französischen Außenminister Debre,” March 10, 1969, AAPD, #94.

<sup>153</sup> Ibid. De Gaulle’s comments were made during Nixon’s visit to France between February 28 and March 2, 1969. This was not an entirely correct summary of Nixon’s stance. He had argued for more European self-initiative regarding West European economic cooperation but not for an independent West European diplomatic initiative, which could possibly undermine U.S. trade negotiations with Eastern Europe.

<sup>154</sup> Memo, Bundesministerium für Wirtschaft [Economics Ministry] Dr. Steidle to Dr. Schomerus, “Besuch des sowjetischen Handelsrats Woltschkow bei Herrn Staatssekretär Dr. von Dohnanyi,” August 20, 1968, BA 102/100000.

While the call for a European Security Conference was nothing new in and of itself, Brandt, desperate for an opening move by the Soviet Union, jumped on the Budapest declaration. As the first major Western statesmen to comment on the declaration, he fully embraced the idea.

We hail such a thought [of a European Security Conference] in itself. Its realization must bring us nearer to a solution of the problems of Central Europe that corresponds to the hopes of the German people and the just interests of the countries involved.<sup>155</sup>

Brandt's quick and categorically positive response to the Budapest appeal reveals how far he was ultimately willing to go in creating goodwill with the Soviet Union. Since the Soviets had repeatedly made it clear that they did not consider the United States or Canada party to such talks, the firm stance by Rainer Barzel, CDU party whip, "that without the United States there is nothing to discuss between East and West European governments on issues of peace and security" was certainly more in line with American interests.<sup>156</sup>

The Nixon administration, for their part, did not consider the Budapest appeal a proposal worthy of a response.<sup>157</sup> Even after Soviet ambassador Dobrynin indicated several days later that the United States would not be barred from participating in such a security conference, Nixon's speech at the Commemorative Session of the North Atlantic Council on April 10 demonstrated his awareness of ideological differences and wariness of selective détente.

Living in the real world of today means recognizing the sometimes differing interests of the Western nations, while never losing sight of our great common purposes. Living in the real world of today means understanding old concepts of East versus West, understanding and unfreezing those concepts, but never losing sight of great ideological differences that still remain.

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<sup>155</sup> David Binder, "Brandt Welcomes Proposal Made by Warsaw Pact Nations for a European Security Conference," *The New York Times*, March 19, 1969, 15.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>157</sup> "U.S. Is Cool to Idea," *The New York Times*, March 19, 1969, 15.

We can afford neither to blind our eyes with hatred nor to distort our vision with rose-colored glasses. The real world is too much with us to permit either stereotyped reacting or wishful thinking to lay waste our powers.<sup>158</sup>

In this speech Nixon is clearly indicating his determination to exercise leadership in the one area that was most dear to him: directing the world balance of power.<sup>159</sup> Assuming the mantle of the moral leader of the Western world, he warned the allies to take a realistic look at the East and refrain from weakening the alliance through selective détente. His warnings, however, fell on deaf ears.

### Brandt's *Osthandel* succeeds: The Gas Pipeline Deal

German public opinion had already shifted toward a more reconciliatory approach with the East. Despite the Brezhnev Doctrine and its implicit threat to invade the Federal Republic of Germany in the aftermath of the Czechoslovakian uprising of 1968, the threat perception of the Soviet Union dropped from 52 points in November 1968 to its all-time low of 7 points in September 1969.<sup>160</sup> Furthermore, during the spring of 1969 the majority of West Germans began to see the Soviet Union as *the* superpower on the rise, economically as well as militarily.<sup>161</sup>

This change in the public perception of the Soviet Union coincided with Brandt's opposition to the American's claim to moral leadership.<sup>162</sup> In fact, Brandt had already unilaterally followed up on the economic part of the Budapest declaration. Bureaucratic inertia had bogged down the discussion over the possible invitation of Soviet trade minister Patolichev to the Hanover trade fair, but it was reinvigorated on March 25, 1969

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<sup>158</sup> "Address at the Commemorative Session of the North Atlantic Council," April 10, 1969, *Public Papers: Nixon, 1969*, #145.

<sup>159</sup> Ambrose, *Nixon: The Triumph of a Politician*, 408.

<sup>160</sup> See Appendix B, Figure 4.

<sup>161</sup> See Appendix B, Figure 2.

<sup>162</sup> Brandt, *Erinnerungen*, 374.

by Brandt's ally in the Economics Ministry, von Dohnanyi. The Economics Ministry finally decided to issue the invitation but since the Hanover trade fair was set to start only four weeks later, von Dohnanyi asked Brandt to convey a verbal invitation.<sup>163</sup> Brandt assured von Dohnanyi that he would ask Economics Ministry Undersecretary Duckwitz to take care of the matter within the next week but must have decided to give the issue a higher priority as he personally conveyed Economics Minister Schiller's invitation in a meeting to an only moderately interested Ambassador Zarpkin the next day.<sup>164</sup>

The reserved Soviet stance toward the FRG changed with Patolichev's acceptance of the invitation on April 23, 1969.<sup>165</sup> In essence, this acceptance must be seen as the turning point in the Soviet willingness to cooperate with the FRG, albeit at this point only on economic matters. While it was certainly easier for the Soviets to engage in high-profile trade with West Germany after the Warsaw Summit meeting in Budapest had paved the way for all Communist countries to engage in trade with the West, the late date of acceptance and the immediate demand for a natural gas pipeline to Germany suggests a more significant shift in Soviet trade strategy vis-à-vis the rest of Western Europe.

This turning point was the changed French approach to Franco-Soviet trade. During his last few days in office, de Gaulle's government tried to reshape the nature of Franco-Soviet trade in a manner that was more in line with Western ideas and interests. For the Soviets the conclusion of the negotiations on the renewal of the five-year Franco-Soviet trade agreement, which concluded on April 18, 1969, must have been troubling.

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<sup>163</sup> Memo, by Economics Ministry Dr. Steidle, "Einladung Außenhandelsminister Patolitschew," March 27, 1969, BA 102/100025; Memo, by Economics Ministry Dr. Schomerus, April 2, 1969, BA 102/100025.

<sup>164</sup> Memo, "Eventuelle Einladung des sowjetischen Außenministers Patolitschew," April 16, 1969, BA 102/100025.

<sup>165</sup> Memo, "Einladung des sowjetischen Außenhandelsministers Patolitschew," April 23, 1969, BA 102/100025, 1.



The French, while blaming increased EC commitments, effectively limited the political and financial rewards for the Soviet Union.

In the new five-year cycle, France was no longer willing to extend eight-year loans, and instead cut back to the commonly accepted five-year loans. Furthermore, the French refused to have Finance Minister Francois-Xavier Ortoli lead the negotiations or initial the agreement, thus giving the previously much publicized Franco-Soviet economic relations a significantly lower profile. But most importantly, the French changed the conception of the new five-year trade deals, calling them a new kind of extended trade deals in which “economic exchange would only represent one element among broad exchanges of thought, experience, and services.”<sup>166</sup> This, however, flew in the face of existing Soviet business practices. The extension of deals beyond strict economic interchanges to prospective interchanges of “thought” and “services” ran counter to Soviet guidelines on economic cooperation. Anything other than an exchange of goods and currency was considered by the Soviets an infringement in domestic affairs. With these conditions unfavorable from the Soviet point of view, it was a logical tactic to explore the possibility of engaging a new player, the FRG, in the Soviet game of divide-and-conquer.

According to an assessment of the German Economics Ministry, the French had not drawn back as the result of Nixon’s call for a unified Western front in negotiations. Rather, the Franco-Soviet trade was plagued by what would become the hallmark of the German-Soviet trade in the years to come: economic exchanges on the basis of barter and French credits. Ultimately, the Soviet unwillingness to allow for more sophisticated

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<sup>166</sup> Memo, “Sowjetische Absichten zur Lieferung russischen Erdgases nach Westeuropa,” April 26, 1969, BA 102/100025, 1-3.

commercial interactions through joint business ventures and foreign investment left the Soviet Union unable to balance its trade deficit and made Western expansion into the Soviet market less attractive.<sup>167</sup> Even the planned Soviet natural gas pipeline through Austria, Italy, and France was of questionable financial benefit, in addition to being legal limbo as Soviet-Italian negotiations on the Italian extension of the pipeline had stalled. Nor was there a sizable demand for natural gas in either Italy or France. Both countries had enough domestic natural gas resources to supply their countries until at least 1975; and without the Italian section, the pipeline into France was dead.<sup>168</sup>

During the meeting between Patolichev and Schiller in Hanover, Patolichev bluntly explained that the Soviet oil sector, as the main Soviet export commodity, had only limited potential. As already indicated, the Soviets had unsuccessfully sought to boost their export of the one type of oil they had plenty of: heating oil. Of the other two types, the Soviet Union had virtually no reserves of crude oil, and only minor export capacities in gasoline.<sup>169</sup> Consequently, the German proposals for cooperation could lead to the development of another hard-currency export commodity: natural gas. Patolichev basically only offered one thing: the initiation of Soviet gas delivery negotiations to the FRG. Brandt, having just gotten his party honed in on a new, conciliatory foreign policy toward Eastern Europe during the Social Democratic Party's convention in Bad Godesberg on April 18, jumped on the opportunity. This was done with no sign of Soviet willingness to provide political or trade concessions in return. Patolichev was very clear about this during his visit to Hanover, and Schiller did get the message:

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<sup>167</sup> Ibid.

<sup>168</sup> Ibid.

<sup>169</sup> MemCon, "Kurzprotokoll über das vertrauliche Gespräch zwischen Minister Schiller und dem sowjetischen Außenhandelsminister Patolitschew," February 1, 1970, BA 102/100026, 4-5.

During the conversation it became very clear that the Soviet side is foremost interested in talks on specific goods and projects. The continuation of trade agreement negotiations and the possible agreement on trade deals have only been mentioned by our Soviet guests in a very casual way.<sup>170</sup>

Concerns about becoming dependent on Soviet energy exports were pushed aside with the remark that the volume of a potential trade deal would not be big enough to present a serious threat. The wisdom of supplying a Communist country that had recently threatened to invade the FRG with a significant inflow of hard currency, however, was never questioned.<sup>171</sup> The most striking display of a wish to create good relations with the Soviet Union at all costs was that the Soviet gas was not even of commercial interest to the FRG. The German Economics Ministry assessed a potential gas pipeline as only feasible if it would connect Italy, France, Austria, Southern Germany, and even Czechoslovakia. Northern Germany was well supplied with Dutch and Norwegian gas for some time to come. Southern Germany was also well supplied, although here, starting in 1975, the market could possibly absorb 2–3 billion cubic meters. Even this relatively small quantity would require the creation of strong market incentives for consumers to switch from oil to natural gas and heavily discounted prices.<sup>172</sup> In essence, the Soviet Union offered something that the FRG had no need for.

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<sup>170</sup> Memo, Economics Ministry to Chancellor Kiesinger, April 29, 1969, BA 102/100021, 2. Original: "In der Unterhaltung kam deutlich zum Ausdruck, daß es der sowjetischen Seite zunächst darum geht, Gespräche über einzelne Waren und einzelne Projekte zu führen. Auf die Fortsetzung der Handelsvertrags-Verhandlungen und den evtl. Abschluß eines neuen Warenabkommens sind die sowjetischen Gäste nur ganz beiläufig zu sprechen gekommen."

<sup>171</sup> Memo, Economics Ministry to Undersecretary von Dohnanyi, "Einfuhr sowjetischen Erdgases nach Bayern; hier: Vorbereitung Ihrer Reise nach Moskau," May 20, 1969, BA 102/100021, 2. Original: "Der andere Gedanke, den die russische Seite wohl stärker verfolgt, läge darin, über eine neue größere Leitung die Erdgaslieferungen nach Italien, Frankreich, Süddeutschland, Österreich und gegebenenfalls auch die Tschechoslowakei zusammenzufassen. Nach unserer Einschätzung wäre hierfür im Endausbau ein Absatzvolumen von insgesamt etwas 10 Mrd. m<sup>3</sup> erforderlich, von dem der süddeutsche Markt (Bayern und Baden-Württemberg) für 1975 bei forcierter Verkaufspolitik (Wettbewerb zum Heizöl) wohl maximal 2 bis 3 Mrd. m<sup>3</sup> aufnehmen könnte. Hierbei würde es sich schon um eine ‚optimistische‘ Größenordnung handeln, die erhebliche Preisanstrengungen erforderlich machen und darüber hinaus die Bereitschaft der Abnehmer zu einem verstärkten Engagement im Erdgasbereich voraussetzen würde."

<sup>172</sup> Ibid.

Whether it was the Soviet realization of how desperately the FRG wanted to free itself from the Soviet-imposed isolation, how important a role the Soviet Union was to play in Brandt's political vision, or simply the fact that Soviet negotiators were well informed of German negotiation positions through its intelligence services, the roles of beggar and chooser were oddly reversed in these interchanges.<sup>173</sup>

German Ambassador Helmut Allardt assured a very reserved Soviet minister on May 26, 1969, that the German Economics Ministry would try to assist the Soviets in selling its natural gas in Germany within the conditions the Soviets had envisioned. The German ambassador also suggested an industrial-technological exchange between the two countries to provide additional incentives for the Soviet Union to continue the dialogue.<sup>174</sup> Further German incentives proved to be more concrete. In connection with Undersecretary von Dohnanyi's trip to Moscow, the Economics Ministry raised, per Soviet request and without any reciprocal gesture, the import quota on heating oil, which resulted in a virtual doubling of heating oil imports from the Soviet Union in an already saturated market.<sup>175</sup>

But not everyone in the German government was happy with the manner in which this trade deal was being negotiated. Deputy Undersecretary of trade policy in the German Foreign Ministry, Dr. Herbst, observed that in the negotiations with the Russians on the proposed pipeline deal, West Germany did not obtain adequate Soviet concessions in return. The reason, it seemed to Herbst, was the dependence of large German firms such as Daimler Benz, Siemens, and Mannesmann/Thyssen on the proposed agreement

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<sup>173</sup> Arkady N. Shevchenko, *Breaking With Moscow* (New York: Ballantine Books, 1985), 224. Shevchenko recalls KGB information on the German negotiating positions to be "surprising in the quality and quantity."

<sup>174</sup> Memo, German Ambassador in Moscow Allardt to German Foreign Office, May 26, 1969, AAPD #176.

<sup>175</sup> Memo, Economics Ministry to Undersecretary von Dohnanyi, May 16, 1969, BA 102/100021, 2.

on Russian natural gas deliveries to West Germany.<sup>176</sup> This assumption, however, that German firms depended on the trade with the East was flawed. While Mannesmann stood to profit from the proposed natural gas pipeline deal, and in 1975 even built a new plant specifically for the steel pipe orders from these deals, they were at full employment and production capacity in 1968–1969, even without the Soviet orders.<sup>177</sup> As another case in point, the proposed Daimler Benz project, the construction of a truck manufacturing plant on the Kama river, held no commercial interest for the German side. In June 1970 a Daimler assessment concluded that the entire project “is commercially without interest. It would be a matter of prestige and not a penetration of the Soviet market by the German automobile industry.”<sup>178</sup> In addition, the Soviets had not firmly earmarked any of these projects to the German firms mentioned above. In fact, the “Daimler” truck manufacturing plant was first offered to Ford Motor Co., which turned it down over political concerns. In short, these economic benefits for the German economy were not nearly as tangible as the pro-*Osthandel* faction would have liked them to be. Yet this Soviet strategy of dangling industrial projects of unheard proportions before West European countries, sometimes without the means or understanding of how to complete them, worked well in pressuring West European governments and companies.<sup>179</sup>

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<sup>176</sup> Memo, German Foreign Office, Herbst, June 27, 1969: AAPD, #213.

<sup>177</sup> Vorstandssitzung 12.8.68, Allgemeines und Marktlage, p1-2, Bd2, M12.045.15, Mannesmann Archives; Vorstandssitzung 12.5.1969. Marktlage, p1, Bd.2, M12.045.16. Original: “Bei MW ist eine gute Beschäftigung der Rohranlagen bis Oktober gesichert. Der Warmbetrieb in Witten wird die Anforderungen wahrscheinlich nicht ganz erfüllen können”; “Sämtliche Walzanlagen sind in der vorgegebenen Fahrweise bis September 1969 ausgelastet.”

<sup>178</sup> Memo, German Ambassador in Moscow, Allardt, to German Foreign Office, “Bau eines LKW Werkes in der UdSSR,” June 24, 1970, BA 102/100011, 3.

<sup>179</sup> For a good example of this, see the proposed oil refinery to be built by the Salzgitter consortium and the pressure that the German industry exerted on the Erhard government. Salzgitter Industriebau: Letter, Salzgitter Corp. to Economics Ministry, Leithe, “Deutsches Konsortium UdSSR Petrochemie,” August 23, 1965, BA 102/69034.

It certainly worked in this case. By June 1969, the Economics Ministry had in principle already condoned Russian natural gas deliveries as long as they were limited to “reasonable amounts” and that “entire industrial regions would not become dependent on Soviet deliveries.”<sup>180</sup> This removed the biggest potential leverage the Economics Ministry had had in gaining Soviet concessions from the deal. The Soviet position also improved through another fortunate circumstance: the proposed pipeline, with its promises of a cheap heating source, stood to benefit the state of Bavaria and thus gained the support of the already latently anti-American oriented CSU. With the CSU being part of the governing coalition, this assured that the gas pipeline negotiations would not become part of campaign rhetoric.<sup>181</sup>

#### Domestic and International Dissent to a new *Osthandel*

Despite the absence of serious public debate on the issue, parts of the German government bureaucracy remained concerned. Economics Ministry official Herbst pointed to a majority in-house opinion according to which the West German government should seek to use this deal for political leverage. Since the annual Soviet revenues from the natural gas deliveries would allow the Soviet Union to finance one-fifth of its total imports from West Germany, Herbst felt that the federal government could wrestle a long sought-after comprehensive trade agreement from the Soviets.<sup>182</sup> This trade agreement, which had last been discussed in October 1966, had failed because of the Soviet refusal to include West Berlin in the agreement. Herbst and the foreign trade section of the Foreign

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<sup>180</sup> Memo, German Foreign Office (Herbst), June 27, 1969: AAPD, #213.

<sup>181</sup> Ibid.

<sup>182</sup> Memo, German Foreign Office (Herbst) to BMWI (Döring), “Sowjetisches Erdgas,” July 3, 1969, BA 102/99987.

Ministry, therefore, argued for tougher negotiations with the Soviet delegation on the natural gas pipeline deal. Foreign Ministry Undersecretary Harkort concurred with Herbst on the need for Soviet concessions and further considered the 20% Soviet natural gas import quota proposed by the Economics Ministry to be surprisingly high.<sup>183</sup>

Apparently concerned over the criticism of the proposed deal, Brandt intervened personally with Economics Minister Schiller. He outlined the great significance of such a pipeline deal for commercial and political reasons and thus “wouldn’t have any concerns about a considerably large quantity of Soviet natural gas deliveries.” Further, “Our interest lies in the expansion of trade, which requires an increase of export capabilities by the Soviet Union.” Like Herbst, Brandt still sought to use this deal to get a trade agreement that would also include West Berlin and advised that the commercial aspects of this deal be settled speedily and in such a manner that they could be used as a basis for a trade agreement. Lastly, he proposed to form a working group between the Foreign and Economics Ministry to further coordinate steps.<sup>184</sup>

Schiller agreed with Brandt in general on the desirability of a trade agreement but did not show the same readiness to sacrifice commercial interests for political ones. With a vague reference to inter-ministerial coordination when the time would be right, Schiller blocked Brandt’s interference and referred him to his staff, should Brandt have questions in the meantime.<sup>185</sup> Here, it becomes more than evident that the discourse on trade with the Soviet Union was one of caution and reservation. Even SPD ministers, such as Schiller, did not share Brandt’s enthusiasm for Soviet trade deals and it is thus not surprising that Brandt, once he became chancellor, had to rely on Bahr and von Dohnanyi

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<sup>183</sup> Memo, German Foreign Office (Herbst), June 27, 1969: AAPD, #213, footnote #4 and #6.

<sup>184</sup> Letter, Foreign Minister Brandt to Economics Minister Schiller, July 10, 1969, B102/99987.

<sup>185</sup> Letter, Economics Minister Schiller to Foreign Minister Brandt, August 26, 1969, B102/99987.

to bring negotiations to fruition, something that a reluctant government bureaucracy was unable to do.

The importance of economic cooperation with the Soviet Union, if not the Soviet gas pipeline deal directly, not only led to a rift between SPD members but caused a rift within the Grand Coalition between the SPD and CDU. German chancellor Kiesinger did not place the same value on trade with Eastern Europe as Brandt. He assured the American Ambassador Kenneth Rush that he “held no illusions in regards to the Soviet stance on the German question. The Soviets are perhaps more interested in certain economic issues than in previous years, but this does not change their political attitudes.”<sup>186</sup> While he planned to continue a friendly dialogue, he did not have “high hopes.”<sup>187</sup> Later on he reassured Ambassador Rush that Germany’s security lay with the United States as this was

the most important aspect of German foreign policy. Second is the rebuilding of Western Europe and finally, if possible, the reduction of the antagonism between East and West. And even then he would not be willing to accept a change in the Russian position if that meant sacrificing national interests, i.e. self-determination.”<sup>188</sup>

This rift between the coalition and government bureaucracies was not one of simple preference in negotiation strategy. At its core lay the debate over the perception of the Soviet Union and its foreign policy ambitions. If the Soviet Union had, under the Adenauer and Erhard governments, once been the unquestioned villain, by 1969 the image of the Soviet Union as a dangerous enemy had begun, according certain factions, to shift to that of a potential partner that promised economic stability and a chance for a European peace order.

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<sup>186</sup> MemCon, German Chancellor Kiesinger with U.S. Ambassador Rush, July 24, 1969, AAPD, #241. Sappain even views Kiesinger’s reluctance to embrace trade with the East as fully as Brandt did as a threat to the improvement of Soviet-German relations. Sappain, 194.

<sup>187</sup> Ibid.

<sup>188</sup> Ibid.



For Brandt, political visions, not security concerns, were the driving element in German-Soviet relations, leading to a sometimes wishful interpretation of Soviet actions. Between July 13–21, 1969, the director of Thyssen A.G., Ernst Wolf Mommsen held high-level talks on trade issues in Moscow and concluded “that the Soviets were interested in improving the climate in economic respects and to intensify interchanges.”<sup>189</sup> Brandt’s assistant, Bahr, after talking to Mommsen, accordingly viewed the negotiations over Soviet gas deliveries as a “political test for the Soviet Union” and felt that this matter was raised as a political issue, and disregarded Mommsen’s economic concerns.<sup>190</sup> To Brandt, close economic ties in the field of energy could be a precursor to broader European cooperation. His vision of a “Marshall Plan for the East” was based on the belief that growing economic interdependence would create the basis for a peaceful order. Ultimately, he sought to replicate the success story of Western European integration in East-West relations under the auspices of the United Nations Economic Commission for Europe and the cooperation between the European Economic Community and the Soviet-led Council for Mutual Economic Assistance (CEMA).<sup>191</sup>

Despite Brandt’s optimism, Moscow’s negotiation style would prove to be less helpful than Brandt or Bahr had hoped. Arkady N. Shevchenko provides an insightful reflection on Soviet negotiation strategy that makes it readily apparent why most German businessmen considered their negotiation with Soviet representatives hard and tedious.

All Soviet negotiators are agents of limited authority who may not express opinions differing from the Politburo’s position. [...] A Soviet’s first instinct is to be suspicious of goodwill and to doubt his counterpart’s objectivity. Part of this intractable attitude can be blamed upon instructions. In order to make them tougher bargainers, Kremlin leaders usually do not include in their

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<sup>189</sup> Memo, Foreign Office Undersecretary Egon Bahr, August 1, 1969: AAPD #246, footnote #1.

<sup>190</sup> Memo, Foreign Office Undersecretary Egon Bahr, August 1, 1969: AAPD #246.

<sup>191</sup> See Brandt, *A Peace Policy for Europe*, 122.

representative's directives any fallback position, thus leaving them singing one stubborn note at the bargaining table until a compromise is worked out back in Moscow.<sup>192</sup>

Thus, with the Kiesinger administration torn between the need for Soviet goodwill and concessions, and Soviet negotiators not willing or able to make major concessions, it is not surprising that by September negotiations had not progressed further than a general understanding on the annual delivery of three billion cubic meters of natural gas for five to six years, starting in 1972. On September 10, 1969, Herbst reported that the German industry had little interest in expanding into the Soviet market due to "Soviet administrative hurdles."<sup>193</sup>

Most of these dealings occurred under the radar of public opinion. The German election campaign was focused on *Ostpolitik*, not *Osthandel*, as were the concerns of the Nixon administration. Early on, Nixon, too, sought to liberalize trade with the Communist bloc. Soon after taking office, he commissioned a study to expand trade globally and even had the issue revisited after the initial report did not sufficiently elaborate on East-West trade. He felt that the boycott policy of the 1950s was anachronistic because "Communist states were too important to ignore."<sup>194</sup> He also suggested Secretary Clifford M. Hardin should visit East European countries on his trip to Europe in order to explore economic ties.<sup>195</sup>

Nevertheless, the difference between Nixon and Brandt's *Osthandel* lay in the fundamental approach to, and value of, *Osthandel*. For Nixon and Kissinger, it was a political tool to continue the ideological struggle with an enemy country. The National Security Council, in May 1969, came to the conclusion that trade with Eastern Europe

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<sup>192</sup> Shevchenko, 264.

<sup>193</sup> Memo, Foreign Office, Undersecretary Egon Bahr, August 1, 1969: AAPD #246, footnote 7 and 8.

<sup>194</sup> Nixon, 343-344.

<sup>195</sup> Memo, C. Fred Bergsten (NSC) to President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger), April 14, 1969, FRUS (1969-1976), vol. III, #19.

amounted to only \$200 million annually. Furthermore, lifting trade restrictions would only insignificantly increase trade volume with the East, in part due to a lack of Russian currency reserves and partially since the Russian market was not as suited for American goods as it was for Western European ones (the U.S. only held a 5% share of trade with Eastern Europe).<sup>196</sup> The lack of profits, therefore, placed the issue of liberalizing trade restrictions in a political rather than economic sphere and Nixon's subsequent rejections of trade exemptions in the Coordination Committee (COCOM) must be attributed to his ideological mistrust of a Communist regime.

Never once in my career have I doubted that the Communists meant it when they say that their goal is to bring the world under Communist control. [...] I have always believed that we can and must communicate and, when possible, negotiate with Communist nations. They are too powerful to ignore. We must always remember that they will never act out of altruism, but only out of self-interest.<sup>197</sup>

Communist countries remained the enemy and economic trade was just another weapon of peaceful competition for political achievements. A summary by C. Fred Bergstein expressed Nixon's views unequivocally. Regarding trade policies with the Soviet Union, he wrote to Kissinger that "I fully recognize that he [Nixon] wishes to avoid giving the Soviets anything at this time."<sup>198</sup> The era of negotiation, therefore, was one of tit-for-tat in which trade concessions would be bartered for political concessions. The Germans were fully aware of this fact:

When Nixon talks about an era of negotiations he does not insinuate an era of agreement at all costs but a phase of balanced agreement on the basis of give and take. While he does not believe that the basic rivalry between the superpowers could be changed he assumes that the Soviet Union will be amicable to agreements out of self-interest, particularly in the area of nuclear arms. Nixon, however, has not gotten any proof in 1970 that the Soviet leadership views arrangements on the basis of give and take equally as desirable as he himself. In light of the absence of clear indicators

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<sup>196</sup> Paper Prepared by the National Security Council Staff, [n.d. but between April 16 and May 15], FRUS (1969–1976), vol. IV, #292.

<sup>197</sup> Nixon, 343-344.

<sup>198</sup> Memo, C. Fred Bergsten (NSC) to President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger), July 3, 1969, FRUS (1969–1976), vol. IV, #303.

of substantial Soviet readiness to reach a compromise, voices in the Senate and in the East Coast media became stronger, recommending a policy of 'as if' to the president.<sup>199</sup>

In this light, Brandt's decision to pursue the natural gas pipeline deal must be seen as a clear break with U.S. interests. The once extremely loyal ally had broken with its strict allegiance to U.S. leadership and pursued its own foreign policy. For those parts of the Nixon administration not categorically opposed to trade with the Soviet Union, the absence of firm economic data paired with the political difficulties of liberalizing trade elevated exports controls to "an instrument of negotiation." This approach to trade, which linked political conditions with trade concessions, fell in line with Kissinger's geopolitical linkage strategy and Nixon's election slogan of détente as "an era of negotiation."<sup>200</sup> Even for this faction, generally supportive of liberalizing trade with the East, the Brandt government in essence stole the American thunder.

The one reason why this has not been explored in the historiography is that the issue of whether COCOM was an effective tool and whether negative export controls serve the desired purpose is still heavily debated. Gary Bertsch and Michael Mastanduno see export controls as valuable tools for Western powers and COCOM as an effective institution. The relative decline in U.S. power in the late 1960s and early 1970s made it essential to cooperate in COCOM, and through its internal flexibility it remained an

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<sup>199</sup> Memo, German Ambassador in Washington (Pauls) to German Foreign Office, "Bemerkungen zur amerikanischen Außenpolitik," December 21, 1970, BA 102/111915. Original: "Wenn Nixon von einer Ära der Verhandlungen spricht, meint er damit nicht eine Ära der Einigungen um jeden Preis, sondern eine Phase des Ausgleichs auf der Basis des 'give and take.' Zwar nimmt er nicht an, daß sich an dem Konkurrenzverhältnis der beiden Supermächte im Grunde etwas ändern läßt, doch geht er davon aus, die UdSSR werde im eigenen Interesse zu Verständigungen bereit sein, insbesondere in Fragen der nuklearen Rüstung. Nixon hat jedoch 1970 keine Beweise dafür erhalten, daß die sowjetische Führung Verständigungen auf der Basis des 'give and take' als ebenso wünschenswert ansieht wie er selbst. Angesichts des Ausbleibens eindeutiger Indizien substantieller sowjetischer Kompromißbereitschaft wurden insbesondere im Senat und in den Massenmedien der Ostküste Stimmen laut, die dem Präsidenten eine Politik des „als ob“ empfehlen."

<sup>200</sup> Memo, Acting Secretary of State (Richardson) to President Nixon, May 14, 1969, FRUS (1969–1976), vol. IV, #295.

effective tool to delay Soviet technological development.<sup>201</sup> Gunnar Adler-Karlsson, on the other hand, has produced—by his own admission—a crude calculation from which he concludes that the Western embargo yielded only negligible results.<sup>202</sup> Alan Dobson, like Adler-Karlsson, sees Nixon and Kissinger as expanding US-Soviet trade, even in the early period of 1970–1972, and slashing export controls wherever possible. To him, the political element that retarded Soviet-American trade was domestic pressure, not the Nixon administration.<sup>203</sup> Dobson’s differing view may be informed by his failure to understand the primacy of political concessions in exchange for trade in Nixon and Kissinger’s approach to foreign policy. Trade with the Soviet Union only increased drastically once the Soviet Union had politically cooperated with regard to Vietnam and Berlin.

The political element of export controls is especially significant with respect to Vietnam, the one issue above all that permeated American foreign policy. The Nixon administration used trade incentives to make economic advances toward China at a time of Sino-Soviet tensions, which was intended to encourage the Russians to “show greater willingness to be helpful on some of the more vexing problems between us.”<sup>204</sup> In particular, Kissinger and Nixon were hoping that limiting exports to the Soviet Union and China “would put pressure on them to help in Vietnam and would signal that we are

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<sup>201</sup>Gary K. Bertsch, *East-West Strategic Trade, COCOM and the Atlantic Alliance* (Totowa, N.J.: Allenheld, Osmun [dist], 1983), 24, 42. Michael Mastanduno, “The Management of Alliance Export Control Policy: American Leadership and the Politics of COCOM,” in *Controlling East-West Trade and Technology Transfer: Power, Politics, and Policies*, Gary K. Bertsch, ed. (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1988), 243-247.

<sup>202</sup> Gunnar Adler-Karlsson, *Western Economic Warfare 1947–1967: A Case Study in Foreign Economic Policy* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1968), 45.

<sup>203</sup> Dobson, 182-183.

<sup>204</sup> Memo, Undersecretary of State (Richardson) to President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger), June 21, 1969, FRUS (1969–1976), vol. IV, #300.

prepared to deal with them after the war.”<sup>205</sup> The Nixon administration pursued a policy of linkage, in which political concessions by the Communist states were necessary to foster trade. Nixon decided that the U.S. “should be prepared to move generously to liberalize our trade policy toward the Soviet Union and the other Eastern European countries whenever there is sufficient improvement in our overall relations with them.”<sup>206</sup> Or, as Kissinger put it, “expanding trade without a political quid pro quo was a gift; there was little the Soviets could do for us economically.”<sup>207</sup> Brandt’s policy of economic liberalization in return for goodwill could not have been very pleasing to Nixon. In fact, European business deals with Eastern Europe were observed with a sense of helpless frustration in the U.S.

At the heart of the problem is the fact that in our East-West trade policy as it relates to peaceful trade we are going it alone. Today only American industry has such heavy bureaucratic governmental licensing requirements and controls for the export of many kinds of peaceful goods to Eastern Europe. If the governments of the European industrial nations of NATO followed a policy similar to ours, it would be one thing. [...] But European NATO and other free-world governments are actively supporting their business communities to expand exports to East Europe by assisting in long-term credits, subsidizing export, encouraging barter arrangements, etc. [...] Our policy of denial denies very little and simply forces the satellite nations to obtain comparable products from Britain, France, West Germany, Italy and other European nations, and Japan at the expense of American business and industry.<sup>208</sup>

Ultimately, though, Nixon’s focus quickly moved away from trade issues. In early March 1970, Nixon sent a memorandum to Kissinger, arguing that it was necessary to “farm out” issues of lower priority. “Trade policy is a case in point. This is something where it just isn’t going to make a lot of difference whether we move one way or another on the glass tariff. Oil import is also a case in point. While it has some political consequences it

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<sup>205</sup> Ibid. See also Editorial Note, FRUS (1969–1976), vol. IV, #313.

<sup>206</sup> National Security Decision Memorandum #15, May 28, 1969, FRUS (1969–1976), vol. IV, #299. Also Dobson, 200.

<sup>207</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 152. See also Dobson, 99.

<sup>208</sup> Letter, U.S. Embassy Vienna (MacArthur) to Deputy Undersecretary of State for Economic Affairs (Samuels), April 4, 1969, FRUS (1969–1976), vol. IV, #289.

is not something I should become deeply involved in."<sup>209</sup> It was Nixon and Kissinger's focus on politics rather than economics that led to a clear advantage for the Soviets in Germany. As Shevchenko explains in his memoirs, the Soviets stressed the importance of trade as a supplement to the political process.

Gromyko and others often remarked that although the Federal Republic belonged to the West, its geopolitical interests would gradually push it toward neutrality and eventually perhaps closer to the Soviet Union than to the United States. [...] Soviet policy was to encourage Bonn to think that only the U.S.S.R. – not the United States – could alleviate the terror of nuclear war. We intended to support the theme with a refrain that Moscow was Germany's natural and historic economic partner.<sup>210</sup>

This failure is even more striking when one considers Keith Nelson's argument that it was economic exhaustion that drove the Soviet Union to the conciliatory stance that made détente possible.<sup>211</sup> Mikhail Heller and Aleksandr Nekrich take the argument even further—they see in détente nothing but a breathing spell for the Soviet Union to recuperate economically by purchasing food stuffs at favorable prices from the West while overcoming the Western embargo on strategic materials at the same time.<sup>212</sup>

### Black or a Different Shade of Red: The German Election Campaign

For the Nixon administration, Germany's 1969 election campaign brought about some interesting possibilities as Brandt's policies of reconciliation with the East stood to benefit U.S. foreign policy interests. By the late 1960s, both superpowers hoped to resolve tensions in Europe in order to focus on more pressing matters in the Asian theater: the Soviet Union had to deal with an increasingly hostile China while the United

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<sup>209</sup> Memo, President Nixon to President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger), March 2, 1970, folder: "HAK/RN Memos 69–70," Box 341, NSCF, Subject Files, NPMS, NA.

<sup>210</sup> Shevchenko, 226.

<sup>211</sup> Keith Nelson, *The Making of Détente: Soviet-American Relations in the Shadow of Vietnam* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1995).

<sup>212</sup> Mikhail Heller and Aleksandr Nekrich, *Utopia in Power: The History of the Soviet Union from 1917 to Present* (New York: Summit Books, 1982), 647.

States became more and more hampered by the Vietnam War. Resolution of the deadlock over Germany was the key element for an understanding and the possibility of reducing troop levels and military expenditures in Europe. Kiesinger's stubborn refusal to revise Germany's foreign policy and participate in American détente policies became a major issue of contention between the FRG and its Western allies in several respects.

The first problem arose from Germany's continued application of the Hallstein Doctrine, which claimed that the FRG was the sole representative of the German people and made it policy not to recognize the GDR until a peace treaty between the World War II allies had been negotiated successfully and the East Germans were able to freely express their political will. Furthermore, no government that recognized the illegitimate government of the GDR could also entertain diplomatic relations with the FRG. While it proved a rather divisive doctrine at times, it nevertheless succeeded in keeping the German question in the forefront of international diplomacy and forced third world countries to side overwhelmingly with the economically stronger West Germany, even as they would play the two Germanies against each other for economic aid.<sup>213</sup> Yet the Hallstein Doctrine effectively blocked the way for diplomatic relations with East European countries, which naturally had recognized the Communist GDR over the democratic FRG. This confrontational policy was felt to be anachronistic by Nixon, as Communist states were too important to ignore.<sup>214</sup> This issue became a hot topic in the election campaign when Cambodia recognized East German statehood on May 8, 1969. The SPD faction of the government under Brandt's leadership was opposed to breaking relations with Cambodia over this recognition, and it was Chancellor Kiesinger who cast

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<sup>213</sup> William Glenn Gray, *Germany's Cold War: The Global Campaign to Isolate East Germany, 1949–1969* (Raleigh, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2003).

<sup>214</sup> Nixon, 343-344.



the decisive vote in a party-line split on the issue. Even though Brandt remained in the grand coalition for the time being, it became clear that the internationally divisive issue of the Hallstein Doctrine would be discarded if Brandt were to become chancellor.<sup>215</sup>

The second hurdle that West Germany presented to American détente was the issue of nuclear proliferation. NPT was a key agreement in the relaxation of tensions between East and West. The United States was concerned about Chinese nuclear weapons tests in 1964 and initiated a push for a NPT.<sup>216</sup> The Soviet Union was gravely concerned about the possibility of the FRG obtaining nuclear weapons, either by acquiring them independently, or by means of allied nuclear sharing.<sup>217</sup> For Germans, though, nuclear strike capability was seen as the only way to assure the credibility of a nuclear counterstrike, should the Soviets single West Germany out for an attack. As German foreign minister Gerhard Schroeder noted, Soviet interest in a nuclear-free Germany and German interest in reunification needed to remain connected.<sup>218</sup> This stance isolated Germany from all Eastern bloc countries as well as most of its Western allies, since no one wanted to see Germany acquire nuclear weapons, even on a sharing basis.<sup>219</sup> Not even the United States was interested in allowing Germany to have nuclear weapons.<sup>220</sup> Brandt had pushed for a quick West German signature to the NPT and had only been curtailed by Kiesinger's insistence to postpone the decision until after the September 28 elections.<sup>221</sup>

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<sup>215</sup> "Bonn is Shutting Cambodia Embassy," *The New York Times*, June 5, 1969, 7.

<sup>216</sup> Schwartz, 68.

<sup>217</sup> Bahr was convinced that certain elements in the West German government pursued the acquisition of nuclear weapons and the Soviets had legitimate concerns in this regard. Bahr, 209.

<sup>218</sup> MemCon, German Foreign Minister Schröder, July 27, 1965, AAPD, 1965, #275.

<sup>219</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 98.

<sup>220</sup> Letter, President Johnson to Chairman Kosygin, January 1966, FRUS 1964–68, vol. XI, #114.

<sup>221</sup> "Brandt Said to Accept Delay," *The New York Times*, April 16, 1969, 3.

Lastly, the recognition of the Oder-Neisse line as the final border between Poland and Germany was deemed essential to relaxation of tensions between Germany and its East European neighbors. As long as the FRG would not recognize the Oder-Neisse line, fear of German revanchism remained strong. The powerful political lobby of refugee organizations, however, made it a difficult task to formally surrender territories that were already under Soviet control. While this was true in the case of the SPD, it was even more so for the CDU. With most refugee organizations sympathetic to the more conservative CDU, it would have been political suicide for a CDU politician to recognize the Oder-Neisse line as Germany's Eastern border in the 1960s. Insisting on these old positions not only hindered FRG diplomacy, jeopardizing the trust it had been able to rebuild in the international community, but it also upset U.S.-Soviet negotiations on détente. Brandt, in contrast, was clearly willing to accept the Oder-Neisse line. On May 19, 1969, Brandt indicated he was ready to talk with Poland over such an acceptance, despite Polish skepticism over the fruitfulness of such an endeavor while the conservative CDU was still in power.<sup>222</sup>

Furthermore, Brandt appeared to be more than Chancellor Kiesinger on issues of international monetary policy. The strength of the German mark had been a source of contention throughout the Kiesinger administration. On the European side, the French demanded tight monetary control, wishing to stem the flow of currency into West Germany. American interests, stemming from a financial overextension in Vietnam, demanded a revaluation of the mark so as to relieve the dollar. With fixed exchange rates as the cornerstone of the international monetary system of the time (known as the Breton-

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<sup>222</sup> David Binder, "Brandt Says West Germany is Ready to Discuss Border Issue With Poland," *The New York Times*, May 20, 1969, 14.

Woods system), any alteration of the exchange rate would be a political act, rather than an automatic economic mechanism. When the Breton-Woods system experienced two explosive runs on the mark in May and September 1969, German fears of inflation and a sense of frustration vis-à-vis the loosely handled monetary policy of the other Western countries brought the issue of international monetary policy to the forefront of the German election campaign. Brandt, again on the side of Atlantic interests, advocated a revaluation while Kiesinger refused to do so out of a need to cater to his constituency: farmers, who stood to lose export opportunities, and conservatives, who retained a fear of currency manipulation from the experiences of the Weimar Republic.<sup>223</sup>

In an odd twist of fate, then, the Nixon administration saw an opportunity in Brandt to pursue its foreign policy more effectively. There has been little trace of Nixon's interest in Germany during the hot phase of the German election campaign. Undoubtedly preoccupied with Vietnam, the German election campaign was of less significance. Beginning with the student protests at Harvard on April 9 over the leakage of the secret bombing raids in Cambodia at the beginning of May to the *New York Times*, and followed by the fiasco of Hamburger Hill in late May, to the publication in *Life* magazine on June 27, 1969 of images of recently killed American soldiers in Vietnam, a highly media-conscious Nixon must have remembered the old adage that all foreign politics is domestic politics.

The American public certainly agreed with the primacy of Vietnam over other issues. When asked in January 1969 about the most important problem the United States faced, Vietnam by far topped the list with 40%, the highest it would ever be, leaving

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<sup>223</sup> Ralph Blumenthal, "Paris Step Fuels Discord in Bonn," *The New York Times*, August 10, 1969, 2; Ralph Blumenthal, "A Vote for the Mark Is a Vote for Whom?" *The New York Times*, September 28, 1969, F1.

other international problems at an insignificant two percent. The largest anti-war demonstrations in U.S. history, during October and November 1969, certainly underscored that message to the president.

Another reason for the relative American silence on the German election might have been an American presumption that Kiesinger would win again. When Nixon asked Kiesinger about the election during their meeting on August 7, Kiesinger exuded confidence by saying that “most Social Democrats were resigned to losing and most Christian Democrats convinced of winning.”<sup>224</sup>

When the election results came in on the night of September 28 Kiesinger’s CDU had won, albeit with only a narrow majority in the Bundestag. Nixon’s eagerness to congratulate Kiesinger on his victory is probably indicative of the American hope for a continued conservative German government, despite the possible advantages Brandt had to offer.<sup>225</sup> Within the next couple weeks, however, Brandt managed to convince the German Liberals (FDP), to participate in a coalition with the SPD, giving them a razor-thin majority in the Bundestag and making him the new chancellor-elect of Germany.

The American response to Brandt’s sudden rise to power was divided. Nixon, maintaining a cold war warrior ideology, was opposed to Brandt in principle for being a Socialist and in particular for the general thrust of his Eastern policy. As Hillenbrand recalled, Nixon viewed Brandt as “ideologically suspect” and his attempts at selective

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<sup>224</sup> MemCon, President Nixon and Chancellor Kiesinger, August 7–8, 1969, folder: “Presidential/HAK Memcons,” Box 1023, NSCF, NPMS, NA.

<sup>225</sup> Martin J. Hillenbrand, *Fragments of Our Time: Memoirs of a Diplomat* (Athens, GA: The University of Georgia Press, 1998), 279.

détente as “downright treasonable.”<sup>226</sup> Kissinger, on the other hand, approached Brandt’s election with more pragmatism.

I cannot maintain that I came to this view [overcoming the outdated policies of Adenauer and adapting to the changing international situation] immediately. But once I recognized the inevitable, I sought to channel it in a constructive direction [...] We were determined to spare no effort to mute the latent incompatibility between Germany’s national aims and its Atlantic and European ties.<sup>227</sup>

Kissinger’s more pragmatic support of Brandt stemmed from two main reasons. One was the previously mentioned prospect of the removal of German obstacles to an American rapprochement with the Soviet Union: *Ostpolitik* would necessitate Germany’s signing of the NPT and the acceptance of the Oder-Neisse border. The other reason for lending support to Germany’s new foreign policy was Kissinger’s inherent suspicion of Soviet intentions.

The Federal Republic needed the support of its allies. Linkage was inherent. If *Ostpolitik* were to succeed, it had to be related to other issues involving the Alliance as a whole; only in this manner would the Soviet Union have incentives for compromise.<sup>228</sup>

The White House, therefore, had every reason—barring Nixon’s ideological concerns—to support Brandt in the same fashion it had supported Kiesinger. Kissinger viewed the FRG’s attempt at unification legitimate and unalterable. Any American attempt to block a policy leading to unification would force the FRG to abandon the Western alliance. *Ostpolitik* was therefore a “must.” This was, however, not very troubling to Kissinger since he assessed Brandt as severely limited in his “attempt to be much more flexible

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<sup>226</sup> Hillenbrand, 285.

<sup>227</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 100. Kissinger relates his position before October 1969.

<sup>228</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 410.

toward the East.”<sup>229</sup> In short, Kissinger concurred with the large segment of the American public who did not think much would come of *Ostpolitik*.

#### Initial *Ostpolitik*: Brandt’s Honeymoon Period

Since Kissinger underestimated the dangers Willy Brandt’s *Ostpolitik* posed to German-American relations, he was pleased that what he saw as Kiesinger’s outdated foreign policy had come to an end. This explains Kissinger’s willingness to agree to see Germany as “a partner, not a client” when notified by Egon Bahr, as Brandt’s emissary, that under SPD leadership Germany would pursue a more independent policy toward Eastern Europe.<sup>230</sup> While the language Bahr employed was rather direct for the previously so submissive FRG, Kissinger seemed to have appreciated Germany’s more independent approach toward alliance politics. He is said to have responded “Thank God” once Bahr elaborated on the fact that Germany would not seek constant reassurances of friendship with the United States.<sup>231</sup> Kissinger even remembered from the meeting that “to him [Bahr], America was a weight to be added to West Germany’s scale in the right way at the right time, but his priority was to restore relations between the two Germanies above all.”<sup>232</sup> Clearly, Kissinger’s assessment of Bahr in his memoirs is less flattering than that of Brandt.

Though Bahr was a man of the left, I considered him above all a German nationalist who wanted to exploit Germany’s central position to bargain with both sides. He was of the type that had

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<sup>229</sup> Memo, President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon, September 29, 1969, folder: “Germany Vol III. July 1969 – 11–69,” Box 682, NSCF, Country Files - Europe, NPMS, NA.

<sup>230</sup> Memo, President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon, “Visit by Willy Brandt's Emissary, Bahr,” October 20, 1969, folder: “Germany Vol III. July 1969 – 11–69,” Box 682, NSCF, Country Files - Europe, NPMS, NA. See also Brandt, *Erinnerungen*, 171.

<sup>231</sup> Bahr, 272.

<sup>232</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 411.

always believed that Germany could realize its national destiny only by friendship with the East, or at least avoiding its enmity. Bahr was obviously not as unquestioningly dedicated to Western unity as the people we had known in the previous government.<sup>233</sup>

Regardless of the harsh tone and the exploitative policy he attributed to Bahr, Kissinger promised Bahr to deal with Germany as “a partner, not a client” and the two statesmen agreed on establishing a backchannel that bypassed the state department in order to facilitate a closer cooperation between the two countries.<sup>234</sup> This pleased Kissinger for two reasons. First, it enhanced his position within the Nixon administration and second, it allowed him to conduct foreign diplomacy the way he liked it: through unofficial backchannel dialogue. For Kissinger, the establishment of backchannels, which had been initiated with numerous other countries, allowed him to bypass the State Department and consolidate the decision-making of the United States’ foreign policies in the White House, i.e. under President Nixon and himself. Nixon clearly approved of this policy and had initiated backchannels for Kissinger with other governments, such as France and the Soviet Union. Backchannels also reflected the way in which Kissinger thought foreign policy should be conducted: as agreements between gentlemen, away from the scrutiny of the public eye.

On the official level, Brandt’s inaugural address to the German parliament on October 28, 1969 was even more promising. He elaborated on all the policies that the United States could have wished for from a German rapprochement with the East but still placed the FRG squarely in the Western camp.

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<sup>233</sup> Ibid. Bahr was indeed concerned about U.S. troop reductions since it could jeopardize the “Western bargaining leverage with the Russians.” Memo, President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon, “Visit by Willy Brandt's Emissary, Bahr,” October 20, 1969, folder: “Germany Vol III. July 1969 – 11–69,” Box 682, NSCF, Country Files - Europe, NPMS, NA, 1-3. See also Kurt Birrenbach, *Meine Sondermissionen: Ruckblick auf zwei Jahrzehnte bundesdeutscher Außenpolitik* (Dusseldorf: Econ Verlag, 1984), 328.

<sup>234</sup> Memo, President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon, “Visit by Willy Brandt's Emissary, Bahr,” October 20, 1969, folder: “Germany Vol III. July 1969 – 11–69,” Box 682, NSCF, Country Files - Europe, NPMS, NA, 4.

The North Atlantic alliance, which has proven its worth in the twenty years of its existence, continues to guarantee our safety in the future. Its firm cohesion is the basis for the common effort to reach a détente in Europe.<sup>235</sup>

He emphasized that “the German people need peace in the full sense of the word, also with the peoples of the Soviet Union and all the peoples of Eastern Europe,” and went on to commit his presidency to formal negotiations with the Soviet Union, Poland, and the approval of the Non-Proliferation Treaty.<sup>236</sup> Brandt further abandoned the Hallstein Doctrine altogether and accepted the GDR as a political entity with which one could negotiate.<sup>237</sup>

One harbinger of the coming tensions between the U.S. and Germany was also included in Brandt’s speech. He criticized Nixon where it hurt most: Vietnam. As Kissinger’s advisor, Helmut Sonnenfeld, summarized, Brandt’s public view of the U.S. role in Vietnam was extremely critical.

In contrast to recent statements of support for the President from British and Dutch leaders, Brandt, in his Government declaration, deals with Vietnam as follows: ‘We unite with all states, and not least with the tortured human beings involved, in the wish that the war in Vietnam will finally be ended by a political solution.’<sup>238</sup>

He cited Brandt’s key passage on their relationship with the United States as a possible reason for Brandt’s outspokenness on Vietnam. Brandt self-confidently assumed a more independent role for West Germany within the transatlantic partnership.

Our common interests require neither additional assurances nor recurrent declarations. They are capable of supporting a more independent policy and a more active partnership on the part of Germany.

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<sup>235</sup> Willy Brandt’s inaugural speech, October 28, 1969, Auswärtiges Amt (publ). *Außenpolitik der Bundesrepublik Deutschland: Dokumente von 1949–1994* (Köln: Verlag Wissenschaft und Politik, 1995), 322-329.

<sup>236</sup> Ibid.

<sup>237</sup> Ibid.

<sup>238</sup> Memo, Helmut Sonnenfeld to Kissinger, October 29, 1969, folder: “Germany Vol III. July 1969 – 11–69,” Box 682, NSCF, Country Files - Europe, NPMS, NA. On Brandt’s misgivings about Vietnam, see Brandt, *Erinnerungen*, 176.



In other words, the Brandt administration realized that it did not need to defer to American interests because the United States was so committed to Europe that it could not afford to withdraw, barring a direct political affront to the United States. Henry Kissinger added a handwritten comment on the memo, noting that “we will come to regret German ‘flexibility’.”<sup>239</sup>

Despite this small blemish, on a political level, the White House had good reason to be pleased with Brandt and support his policies. The Non-Proliferation Treaty was signed on November 18, 1969 and German talks with the Soviet Union and Poland began in December 1969 and February 1970, respectively. Accepting Bahr’s anti-American intentions must therefore have been a small price to pay, especially since Kissinger considered Brandt solidly in the Western camp.<sup>240</sup> American public opinion, while cautious, was also convinced of Brandt’s loyalty to the West. *New York Times* correspondent Roger Berthoud outlined Brandt’s *Ostpolitik* in detail and concluded that “as former mayor of Berlin Herr Brandt is fully aware of the value of solidarity and has none of the illusions about communism which his political opponents love to attribute to him.”<sup>241</sup>

In his memoirs Kissinger remembered the initial White House approach to Brandt’s *Ostpolitik* as very supportive. Driven by the realization that without the support of her allies the FRG had a very weak bargaining position vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, the White House stood ready to support Brandt’s initiatives toward the East without

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<sup>239</sup> Ibid.

<sup>240</sup> Memo, President's Assistant for National Security Affairs (Kissinger) to President Nixon, “Brandt’s Eastern Policy,” February 16, 1970, folder: “Europe-General Thru May 70,” Box 667, NSCF, Country Files - Europe, NPMS, NA, 3.

<sup>241</sup> Roger Berthoud, “Herr Brandt’s new approach to power: Bonn will stay a loyal ally but it may be less accommodating,” *The New York Times*, October 20, 1969, A2.

reservation.<sup>242</sup> Whether this support of *Ostpolitik* extended to Nixon is not clear, but it is unlikely. Kissinger recalls that in January 1970, roughly three months after Brandt came to power, Nixon's "suspicion of Brandt had not abated."<sup>243</sup> Nixon also was concerned that selective détente would act as a Soviet means of dividing the West. In a statement at the NATO ministerial conference in April 1969 he warned against Soviet tactics of isolating individual NATO partners. "Since we approach a time of negotiations, it is important that we do not agree to a "selective" form of rapprochement that Moscow determined."<sup>244</sup>

Nixon's relative quietness on Brandt's *Ostpolitik* in the winter of 1969 must be viewed in light of Nixon's other priorities, specifically Vietnam. His failure to stall the American anti-war movement until an "honorable" withdrawal from Vietnam could be achieved, in conjunction with the North Vietnamese refusal to give way in diplomatic negotiations, left Nixon with a conflict that had an impact on both the American economy and his popularity.<sup>245</sup> His announcement of troop withdrawals from Vietnam in September 1969 and the subsequent talks in Paris with the North Vietnamese held a much greater political risk for Nixon than did Brandt's *Ostpolitik*. In addition, negotiations with the Soviet Union, the Strategic Arms Limitation Talks (SALT), began in Helsinki in November, which also stood to impact the United States more directly than Germany's foreign policy. Once Germany had taken all the steps the Nixon administration

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<sup>242</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 410-411. It must be doubted whether this statement is entirely accurate, since Kissinger wrote these memoirs before 1979, hence at a time when *Ostpolitik* seemingly had been the way to solving the East-West conflict. However, if one considers Kissinger's belief that Brandt had only limited room to maneuver, and therefore little opportunity to do harm, *Ostpolitik* must, indeed, have been a welcome change.

<sup>243</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 416.

<sup>244</sup> Brandt, *Erinnerungen*, 181.

<sup>245</sup> George C. Herring, *America's Longest War: The United States and Vietnam, 1950-1975* (New York: Alfred A Knopf, 1979), 225-232.

considered crucial in “adjusting” German foreign policy to the new era of détente, Brandt and his *Ostpolitik* held less interest for President Nixon. Through the removal of the “German problem,” the United States was now able to consolidate her position in Europe, leaving her strengthened to deal with Vietnam and the Soviet Union. Americans viewed Brandt and his *Ostpolitik* with the grandfatherly benevolence of an impulsive child who, when confronted with the realities of life, would soon come to understand the limits of his idealism. With regards to German-American relations, Brandt was in his “honeymoon” period—for the first hundred days, he stayed within the acceptable political framework that Kissinger had predicted: a limited rapprochement with the East without upsetting the status quo.

Yet Kissinger and Nixon’s preoccupation with political issues blinded them to economic and social developments that stood to profoundly affect the German international position. Unlike the Nixon administration, the Soviets highly valued economics. It is unlikely that they were simply reinvigorating Lenin’s economic doctrines and sought to buy the proverbial rope on which to hang the Western capitalists, as Shevchenko claims. But they clearly did see an opportunity to gain influence in West Germany and improve their hard-currency position. Soviet premier Kosygin sent his son-in-law, Professor Belonov, on November 20, 1969 to reiterate strong Soviet interest in forming a commission on industrial-technological cooperation. This time the Economics Ministry’s assessment of Soviet intentions and the Belonov visit was entirely positive.

There are many indications that the Soviet Union is ending its policy aimed at conducting trade agreements with other Western industrialized nations while isolating the Federal Republic. It appears that they will now also suggest to the [German] Federal Government a closer cooperation in economic matters and its institutionalization on a governmental level.<sup>246</sup>

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<sup>246</sup> Memo, “Deutsch-sowjetische Arbeitsgruppe für wirtschaftliche und industriell–technologische Kooperation,” November 20, 1969, BA 102/99989. Original: “Viele Anzeichen sprechen dafür, daß die Sowjetunion ihre bisherige Politik, die darauf gerichtet war, mit anderen westlichen Industrieländern

With all the stops pulled out, the chancellor's office, under Bahr's auspices, was now able to move the talks along at such a pace that in January 1970 the long-negotiated pipeline deal could be finalized. The conservative faction within the German government could do little but voice its concerns that Germany had not managed to "obtain a basic set of rules, regulating trade deals between Western countries and the Soviet Union" in its negotiations over the pipeline deal.<sup>247</sup> Deputy Undersecretary Herbst, representing this view, pointed to the unprecedented conditions in which West German banks had extended loan guarantees to the Soviet Union that exceeded the customary five years limit by eight to ten years. The West German government also secured the loan with a Hermes credit of unusually high proportions (50%). Even the repayment procedures proved to be extraordinary: the Soviet Union provided only 1/11 of the value of the trade deal as down payment and did not have to start repaying the loan until roughly three years after delivery and then at an interest rate that was 1.5% below the customary rate. Additionally, installments would increase significantly toward the end of the loan, providing further financial flexibility for the Soviet Union.<sup>248</sup> In short, the Brandt administration had bent over backward to make the deal as lucrative as possible for the Soviet Union and quietly made up the difference between the customary market rate of 6.5% and the 5% the Soviet Union received.<sup>249</sup>

Undersecretary Harkort voiced an even stronger condemnation of the deal.

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Kooperationsabkommen abzuschließen und die Bundesrepublik zu isolieren, aufgeben und nun auch der Bundesregierung eine engere Zusammenarbeit auf wirtschaftlichem Gebiet und ihre Institutionalisierung auf Regierungsebene vorschlagen wird.“

<sup>247</sup> Memo, German Foreign Office (Reute), January 6, 1970, AAPD, #2.

<sup>248</sup> Memo, German Foreign Office (Herbst), January 26, 1970: AAPD, #23.

<sup>249</sup> Randall Newnham, *Deutsche Mark Diplomacy: Positive Economic Sanctions in German-Russian Relations* (University Park, PA: Pennsylvania State University Press, 2002), 159.

- 1) It can be that special conditions become necessary for trade deals with the East if they exceed common standards. But in that case they should be chosen due to their unusual size, not because they are deals with the East—unusual deals with the West should then receive the same treatment.
- 2) One and a half decades have we fought against a race to undercut credit rates and conditions in the trade with the East, among others. If new conditions have now become necessary, one should try to coordinate them with the other large export countries.<sup>250</sup>

According to Harkort, this deal also demonstrated a clear preference for business deals with the East over those with the West. This, of course, was true in the sense that German deals with other West European or American companies were not subsidized with such outstanding credit conditions. On a more permanent level, though, Harkort's criticism extended to the attitude of the German government in general. Government intervention by the chancellor's office or the Economics Ministry often brought a stalled business deal to completion, where no such activities are apparent with respect to American companies. Quite the contrary, German officials many times expressed strong concern about American businesses investing too heavily in the FRG. Already in 1966 CSU leader Franz Josef Strauß had pushed for a German opening to the Soviet Union as a means to balance the American purchase of the German DEA petroleum company.<sup>251</sup> Brandt's own blunt refusal to consider U.S. objections to the preferential trade system set up by the European Economic Community also indicates his unwillingness to foster US economic interests.<sup>252</sup>

Lack of intergovernmental and international consultation on a deal of such political consequence was the final point of criticism advanced by Herbst and Harkort. No specific reference to the U.S. is made here, which alone is significant in that even the

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<sup>250</sup> Memo, German Foreign Office (Herbst), January 26, 1970: AAPD, #23, footnote 5. For the unusual conditions, see also Newnham, 158.

<sup>251</sup> Letter, Economics Ministry to Director of Bundeskanzleramt, "Amerikanische Investitionen in Europa," August 8, 1966, BA 102/100003.

<sup>252</sup> MemCon, "Über ein Gespräch des Bundeskanzlers mit dem amerikanischen Finanzminister Schultz am 15. März 1973 im Bundeskanzleramt," March 16, 1973, BA 102/111917, 1-2.

faction of the German government that was critical of *Osthandel* did not feel a special obligation to the Western superpower. This probably can be traced back to the previously mentioned visit by Bahr to Kissinger in which he outlined a new relationship built on information, not consultation, among equal partners.

Diplomatically, 1970 brought to light some miscalculations on the part of the Nixon administration, if not Nixon himself. Still holding a strong interest in the transatlantic alliance, Nixon had already suggested to Kissinger an informal meeting with “some major European ambassadors” to restore U.S. moral authority and leadership within the alliance.<sup>253</sup> Kissinger rejected Nixon’s concern and assured him that his European policy was “on the right track.” Nixon, however, was not as convinced and suggested the possibility of another visit to Europe.<sup>254</sup> On January 19, 1970, Nixon reiterated his desire to retake the initiative in alliance politics rather than “stand by and let Italy, France and Germany go off in all directions” and NSC member Alexander Haig noted that the president had raised similar concerns several times already.<sup>255</sup> Nixon’s somewhat disillusioned view of West European foreign policy initiatives must have been informed, at least in part, by the unsuccessful European intervention in Middle East diplomacy.<sup>256</sup> Yet Nixon’s vision of reasserting strong transatlantic leadership was falling on deaf ears within his own administration. By late January, the National Security

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<sup>253</sup> Memo, Brown to Kissinger, December 17, 1969, folder: “Europe-General Thru May 70,” Box 667, NSCF, Country Files - Europe, NPMS, NA.

<sup>254</sup> Memo, Kissinger to Nixon, December 29 1969, folder: “Europe-General Thru May 70,” Box 667, NSCF, Country Files - Europe, NPMS, NA.

<sup>255</sup> Memo, Brown to Kissinger, February 10, 1970, folder: “Europe-General Thru May 70,” Box 667, NSCF, Country Files - Europe, NPMS, NA; Memo, Haig to Sonnenfeld, February 12, 1970, folder: “Europe-General Thru May 70,” Box 667, NSCF, Country Files - Europe, NPMS, NA.

<sup>256</sup> Assistant Secretary of State Joseph Sisco at the panel discussion, “Re-evaluating the Nixon/Ford/Kissinger Era: Transatlantic Relations & US Foreign Policy in the 1970s and Beyond,” June 18, 2003 at the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

Council had not even managed to conduct a systematic review of U.S. policy vis-à-vis its European allies, despite Nixon's prodding "for some months."<sup>257</sup>

Essentially, the discrepancy between Nixon's wishes and their implementation by the National Security Council stemmed from a difference in opinion between Nixon and Kissinger. Kissinger did not advance a tough ideological line in the NSC but embraced the flexibility offered by Brandt's *Ostpolitik*. The National Security Council staff also took a lax stand on European issues, arguing that "there may be no particular urgency to a reexamination of our European policy, nor any clear ordering of issues that must be decided" as the United States faced "no imminent crisis" in Europe.<sup>258</sup>

This approach, however, left the Nixon administration somewhat dumbfounded when Brandt scored sweeping diplomatic successes within his first 100 days in office. In the first move that exceeded Kissinger's expectations on German diplomatic maneuverability, the FRG intensified diplomatic contacts with the Soviet Union, conducting high-level talks between Bahr and Soviet foreign minister Gromyko from January 30 through February 18, 1970. Despite this flurry of activity, Kissinger stood behind Brandt's integrity. In a memo to Nixon he wrote:

He [Brandt] rejects the idea that Germany should be free-floating between East and West and he remains strongly committed to NATO and West European integration. Indeed he believes his Eastern policy can be successful only if Germany is firmly anchored in the West. He has in effect renounced formal reunification as the aim of German policy but hopes over the long run to achieve special ties between the two German states which will reflect the fact that they have a common national heritage.<sup>259</sup>

He followed this up with a concluding assessment that Brandt, and the other two leaders within the SPD, Herbert Wehner, and Helmut Schmidt," are "conducting a responsible

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<sup>257</sup> Record of NSC Review Group Meeting, January 23, 1970, NSC Institutional Files, H-111, SRG Minutes 1970, NPMS, NA.

<sup>258</sup> Memo, Sonnenfeld to Kissinger, January 14, 1970, folder: "Europe-General Thru May 70," Box 667, NSCF, Country Files - Europe, NPMS, NA.

<sup>259</sup> Memo, Kissinger to President Nixon, February 16, 1970, folder: "Germany Vol IV. 12-69 - 9 Apr 70," Box 683, NSCF, Country Files - Europe, NPMS, NA.

policy of reconciliation and normalization with the East.”<sup>260</sup> Kissinger’s concern was therefore not directed toward Brandt or his *Ostpolitik* but toward the Soviet’s ability to use this new approach to its advantage.<sup>261</sup> Unlike Nixon, he saw no necessary incompatibility between Western integration on the one hand, and some degree of normalization with the East, on the other, but warned of the possibility of long-term leverage for the Soviets.

The Soviets, having achieved their first set of objectives may then confront the FRG with the proposition that a real and lasting improvement in the FRG’s relations with the GDR and other Eastern countries can only be achieved if Bonn loosens its Western ties. Having already invested heavily in their Eastern policy, the Germans may at this point see themselves as facing agonizing choices. It should be remembered that in the 1950s, many Germans [...] enthralled by the vision of Germany as a ‘bridge’ between East and West, argued against Bonn’s incorporation in Western institutions.<sup>262</sup>

He feared that the Soviets could use *Ostpolitik* to pursue selective détente, which would create more demands and concessions from Brandt.<sup>263</sup>

Eastern policy is acquiring its own momentum and will lead Brandt into dangerous concessions. [...] Having staked much prestige during the electoral campaign and, since, on progress with his Eastern policy, Brandt is now under some compulsion to demonstrate that he can deliver.<sup>264</sup>

Brandt must have, indeed, felt such pressure as he tried both economic and political avenues to reach the Soviets. While it is not clear if the Soviets truly felt more confident in the new West German government through its economic gestures or simply saw an opportunity to consolidate their hold on Eastern Europe politically, *Ostpolitik* soon showed results.

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<sup>260</sup> Ibid.

<sup>261</sup> Kurt Birrenbach, 326-327.

<sup>262</sup> Memo, Kissinger to President Nixon, February 16, 1970, folder: “Germany Vol IV. 12-69 – 9 Apr 70,” Box 683, NSCF, Country Files - Europe, NPMS, NA.

<sup>263</sup> This stands in sharp contrast to Birrenbach’s assessment of Kissinger. Birrenbach, 327. See also Clay Clemens, “Amerikanische Entspannungs- und deutsche *Ostpolitik*: 1969-1975,” *Die USA und die Deutsche Frage: 1945-1990*. Friedrich, Wolfgang-Uwe, ed. (Frankfurt: Campus Verlag, 1991): 195.

<sup>264</sup> Memo, Kissinger to President Nixon, February 16, 1970, folder: “Germany Vol IV. 12-69 – 9 Apr 70,” Box 683, NSCF, Country Files - Europe, NPMS, NA.



## The Inter-German Summit Meeting: The Rude Awakening

Thanks to Brandt's insistence, a meeting between the heads of the two German states, Willy Brandt and Willy Stoph, occurred on March 19, 1970. Brandt had responded to one of Walter Ulbricht's propaganda tools, a proposal for a summit meeting to ratify a treaty on basic relations between East and West Germany. One day before Stoph invited Brandt to the GDR, the Soviet Union had also expressed interest in talks with the three former allies to commence in only eight days time.<sup>265</sup> For Kissinger, the idea of new "partnership" between Germany and the U.S. turned sour over those proposals. Both Bahr and Brandt, rejected American advice on when and how to negotiate with the East.

Kissinger had viewed the shorttime frame as impossible and thereby clashed with an eager Brandt, who wanted to see this through without giving the East Germans an out. As mentioned previously, Kissinger had had concerns about *Ostpolitik* all along because he felt that it might revive the "vision of Germany as a bridge between East and West" as well as "generating suspicions among Germany's Western associates as to its reliability as a partner."<sup>266</sup> Brandt's willingness to initiate talks with East Germany, against Kissinger's advice, demonstrated a level of inter-German independence that was clearly uncomfortable to the Nixon administration.<sup>267</sup> More importantly, the American's loss of control over the West German-East German dialogue eliminated intervention against a

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<sup>265</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 532-537.

<sup>266</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 530.

<sup>267</sup> How interested Kissinger was in retaining control of the inter-German dialogue can be seen in his cheerful comment on having "harnessed the beast of détente" by making the treaties with the East dependent on U.S. participation. See Kissinger, *White House Years*, 534.

pan-German nationalism. This might have threatened the division of Germany, which was seen as crucial to the status quo of the Cold War.<sup>268</sup>

In a memorandum to Nixon on March 10, 1970, the very day the discussion over the eight day time-limit would arise between Kissinger and Brandt, both Nixon and Kissinger agreed that there was little chance of success for West Germany's negotiation. Nixon summed this up the following way: "It looks like Brandt is over his head. He has very little to offer and they have a great deal." More importantly, though, he already saw an opportunity in these negotiations for the fall of Brandt's government. Next to Kissinger's concern that there were "serious misgivings" over Brandt's policies—Brandt might feel compelled to give away more than would be prudent in order to succeed and keep his coalition with the Liberals in place—Nixon remarked on the memo that "if Brandt continues on this soft headed line- this would be in our interest."<sup>269</sup>

Yet it was Kissinger's other fear—of a reviving German nationalism—that ultimately brought Kissinger to side with Nixon on opposing *Ostpolitik*. Despite heavy security precautions by the feared East German secret police, the Stasi, East German citizens in Erfurt broke through the road blocks to cheer on Willy Brandt for his attempts to establish inter-German dialogue. This unusually emotional response by the German people sent a warning signal to all involved parties, but especially to a German-born Jew, that German nationalism was alive and well. Little was achieved on the diplomatic level during the summit, but the people's reaction had shown how destabilizing inter-German rapprochement could be. An alliance between the two Germanies could create a situation

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<sup>268</sup> Interview with Egon Bahr, November 13, 1997, quoted in Sarotte, M.E. "A Small Town in (East) Germany: The Erfurt Meeting of 1970 and the Dynamics of Cold War Détente" *Diplomatic History*, 25 (1), 2001, 103.

<sup>269</sup> Memo, Kissinger to President Nixon, "*Ostpolitik*," March 10, 1970, folder: "Germany Vol IV. 12-69 - 9 Apr 70," Box 683, NSCF, Country Files - Europe, NPMS, NA.

in which Germany would maneuver between the East and the West in the tradition of Bismarck.<sup>270</sup> Kissinger's emerging reluctance toward *Ostpolitik* can be seen by his "Baloney" remark beside the Sonnenfeld's statement describing *Ostpolitik* as advantageous for the United States.

German *Ostpolitik* has advanced Western unity by enabling all Western countries to approach the East more flexibly, reducing fears of an eventual united Germany and permitting and stimulating the FRG to conduct a more active Western policy.<sup>271</sup>

To Kissinger, the Erfurt meeting must have demonstrated that the very opposite was becoming more and more likely. Nixon, however, viewed the Erfurt summit as a problem for the East. His acceptance of Cold War realities, i.e. the Soviet sphere of influence, was rather obvious in his remark on the popular reaction to Willy Brandt's visit in Erfurt. On his daily news summary, next to the report of "shouting and cheering East Germans" in Erfurt, he noted "K[issinger].- Good. This will scare [the] hell out of the Soviets. They have their problems and may now come to us to pull them out."<sup>272</sup>

The American media had also begun to voice objections to *Ostpolitik*. Even the leftist magazine, *The Nation*, highlighted the emotional atmosphere with which the East Germans welcomed Willy Brandt, and pointed to the role of the superpowers in "watching developments with interest – and a certain trepidation" as well as asking the rhetorical question whether the division of Germany was necessarily bad, considering "the exploits of German militarism over the past hundred years."<sup>273</sup> In response to the second meeting of the two German heads of state in Kassel on May 21, 1970, the *National Review*, a magazine more representative of Nixon's voters, had an even more

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<sup>270</sup> Birrenbach, 327.

<sup>271</sup> Memo, Sonnenfeld to Kissinger, "On Ray Cline Paper on *Ostpolitik*," April 9, 1970, folder: "Germany Vol IV. 12-69 – 9 Apr 70," Box 683, NSCF, Country Files - Europe, NPMS, NA.

<sup>272</sup> March 20, 1970 News Summary quoted in: Ambrose, *Nixon: The Triumph of a Politician*, 386.

<sup>273</sup> "The Two Germanys: A Beginning," *The Nation*, April 6, 1970, 17.

negative reaction to *Ostpolitik*. Under the heading “Willy Brandt turns East,” Brandt was depicted as a spineless politician who was being influenced by “radicals” such as Bahr, Bauer, and Wehner, who wished to appease the East and sought eventual neutrality. In the long run, this article predicted, *Ostpolitik* could cause the line between free world and totalitarian regimes to be eradicated and called for a check on “the destruction of the Western defenses in Europe and the Soviet penetration of the European West.”<sup>274</sup>

Nixon’s views of Brandt’s *Ostpolitik* were consistently negative. He saw the East-West conflict in a strongly ideological light. In his own memoirs, Nixon belabors his suspicions of the Soviet Union and the limits to which one can cooperate with them.

I felt that I had to put Europe at the top of the list. Only when we had secured our Western alliance would we be on a sufficiently solid footing to begin talks with the Communists. [...] Never once in my career have I doubted that the Communists meant it when they say that their goal is to bring the world under Communist Control. [...] I have always believed that we can and must communicate and, when possible, negotiate with Communist nations. They are too powerful to ignore. We must always remember that they will never act out of altruism, but only out of self-interest.<sup>275</sup>

What changed in the spring of 1970 was Kissinger’s stance on *Ostpolitik*. Kissinger had felt confident that through the backchannel negotiations between Bahr and himself that he could contain Willy Brandt and his *Ostpolitik*, even use him for U.S. foreign policy goals. For Brandt’s honeymoon period, his first hundred days in office, this approach had certainly worked well, and Kissinger was able to moderate Nixon’s ideological dislike for Brandt and his *Ostpolitik*. Yet, overconfident in his ability to control Germany’s foreign policy and underestimating Brandt’s political successes with the East, he had ignored Nixon’s repeated call for a more assertive American leadership within the alliance. The very fact that Brandt managed to arrange an inter-German summit meeting, much less the stunning display of latent German nationalism, forced Kissinger to reevaluate his

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<sup>274</sup> Norbert Muhlen, “Willy Brandt Turns East,” *National Review*, June 30, 1970, 676-677.

<sup>275</sup> Nixon, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon*, 343-344.

stance on *Ostpolitik*. But having no long-term strategy to deal with the display of German nationalism in Erfurt, or the threat of a selective West German détente with Eastern Europe, left the Nixon administration with no effective strategy to address the issue. While the end of March 1970 finally saw Nixon and Kissinger in agreement on the undesirability of *Ostpolitik*, the opportunity to implement a long-term strategy had passed. Willy Brandt had scheduled the traditional ritual of every German chancellor to visit the White House upon his inauguration, albeit six months late, for the beginning of April. It was then that Nixon would have to show his hand on *Ostpolitik*.

## CHAPTER III

### THE HEIGHT OF OSTPOLITIK

There was an element to *Ostpolitik* that meant capitulation to the Soviet Union.

James Schlesinger, 2003<sup>276</sup>

The inter-German summit in March 1973 in Erfurt demonstrated to the rest of the world that the German question was still unresolved. Worse yet, enthusiastic East Germans had overrun barriers set up by the secret police and rendered the carefully choreographed script of what should have been a stilted and ultimately meaningless meeting into a shining beacon for a vibrant German nationalism. Willy Brandt tried not to encourage the East Germans chanting “Willy, Willy”, but the world took notice. Gone was the grandfatherly benevolence the Nixon administration had displayed towards the illusionary policies of the first West German chancellor from the SPD. With Germany’s neighbors concerned about the renewed prospect of a reunited Germany, Nixon and Kissinger had to decide how to deal with the man who had emerged as the front-runner in détente politics with the Soviet Union, a position that the Americans thought they should lead.

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<sup>276</sup> James R. Schlesinger at the panel discussion “Re-evaluating the Nixon/Ford/Kissinger Era: Transatlantic Relations & US Foreign Policy in the 1970s and Beyond,” June 18, 2003 at the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

### The German-American Summit on *Ostpolitik* (April 1970)

The American response to West Germany's foreign policy maneuvers was still blinded by Kissinger's disregard for economic issues, and thus resulted in only a mild and low-key critique of Brandt's policies. There was an apparent link between *Osthandel* and *Ostpolitik* that Kissinger overlooked, despite the suggestion of such a connection in a report by the American Embassy in Bonn on the natural gas pipeline deal.

The SPD/FDP government continued the previous government's support of the negotiations, and some believe that the signing of the agreement (February 1, 1970) was arranged to lend atmospheric support to the Moscow visit of Egon Bahr, the State Secretary in the Chancellor's Office [...]

It is clear that the FRG hopes for an improvement in the political climate from improved economic relationships. It regards the gas deal as the first big step towards closer economic relations with the USSR.<sup>277</sup>

The embassy report also cited a CDU expert as opposing the deal on the grounds that "one should not entrust to one's 'foe' the responsibility for providing basic energy supplies" and that "it is foolish to finance Soviet economic development at the cost of the FRG."<sup>278</sup> Yet Kissinger only valued the political arena, and thus expressed little concern over the intensification of trade with the Soviet Union, and even pushed Nixon to be more lenient on COCOM export controls. Kissinger did not appreciate the emphasis the Soviets placed on trade as a sign of goodwill and as a means to complement any deficiencies in the Soviet Five-Year plan. Thus, for the Soviet Union, trade was a crucial component to any détente policy.<sup>279</sup>

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<sup>277</sup> Airgram, U.S. Embassy Bonn to State Department, "Significance of the Soviet-FRG Natural Gas Arrangement," February 17, 1970, 3-4, folder "FSE W-Ger 9 1/1/70", Box 994, RG 59, Subject Numerical Files, 1970-1973, Economic, NA.

<sup>278</sup> Airgram, U.S. Embassy Bonn to State Department, "Significance of the Soviet-FRG Natural Gas Arrangement," February 17, 1970, 5, folder "FSE W-Ger 9 1/1/70", Box 994, RG 59, Subject Numerical Files, 1970-1973, Economic, NA. Ibid, 5.

<sup>279</sup> For detailed account on this point see Robert M. Spaulding, *Osthandel and Ostpolitik : German Foreign Trade Policies in Eastern Europe from Bismarck to Adenauer* (Providence, RI : Berghahn Books, 1997).

Indeed, Brandt hoped that the German-Soviet natural gas pipeline deal would be the cornerstone for a much desired trade agreement. The inter-departmental communication between the chancellor's office and the Economics Ministry revealed the importance Brandt placed on these economic dealings. When Economics Minister Schiller seemed reluctant to take further steps to intensify trade with the East, as he saw significant problems in trade liberalization and the inclusion of West Berlin, Brandt intervened, asking that the chancellor's office be involved in any consultations between the Economics Ministry and the Foreign Office on this trade issue.<sup>280</sup> After consultations between Schiller and Brandt, the understanding was reached that a trade agreement would be in the general interest of the FRG but seemed too unrealistic at the moment.<sup>281</sup>

For West Germany, economic ties and incentives had to be the key to rapprochement with the Soviet Union. The FRG was in no position to offer a meaningful military or strategic concession that in and of itself could have led the Soviet Union to pursue détente. The special emphasis the German government placed on intensification of trade was also reflected in the fact that Egon Bahr would become a special envoy for international business relations under the Schmidt government.

Brandt's emphasis on relations with the East also created discomfort on a political level among the opposition as well as within his coalition. He had demonstrated Germany's newfound independence by postponing the customary White House trip for

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<sup>280</sup> Letter, Economics Minister Schiller to Chancellor Brandt, February 4, 1970, BA 102/99988; Letter, Chancellor Brandt to Economics Minister Schiller, February 12, 1970, BA 102/99988.

<sup>281</sup> Memo, "Vertiefung der deutsch-sowjetischen Wirtschaftsbeziehungen," March 12, 1970, BA 102/99988. This memo outlined that the liberalization of trade with the Soviet Union could only be labeled as a general intention on part of the FRG, not a firm commitment, i.e. the Soviets could receive an improved status of total liberalization for 80% of the goods, but any firm legal commitment would create too many domestic problems. The memo further concluded that it would not be possible at the present time to include Berlin in a trade agreement. Any exclusion of West Berlin, however, would make such agreements with other East bloc states an impossibility.



any new German chancellor soon after the October inauguration until far into the New Year. As Kissinger explained to Nixon, “Brandt is trying to carve out for himself an image of greater independence from us (he referred to this in his inaugural address) and that, for this reason, he does not wish to seem to be rushing to see you.”<sup>282</sup> Yet this greater independence only went so far. Unlike U.S. presidents who wield absolute power over their secretaries, a majority of German ministers have to agree to a policy before it can be implemented. After the Erfurt meeting in March of 1970 the German cabinet forced Brandt to “postpone a decision on whether to move into full-fledged negotiations with Moscow on renunciation of force or merely to continue exploratory conversations” until Brandt had coordinated his foreign policy with Nixon. An American assessment of the chancellor’s trip also suggested that Brandt’s association with the American President would help him silence the conservative opposition in the FRG.<sup>283</sup> Brandt’s visit to Nixon was of paramount importance to the new German chancellor. Brandt needed to come away with Nixon’s blessing of his *Ostpolitik* to quiet concerns both among the opposition and his own ranks. In a way, the German public wanted to see how the U.S. president would react to Germany’s independent maneuvers.

Brandt also had a very clear sense of what this summit meeting should look like. For one, he wanted it to happen in April, which caused a scheduling conflict for the White House. Nixon had implemented a new rule restricting the visits of foreign dignitary to two days per month to cut down on the number of foreign visitors to the White House. As the Danish prime minister had already been invited for two days in

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<sup>282</sup> Memo, HAK to President Nixon, “Brandt Visit,” November 5, 1969, folder “Germany Vol III. July 1969 - 11-69”, Box 682, NSCF, Country Files - Europe, NPMS, NA.

<sup>283</sup> Telegram, American Embassy Bonn to SecState WashDC, “Brandt Visit to U.S. and FRG *Ostpolitik*,” March 24, 1970, folder “Chancellor Brandt Visit, April 10-11, 1970 [2 of 3],” Box 917, NSCF, VIP Visits, NPMS, NA.

April Nixon had to make an exception to this rule so they could schedule the German chancellor.<sup>284</sup> Brandt also caused uproar by insisting that the time he was allotted for his appointment with Nixon was insufficient. Dealing with Nixon the subject of rearranging his schedule to please Brandt certainly must have been difficult. In a memo to Al Haig, Special Assistant to the President, Dwight Chapin, offered Brandt a time that did not please the visitor and notes “Let’s work out Saturday [the day of the meeting] problem – but the P[resident] won’t do 9 am and maybe not 9:30 [the originally scheduled time].”<sup>285</sup> The way Chapin worded the note provides a hint of how difficult it must have been to convince Nixon of the necessity of a longer meeting with Brandt.

Kissinger recalls the summit between Brandt and Nixon in early April 1970 as “surprisingly cordial, given the fact that neither man would have sought out the other’s company had not fate thrust the leadership of great nations upon them.” Kissinger then elaborates on the ideological reasons for this, pointing out that “Nixon had genuine doubts about those he saw as personalities of the left.”<sup>286</sup> In this, Kissinger’s assessment was probably accurate. For Nixon, close ties with the Communist bloc were problematic and Brandt, as a person of the left, highly unreliable. Nixon’s two memoirs, *The Memoirs of Richard Nixon* and *In the Arena*, confirm this point. In them, Brandt is only mentioned once, in passing, whereas Nixon treats other Germans, such as Otto von Bismarck, with much more respect.

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<sup>284</sup> Memo, Helmut Sonnenfeld to HAK, “Dates of Brandt Visit,” December 19, 1969, folder “Chancellor Brandt Visit, April 10-11, 1970 [1 of 3]”, Box 917, NSCF, VIP Visits, NPMS, NA.

<sup>285</sup> Memo, Dwight Chapin forwarded to Al Haig, “Brandt wishes more time with the President,” March 31, 1970, folder “[CF] CO 53 Germany, 1-1-70 to [11-16-70] [1969-70]”, Box 6, 1969-1974, WHSF, WHCF, NPMS, NA.

<sup>286</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 424.

The summit meeting demonstrated a fundamental “generational” miscommunication between the German and U.S. leadership. To Nixon, support for his conduct of the Vietnam War would have been the greatest “gift” Brandt could have brought with him from Europe; but Brandt was only willing to give tacit support. Brandt’s “neutral” stance at his inaugural address had been observed with a critical eye.

In contrast to recent statements of support for the President from British and Dutch leaders, Brandt, in his Government declaration, deals with Vietnam as follows: ‘We unite with all states, and not least with the tortured human beings involved, in the wish that the war in Vietnam will finally be ended by a political solution [...] You will recall that Bahr said that Brandt and Heinemann have no guilt complex about the past and consequently can be expected to be more self-assured, less inhibited in expressing German views and, hence, more ‘unbequem’.<sup>287</sup>

Given this wary approach to Brandt and his delegation, disagreement was unavoidable. Brandt clearly saw himself speaking for a new generation in a speech at a White House dinner given in his honor.

Our primary goal has to be to conceptualize the 1970s in such a clear way that it helps the younger generation create an appropriate and convincing perspective. You in America and we in Europe [...] are dealing with a new generation. It is full of movement [...], experiences the many transitions of our time and searches for long-lasting concepts. It is our task to achieve this goal.<sup>288</sup>

As Nixon was facing student riots and the U.S. population viewed domestic unrest as the most important problem facing the nation at the time, it seems unlikely that Nixon appreciated Brandt’s lecture.<sup>289</sup>

The personal trust between Kissinger and Bahr also suffered a blow when it became clear that the Brandt government was not fully revealing its hand to the

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<sup>287</sup> Memo, Helmut Sonnenfeldt to HAK, “Brandt’s Inaugural Address,” October 29, 1969, folder “Germany Vol III. July 1969 - 11-69,” Box 682, NSCF Country Files - Europe, WHSF, NPMS, NA.

<sup>288</sup> Speech by Chancellor Brandt at the White House Reception on April 13, 1970, BA 102/111903. Original: “Und doch besteht unsere eigentliche Aufgabe darin, die Konzeption dieser siebziger Jahre immer klarer auszuarbeiten und der jüngeren Generation bei einer ihr gemäßen und sie überzeugenden Perspektive zu helfen.

Sie in Amerika und wir in Europa haben es jetzt – 25 Jahre danach – mit einer neuen Generation zu tun. Sie ist voller Bewegung, denn sie ist zwar in vergleichsweise ruhigeren Verhältnissen aufgewachsen, erfährt aber die vielfachen Umwälzungen unserer Zeit und sucht nach zukunftssträchtigen Konzepten. Es ist an uns, diese Herausforderung zu bestehen. Ich glaube, daß wir dazu imstande sind.“

<sup>289</sup> See Appendix B, Figure 7.

Americans. Only when confronted by Kissinger about papers that were exchanged during Soviet-German talks, did Bahr admit to “holding in writing formulations that had been discussed.” He summarized these “formulations” as drafts dealing with “the renunciation of force,” and the “respect for (not recognition of) all European frontiers.”<sup>290</sup> In short, Bahr had withheld drafts to key elements of the Soviet-German negotiations.

Despite all this, the Nixon administration would not openly oppose *Ostpolitik*. No U.S. administration could publicly stand in the way of West German efforts to reestablish economic and cultural links with the East, especially after Nixon campaigned on the idea that his presidency would be one of negotiation and détente. So the Nixon administration had to resort to off-hand comments that hinted at American reservations about the divergent German policy. Kissinger indirectly conveyed his fears to Defense Minister Schmidt during the German delegation’s visit in April, when he questioningly stated that “*Ostpolitik* surely would not jeopardize German loyalties to the alliance” while following this with an implied threat of political repercussions should Brandt stray from the Western line.<sup>291</sup> Nixon duly reiterated this point in a private conversation with Brandt on April 11. He confessed faith in Brandt’s policies and “was certain that [the Germans] did not think of jeopardizing proven friendships.” Similarly he warned that “insecurities” might arise in France, England, and the United States with regards to *Ostpolitik* and that the German agreement needed “to stay in close contact in all East-West issues.”<sup>292</sup> Even

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<sup>290</sup> Memo, Luncheon conversation between Henry Kissinger and Egon Bahr, April 8, 1970, folder “Germany Vol IV. 12-69 - 9 Apr 70,” Box 683, NSCF Country Files - Europe, WHSF, NPMS, NA.

<sup>291</sup> MemCon, “Gespräche des Bundesministers Schmidt in Washington,” April 7, 1970, AAPD, #572.

<sup>292</sup> Memo, “Aufzeichnung des Bundeskanzlers Brandt”, April 11, 1970, AAPD, #595.

more bluntly, Nixon advised Brandt not to ever drop an old friend for a new friend unless he was sure that the new friend was better than his old one.<sup>293</sup>

Officially, Brandt left the summit with the American's blessing for *Ostpolitik*, not because Nixon began to appreciate Brandt's ideology but simply because the Nixon administration could not afford to be portrayed as the one allied power that obstructed détente in Europe and a rapprochement of the two Germanies. Despite its misgivings about the ultimate direction of Brandt's foreign policy, the Nixon administration had little choice but to publicly endorse *Ostpolitik*. Brandt's later claim that Nixon and Kissinger did not understand the novelty of a European Security Conference in that it was designed to transcend the post-war political order, is symbolic of the White House approach. Kissinger responds to this claim in his memoirs. "He was wrong. We got the point. We were simply not persuaded by the argument and we thought it more tactful not to pursue it."<sup>294</sup> Nixon disliked the idea of a European Security Conference even more than Kissinger, yet retained his cautious support in public.

Nixon: I had a thought. In the morning paper I noticed that Pompidou and Brezhnev were making a lot of noise about the European security conference. And I think it'd be well, and we can talk about it when you come here tomorrow, if you keep the thing very very cool on the thing, as you of course have said, we don't want the damn thing. We may have to have it at some point. Those damn Europeans, the way they play it, I think it's very very much in our interest to do that. Also we have laid the foundation with the Russians because, you know, we played it very cool with Brezhnev, I mean with – what the hell's –

Rogers: Gromyko

Nixon: Gromyko. And when I said well we'd have to wait and look into it and so forth. So in talking if we have any friends left in Europe, would you... of course the Italians, the Italians are for it. The British, when I spoke to Hume, and I think he must have told you the same thing, he's not too keen on the darn thing. But let's just

Rogers: They all run with the tide, though.

Nixon: Yeah I know, I know. But let's not get that damn tide going so that it comes before our Soviet thing or even that we indicate too much... I think if we could just indicate every time... you're the one to do it – I'm gonna lay off of it by miles. But you just sort of indicate well this is a

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<sup>293</sup> Helmut Sonnenfeldt at the panel discussion, "Re-evaluating the Nixon/Ford/Kissinger Era: Transatlantic Relations & US Foreign Policy in the 1970s and Beyond," June 18, 2003 at the Library of Congress, Washington, D.C.

<sup>294</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 424.

gingerly thing and we've gotta consider it and what we've talked about. Because the press would love to push us into this god damn thing.<sup>295</sup>

If the issue of the European Security Conference is any indication, Brandt did not understand the subtle reservations the Nixon administration articulated during the summit meeting. One can only speculate on why the U.S. did not lean stronger on the German delegation to follow the leadership that Nixon claimed for himself. Certainly, as indicated in the above transcript, the sense of losing their European friends and the weakening U.S. self-perception must have played a role in Nixon's treatment of the Europeans. Blocking Brandt's efforts at détente would have further alienated world opinion. Ultimately, Brandt was able to return to Germany with the U.S. officially backing his *Ostpolitik*, and he quickly intensified the rapprochement with the Soviet Union.

#### *Advances in Osthandel*

Had Brandt heeded American warnings, he would have pursued a more cautious approach. As it was, though, the possibilities of intensifying trade with the Soviet Union seemed better than ever. The eighth Soviet Five-Year Plan, which ended in 1970, saw significant growth in national income (41%) and industrial production (50%). The standard of living in the Soviet Union already presented a problem to Brezhnev, however, for improvements made in the early 1960s gradually leveled off in 1968, at a position well below that of many Western industrial countries. Throughout the 1960s agricultural production also had been a problem. During the late 1960s, Brezhnev even had to raise prices for agricultural products and the Soviet Union had to import an increased amount of grain from the West. By 1970 the Soviet Union, as a developed industrial country,

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<sup>295</sup> Transcript, White House Telephone Conversation, 012-130, October 26, 1971, 8:49 am—8:55 am, White House Tape Recordings, NPMS, NA.

found it increasingly difficult to maintain the high rates of growth in the industrial sector that it had sustained in earlier years. Increasingly, large investment and labor inputs were required for growth, but these inputs were becoming more difficult to obtain. Although the goals of the Five-year plans of the 1970s had been scaled down from previous plans, the targets remained largely unmet. The industrial shortfalls were felt most sharply in the sphere of consumer goods, where the public steadily demanded improved quality and increased quantity.

For the ninth Five-Year Plan (1971-75), it was hoped that Western imports on credit would add production capabilities and improve the efficiency of already existing structures. Offering large-scale contracts to Western companies with little or no down payment and to be paid for by the products of these manufacturing plants was the strategy the Soviet leadership pursued to increase their economic output without depleting their hard currency resources. For Soviet officials, in the process of devising the ninth Five-Year Plan and counting even more heavily than before on foreign imports, the beginning of 1970 seemed an ideal time to intensify German trade with the Soviet Union.

#### The Soviet Approach to Trade

To avoid contamination of the Socialist society, the Soviet government tried to minimize contact with Western companies. By strictly refusing joint ventures, investment of foreign capital in the Soviet Union, or multi-national corporations, the Soviets managed to keep the upper hand in negotiations. They offered large-scale orders for industrial goods that nearly exceeded the capacity of a single West European country, the prestige and benefits of which were often too significant to overlook. By limiting contractors to

national groups, the Soviet trade representatives were also able to play one Western country against another. One such example was Patolichev, who spelled out quite clearly that he had to “take a business approach and compare whether credit offers from the FRG are worse than those of other countries. [...] If the FRG is not competitive here, it will lose big and lucrative deals.”<sup>296</sup>

Interestingly, the United States was almost entirely excluded from any of these dealings until 1972. With various countries of Western Europe seeking these orders, the Soviet Union was not just able to involve the government of these nations in negotiations but also—directly and indirectly—able to exert considerable pressure on the national governments to subsidize the loans the Soviet Union demanded and to clear administrative hurdles. Naturally, the emergence of the European Economic Community and the transfer of negotiation authority for imports and exports to Brussels greatly troubled the Soviet Union. Concerned about losing the advantage in their effective negotiation strategy, they repeatedly voiced their objection to anything but bilateral deals and did not recognize the European Economic Community as a valid negotiation partner.<sup>297</sup>

In addition, dealing with the Soviet Union often proved challenging from a Western perspective. Despite confirmed business meetings and schedules, many Western businessmen frequently had to return home the same day because their hotel had not been

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<sup>296</sup> Memo, “Gespräch von Herrn Minister mit dem sowjetischen Außenhandelsminister Patolitschew am 25. September 1970 in Moskau,” September 30, 1970, BA 102/100023, 6. Original: Patolitschew: „Grundsätzlich hat die UdSSR kein Interesse an Krediten aus der BRD zu beliebig hohen Zinssätzen. Ich muß als Außenhandelsminister einen kaufmännischen Standpunkt einnehmen und vergleichen, ob die Kreditangebote aus der Bundesrepublik schlechter sind als diejenigen aus anderen Ländern. Das Abkommen mit der Bundesrepublik soll nicht ungünstiger ausfallen als die Abkommen mit anderen Ländern. Wenn die Bundesrepublik hier nicht wettbewerbsfähig ist, werden ihr große interessante Geschäfte verloren gehen.“

<sup>297</sup> Telegram, German Ambassador in Moskow, Allardt, to German Foreign Office, “Besuch BMa.d. Dr. Schroeders in Moskau,” January 21, 1971, BA 102/100023.



reserved by their host and they were unable to find suitable arrangements. Even when Economics Minister Schiller visited Moscow on a state visit (September 23-27, 1970), he ran into logistical problems. The pilots who flew Minister Schiller were neither able to pay with the usually accepted vouchers nor with cash, and thus had to ask the German embassy to cover the incurred expenses.<sup>298</sup>

### The Kama River Plant

One example of a typical deal with the Soviet Union was the Kama River truck manufacturing plant project. The Soviet Union managed to exert enormous pressure on various Western countries despite its dire need for such a plant. An apparent remedy to overcome the poor performance of the Soviet agriculture was the production of more trucks. In 1968 and 1969, the lack of trucks prevented the proper harvesting and storing of the harvest, which resulted in a disastrous waste of otherwise perfectly good crops. Furthermore, the shortage of trucks crippled progress on numerous industrialization projects that were vital to the Soviet economy.<sup>299</sup> German involvement in the planned Soviet Kama River truck manufacturing plant is not only exemplary of the difficulties West Germany faced in dealing with the Soviet Union, but also indicative of the policies the Soviets pursued in dealing with the West.

Initial German attempts by representatives of the Daimler Benz Corp. to engage in a dialogue with Soviet industry representatives at two 1968 fairs in the Soviet Union failed, for lack of Soviet willingness to engage with West German firms. After the

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<sup>298</sup> Memo, "Besuch von Minister Schiller in Moskau," October 1, 1970, BA 102/100023.

<sup>299</sup> Letter, German Ambassador in Paris, Ruete, to German Foreign Office, "Sowjetisches LKW-Kombinat an der Kama," October 21, 1970, BA 102/100011, 1-2.

reversal of that policy in 1969 the Soviets sent a high-level delegation to visit the Daimler Benz manufacturing plant in September 1969.<sup>300</sup> During a follow-up meeting in Moscow in June 1970 the Soviet conception of the deal became evident and would be highly representative of future deals.

Daimler Benz was to build a turn-key plant and act as general contractor and financier. The creation of a multi-national consortium or a joint venture with a Soviet company was categorically ruled out. There was to be no penetration of the Soviet economy, ownership of Soviet capital, or even interaction with the Soviet population. The Soviets wanted Western technology and labor to design, construct, and develop the manufacturing plant.<sup>301</sup> However, Soviet representatives were either unwilling or unable to comprehend the intricacies of Western financing.

One such example was the Soviets' insistence on low-interest loans. When they continued to demand a federally subsidized loan, comparable to that of a French competitor, Economics Ministry Undersecretary von Braun suggested to Soviet ambassador Zarapkin that it was not the interest rate per se but the overall cost to the Soviet Union that should be the deciding factor. In other words, if a German company could sell a product cheaper, the interest rate made no difference, as the German company was the debtor, not the Soviet Union. Von Braun concluded his account of the meeting with the assessment that "this consideration had apparently never crossed Mr. Zarapkin's mind before."<sup>302</sup> As Shevchenko explains, Soviet negotiators usually would not have a fallback position so even a new insight such as this would leave them "singing

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<sup>300</sup> Letter, German Ambassador in Moscow, Allardt, to German Foreign Office, "Bau eines LKW Werkes in der UdSSR," June 24, 1970, BA 102/100011.

<sup>301</sup> Ibid.

<sup>302</sup> Memo, Undersecretary Braun, "LKW-Geschäft mit der Sowjetunion," September 21, 1970, BA 102/100011.

one stubborn note at the bargaining table;” accordingly, Zarapkin continued to insist on low-interest loans.<sup>303</sup> In a discussion between Soviet Minister for Automobile Industry Aleksandr Tarasov and Economics Minister Schiller on September 30, 1970, the Soviet side mentioned in every statement that they wanted the same interest rate (6%) as in the gas pipeline deal, despite a rise of interest rates to 10% at the time. They also insisted on a flexible bank loan (Rahmenkredit), rather than a much more controllable line of credit (Lieferkredit), again as in the gas pipeline deal. This, of course, caused the Brandt government considerable headaches as the financing of the gas pipeline deal had apparently increased the expectations of the Soviets for low-interest long-term financing of a large majority of the deal. However, it was especially this long-term low-interest financing that had sparked heavy criticism from other EC countries.<sup>304</sup>

Soviet behavior during the gas pipeline deal caused the German banks to balk at granting another flexible bank loan. After the Soviets had been granted a flexible bank loan of 1.2 billion marks by the German bank consortium to buy steel pipes, they only used two thirds of the amount for that purpose and used the other third to purchase non-related items. This caused the German banks considerable difficulties, as the exporters of the smaller orders were reluctant to accept the ten-year financing connected with the deal.<sup>305</sup>

Finally, Daimler Benz could look to the difficulties that the Italian car manufacturer Fiat had experienced as the general contractor at the Soviet car manufacturing plant in Togliattigrad. There, the Soviets were not even able to keep the deadlines for earth movement and pouring foundations. Daimler Benz thus concluded

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<sup>303</sup> Shevchenko, 264.

<sup>304</sup> Memo, Dr. Henze, “Lastwagenprojekt in der UdSSR,“ September 16, 1970, BA 102/100011, 2.

<sup>305</sup> Ibid.

that the entire project was simply too risky for one company alone. Despite the general belief that Brandt shied away from trade and economic matters, he was being meticulously informed about the developments on Soviet trade through the German Industry Committee on Trade with the East [*Ostausschuß der deutschen Wirtschaft*].<sup>306</sup> This trade with the East turned into a highly politicized exercise that pitted the Western European allies against each other.

Interesting to note is how easily the Soviets managed to play the various West European powers against each other. Out of “concern” for the German industry, Minister Tarasov informed Schiller that both France and Italy had agreed to a flexible bank loan of 6% (subsidized by the national governments) and since the Soviet side had to “unify” their financing, he was afraid that the German firms would not be competitive.<sup>307</sup> Indeed, the Russians had already concluded deals valued at over 350 million marks for equipment for Kama from the French. A prospective cooperation between Daimler Benz and Renault for the complete plant failed because Renault did not want to be a minor partner, working under the supervision of Daimler Benz.

To gain the upper hand in this deal, both the French government and French industry brought security and efficiency concerns to the Soviets’ attention. In an absurd twist on security concerns from an ideological point of view, the French argued that it would be in the Soviets’ best security interest to build several small plants, rather than one big one, thereby providing less of a target (presumably from NATO forces). The first of these smaller plants, furthermore, could be in operation much quicker, providing a first

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<sup>306</sup> Memo, Ostausschuß der deutschen Wirtschaft to Chancellor Brandt, “Lastwagenprojekt Rußland,” September 7, 1970, Nachlaß Otto Wolff von Amerongen, 72-1018-1, Rhein-Westfälisches Wirtschaftsarchiv, Köln.

<sup>307</sup> MemCon, Soviet Trade Minister Tarasov with German Economics Minister Schiller, September 30, 1970, BA 102/100011, 1-17.

batch of badly needed trucks. This smaller plant could be provided entirely by the French company Renault, and other European firms would only have to be involved to the extent that the other plans exceeded French capacities.<sup>308</sup>

Another interesting aspect is the American position on this deal. In the May 11, 1970 issue of *U.S. News and World Report*, Secretary of Defense Melvin Laird had moved the debate about a possible involvement by Ford Motor Co. in the Kama River project to the center of the public debate by voicing concern about such a deal.

Before giving away the technology to construct trucks in the Soviet Union, and establishing plants for them, there should be some indication on the part of the Soviet Union [that] they're not going to continue sending the trucks to North Vietnam by the shiploads for use on the Ho Chi Minh trail. We have many American pilots who are today prisoners of war in North Vietnam because they had to attack trucks provided by the Soviet Union to North Vietnam.<sup>309</sup>

Democrats only questioned this line of reasoning in form, not substance. Senator Edward Kennedy thought the criticism was heavy-handed and that the plant would only be operational by 1974. Kennedy hoped that by then the Vietnam War would be over. However, no one voiced criticism concerning the general problem of whether trade sanctions were a valid tool in achieving a foreign policy goal.

Laird countered Kennedy's criticism by saying that

as long as the Soviet Union is supplying 80 percent of all of the trucks that are being used on the Ho Chi Minh trail [...] I cannot in good conscience as secretary of defense support the exportation of those trucks from the Soviet Union on the basis of the importation of United States technology from Russia at this time. [...] This is not the time for us to move our technology to the Soviet Union in order to produce those trucks in a more efficient and more economical basis.<sup>310</sup>

Despite this controversy and Ford's rejection of the proposed deal (after being pressured to do so by its shareholders), there was no great concern on part of the German

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<sup>308</sup> Letter, German Ambassador in Paris, Ruete, to German Foreign Office, "Sowjetisches LKW-Kombinat an der Kama," October 21, 1970, BA 102/100011, 1-2.

<sup>309</sup> *U.S. News and World Report*, May 11, 1970, 5.

<sup>310</sup> Speech by U.S. Secretary of Defense, Laird, before the Chicago Council on Foreign Relations, as cited in Letter, German Ambassador in Washington, Pauls, to German Foreign Office, "Kritische Einstellung zu deutsch-sowjetischen Wirtschafts- und Wissenschaftsbeziehungen," December 14, 1970, BA 102/100011, 2.

government or industry about its involvement in the project.<sup>311</sup> The waning fear of U.S. unhappiness with German trade policy is also evident in a question asked by two members of Parliament from the CDU/CSU, who inquired whether “the federal government is willing to consult about the deliveries to the East of strategically significant value, such as a truck manufacturing plant, with our allies, so as to find a common approach.”<sup>312</sup>

Dr. Klarenaar of the Economics Ministry laid out the answer for Minister Schiller that stated that the truck plant did not fall under export controls and that “furthermore, we will consult with our allies should the negotiations of German companies lead to concrete agreements.” This formulation was crossed out in the draft and replaced by a non-committal “furthermore, we will research the necessity of consultations, should the negotiations of German companies lead to concrete agreements.”<sup>313</sup>

Ultimately, the Soviet Union assumed the general contractor role itself, outsourcing high-tech individual plants and elements to various Western companies. However, West Germany provided the parts of the plant that the U.S. deemed as too high-tech for export.<sup>314</sup> This clearly conflicted with Nixon’s interests and ideas. Kissinger, on the other hand, had little ideological interest in maintaining export controls. In several instances, Nixon not only went along with Kissinger’s recommendation to continue a policy of restricting trade with Eastern Europe but even disapproved some of Kissinger’s own suggestions on moderately liberalizing trade with Communist

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<sup>311</sup> Memo, Dr. Lukas, “Amerikanische Haltung zum LKW Projekt an der Kama“, December 22, 1970, BA 102/100011, 1.

<sup>312</sup> Memo, Dr. Klarenaar, “Fragestunde des deutschen Bundestages 15./18.12.1970“, [n.d.], BA 102/100011, 3.

<sup>313</sup> Ibid.

<sup>314</sup> Memo, “Sprechzettel für Messen und Ausstellungen 1974 - Sachstand 11 October 1973,“ October 19, 1973, BA 102/100002, 3.

countries.<sup>315</sup> This did not reflect a firm belief in the effectiveness of existing prohibitions on trade, as Nixon had repeatedly voiced his convictions that “the present prohibitions on trading with Communist countries are obsolete.”<sup>316</sup> Instead, it demonstrated a moral conviction in doing the “right thing” by maintaining export controls vis-à-vis Communist countries.

Nixon partially blocked the Kama River foundry plant, assembly plant, and gear and transmission plant, the three most technologically complex elements of the proposed Soviet Kama River truck manufacturing plant.<sup>317</sup> But Nixon went further than just blocking manufacturing capabilities in the Soviet Union. He also blocked a proposal for the construction of oil and natural gas pipelines in the Soviet Union.

#### Natural Gas Pipelines

By mid-1970, additional Soviet oil and natural gas deliveries to Germany were being considered. Shortly after the conclusion of the first deal, negotiations were underway for another four billion tons of natural gas per year (in addition to the three billion from the first contract).<sup>318</sup> Once this deal was concluded, the proposed pipeline’s capacity would be fully utilized. Soviet gas, it was estimated, would provide roughly 11% of the total German natural gas supply for 1980. The yet-to-be constructed gas pipeline would further use roughly one third of its capacity to support East European allies, such as the GDR and Czechoslovakia. Having already committed the other two thirds of the delivery

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<sup>315</sup> Memo, HAK to President Nixon, June 23, 1969, FRUS (1969-1976), vol. IV, #301. See also Dobson, 213.

<sup>316</sup> See Editorial Note to Document #313, cited in FRUS (1969-1976), vol. IV, #313.

<sup>317</sup> Memo, National Security Council Staff, Ernest Johnston, to Kissinger, June 30, 1971, FRUS (1969-1976), vol. IV, #336.

<sup>318</sup> Telegram, American Consul Düsseldorf to U.S. Secretary of State Rogers, July 9, 1971, folder “FSE W-Ger 9 1/1/70,” Box 994, RG 59, Subject Numerical Files, 1970-1973, Economic, NA.

capacity to West Germany and Italy, the Soviet gas delivery capabilities would be exhausted, and a maximum of 7 billion cubic meters per year could not be exceeded for the second contract.<sup>319</sup> Support for this proposed second deal was more ambivalent than toward the first one. Helmut Schmidt, at the time Germany's finance minister, was particularly opposed to the heavy subsidies wanted by the Soviet Union. But even though support had waned the Soviets demanded the same favorable conditions they had received for the first deal. Soviet Vice President Kirill Novikov was very reluctant to commit to an increase in steel pipe orders without concessions on the financing. "One has to first look at the figures of the natural gas deal because the Soviet Union only wants to make commitments it can keep." he remarked to Brandt. Novikov further added that the U.S. had expressed interest in Soviet natural gas, as well.<sup>320</sup>

In his position as finance minister Helmut Schmidt was able to block an interest rate subsidy by the German government and the lowering of the customary fees in connection with federal loan guarantees.<sup>321</sup> Otherwise though, the cabinet bent over backwards to make the second gas pipeline deal lucrative for the Soviet Union. To equip Economics Minister Schiller with incentives for the deal, on September 18, 1970 the cabinet approved a loan guarantee volume for the Soviet Union of 1.5 billion marks annually. This could have even triggered a parliamentary vote on increasing the ceiling of the federal budget.<sup>322</sup>

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<sup>319</sup> Airgram, U.S. Embassy Bonn to U.S. Department of State, "FRG Natural Gas Supplies," June 12, 1972, folder "FSE W-Ger 9 1/1/70," Box 994, RG 59, Subject Numerical Files, 1970-1973, Economic, NA, 2.

<sup>320</sup> MemCon, Chancellor Brandt with Vice President Novikov, April 24, 1972, BA 102/100026, 3.

<sup>321</sup> Memo, Dr. Henze, "Sowjetisches Projekt einer Lkw-Produktion an der KAMA," September 24, 1970, BA 102/100026.

<sup>322</sup> Memo, Talking Points for the visit of a Soviet delegation to the Economics Ministry, September 23, 1970, BA 102/100026. Original: "Das Kabinett hat in der Sitzung vom 18. September 1970 zur Vorbereitung der Moskau-Reise von Minister Schiller beschlossen, daß der sowjetischen Seite ein Bürgschaftsrahmen bis zu einem Liefervolumen von 1,5 Mrd. DM jährlich eingeräumt werden könne und



General consent for a second pipeline deal and its layout was already agreed on in April 1971. The financing, however, presented problems as the Soviets insisted on the same financing as with the first deal. As Deputy Foreign Trade Minister Victor Osipov stated, in complete ignorance of the changed market conditions, “we desire an improvement in the financing conditions. We cannot agree to worse conditions.” Here again, the Soviets made the purchase of 1.5 billion marks of German steel pipes contingent on the successful completion of the financing of the second gas deal.<sup>323</sup> On the German side, the Soviet demands appeared outrageous. With the free market interests rates already up to 9%, the 6% rate the Soviets wanted seemed unrealistic. Furthermore, the Deutsche Bank consortium only wanted to finance 800 million marks, in two stages, and cut the last rate of 300 million from the old deal by increasing the interest rate payments. The second credit, they argued, should only range between five and eight years, because the Soviets would be able to pay higher installments as they realized higher gas deliveries. The Economics Ministry was not interested in a repetition of the “severely critical reaction of our EC partners to the ‘exotic’ conditions of the first pipeline deal.”<sup>324</sup>

The second pipeline deal did finally go through in 1972, but a certain dependency on the Soviet contracts was already discernible. As the American consul in Düsseldorf reported to the state department, “[Chairman of the Mannesmann Board of Directors] Weisweiler admitted that Mannesmann eventually would have to do just that [concede to

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daß vorbehaltlich einer Zustimmung des Parlaments notfalls der Ermächtigungsrahmen des Haushaltsgesetzes für 1970 von 27 Mrd. DM entsprechend angehoben wird. Dagegen hat sich das Kabinett gegen die Gewährung von Zinssubventionen ausgesprochen.“

<sup>323</sup> Memo, Dr. Lucas, “Gespräch des stellvertretenden Außenhandelsministers Ossipow,“ April 15, 1971, BA 102/100026.

<sup>324</sup> Memo, Borucki, “Neuer Ausfuhrkredit für Röhrenlieferungen in die UdSSR,“ April 14, 1971, BA 102/100026.

Soviet interest rate demands] in order to keep the Mühlheim operation going after the end of the year.”<sup>325</sup> The Mühlheim plant, which had been specifically constructed for the large-diameter steel pipe orders from the Soviet Union, now depended on continued Soviet orders. The welfare of certain German industrial sectors, such as steel, became more and more intertwined with the development of the Soviet economy and the political climate between the two states.

Schmidt was quick to alleviate American fears of a German dependence on Soviet energy. In a conversation with Secretary of Commerce Peter G. Peterson, Schmidt tried to emphasize the minimal commitment on the part of the German government: even with the second gas pipeline deal, the proportion of Soviet gas on the total energy consumption would be no more than seven to eight percent. Germany also did not grant government-sponsored loans, just loan guarantees, because otherwise there would be no deal. To this, Peterson responded that the U.S. did not grant any guarantees and the current loan negotiations ranged from three to five years. In fact, Peterson was apparently so interested in exchanging information on trade and loan conditions with the Soviet Union that he suggested U.S. experts consult with Economics Undersecretary Mommsen during the current visit.<sup>326</sup>

The triangular negotiations between the FRG, Iran, and the Soviet Union also shed an interesting light on the German approach to its natural resource supplies. Given that Iran was a country rich in natural gas resources, supplying the German natural gas

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<sup>325</sup> Airgram, American Consul Düsseldorf to Secretary of State, “German-Soviet Natural Gas-Pipeline Deal,” June 8, 1972, folder “FSE W-Ger 9 1/1/70,” Box 994, RG 59, Subject Numerical Files, 1970-1973, Economic, NA.

<sup>326</sup> Telegram, German Ambassador in Washington, Pauls, to German Foreign Office, “Gespräch zwischen Bundesminister Schmidt und US-Secretary of Commerce Peterson,” September 26, 1972, BA 102/111905, 1-2.

system would be rather lucrative. Already in 1971, the FRG planned on importing natural gas from Iran. Of the two proposed routes, the FRG early on discarded the route through Turkey, Greece, and Yugoslavia in favor of one through the Soviet Union. The rejected route could have tied the NATO countries Greece and Turkey closer to the West and realized considerable transit revenues for these economically weak countries. It would have also been an ideal means to foster the independence and Western orientation of Yugoslavia. Instead, a route through the Soviet Union was chosen that, after long and difficult negotiations, made the Soviet Union not only a transit country that would collect hard currency revenues, but the buyer of Iranian gas and in turn the seller of Soviet gas to the FRG. Once again the FRG increased its reliance on Soviet natural gas rather than gaining access to an independent source. To add one more layer of dependence to the issue, the FRG sided with the Soviets against their interests in granting the Soviet Union the status of a middle-man. Bahr, in a conversation with Soviet Minister Kulov, agreed to negotiate with the Shah of Iran for the Soviet option.<sup>327</sup> Chancellor Brandt also expressed his pleasure about the positive stance the Soviet delegation was taking towards the planned triangular agreement with Iran “because such a joint agreement demonstrates what such different countries could accomplish if a perspective of a secure peace exists.”<sup>328</sup> The prospective deal did not come to fruition as the revolution in Iran overthrew the Shah before delivery could begin. All deals were aborted and the idea discarded.

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<sup>327</sup> Telegram, German Embassy Moscow to German Foreign Office, “Gespräche von Bundesminister Bahr in Moskau,” March 2, 1974, BA 102/99998.

<sup>328</sup> Telegram, German Embassy in Moscow to German Foreign Office, “Aufzeichnung des Gesprächs des Herrn Bundeskanzlers am 18. Januar 1974 mit dem Stellvertretenden Vorsitzenden des Ministerrats der UdSSR, Herrn Nowikow,” March 2, 1974, BA 102/99998, 8.

## Soviet Crude Oil Exports

West Germany exercised its own leverage to entice Soviet officials. The desperate need for hard currency and Western products continued with more barter trade. Since the FRG and the Soviet Union did not have a trade agreement in place, every import needed to be approved by the Economics Ministry. The import quotas were not designed for much fluctuation and the Soviets continually pushed for a liberalization of the oil market. Ultimately, the Soviets linked the purchase of German machinery with the responsibility of the German seller to obtain more German import licenses for Soviet products. Especially in the late 1960s, when the oil market in the FRG was saturated, German companies often tried to make a deal by petitioning the Economics Ministry for import licenses, which were usually declined since a coupling of purchase orders with import licenses would have set a dangerous precedent and upset the local energy market.<sup>329</sup>

The Soviet trade mission in Cologne became very creative at circumventing import licenses. Once they insisted on the fulfillment of an oil shipment to the FRG that was part of a trade deal, but which the Economics Ministry had not approved.<sup>330</sup> Another time, the Soviet trade mission indicated that a shipment had been readied for a German company and should be quickly approved by the Economics Ministry despite the fact that it had previously been declined.<sup>331</sup> Attempts to import Soviet oil imports via third

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<sup>329</sup> For examples see Letter, Rheinische Stahlwerke to Economics Ministry, August 26, 1965, BA 102/100003 and Letter, Mühlheimer Rohstoffhandel GmbH to Economics Ministry, "Erteilung zusätzlicher Lizenzen für die Einfuhr von Benzin aus der UdSSR gemäß unserem Vertrag vom 2.1.1964 mit der Firma Sojuznefteexport, Moskau," July 26, 1966, BA 102/100003; also Memo, Dr. Steidle, "Kompensationsgeschäft der Fa. Henschel-Export-GmbH mit der Sowjetunion," October 17, 1966, BA 102/100003.

<sup>330</sup> Letter, Handelsvertretung der UdSSR in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland to Economics Ministry, April 18, 1967, BA 102/100003.

<sup>331</sup> Letter, Handelsvertretung der UdSSR in der Bundesrepublik Deutschland to Economics Ministry, October 23, 1967, BA 102/100003.

countries, such as the attempts of Maxoil to import Soviet heating oil through Switzerland, were also explored.<sup>332</sup>

By 1969 Soviet attempts to enter the German market had become more sophisticated. The Soviet Union now tried to lure large German corporations with sizable orders, as when Soviet trade commissioner Volkov, who visited the Economics Ministry on February 2, 1969 “after a hiatus of several years” indicated that the Soviet Union was interested in giving orders worth 300 million marks to German companies in order to partially equip the car manufacturing plant in Togliattigrad, which FIAT had been contracted to build.<sup>333</sup> This is a very telling strategy as the talks to extend the natural gas pipeline from Austria through Italy into France, which would have provided a sizeable hard-currency inflow, had apparently stalled. The Italians must have been interpreted the giving of a sizable order to German, rather than Italian companies, as a sign of displeasure.<sup>334</sup> But it also helped Volkov to negotiate for an increase in import licenses with Germany, as he indicated that only with increased exports to Germany could the SU afford to order the proposed car manufacturing machines from the FRG. After Volkov’s visit, the FRG granted the Soviet Union a sizable increase in import licenses (heating oil from 0.7 to one million tons and gasoline from 0.1 to 0.3 million tons), which the Soviet side received “with satisfaction.”<sup>335</sup> Even so, they pushed for even more import concessions from the FRG, as the already negotiated deals between German and Soviet firms had a volume of 1.8 million tons of heating oil versus the one million the German

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<sup>332</sup> Letter, Dr. Lucas to Ref. III C2, May 2, 1969, BA 102/100003.

<sup>333</sup> Memo, “Besuch des sowjetischen Handelsrats Woltschkow im Bundeswirtschaftsministerium am 5.2.1969,” February 11, 1969, BA 102/100003.

<sup>334</sup> Letter, Dr. Lantzke to Economics Ministry Undersecretary Dr. Arndt, March 18, 1969, BA 102/100003

<sup>335</sup> Telegram, German Embassy in Moscow, Stempel, to German Foreign Office, “Einfuhrerleichterungen für leichtes Heizöl und Rohbenzin,” March 24, 1969, BA 102/100003.

government was willing to issue. The Soviet trade commissioner promptly repeated his concern that the order of German machinery, now increased to 400 million marks, would be in jeopardy if no more concessions were made on the Soviet side.<sup>336</sup>

Volkov wasted no time waiting for the initially negative response from the Economics Ministry.<sup>337</sup> He visited numerous trade and industry associations, such as the German Machine Tooling Association (Verein Deutscher Maschinenbau-Anstalten), and requested “in a persistent manner” for them to push the federal government to allow an increase in heating oil and gasoline imports from the Soviet Union.<sup>338</sup>

This near total dependence on increases in heating oil exports to finance additional manufacturing capabilities from the West was very troublesome for the Soviets, as the heating oil market in Germany was completely saturated and the German government had already hesitated to increase the import licenses from 0.7 to one million tons. When the Soviets played their trump card, a prospective gas pipeline deal with the German companies Mannesmann and Thyssen, along with the tacit offer of forgiveness for the still lingering ill will over the pipeline embargo of 1963, they linked any future prospects of this deal with an increase in heating oil imports from the Soviet Union from the one million tons to 1.8 million tons.<sup>339</sup>

The trump card worked. During his visit to Moscow in May, Undersecretary von Dohnanyi promised Patolichev another increase of 0.3 million tons in heating oil imports

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<sup>336</sup> Memo, Lucas, “Maßnahmen zur Erhaltung der Preisstabilität,” March 13, 1969, BA 102/100003; Memo, Economics Ministry Undersecretary Dr. Arndt, “Erteilung von Einfuhrgenehmigungen für sowjetische Erdölerzeugnisse,” April 2, 1969, BA 102/100003.

<sup>337</sup> Ibid.

<sup>338</sup> Letter, Verband Deutscher Maschinenbau-Anstalten, Stäcker, to Economics Ministry, Dr. Steidle, “Erdöl und Erdölderivaten,” May 9, 1969, BA 102/100003.

<sup>339</sup> Volkov made this clear to Mannesmann in writing and Thyssen’s chairman, Mommsen, was reminded of this by the Soviet Foreign Trade Minister Patolichev. See Letter, Mannesmann Export GmbH to Undersecretary Arndt, April 24, 1969, BA 102/100003 and Memo, Dr. Lucas, “Besuch von Herrn Wilhelm A. Kleberger,” May 8, 1969, BA 102/100003.

and 0.15 million tons in gasoline imports. At a subsequent visit by Volkov at the Economics Ministry on August 19, 1969, the Soviet trade representative still showed himself unhappy about the gap between the 1.3 million ton heating oil quota and the 1.8 million tons desired by the Soviets. When the Economics Ministry mentioned the problem the Berlin company Brenntag GmbH was having in getting the Soviet company Sojuznefteexport to fulfill its deliveries of 50,000 tons of oil, the Soviet delegation declined to speak about it since West Berlin was not part of their responsibility. Only after the Economics Ministry promised to increase the import quota by another 0.25 million ton of heating oil did the Soviets promise to honor its agreement with Brenntag. The Soviets did not desire a further increase in the gasoline quota, as it had only been able to deliver 60,000 tons of gasoline of the 150,000 tons for which von Dohnanyi had issued Soviet import licenses in May. Furthermore, the Soviets were very interested in maintaining the then-negotiated quotas for the year 1970.<sup>340</sup>

It is significant to note that the Soviets had a clear interest in more Western imports but could not find the means to acquire them. Only through unusual pressure on German companies, as well as concessions on Berlin, was it possible to get heating oil exports to Germany to anywhere near the level (1.5 million tons versus 1.8 million tons) necessary for the completion of existing trade deals. The Soviets were also unable to fulfill the quota offered by the German side on gasoline exports, leaving virtually no trade goods that the Soviets could have used to boost their export balance. Despite a heavily saturated market that had already led to a price deflation of 4.5% compared to the

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<sup>340</sup> Memo, Dr. Lucas, "Wesentliches Ergebnis der Besprechung am 19. August 1969," August 21, 1969, BA 102/100003.

previous year, the German Economics Ministry was very liberal with its import quotas over the next two years.<sup>341</sup>

An interesting aspect here is the question of a trade agreement between the two countries. Despite their almost desperate attempts to gain more import concessions from Germany, the Soviets did not even acknowledge German attempts to initiate talks on a trade agreement between the two countries.<sup>342</sup> This might have been linked with the understanding that a trade agreement would have to include West Berlin and the fact that the Soviet Union was not willing to do so.

Things seemed to change on the Soviet side soon after Brandt's election to chancellor. On November 20, 1969, Kosygin sent his son-in-law, Professor Belonov, to Germany to reiterate the Soviet Union's strong interest in forming a commission on industrial-technological cooperation. The German assessment of the Belonov visit was that

Many signs indicate that the Soviet Union wants to end its current policy of signing cooperation agreements with other Western industrial nations and isolating the FRG. It will also offer the federal government closer cooperation in the economic sector and will suggest its institutionalization on government level. Even if the model of French-Soviet cooperation, which is tailored to the French economy, can only be transferred in a limited way, an institutionalization of German-Soviet economic relations through an economic commission would nonetheless be desirable for economic and political reasons.<sup>343</sup>

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<sup>341</sup> Memo, Dr. Lantzke, "Sowjetische Wünsche auf Erhöhung der Einfuhrkontingente für Mineralölprodukte," October 27, 1972, BA 102/100002. This Memo detailed the following heating oil import quotas in million tons/ year:

|                     | 1968  | 1969  | 1970  | 1971  | 1972            |
|---------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-----------------|
| Basic quota         | 700   | 700   | 700   | 1500  | 1500            |
| Additional licenses | 273   | 850   | 1250  | 600   | 600             |
| Total               | 973   | 1,550 | 1,950 | 2,100 | 2,100           |
| Used                | 1,145 | 1,340 | 1,870 | 1,941 | 1,483 (Jan-Jul) |

<sup>342</sup> The positive effects of a trade agreement and the German willingness to engage in talks had, most recently, been suggested by Dr. Arndt and Dr. von Dohnanyi in Letter, Dr. Arndt to Handelsrat E. Volkov, "Erteilung von Einfuhrgenehmigungen für sowjetische Erdölerzeugnisse," [n.d. but after March 25, 1969], BA 102/100003.

<sup>343</sup> Memo, Dr. Lucas, "Deutsch-sowjetische Arbeitsgruppe für wirtschaftliche und industriell-technologische Kooperation," November 20, 1969, BA 102/99989. Original: "Viele Anzeichen sprechen dafür, daß die Sowjetunion ihre bisherige Politik, die darauf gerichtet war, mit anderen westlichen Industrieländern Kooperationsabkommen abzuschließen und die Bundesrepublik zu isolieren, aufgeben und



It was the clear desire of the German industry to work under the umbrella of a trade agreement that bound the Soviets to any deals and offered a sense of security and longevity for German investors. Yet the perceptions of the industry representatives and politicians about the Soviet Union had an even stronger impact than the political pressure of some of the leading companies in West Germany.

#### The German Paradigm Shift of the Soviet Union towards a “Normal” State

With the advent of communication and visits between the two countries, the perception of the Soviet Union changed drastically in the FRG. A multifaceted blend of a sense of ownership in the new *Ostpolitik*, a necessity of its success, desperation over the status quo, and a healthy dose of wishful thinking led German business representatives to depict the Soviet Union as a benign power with virtually unlimited economic potential. This aspect of the gas pipeline deal, perhaps the most profound one, was not readily apparent at the beginning of 1970. No one could seriously argue that 2–3 billion cubic meters of natural gas per year could make the FRG dependent on the Soviet Union. However, by tying German business and governmental interests to the successful development of the Soviet economy, the FRG came to have a vested interest in the prosperity of the Soviet Union. The old adage, “Lend a man a dollar and he owes you, lend him a million and he owns you” comes to mind. Once the natural gas pipeline had been constructed (it was scheduled for completion in October, 1973), the FRG would have to rely on the good

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nun auch der Bundesregierung eine engere Zusammenarbeit auf wirtschaftlichem Gebiet und ihre Institutionalisierung auf Regierungsebene vorschlagen wird.

Wenn auch die Übertragung des auf die Wirtschaftsordnung Frankreichs zugeschnittenen Modells der französisch-sowjetischen Zusammenarbeit auf die Bundesrepublik nur in beschränktem Maße möglich ist, so wäre doch eine Institutionalisierung der deutsch-sowjetischen Wirtschaftsbeziehungen durch eine gemischte Regierungskommission aus politischen und wirtschaftlichen Gründen zu begrüßen.”

faith of the Soviets that the gas would continue to flow. The initial investment of the Brandt government, as well as many German firms, depended on maintaining good Soviet-German relations. This led to an approach based on wishful thinking that often glossed over harsh Soviet economic realities and significantly improved the Soviet position.

This paradigm shift occurred through visits of German government and industry representatives to the Soviet Union. From the reports of these travels two somewhat contradictory images emerged: that of a poverty-stricken third-world economy and that of a booming and flourishing, yet foreign, economic system, with nearly infinite resources—images that constantly collided. As Foreign Minister Walter Scheel observed during a tour of the Togliatti auto plant:

Eighty percent of the presses are from the West [...]. Just 10% of the presses were manufactured in the Soviet Union, in Barnaul. They work only smaller pieces and are not comparable to the finished product of the Western presses.<sup>344</sup>

Often German specialists complain that the—generally stringent—Soviet work environment regulations are not enforced so that there have already been many deadly accidents among the Soviet workers. Fortunately, they [German workers] have been spared so far. Indeed, there are many deep open holes on the production site. People are welding in the factory buildings while the machines are already running. Mr. Poljakov, the plant director, commented that if someone believed that the regulations are not kept, he could quit his work.<sup>345</sup>

Yet, ironically, Scheel actually marveled at the Western technology of the plant, still using it as evidence of Soviet advances:

It is impressive to witness how the chassis and the chassis production line flow into each other. Through hydraulics the transmission and the front axle are lifted into the chassis from below and then installed. On this point, this plant is more modern than the VW-plant in Hanover.<sup>346</sup>

Other reporters outlined the total dependence on foreign technological assistance even more pointedly:

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<sup>344</sup> Memo, Foreign Minister Scheel, “Bericht über meine Dienstreise nach Togliatti vom 25. bis 30. Oktober 1970,” November 24, 1970, BA 102/100023, 2-5.

<sup>345</sup> Ibid.

<sup>346</sup> Ibid.

The ardent observer should notice immediately that many plants and equipment are of foreign origin. Various large lathes, among them torrent lathes, carried the logo of a West German company. The surface preparation for rotors (drive shafts) is conducted with the highest demand for precision. Over and over it is quite disarming that for Soviet experts it is a matter of course that these demands on quality can only be fulfilled with foreign assistance.<sup>347</sup>

Potentially destabilizing social problems were also readily discarded, as in this report:

Basically, you cannot begin to compare the economic tasks that the Soviet Union has to complete with the ones of a market economy such as the West German one. The Soviet Union commands a population of 240 million and incredible natural resources, which it can only mobilize one at a time but which it will mobilize, even if it takes longer. [...]

It is wrong to assume that the Russians would be influenced by the discontent of its population. The Russian people do not compare their standard of living with that of the Western countries. Instead, they contrast it to their worse life of the past, recognize gradual improvements, and save money so they can buy once the offering is more plentiful and qualitatively better.<sup>348</sup>

A good example of the German fascination with the Soviet economy, akin to the California Gold Rush, are the dealings of the Dieffenbacher GmbH, which delivered three plywood manufacturing plants to the Ukraine. Due to the revaluation of the mark in 1969, it completed these contracts at a heavy loss.<sup>349</sup> The firm, however, considered this an initial investment since the Soviets displayed interest in more large-scale orders should the plants work to satisfaction. Although the plants did work to Soviets' satisfaction, the completely perplexed company owner wrote to his Bundestag representative that the large-scale orders instead had been given to a Finnish firm that produced inferior products but could operate under a Soviet-Finnish barter trade agreement (oil for machines).<sup>350</sup>

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<sup>347</sup> Report, BfA-Correspondent, Klaus Dürkoop, "Visit of the Elektrosila Plant," November 28, 1971, BA 102/100023, 3.

<sup>348</sup> Letter, Otto A. Friedrich to Economics Minister Schiller, "Ergebnis-Niederschrift über Orientierungsbesuch in Moskau und Leningrad 23.11-27.11.1970," BA 102/100023, 2-4.

<sup>349</sup> See also Karsten Rudolph, *Wirtschaftsdiplomatie im Kalten Krieg: Die Ostpolitik der westdeutschen Großindustrie 1945-1991* (Campus Verlag: Frankfurt, 2004), 297-300.

<sup>350</sup> Letter, Dieffenbacher GmbH to MdB Baier, "Geschäfte mit der UdSSR," August 26, 1971, BA 102/100001.

## Strained Ties with the United States

### Soviet Anti-American Rhetoric

The usefulness of relying on trade to get a hostile government to cooperate is a matter of debate. Undoubtedly, though, economic ties with the Soviet Union and the political capital Brandt had invested in his *Ostpolitik* drove the FRG to ever-increasing cooperation with the Soviet Union, at virtually the same time disregarding American and/or NATO interests. The perception of the Soviet Union, fostered by Soviet representatives, became one of an economic wonderland that, as a result of its planned economy and large-scale orders, could provide Germany with an economic stability that was much more advantageous than the fickle throes of a weakening U.S. economy. Thus in the FRG the question of how to deal with the Soviet Union changed significantly through the level of personal and business interactions between the Germans and the Soviets. Early on, in 1970, Kosygin indicated to Bahr that he would like to conclude the negotiations with the FRG during the next three to six months, while the Americans were still involved in Vietnam.<sup>351</sup> Finalizing negotiations while your ally is otherwise occupied should have sent up a warning flag. However, it did not.

German diplomats often tolerated or consented to Soviet anti-American rhetoric as part of the business negotiations. Upon German economics minister Schiller's visit to Moscow, Kosygin immediately tried to sow discord within the alliance. One of his initial comments was that "the Dutch sell their gas pretty expensively. We took note of this but

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<sup>351</sup> Letter, Egon Bahr to Chancellor Brandt, March 7, 1970, Ordner 429B, Mapped 1, Depositorium Egon Bahr, Archiv der Sozialen Demokratie, 4. Original: "Besonderes Schutzbedürfnis hat die Information, daß Kosygin dazu neigt, die ganze Sache in den nächsten drei bis sechs Monaten, solange die Amerikaner noch Krieg führen in Vietnam, unter Dach und Fach zu bringen."

of course do not mind.”<sup>352</sup> This was followed later by an abrupt change in topic when he questioned whether the German payment for U.S. troops were a heavy burden on the federal budget. After Schiller’s objection that these were measures to balance payments, a well-informed Kosygin objected that German offset purchases were used to acquire weapons and U.S. bonds which the FRG could not resell.<sup>353</sup> While Kosygin’s statement was not entirely true, it nonetheless demonstrated a strong preoccupation with the German-American relationship and a readiness to remind the German visitor of sore points in the transatlantic alliance.

Kosygin, however, went one step further and outlined his vision of a future German-Soviet nuclear energy policy that would alleviate the “one-sided orientation toward the West in these matters.” He recalled Chancellor Brandt’s statements after the signing of the Moscow treaty, in which Brandt had offered cooperation on the development of nuclear technology. Without mentioning the U.S. by name, Kosygin argued that “other countries might be angered by such cooperation or might fear it” and suggested that “we can work without much noise and want to build our economic relations on a firm basis.”<sup>354</sup>

Schiller actually played along and reiterated the FRG’s interest in nuclear cooperation with other countries. He “agreed with this [Kosygin’s] presentation of economic issues and declared bravery and patience as necessary preconditions for the solution of economic and political tasks of the treaty of August 12<sup>th</sup> [Moscow Treaty].”<sup>355</sup>

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<sup>352</sup> MemCon, Visit of Economics Minister Schiller with Prime Minister Kosygin, September 26, 1970, BA 102/100023, 3.

<sup>353</sup> Ibid, 5-6.

<sup>354</sup> Ibid.

<sup>355</sup> Ibid.

In another instance, Kosygin explained that continued U.S. devaluation of the dollar turned the U.S. into strong competitors with the Europeans; uniting the resources of European countries such as the FRG, France, Italy, and GB would create a firm foundation for continued negotiations.<sup>356</sup> Furthermore, he elaborated on the monetary situations by which “today, the FRG credits the USA – just like a reverse Marshall Plan.” After sufficiently discrediting the Western economic system, he portrayed the Soviet Union as the steady rock that would continue to expand according to plan and which, benevolently, would continue to engage in trade with the FRG, even if the dollar-devaluation adversely affected the competitiveness of West German products.<sup>357</sup>

While it is debatable whether Soviet rhetoric in these talks had any impact on German foreign policy per se, the economic shift toward the Soviet Union certainly did. The transatlantic alliance only stood to lose from this development. Despite strong proclamations to the contrary, in the bipolar world of the Cold War any movement toward the Soviet Union precipitated a distancing from the United States. Even though the two poles were themselves coming closer together, Brandt’s administration moved faster and with a different quality than Nixon’s, resulting in a profoundly different approach and attitude toward the Soviet Union, one that altered the perception of German industry and society alike. Despite a stagnating economy, a lack of the financial resources, and the technological inability to exploit its vast natural resources, the Soviet Union managed to gain the upper hand economically in its dealings with the West Europeans, as several European countries were willing to trade with it and accept barter

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<sup>356</sup> Telegram, German Embassy in Moscow, Sahm, to German Foreign Office, “Gespräch O. A. Friderichs mit Kossygin,” October 5, 1973, BA 102/135258.

<sup>357</sup> Letter, Otto A. Friedrich to Economics Minister Friderichs, “Zusammenfassende Notiz über einen Besuch in Moskau vom 1. bis 5. Oktober 1973,” October 17, 1973, BA 102/135258, 2-3.

deals. This, however, created a split in the transatlantic alliance over strategic interests, even if no immediate political controversy arose.

#### EU Preferential Tariffs and Agricultural Subsidies

With all the economic activity between the FRG and the Soviet Union, it was clear to the Brandt government that the vitalization of trade with the Soviet Union was eyed very suspiciously in the United States. Since the Soviets demonstrated a much less forthcoming attitude toward trade with the United States during the 1970s, the Nixon administration would have wished for a more cautious approach. The Germans certainly recognized this difference in treatment. German ambassador Pauls reported of several fundamental elements that made Americans suspicious of Soviet trade policy. Among them was

Moscow's lack of willingness to compromise in the question of Berlin despite the advantages that the German *Ostpolitik* promises for the Soviet Union and the Soviet policy towards a 'Europe from the Ural Mountains to the Atlantic,' which includes the CSE [would turn into the CSCE] initiative as well as bilateral agreements.<sup>358</sup>

Ultimately, this led to an American suspicion that "the Soviet policy is much more than previously concerned to erode NATO. This is done by applying a split-level policy with promises of détente for Central Europe while maintaining at the same time hostile stance towards the American rival."<sup>359</sup> Despite the clear recognition of U.S. perceptions of the

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<sup>358</sup> Telegram, German Ambassador in Washington, Pauls, to German Foreign Office, "Bemerkungen zur amerikanischen Außenpolitik," December 21, 1970, BA 102/111915, 2-3. Original: "Die mangelnde Konzessionsbereitschaft Moskaus in der Berlin-Frage trotz der Vorzüge, die die deutsche *Ostpolitik* auch der Sowjetunion verspricht; die offenbar über den politischen Status quo hinweg auf ein 'Europa vom Ural zum Atlantik' zielende sowjetische Europapolitik als deren Mittel die KSE-Initiative sowie bilaterale Verträge gesehen werden; der Verdacht, die sowjetische Politik bemühe sich mehr als bisher, die NATO zu erodieren durch Anwendung einer 'split-level'-Politik von Entspannungsverlockungen gegenüber Mitteleuropa, bei gleichzeitig unverminderter Feindschaft gegen den amerikanischen Rivalen."

<sup>359</sup> Ibid.

Soviets' split-level policy, "Smiles for Europe, Frown for Washington,"<sup>360</sup> the German government did not alter its course of intense economic cooperation with the Soviet Union. In a sense, however, this reflected American fears of Western Europe moving away from the United States as a whole. Reports of German and French heads of state coordinating their approaches when dealing with the U.S. further strengthened this notion.<sup>361</sup>

To further strengthen that notion of an American isolation, the preferential tariff system of the European Economic Community, which sought to protect trade interests of French colonies, put U.S. exports to the EC at a distinct disadvantage. Even before the German-American summit meeting in April 1970, the German assessment of this trade conflict was dire. It cautioned that, despite Nixon's assurances in his address to Congress that the U.S. would be willing to pay a price for the unification of Europe, the unequivocal American support of the West European unification process was wavering because of certain economic considerations.<sup>362</sup>

Agricultural Secretary Clifford M. Hardin articulated the same concern during his visit to Germany and even threatened that "the American government not only considers the regional preferential policy of the [European] community as incompatible with GATT but also toys with the idea of concluding a preferential agreement with Latin America as a counter measure to the policy of the community."<sup>363</sup> In January of the following year, the growing conflict loomed even larger. The Economics Ministry suggested a speedy visit to

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<sup>360</sup> Joseph C. Harsch, *Christian Science Monitor*, December 21, 1970, 23.

<sup>361</sup> Charles Hargrove, "French align policies with Germans before Nixon talks," *The London Times*, December 6, 1971, 4, column F.

<sup>362</sup> Memo, "Verhältnis Europa - USA // Handelspolitik betrifft Besuch des Herrn Bundeskanzlers in den USA am 10./11. April 1970," March 13, 1970, BA 102/111903, 1-2.

<sup>363</sup> Memo, Dr. Schilling, "Besuch von US-Landwirtschaftsminister Hardin bei Staatssekretär Dr. Rohwedder am 9.12.1970," December 9, 1970, BA 102/111915.



the new Secretary of the Treasury, John B. Conally, and cautioned of a stronger protectionist policy in the U.S.

Relations between the U.S.A. and the European Community appear to worsen – at least in the near future. [...] The mayor problems are the agricultural policy of the EC and the preferential customs agreement. If the EC believes it cannot or should not be flexible in this regard, one must expect that the agricultural groupings in the U.S., which had been a very important group with liberal trade tendencies, will also turn protectionist.<sup>364</sup>

Europeans, on the other hand, pointed to a consistently favorable balance of trade with the EEC. In their opinion, the United States' chronic balance-of-payment problem resulted in pressure on them to alleviate a problem caused by unreasonable fiscal policies. Being indirectly volunteered to partially finance the U.S. involvement in Vietnam made many Europeans unsympathetic to the economic plight of the U.S.<sup>365</sup>

Willy Brandt's *Osthandel* and the protectionist EC tariff policies continued to create strong concerns in the U.S.<sup>366</sup> In a sense, a stronger emphasis on Europe and less on the Atlantic alliance fell in line with the French policy. EC agricultural policies were mostly set up to benefit French interests. Brandt, implicitly, had made a decision for a Franco-German emphasis rather than a transatlantic one. Not surprisingly, Brandt early on offered the French government cooperation in dealing with the Soviet Union economically. In a meeting with French President Georges Pompidou, Brandt seemed

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<sup>364</sup> Memo, Dr. Hanemann, "Besuch in den USA," January 12, 1971, BA 102/111903, 2-3. Original: "Die Beziehungen zwischen den USA und den Europäischen Gemeinschaften auf handelspolitischem Gebiet scheinen sich—mindestens zunächst—eher noch zu verschlechtern als zu bessern. Der Ablauf des kürzlichen Besuchs von US-Landwirtschaftsminister Hardin in Brüssel, über den ich am 17. Dezember 1970 berichtet habe, kann als Anzeichen hierfür gelten. Die beiden von den USA immer wieder besonders betonten Gravamina sind die Agrarpolitik der EG und ihre Assoziierungsankommen mit Zollpräferenzen. Wenn die EG in ihrer Agrarpolitik glauben, nicht flexibel sein zu können oder zu sollen, so muß man befürchten, daß die US-Landwirtschaftskreise, die bisher eine sehr gewichtige Gruppe mit liberalen Außenhandelstendenzen waren, auch noch in das Lager der Protektionisten abschwenken."

<sup>365</sup> Wolfram F. Hanrieder, "Germany as Number Two? The Foreign and Economic Policy of the Federal Republic," *International Studies Quarterly* 26, no. 1, (March 1982): 57-86, 63.

<sup>366</sup> Talking Points Memo, "Für handelspolitische Gesprächsthemen zum Treffen mit Handelsminister Peterson in Washington," September 19, 1972, BA 102/115022, 4. Original: "Die USA verstärken bei aller positiven Würdigung und Unterstützung der europäischen Integrationsbestrebungen zunehmend ihre Kritik an wichtigen Elementen der europäischen Gemeinschaftspolitik. Die Agrar- und Präferenzpolitik der EWG steht dabei im Vordergrund."

quite convinced of the sincerity of the Soviet Union and the merits of his approach, and so he encouraged cooperation between French and German companies in undertaking deals with the East.<sup>367</sup>

### COCOM and Export restrictions

With stronger economic links between the Soviet Union and the FRG, the issue of export restrictions became more and more pressing. Again diverging from the U.S. position, which saw no intrinsic value in the lifting of restrictions but wanted to use it as a bargaining tool with the Soviet Union, the Brandt government now advocated a liberalization of COCOM restrictions without any concrete Soviet concessions in return. In a meeting with Commerce Secretary Peter Peterson it became clear that the Brandt government considered Soviet moves at détente sufficient grounds for liberalization.

In light of the technological and scientific development in the East and the West and the desired increase in the exchange of goods and services between both regions I wonder if the volume of current COCOM restrictions is still reasonable.<sup>368</sup>

It is a telling aspect of the internal dynamics within the FRG that Finance Minister Schmidt attributed pressures for liberalization to the German industry, with the government supporting these initiatives, and not vice versa. This demonstrates that by 1972 the Soviet Union had managed to turn the dynamics between trade and politics to their advantage. While Brandt had pushed the German industry to pursue trade with the East in 1970 in order to bring about political concessions, now the Soviet Union could count on the German industry to advocate their case in the political arena.

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<sup>367</sup> AAPD, July 3, 1970, Doc #291.

<sup>368</sup> Letter, Economics and Finance Minister Schmidt to Secretary of Commerce, Peter G. Peterson, October 27, 1972, BA 102/115022, 2. Original: "Ich frage mich aber, ob angesichts der technisch-wissenschaftlichen Entwicklung in Ost und West und des angestrebten zunehmenden Waren- und Dienstleistungsaustauschs zwischen beiden Regionen der Umfang der bestehenden COCOM-Ausfuhrbeschränkungen noch gerechtfertigt ist."

The German industry views the many embargo rules as an intolerable export hindrance in these times and demands a stronger liberalization for computers, electronics, transistors, electronic devices, and communication equipment and parts, chemical products as well as ships with higher speeds. [...] The federal government supports this view.<sup>369</sup>

This advocacy in fact occurred in a rather forceful way. Schmidt pointed to differences in interpretation of the COCOM agreement on the part of different member states, as other member states, most notably Great Britain, had refused outright to abide by the agreement. He also mentioned the special circumstances of the FRG, for its smaller market hindered the development of research-intensive high-tech products that could only be profitable in a large market.<sup>370</sup>

This line of reasoning, however, neglects the possibilities within the EEC, as by 1972 the EC was one of the largest economic blocs in the world. Using the EC on one hand to argue that tariff and agricultural policies could not be altered according to U.S. interests, and on the other hand not considering its member states as a potential market for domestic products, is reminiscent of Timothy G. Ash's thesis that the Brandt government used the term "Europe" semantically and diplomatically to foster its ends. The Brandt government hid behind a strong Europe to shield itself from American criticism and portrayed a weak, unfinished Europe when the need arose. While this strategy was successful in preventing a direct clash with the Nixon administration, it could not contain public criticism from non-governmental circles.

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<sup>369</sup> Talking Points Memo, Hanemann, Conversation Helmut Schmidt with Secretary Peterson, "Über COCOM- Fragen," September 18, 1972, BA 102/115022, 1-3. Original: "Die deutsche Wirtschaft sieht in zahlreichen Embargovorschriften eine in der heutigen Zeit nicht mehr vertretbare Ausführbehinderung.[...] Die deutsche Wirtschaft fordert hier [bei dem Bereich der industriellen Fertigung] vor allem eine stärkere Liberalisierung für EDV-Anlagen, elektronische Bauteile, Transistoren, elektronische Meß-, Eich- und Prüfgeräte, Nachrichtenübermittlungsgeräte und – Geräteteile, chemische Erzeugnisse sowie für Schiffe mit höheren Geschwindigkeiten.[...] Die Bundesregierung unterstützt diese Auffassung."

<sup>370</sup> Talking Points Memo, Hanemann, Conversation Helmut Schmidt with Secretary Peterson, "Über COCOM- Fragen," September 18, 1972, BA 102/115022, 2.

## U.S. Opposition to *Ostpolitik*

In the United States, *Ostpolitik* became a highly divisive issue that was quickly incorporated into the ideological confrontation between liberals and conservatives. Jabbing at the “liberal news media” for approving of Willy Brandt just because he was a Social Democrat, the conservative *National Review* criticized Willy Brandt for giving in to the East as early as June 1970. Portraying Brandt as flip-flopping between an anti-American left-wing position with an emphasis on the “Social” and a pro-American right-wing position that emphasized the “Democrat,” the author, Norbert Mullen, saw Brandt as fully surrounded by left-wing Social Democrats. *Ostpolitik* was seen as a dangerous policy of appeasement, as “Willy Brandt could be preparing the way for the destruction of the Western defenses in Europe and the Soviet penetration of the European West.”<sup>371</sup>

After the signing of the Moscow treaty, conservative U.S. opposition became even fiercer, and comparison was drawn to the treaty with the Hitler-Stalin pact. An article in the *National Review* portrayed a vision of a Europe free of U.S. influence, seeing many advantages for the German industry in expanding into the Soviet Union, and remembering Lenin’s dictum that German technology plus Russian space, resources, and manpower would rule the world.<sup>372</sup> By September 1970, conservative criticism focused on Brandt. Chiding the U.S. administration for not recognizing the fateful doings of Brandt, that “experienced and resourceful Marxist,” the Moscow treaty was now portrayed as an even more damaging agreement than the Hitler-Stalin pact. Brandt was

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<sup>371</sup> Norbert Mullen, “Willy Brandt Turns East,” *National Review*, June 30, 1970, 34.

<sup>372</sup> “The Brandt-Brezhnev Pact,” *National Review*, August 25, 1970, 23.

portrayed as purposely trying to link Germany to the Soviet Union, destroy NATO, and expel the United States from the FRG.<sup>373</sup>

This damning critique was countered by the liberal magazine *The Nation*, which did not feel Brandt's policies went far enough. Joe Morris applauded Brandt's overtures to the East as a long overdue step in overcoming the Cold War divisions brought about by the Dulles-Adenauer team, but wished for a more conciliatory German stance on the permanence of the post-war borders.<sup>374</sup> This turned into open praise and excitement about the Moscow treaty in August, 1970.<sup>375</sup> To *The Nation*, Brandt was the hero who had implemented badly needed détente policies, yet was undermined by Nixon and other hawks in the U.S. Conservative critiques were brushed aside with the remark that these hawks operated under yesterday's Cold War philosophy, which assumed that Communism was evil and could not change.<sup>376</sup>

A year-end assessment by the German embassy of U.S. media coverage on *Ostpolitik* found a turn for the worse in the mainstream media. A worsening Soviet-American relationship, resulting from the situation in the Middle East, Cuba, SALT, and reports of the abuse of Soviet dissidents, changed the mood of the media coverage. Citing comments like "Many Faces of Kremlin, Smiles for Europe, Frown for Washington" and "... keeping the American 'bogey' now that the Soviets' relations with China and West Germany are better," the media depicted a more aggressive Soviet stance that clearly

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<sup>373</sup> William S. Sham, "Stalin-Hitler Pact, 1970 Model?" *National Review*, September 8, 1970, 42.

<sup>374</sup> Joe Alex Morris, Jr., "Hammering at Recognition," *The Nation*, May 25, 1970, 614-616.

<sup>375</sup> "A Good Beginning," *The Nation*, August 31, 1970, 131-132.

<sup>376</sup> Paul Wahl, "Opening to the East: Brandt and the two Germanys," *The Nation*, February 1, 1971, 142-145.

translated into a more cautious approach to *Ostpolitik*.<sup>377</sup> The previously conservative arguments became more forceful, focusing on American interests concerning *Ostpolitik*. Issues like threats to the Western alliance, the disadvantages of high-tech exports, and whether West Germany received enough in return for its concessions were of crucial importance in the latter half of 1970. The issue of Berlin, however, remained benchmark for any evaluation on the value of *Ostpolitik*.<sup>378</sup>

Despite the ideological division between conservatives and liberals in this debate, one of the most forceful opponents to *Ostpolitik* ironically came from the American labor unions. The AFL-CIO Executive Council clearly recognized the link between *Osthandel* and Soviet influence. In a damning critique of Brandt's *Ostpolitik*, the diplomatic advances of *Ostpolitik* were portrayed as giving away the Western powers' diplomatic leverage for nothing in return.

The most disturbing feature of the present world situation is the continued growth of Soviet military power and political influence [...] But the greatest diplomatic victory for Moscow in the last year has been its Treaty of August 12, 1970 with the Federal Republic of Germany. In this treaty, a Western power has, for the first time, recognized the post-war Soviet conquests and hegemony in Eastern Europe. In addition, the Federal German government has promised an expansion of trade, long term credits, scientific, technological, and cultural contacts and arrangements with the USSR. The Soviet Union has given nothing in return for these great concessions. The Federal German negotiators did not succeed in having the Soviets recognize, in the treaty, the German people's right of self-determination or in obtaining Moscow's renunciation of its right of intervention on the basis of Article 53 and 107 of the U.N. Charter. [...]

Though Bonn has made the ratification of the treaty [...] dependent on a satisfactory Berlin settlement, there has been no improvement regarding the plight of this city. In the Four Power talks on Berlin, the USSR has, to date, shown no willingness to make any concessions. On the contrary, the Kremlin continually demands concessions by the West.<sup>379</sup>

How bad public opinion with the American labor force really was can be seen by German reaction to the article, "Willy Brandt: Remaking the Face of Europe," published by the

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<sup>377</sup> Telegram, German Embassy in Washington to German Foreign Office, "Der Wandel im außenpolitischen Bewußtsein der amerikanischen Öffentlichkeit seit Sommer 1970," December 30, 1970, BA 102/111915, 3-5.

<sup>378</sup> Ibid, 5-7.

<sup>379</sup> Statement by the AFL-CIO Labor Union Executive Council on U.S. Strength and World Responsibility—Best Guarantee for World Peace, Bal Harbour, Fla., February 19, 1971, BA 136/6220 (This statement was approved almost unanimously by council members).

American Automobile Workers Union (UAW). The German embassy in Washington commented that this article “belongs to one of the relatively few comments from organized labor in the U.S. which finds the *Ostpolitik* of the [German] Federal Government to be positive.”<sup>380</sup>

Some members of the U.S. Congress also were critical of *Ostpolitik*. After a prominent SPD leader, Steffen, accused the allied forces of being in Germany under precisely the same moral, political, and juridical conditions under which the Soviet occupiers were in Czechoslovakia, conservative Congressman Philip M. Crane linked this attitude with Brandt’s *Ostpolitik* and voiced his displeasure.

We have heard so much of the alleged differences between Chancellor Brandt and his defense minister. We know also that some members of Mr. Brandt’s coalition partner, the free democrats, were so displeased over ‘*Ostpolitik*’ that they resigned and joined the opposition. [...]

It can be said that extreme statements such as this one [Mr. Steffen’s] should not be dignified with an answer. However, the point is that these kinds of remarks show what is happening in [the] SPD in Germany.

Our government must be aware of these pressures as they continue to deal with *Ostpolitik*. I am confident that the voters of West Germany will appropriately deal with political irresponsibility when their turn comes. Meanwhile, however, we must recognize reality and unfortunately reality suggests that Chancellor Brandt’s party is being influenced by a far leftist faction whose intentions do not coincide with those of the United States or our NATO allies.<sup>381</sup>

It must be noted that not all Members of Congress shared this view. Senator Jacob K. Javits, for example, was very adamant about his support for Brandt’s *Ostpolitik*. In a conversation with von Dohnanyi, he assured the minister that his use of the term “Finnlandization” in reference to German *Ostpolitik* had been politically abused and he claimed that it would be stiken from the transcripts. He explicitly wanted to convey to

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<sup>380</sup> Letter, German Embassy in Washington, Middelmann, to German Foreign Office, “Leitartikel des Direktors der Auslandsabteilung der amerikanischen Automobilarbeitergewerkschaft UAW, Victor Reuther,” April 6, 1971, BA 136/6220.

<sup>381</sup> Telegram, German Ambassador in Washington, Pauls, to German Foreign Office, “Statement des Kongreßabgeordneten Philip Crane,” April 16, 1971, BA 136/6220.

Brandt that he “was in full agreement with the foreign policy of the German government.”<sup>382</sup>

Criticism, however, was not just limited to the Eastern Treaties, themselves. Former Undersecretary of State George W. Ball criticized *Ostpolitik* on the basis that it rested on a faulty paradigm shift in the German perception of the Soviet Union. Implying that Willy Brandt viewed the Soviet Union as a peaceful nation while it was only strategically dormant, he discarded the diplomatic significance of the two Eastern treaties and questioned their long-term effect on the mentality of the German people.

Today Willy Brandt’s initiative, which seeks to revivify that policy [of French détente], has, I think, been badly understood in America, largely because the two treaties negotiated so far—one with Moscow and one with Warsaw—contain so little of substance that it is difficult for Americans to see just what purpose they serve. [...]

The danger is not that the Bonn-Moscow Pact will lead Germany into too intimate relations with the Soviet Union, but that it may instead lead it to a dangerous complacency. This is the essence of my own reservations. Will a new generations of German—who feel no responsibility for the obscenities of Nazism, for the war, the defeat or the occupation—be prepared to make the exertions necessary for a protracted holding of the line against the continuing, though presently frustrated, objective of the Soviet Union to push the boundaries of its empire farther to the West? Will they be prepared to exercise the patience and pay the cost which the continuance of this policy entails, particularly when pressures will almost certainly build up in America for some phasing out of our own overseas deployment?<sup>383</sup>

Germans attending Ball’s speech observed a “long and agreeing applause,” indicating just how unpopular *Ostpolitik* had become.<sup>384</sup>

The perception of a weakening U.S. economy increased drastically in early 1972. The shock of having a negative trade balance called for a harsher policy to remedy the trade deficit and financial situation. The German embassy observed that protective tariffs and a harsher criticism of the EC policies would probably be forthcoming. At the same

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<sup>382</sup> Letter, Minister for Education and Culture, Klaus von Dohnanyi, to Chancellor Brandt, November 27, 1972, BA 136/6921.

<sup>383</sup> Address by former Undersecretary of State George W. Ball at the World Affairs Council of Northern California Conference, May 8, 1971, Asilomar, California, as cited in Report 180/1971, German General Consulate in San Francisco, Dr. Motz, to German Foreign Office, “Deutsche Ostpolitik,” May 13, 1971, BA 136/6220. 5-13.

<sup>384</sup> Ibid.



time, the German ambassador commented that a trade deal between the U.S. and the Soviet Union of \$1 billion in grain deliveries over the next three years was a sign of liberalization.<sup>385</sup> The subsequent peak in trade between the U.S. and the Soviet Union was mentioned often by German delegates when discussing trade policies with their U.S. counterparts. The Germans frequently took these grain deliveries as a sign that the U.S. and the FRG were on the same page with their trade policies, especially in 1973 when the U.S. increase in trade with the Soviet Union rivaled that of the FRG. However, this assessment was incorrect. For one, the U.S. did not think that agricultural goods improved the strategic situation of the Soviet Union to the extent that manufacturing plants or the building an energy infrastructure did. For another, the creation of steel processing plants (as done by the Mannesmann AG), or constructing a natural gas distribution system in Bavaria created much stronger and long-term ties with the Soviet economy than selling surplus grain.

As a result, the situation of the FRG was decidedly more dependent on the goodwill of the Soviet Union than that of the U.S. The intense interlinking of the German and Soviet economies paralleled the intense cooperation and friendship that Brandt envisioned for German-Soviet relations. America's loose economic ties with the occasional condition on strategic exports exemplifies the quid-pro-quo attitude of an equal partner who pursues cooperation only far enough to maintain a strategic advantage.

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<sup>385</sup> Talking Points Memo, Meeting Minister Schmidt with Secretary of Commerce, Peterson, et al. in Washington, September 19, 1972, BA 102/115022, 2.

## Political Games over Berlin

### Soviet Pinpricks

The issue of Berlin was probably the most important issue for the FRG in which the Soviet Union could make its superiority felt. The German side repeatedly insisted on including Berlin in the treaty negotiations, but the West German position was apparently not strong enough to have the Berlin inclusion spelled out in a binding and clear manner in their agreements with the Eastern bloc. The Soviets had a history of using economic interactions to undermine the status of Berlin. One such example was the Soviet company Prodingtorg, which had filed a complaint about over the illegal re-export of Russian caviar by a West Berlin company to West Germany. Since the sales agreement prohibited re-exports to third countries and the Soviets considered Berlin a separate country, in their view this constituted a break in the sales agreement.<sup>386</sup> With such harassment tactics the Soviets were able to keep the issue of West Berlin in the forefront of political debate.

The Bonn government sought to pursue a trade agreement as it had an interest in strengthening economic ties with the Soviet Union. Since they could not command German companies to pursue trade deals with the Soviet Union as the Soviets could do, the security a trade agreement provided was of utmost importance for the revitalization of trade. The problem with concluding the agreement was not one of economics but politics. In no prior trade agreements between the FRG and the Soviet Union were there references to West Berlin. The only treaty still valid was the 1958 German-Soviet Agreement on Trade and Shipping. In this treaty the Germans had handed the Soviet

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<sup>386</sup> Letter, Minister for Agriculture to Minister for Economics, "Reexportklausel bei der UdSSR," July 29, 1966, B102/99987.

delegation a letter stating that the FRG assumed that West Berlin was included in the treaty. The Soviet delegate apparently took the letter unopened and in a later negotiation the Soviets denied the validity of the said treaty for West Berlin.<sup>387</sup> Negotiations in 1967 on the reinstatement of a general trade agreement faltered on the issue of Berlin.

The Soviets were also adamant in insisting that trade with German companies in Berlin was to be conducted in U.S. dollars. Soviet firms rejected German credit lines and even insisted that German companies have their trade with the Soviet Union funneled through branch offices in West Berlin. In one instance, when a German company did not have such a branch the Soviet firm involved recommended to the German owner that he find one.<sup>388</sup> The Soviets turned the issue any way they pleased. They gladly accepted West German import licenses issued to Berlin companies as it provided them with sought-after hard currency. On the other hand, they strictly separated West Berlin from West Germany in their trade statistics, during fairs when raising the Berlin rather than the West German flag, and in insisting on payment of clearly West German goods in U.S. dollars.<sup>389</sup>

For the German government the inclusion of Berlin in any prospective trade agreement was of paramount importance. Even in talks with the Soviets on forming a commission that would negotiate a trade agreement, the German side stated that “the work of the German-Soviet trade commission would take into account the ties between the Federal Republic of Germany and Berlin (West), especially in the area of economics, science and technology.” Should this not be possible, it was concluded that “we will have

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<sup>387</sup> Memo, Dr. Becker, “Deutsch-sowjetischer Handelsvertrag,” September 28, 1970, BA 102/99988.

<sup>388</sup> Telegram, Herr Massion to German Foreign Office, “Handel der Sowjetunion mit Berlin,” April 15, 1970, BA 102/100001.

<sup>389</sup> Memo, Dr. Neundörfer, “Bisherige Haltung der Sowjetunion gegenüber Berlin im deutsch-sowjetischen Warenverkehr,” October 7, 1970, BA 102/100001.

to wait with the formation of the German-Soviet Trade Commission until the Four Power Agreement on Berlin will be in force.”<sup>390</sup>

Including West Berlin in any treaty with the Soviet Union was not simply a priority for the Brandt government. In a sense, the Berlin issue provided a tangible measurement of the effectiveness of *Ostpolitik*. Not to include West Berlin would have been a public relations disaster for the SPD/FDP coalition. As Brandt explained to Bahr in August 1970 after failing to find satisfactory coverage of the Berlin issue in Bahr’s account of his Soviet negotiations: “The [Berlin Declaration] is a substantial element and a crucial point domestically. [...] The Soviet side has to understand that our government has to explain in parliament in which way the foreign minister has articulated our interest in this crucial question.” He further explained that a de-facto inclusion of West Berlin in the East-West trade would be very helpful. Finally, he warned Bahr that “we need a substantial discussion, an agreed-on formal declaration and an agreed-on terminology.”<sup>391</sup>

Brandt was further concerned about the spirits of West Berliners. He saw the current situation as unattractive, depressing, and devoid of youthful energy.

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<sup>390</sup> Letter, Foreign Minister, Scheel, to Economics Minister, Schiller, “Deutsch-sowjetische Wirtschaftskommission,” January 24, 1972, BA 102/100002, 1.

<sup>391</sup> Letter, Chancellor Brandt to Egon Bahr, August 3, 1970, Bundeskanzler, Mappe 2, Willy Brandt Archiv [WBA], 1-2. Original: “Weder in den Delegationsberichten noch in Deinem Brief finde ich etwas über die von uns vorgesehene Berlin-Erklärung. Dies ist aber materiell und innenpolitisch ein springender Punkt. Eine Sache sind die Rechte der Mächte, die wir nicht anrühren, eine zweite Sache unsere Hoffnungen in Bezug auf die Gespräche über Berlin. Eine dritte Sache: unser Interesse an West-Berlin, das der sowjetischen Seite sehr deutlich gemacht werden muß.

[...] Die Sowjetische Seite [muß] verstehen, daß unsere Regierung spätestens im Bundestag klarzumachen haben wird, auf welche Weise der Außenminister unsere Interesse in dieser vitalen Frage vertreten hat und auf welches Verständnis er dabei gestoßen ist. Deshalb muß, ohne den Gesprächen der Vier in die Quere zu kommen, möglichst konkret gesprochen werden. Ein Beispiel: Es wäre eine wesentliche Hilfe, wenn – unabhängig von allem juristischen Drum und Dran – klargestellt werden könnte, daß die tatsächliche Einbeziehung in den Warenaustausch auch in Zukunft gelten soll und daß auf anderen praktischen Gebieten entsprechend verfahren werden kann.[...]

Um noch einmal zu präzisieren: Mit einer bloß vertraulichen Erwähnung ist es nicht getan. Es bedarf erstens einer substantiellen Erörterung, zweitens einer abzusprechenden formalen Erklärung, drittens einer ebenfalls abzusprechenden Sprachregelung über den Vertragsverhandlungen geführten Meinungs-austausch.“

In the current condition time is working against us. The aging of society progresses, the longing of the people for normal circumstances, as well. [...] Maybe we can even get back what has been lost many years ago. [...] The spirit of West Berlin is more important to me than the unavoidable acceptance of the Oder-Neisse Line. [...] West Berlin is even more important to me than good or not so good relations to the GDR.<sup>392</sup>

With the political stakes that high domestically, West German politicians categorically required the inclusion of West Berlin in the treaty. Economics Minister Schiller, for example, upon being asked by a journalist during his trip to Moscow in October 1970 whether he had felt that the Russians agreed to consider West-Berlin as part of the FRG, answered that “West Berlin must be included in the territorial delineation of the treaty. The Soviet reaction to this was reluctant, as usual. The question of the territory will, therefore, be a major element of the upcoming negotiations.”<sup>393</sup>

The Soviets did their best to heat up the issue. The chair of the Foreign Relations committee, Jury A. Zhukov, explained in a speech on September 22, 1970 that “we are not of the opinion that the Federal Republic has a right to assume that West Berlin is part of it. It is not politically united with it. West Berlin is the only territory that still remains under occupation. No one can change these facts.”<sup>394</sup> In backdoor negotiations, Soviet Premier Kosygin was even more direct. Prodded by Schiller about whether using the jurisdiction of the German Bundesbank would be an appropriate term for a new trade

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<sup>392</sup> Letter, Chancellor Brandt to John J. McCloy, March 24, 1971, Bundeskanzler, Mappe 43, WBA, 3-4. Original: “Im gegenwärtigen Zustand arbeitet die Zeit dort nicht für uns. Die Überalterung nimmt zu, der Wunsch der Menschen nach normalen Verhältnissen ebenfalls. [...] Vielleicht gelingt es sogar, zurückzuholen, was vor vielen Jahren verlorengegangen ist, ohne daß sich außer [...] Eine derartige Berlin-Regelung würde der Stadt zum ersten Mal eine natürliche Attraktion und ein neues Blühen beschere können. Die Lebenskraft West-Berlins ist mir wichtiger als die ohnehin nicht vermeidbare Hinnahme der Oder-Neiße-Linie, die außer der CSU niemand in der Welt mehr in Frage stellt. Mir ist West-Berlin sogar wichtiger als gute oder weniger gute Beziehungen zur DDR.“

<sup>393</sup> Letter, Economics Ministry, Schulte-Steinberg, to Economics Minister Schiller, “Interview von Herrn Minister für die Pariser Zeitung Les Echos,” October 12, 1970, BA 102/10001, 2. Original: “West-Berlin muß also in den räumlichen Geltungsbereich [der BRD] einbezogen werden. Die sowjetische Reaktion hierauf war zunächst verhalten. Die Frage des Geltungsbereichs wird daher ein wesentlicher Punkt für die kommenden Verhandlungen über ein neues Handelsabkommen sein.“

<sup>394</sup> German Foreign Office, Dr. Bräutigam, to Economics Ministry, Lukas, “Vortrag von Jurij A. Shukow,” December 4, 1970, BA 102/99988.

agreement, Kosygin simply replied: “This is a complicated question. I think it should not be included in parts of the trade agreement so as not to complicate the economic issues. I therefore ask you not to pose that question here.”<sup>395</sup>

The German foreign office, however, picked up Schiller’s suggestion. Rather than insisting on an agreement on Berlin before negotiations could begin, the German Foreign Office wanted to send a letter to the Soviet embassy, insisting that the FRG could only conduct a trade agreement if it referred to the jurisdiction of the “Währungsgebiet der Bundesbank.”<sup>396</sup> In another German push for movement on the issue, German ambassador Allardt informed the Soviet Foreign Ministry through Ambassador Valentin Falin that the FRG was willing to negotiate a trade agreement, but that an agreement on the jurisdiction over West Berlin had to be reached before it could be initialed. Falin, on the other hand, presumably in accordance with a Soviet stance that was designed to leave the Germans sweating, stated that he could not comment on this, as this was part of the ongoing allied four-power-negotiations in Berlin.<sup>397</sup>

When the Soviet delegation for the negotiations finally met in Bonn on February 25, 1971 the German delegation leader, Dr. Hermes, reiterated that an agreement without the inclusion of Berlin was out of the question and the Soviet delegation leader, Manzullo, replied that this had nothing to do with the current negotiations. While the bulk of economic questions were resolved quickly, the question of Berlin remained as the major problem. The delegation agreed to end the first round of negotiations on March 5,

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<sup>395</sup> MemCon, Visit of Minister Schiller with Prime Minister Kosygin, September 26, 1970, BA 102/100023, 7-8. Original: “Das ist eine komplizierte Frage. Ich meine, sie sollte nicht in Elemente des Handelsabkommens aufgenommen werden, um die wirtschaftlichen Fragen nicht zu komplizieren. Ich bitte Sie deshalb, die Frage hier nicht aufzuwerfen.“

<sup>396</sup> Memo, Dr. Becker, “Deutsch-sowjetisches Handelsabkommen,” September 30, 1970, BA 102/99988.

<sup>397</sup> Letter, Economics Ministry, Dr. Thieme, to Economics Minister Schiller, “Aufnahme der deutsch-sowjetischen Verhandlungen über ein Handelsabkommen,” December 15, 1970, BA 102/99988.

1971 and reconvene in Moscow at some future date, presumably after the Four Power negotiations on Berlin had been concluded.<sup>398</sup> When the negotiations were aborted, there were only two issues that posed substantial problems: a) trade liberalization for German imports and b) the issue of Berlin.<sup>399</sup> While trade liberalization was a matter of degree and quite negotiable, Berlin was a matter of principle. The Eastern treaties, a trade agreement, and German domestic support of *Ostpolitik*, all hinged on the issue of Berlin. It is not surprising, therefore, that the Brandt government saw its political fate as intricately connected with the Four Power Agreement.

#### The Four Power Agreement on Berlin

With the fate of Brandt's government riding on the outcome of the Four Power Agreement it should have been relatively easy to boycott the process and end Brandt's overtures to the East. Regardless of their public posture, both Nixon and his national security advisor agreed that *Ostpolitik* contained significant risks, especially since it would give the Soviet Union a lever to pry the alliance apart.

[t]he objective obstacle facing Brandt is that he cannot keep Soviet friendship if he emphasizes West Germany's ties to NATO. German ties to the European community can be agreeable to the Soviets only if they see it as a means to weaken NATO. [...] Brandt has maneuvered the situation so that we have been pushed into the position of being responsible for both Berlin, and for the success of his Eastern initiative [...] As a result of the signature of the German-Soviet treaty, European political relationships have turned a corner, and we will be facing a new period in our relationship with Europe. [...] The impact of the German-Soviet treaty might very well lead to an increased interest on the part of the Europeans to deal more independently with Moscow. Moscow, in turn, will find it useful to encourage this in order to split off the various Western Allies from each other.<sup>400</sup>

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<sup>398</sup> Memo, Dr. Becker, "Deutsch-sowjetische Wirtschaftsverhandlungen," March 2, 1971, BA 102/99988.

<sup>399</sup> Letter, Economics Ministry, Dr. Hanemann, to Economics Minister Schiller, "Deutsch-sowjetische Wirtschaftsverhandlungen," March 5, 1971, BA 102/10001.

<sup>400</sup> Memo, Henry A. Kissinger to President Nixon, September 1, 1970, "The German-Soviet Treaty," folder: "Germany Vol VII. 1 August 70 - Nov 70," Box 684, Country Files - Europe, NSCF, NPMS, NA.

Nixon deemed this “decisive” and an “excellent perceptive analysis (and somewhat ominous).”<sup>401</sup> The Nixon administration also had clear alternatives to the SPD-led government. On September 13, 1970 Kissinger called the CDU “our friends” whom the U.S. must not “demoralize” by openly supporting the policy of the SPD.<sup>402</sup> Ironically, Kissinger even expressed his regret that the German ultra-right party had not entered parliament, since this would have shifted political power in the German Parliament in favor of the CDU.

The worst tragedy 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.<sup>403</sup>

Nixon also followed this line when he assured CDU party chairman, Rainer Barzel, that “we stand by our old friends.”<sup>404</sup> This stance was never pronounced in public, and indeed was a tricky policy to enforce. Any tensions between the Nixon administration and Brandt’s government would have undermined the alliance and further exposed Germany to Soviet influence. Furthermore, Germany was a key element in the American version of détente, and therefore not to be alienated. On the other hand, Nixon wanted to avoid helping Brandt remain in office by only offering his tacit approval of *Ostpolitik*. In short, the Nixon administration tried to pursue the course that would best suit the United States, which was not to offend the SPD while leaning towards the CDU.

In a National Security memorandum dated November 6, 1970, Kissinger pursued this policy to perfection. He outlined the need to

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<sup>401</sup> Ibid.

<sup>402</sup> Memo, Henry A. Kissinger to President Nixon, September 13, 1970, folder: “Germany Vol VII. 1 August 70 - Nov 70,” Box 684, Country Files - Europe, NSCF, NPMS, NA.

<sup>403</sup> Recording of Conversation between President Nixon and Henry A. Kissinger, May 29, 1971, White House Tapes, Conversation 507-4, NPMP, NA.

<sup>404</sup> Rainer Barzel, *Im Streit und umstritten: Anmerkungen zu Konrad Adenauer, Ludwig Erhard und den Ostverträgen* (Frankfurt a. Main: Ullstein, 1986), 172.



develop a sense of confidence and trust in relations with the FRG, whether governed by the CDU or SPD [...] to avoid to the fullest extent feasible any involvement, either indirectly or directly, in the internal political affairs of the FRG and, in particular, to avoid any impression that we favor or support any political party in the FRG.<sup>405</sup>

While this document, at first glance, seemed to have played towards the SPD interests, it was in fact a masterpiece of Kissingerian political maneuvering. Since Kissinger announced that “this policy will be communicated to the British and French governments and to the FRG as part of the normal consultative process,” it gave President Nixon good reason to decline any statement that supported Brandt or his *Ostpolitik*. The CDU could not be offended since this policy welcomed relationships with either party. While it supported “the FRG’s Eastern policy” in general, the United States did not obligate itself to “support particular tactics, measures, timing or interpretations.” It further stated an assertive American policy in which “our juridical position with respect to Germany as a whole is in no way impaired” and strengthened the Americans’ negotiating position with the Soviet Union in that “a new four power agreement is, therefore, not an essential requirement in terms of our interests or our policy.”<sup>406</sup> In essence, this policy severely limited American cooperation in the pursuit of Brandt’s *Ostpolitik* while endorsing it in general terms.

Such a policy of delay was, of course, not acceptable to Brandt. In December 1970 Brandt emissary Horst Ehmke met with Kissinger and Assistant Secretary of State for European Affairs Martin Hillenbrand on short notice to discuss the lack of progress on the Four Power Agreement on Berlin. Unofficially, “reports of unhappiness in the Nixon administration over West German Chancellor Willy Brandt’s Eastern policy” had

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<sup>405</sup> National Security Decision Memorandum 91, “United States Policy on Germany and Berlin,” November 6, 1970,” folder “Germany BERLIN Vol III. Jan - Apr 72,” Box 691, Country Files - Europe, NSCF, WHSF, NPMS, NA, 1.

<sup>406</sup> Ibid, 2.

spread to the news media.<sup>407</sup> These sentiments were certainly true with respect to Nixon.<sup>408</sup> Two months before the conclusion of the Four Power talks on Berlin, in May 1971, he still retained his aversion to *Ostpolitik* and the liberal German chancellor. “I don’t want to hurt our friends in Germany [CDU] by catering to that son-of-a-bitch [Brandt].”<sup>409</sup>

Kissinger’s stance was more oblique but ultimately carried the day. While he had been concerned about *Ostpolitik*, this was mostly due to the lack of his personal involvement, not its effect on international relations. In his memoirs he triumphantly declared the linkage between the Eastern treaties and the successful completion of a Four Power Agreement as successfully harnessing of “the beast of détente”.<sup>410</sup> Using such terminology not only indicates the strong desire for the U.S. to take the leadership in détente policies but also the reluctance to engage in it altogether. Yet he failed to take the initiative and continued to work closely with Bahr on the Four Power negotiations. Bahr had apparently learned from past mistakes and continued to outline in great detail his talks with Soviet representative Falin, even recounting personal aspects of Falin’s wife’s illness.<sup>411</sup> Kissinger, on his part, involved Bahr extensively in the preparation for the talks. Kissinger remembered that he had given Ambassador Dobrynin a draft that suggested a focus on practical aspects rather than legal issues as a way to overcome a deadlock in negotiations. Kissinger apparently had not modified many of Bahr’s

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<sup>407</sup> Marilyn Berger, “Bonn Official, Kissinger Confer,” *The Washington Post*, December 22, 1970, A18.

<sup>408</sup> This is in sharp contrast to Stephen Ambrose, who depicted Kissinger as suspicious of *Ostpolitik* while Nixon embraced it. Ambrose, 464.

<sup>409</sup> Recording of Conversation between Nixon and Kissinger, May 29, 1971. [NARA NPMP] White House Tapes, Conversation 507-4.

<sup>410</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 534.

<sup>411</sup> Letter, U.S. Ambassador in Bonn, Rush, to Henry A. Kissinger, March 28, 1971, folder “Ambassador Rush - Berlin Vol. I [1 of 2],” Box 59, Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, Country Files-Europe, NSCF, NPMS, NA.

suggestions in this draft, which was discussed during a weekend retreat, since he simply gave Dobrynin Bahr's German version of the draft.<sup>412</sup> Furthermore, Bahr was invited to be a third party in backchannel meetings between Ambassador Rush and Soviet representative Falin, who was the key Soviet representative in the negotiations.<sup>413</sup> Thus, it must have been an issue of hurt pride for Kissinger that Bahr had excluded him from the initial Soviet-German consultations. Far from "harnessing" Bahr, however, he involved the West German side heavily in developing acceptable language and diplomatic solutions for the American side during the Four-Power Agreement negotiations.

Nevertheless, it seems clear that the Nixon administration was less than enthusiastic about the Berlin talks. Fundamentally, Nixon viewed Berlin as a bargaining chip with the Soviets: "Berlin is something they need from us a hell of a lot more than we need it from them. [...] We are going to make them [the Soviets] pay."<sup>414</sup> Kissinger made extensive use of the Berlin accords as a negotiating tool. According to David Geyer, Berlin "was always a means and never the ends in Soviet-American relations."<sup>415</sup> The Berlin accords were used to speed up SALT negotiations and help pressure the Soviets to provide assistance to the American cause in Vietnam. Only when the Soviets linked the success on the Berlin talks with the possibility of a Soviet-American summit did the

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<sup>412</sup> MemCon between Henry A. Kissinger and Soviet Ambassador in Washington, Dobrynin, on April 27, 1971, Tab 1 of Memo, Henry A. Kissinger, "Meeting with Ambassador Dobrynin, April 27, 1971," folder "Berlin - Vol.3 [1 of 2]" Box 59, NSCF Henry A. Kissinger Office Files Country Files-Europe, NPMS, NA.

<sup>413</sup> Letter, U.S. Ambassador in Bonn, Rush, to Henry A. Kissinger, May 5, 1971, folder "Ambassador Rush - Berlin Vol. I [1 of 2]," Box 59, Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, Country Files-Europe, NSCF, NPMS, NA. For Falin's role, see Letter, U.S. Ambassador in Bonn, Rush, to Henry A. Kissinger, May 28, 1971, folder "Ambassador Rush - Berlin Vol. I [1 of 2]," Box 59, Henry A. Kissinger Office Files, Country Files-Europe, NSCF, NPMS, NA.

<sup>414</sup> Recording of Conversation with President Nixon in the Oval Office, June 14, 1971, White House Tapes, OVAL 519-15, NPMP, NA.

<sup>415</sup> David C. Geyer, "The Missing Link: Henry Kissinger and the Back-Channel Negotiations on Berlin" in David C. Geyer and Bernd Schaefer, eds., *American Détente and German Ostpolitik, 1969-1972* (Washington, DC: Supplement 1 to the Bulletin of the German Historical Institute, 2004): 80-92, 91-92.

Nixon administration move into high gear, finalizing the Four Power Agreement on September 3, 1971.<sup>416</sup>

Ultimately, though, the Four Power Agreement did not deliver to Bonn what they had desired: a clear and indisputable agreement that linked West Berlin with West Germany. Instead, the result was a vague formulation that each side could interpret the way it pleased. Even with the agreement in force, West Germany depended on case-by-case negotiations to include West Berlin in bilateral treaties. However, to the Brandt government this was not immediately apparent. Operating under the firm assumption that the Berlin issue was resolved, Brandt gave his foreign policy a new sense of independence from the United States.

#### The Height of Brandt's *Ostpolitik*

Ever since Brandt's ascension to the chancellorship, the public emphasis on balancing his Eastern policy with an active Western policy was part of the new foreign policy credo. According to both Brandt and Bahr, "the policy of a European unity [in this case not the EC but East and West Europe] cannot be pursued without the support and the backing of the U.S.A."<sup>417</sup>

On the other hand, there was a very real sense of distinction between the U.S. and West European stature in world politics. Economic and political turmoil in the U.S. portrayed a sense of weakness and insecurity to the outside world. As Günter Grass, a confidante of Brandt and intellectual leader put it:

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<sup>416</sup> Ibid.

<sup>417</sup> Talking Points Memo, Visit Chancellor Brandt to the U.S. on April 10/11, 1970, "Verhältnis Europa-USA // Handelspolitik," March 13, 1970, BA 102/111903, 1. Original: "Die Politik der europäischen Einigung [...] ist nicht durchzuführen ohne den Rückhalt und die Unterstützung der USA."

The United States are in an apparent irreparable crisis. The signs are many: Overconfidence gave way to aggressive insecurity. The liberal minorities resign or place their hope in mostly short-lived political actions. The youth, which had still protested yesterday is now preoccupied with itself and drugs. [...] Many predictions point to a second (creeping) civil war. Political assassinations occur daily in the countryside and have become entrenched practices. The country is sick. Europe, if it does not want to become infected, must distance itself.<sup>418</sup>

Yet, distancing West Germany from the United States was impossible during 1970, nor was it even thinkable during the Four Power Agreement negotiations.

Consequently, Brandt backed Nixon and his policy in public. In a letter to a member of the Bundestag, Horst Krockert, he defended the fact that he had not critiqued the Vietnam War since his inaugural address.

Since then I have declined to publicly comment [on Vietnam], not even to the reports on the events of My Lai. I think it inappropriate to comment on this in light of the strong condemnation by President Nixon and in light of the moral debate that the media coverage has triggered within the American nation. [...]

The American government under President Nixon seeks peace in Vietnam. There can be no doubt about this. [...] I believe we should support the American government in its will to end this war on that basis [self-determination of the Vietnamese people].<sup>419</sup>

Brandt also defended Nixon's policies internationally. In a letter to Jean Monnet, for example, he praised Nixon's approach to the EEC. He wrote that "in particular Nixon's

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<sup>418</sup> Letter, Günter Grass to Chancellor Brandt, March 25, 1970, Mappe 6, Bundeskanzler, WBA, 1-3. Original: "Die Vereinigten Staaten befinden sich in einer, wie es den Anschein hat, durch nichts zu behebbenden Krise. Die Anzeichen sind vielgestalt: übersteigertes Selbstbewußtsein ist aggressiver Unsicherheit gewichen. Die liberale Minderheit flüchtet sich in Resignation oder in zumeist kurzlebige politische Aktionen. Die gestern noch protestierende Jugend ist mit sich und ihren Drogen beschäftigt. [...] Viele Prognosen deuten auf einen zweiten (schleichenden) Bürgerkrieg hin. Der politische Mord findet in der Provinz täglich statt und ist zur Gewohnheit geworden. Das Land ist krank: Europa wird, wenn es nicht infiziert werden will, auf Distanz gehen müssen."

<sup>419</sup> Letter, Chancellor Brandt to MdB Horst Krockert, January 23, 1970, Mappe 41, Bundeskanzler, WBA, 1-2. Original: "Ich habe es seither abgelehnt, mich öffentlich zu äußern, auch nicht zu den Berichten über die Geschehnisse von My Lai, weil ich angesichts der scharfen Verurteilung aller Ausschreitungen durch Präsident Nixon und des durch die Presseberichterstattung ausgelösten Bewissenskonflikts in der amerikanischen Nation eine eigene Stellungnahme für unangemessen halte."

Die amerikanische Regierung unter Präsident Nixon sucht den Frieden in Vietnam. An dieser Tatsache kann es keinen Zweifel geben. Sie ist bereit zu einer in Verhandlungen zu erreichenden Regelung des Konflikts mit ihren Gegnern, die eine einzige aber unverzichtbare Forderung erfüllen muß: die betroffene Bevölkerung muß das Recht erhalten, über ihr Schicksal selbst zu bestimmen.

Ich glaube, wir täten gut daran, die Berechtigung dieser Forderung anzuerkennen und die amerikanische Regierung in ihrem Willen, den Krieg auf dieser Grundlage zu beenden, zu unterstützen."

clarity of attitude impressed me, as he wants to continue to use the community as an important means to strengthen the position of the West.”<sup>420</sup>

By the summer of 1971, however, with the Four Power Agreement on Berlin all but completed, Brandt placed less emphasis on his *Westpolitik*. He declined to make small gestures of goodwill, such as giving a short speech in front of the American chamber of commerce in Frankfurt, where he could have strengthened relations at a time when the U.S. business community was very much suspicious of him. Instead, he sent then-Defense Minister Helmut Schmidt to give the talk.<sup>421</sup>

Brandt displayed an even stronger attitude when Kurt Birrenbach, a member of the Bundestag, indicated that the current year’s agreement to offset the costs of U.S. military troops in Germany might fail as the U.S. was facing a particularly difficult situation and the FRG had not agreed to the demands put forth by the U.S. (such as a larger percent of payments rather than loans, and a 0% interest rate on the remaining loans). Birrenbach outlined the fact that election year policies would blow a failure of an offset agreement out of proportion. He strongly advocated committing to the increased payments as the lesser of two evils. “As we have to fear that the Democratic Party will not be choosy with propagandistic demands, one should try to support this president, who is truly an atlanticist and shows concern for the problems of Europe.”<sup>422</sup>

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<sup>420</sup> Letter, Chancellor Brandt to Präsident des Aktionskomitees für die Vereinigten Staaten von Europa, Jean Monnet, May 11, 1970, Mappe 43, Bundeskanzler, WBA. Original: “Insbesondere die Klarheit der Haltung des amerikanischen Präsidenten hat mich beeindruckt, der die Gemeinschaft weiterhin als entscheidendes Mittel zur Stärkung der Position des Westens betrachtet.“

<sup>421</sup> Letter, Parlamentarischer Staatssekretär, Dr. Katharina Focke, to Defense Minister Helmut Schmidt, July 28, 1971, BA 136/6220.

<sup>422</sup> Letter, MdB, Dr. Kurt Birrenbach, to Chancellor Brandt, “Devisenausgleich mit den Vereinigten Staaten,” July 2, 1971, BA 136/6220, 2. Original: “Da zu fürchten ist, daß die Demokratische Partei in ihrer Wahlkampagne mit propagandistischen Forderungen nicht wählerisch sein wird, sollte man versuchen, diesen Präsidenten, der wirklich atlantisch orientiert ist und Verständnis für die Probleme Europas hat, zu unterstützen.“

Chancellor Brandt replied, rather coolly, that the German federal government “has agreed to provide the Americans appropriate compensation for the currency expenditures for their troops in the Federal Republic.” However, Brandt, for “political, psychological, and economic/financial reasons” refused to commit to the customary 80% compensation, despite his realization of the “danger for a continued military presence in Europe.”<sup>423</sup> In the next sentence he reaffirmed a previous statement for which Birrenbach had criticized him. “I am indeed of the opinion that we cannot buy an agreement by Congress to the American governmental policy of keeping troop levels in Europe the same.”<sup>424</sup> While Brandt certainly was correct in stating that he could not purchase American soldiers to be stationed in Germany, the unwillingness to help finance the expenses of positioning U.S. troops in the FRG would certainly strengthen the position of more isolationist members of Congress. When compared with previous governments, to whom this issue was a top priority, it seems evident that Brandt felt less need to fret over U.S. troop levels in Germany. *Ostpolitik* afforded him an unprecedented level of independence from the U.S.

Even within NATO, *Ostpolitik* had lost much of its controversy by the fall of 1971, making a strong display of pro-American support unnecessary. The German report on the NATO meeting in September 1971 explained that “the question of East-West relations is far less explosive today as compared to a year ago. [...] Apparently the Berlin Accord has convinced many that our policy is in the interest of everyone.”<sup>425</sup>

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<sup>423</sup> Letter, Chancellor Brandt to Dr. Kurt Birrenbach, July 22, 1971, BA 136/6220, 1-2.

<sup>424</sup> Ibid. Original: “Ich bin in der Tat der Auffassung, daß wir die Zustimmung des Kongresses zu dem Entschluß der amerikanischen Regierung, ihre Truppenstärke in Europa unverändert aufrechtzuerhalten, durch keine noch so große Zahlung erkaufen könnten.“

<sup>425</sup> Report, Heinz Ruhnau, 17th NATO Meeting in Ottawa (September 23-29, 1971), n.d., BA 136/6921, 2.

A more independent Brandt now found it possible to be less forthcoming with his support for Nixon's Vietnam policy. A proposed letter by a staffer commended Nixon on his policy.

In your eight-point-plan of January 25, 1972, and most recently in your declaration of May 8 1972 you have shown the way by which the Vietnam problem could be solved in a short period of time. This, however, requires the goodwill of all parties involved. I hope your opponents realize this soon and act accordingly.<sup>426</sup>

Brandt revised this letter, removing the part that implied his support of Nixon. Instead, all he wrote was an assurance that he was closely monitoring the situation and appreciated those policies that led to an end of the conflict.

I assure you, Mr. President, that I watch the developments in Southeast Asia with much care and that I fully appreciate those measures of yours, which aim at ending the conflict and lead to a negotiated solution.<sup>427</sup>

Later that year, after the "Christmas bombings," Brandt became even more critical than before, and on December 23, 1972 instructed his foreign minister to sound out the idea of issuing a critical statement on these new developments. He wished, however, for a European statement rather than a German one. While Scheel viewed the prospect of this idea with justifiable misgivings, he nonetheless, consulted with the other West European allies. Nothing came of the idea as the British refused to do so and the French were concerned about their role as mediator in the Paris peace conference. One interesting element here is that even though Brandt tried to hide behind a European front, the German government was fully aware that by consulting its West European allies, this

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<sup>426</sup> Draft Letter, Chancellor Brandt to President Nixon, [n.d.], BA 136/6921. Original: "In Ihrem am 25. Januar 1972 veröffentlichten Acht-Punkte-Plan und zuletzt in Ihrer Erklärung vom 8. Mai 1972 haben Sie selbst, Herr Präsident, den Weg aufgezeigt, durch den das Vietnam-Problem in kurzer Zeit gelöst werden könnte. Hierzu bedarf es allerdings des guten Willens aller Beteiligten. Ich hoffe, daß auch die Gegenseite dies bald erkennt und die notwendigen Konsequenzen zieht."

<sup>427</sup> Letter, Chancellor Brandt to President Nixon, May 15, 1972, BA 136/6921. Original: "Ich versichere Ihnen, Herr Präsident, daß ich die Entwicklung in Südostasien mit größter Aufmerksamkeit verfolge und daß ich für Ihre Maßnahmen, die auf Beendigung des Konflikts abzielen und zu einer Verhandlungslösung führen sollen, volles Verständnis habe."



attempt would be reported to Washington. Apparently, Brandt felt he was in a strong enough a position to advance the idea anyway.<sup>428</sup>

Brandt's shifting orientation toward Western Europe at the cost of the transatlantic partnership can also be found in his response to the suggestion for regular consultations between NATO and Members of the European Parliament under the auspices of NATO. As the Parliamentary Commission of NATO suggested, this would increase contact between U.S. Representatives and Members of the European Parliament. Brandt was not very enthusiastic. Using the weak argument that Ireland was not part of NATO, he said that he preferred to leave any possible contacts under the auspices of the European Parliament. Interestingly enough, Blumenfeld's response had merit. He argued that the fact that there were non-NATO members in the European Parliament would mean more intensive consultation between the Americans and Europeans.<sup>429</sup> Brandt, however, did not want to strengthen the role of NATO in the European integration process. This was explained very clearly in an accompanying letter, which clarified his reasoning:

This draft avoids a [positive] commitment to the suggestion by the political committee to recognize the North Atlantic Council as an official North American-European parliamentary body. In the past we have, in accordance with the Foreign Office, followed the principle that it would be against the parliamentary principle to escalate parliamentary groups that have no real authorities.<sup>430</sup>

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<sup>428</sup> Memo, Minister Bahr to Chancellor Brandt, "Europäische Reaktion auf amerikanische Vietnam-Politik," January 4, 1973, Mappe 190, Bundeskanzler, WBA.

<sup>429</sup> Letter, Minister Ehmke to North Atlantic Assembly, Erik Blumenfeld, July 21, 1972, BA 136/6921; North Atlantic Assembly, Eric Blumenfeld, to Chancellor's Office, Minister Ehmke, August 2, 1972, BA 136/6921.

<sup>430</sup> Letter, Economics Ministry, Fischer, to Chancellor's Office, Minister Ehmke, "Schreiben des Vorsitzenden des Politischen Ausschusses der Nordatlantischen Versammlung," July 18, 1972, BA 136/6921. Original: "In diesem Entwurf wird eine Festlegung zu dem weitem Vorschlag des politischen Ausschusses, die Nordatlantische Versammlung als offizielle Nordamerikanisch-Europäische Parlamentarische Körperschaft anzuerkennen, vermieden. Wir haben uns im Einvernehmen mit dem Auswärtigen Amt in der Vergangenheit an den Grundsatz ausgerichtet, daß es dem parlamentarischen Gedanken widerspräche, Parlamentariergremien, die wie die Nordatlantische Versammlung keine echten parlamentarischen Befugnisse haben, aufzuwerten."

While this procedural objection was not explicitly directed against the United States, there can be no doubt that an increased consultation between the European Community and representatives of the United States would have been advantageous. As Brandt was not usually a stickler for formalities, the intent behind this objection must have been to limit the influence the U.S. would have on European decision-making. Quite confident in Europe's ability to develop its own foreign policy, Brandt must have seen too much interference from the U.S. as a hurdle.

Brandt's strategy was clear: engage the Soviet Union as much as possible. For this, the United States was more of a hindrance after the signing of the Four Power Agreement. Only closer cooperation with the East could bring about the pan-European peace order that Brandt desired, for which trade, politics, and culture were the crucial elements. As he remarked to Trade Minister Nikolai Patolichev during the signing of the trade agreement, "the area of economy, politics, and culture show first a realization [of detente]. This is not only important in light of German-Soviet relations but beyond that for the European development in general, which leads to a cooperative coexistence because of this."<sup>431</sup>

With the Four Power Agreement out of the way, Brandt's *Ostpolitik* was able to score one success after another. The first was his visit with Brezhnev in the Crimea. Here, trade issues played a vital role. Both Brezhnev and Brandt agreed that the trade volume was still too small. Brandt picked up on Kosygin's earlier suggestion of a trade

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<sup>431</sup> MemCon, Chancellor Brandt with Soviet Foreign Trade Minister Patolicev, July 5, 1972, July 12, 1972, BA 102/100026. Original: "Im Bereich der Wirtschaft, der Politik, und der Kultur seien erste Verwirklichungen zu verzeichnen. Dies sei nicht nur im Blick auf die deutsch-sowjetischen Beziehungen sondern darüber hinaus auf die europäische Entwicklung im allgemeinen wichtig, die dank derartiger Schritte zur ‚kooperativen Koexistenz‘ führe."

commission and explained that the FRG was now ready to form such a commission.<sup>432</sup> Brezhnev, in turn, suggested even more deals in the oil and gas sector. He also added the possibility of high-quality plastics production by a plant to be constructed by German companies.<sup>433</sup> Brezhnev had further, concrete ideas on how to expand the trade volume with the FRG. He mentioned radio electronics, machine tooling, and the construction of a nuclear power plant. He also baited Brandt with the possibility of exploiting Soviet natural resources.<sup>434</sup>

Despite such a clear and open attitude towards trade, the Soviets' political obstinacy was quite striking. Brezhnev voiced concern about West German attempts to "twist" the text and meaning of the Four Power Agreement by translating it into German. "No one will consent to the skewing of the text that is available in three languages through a German translation."<sup>435</sup> Brezhnev's continued political reservations on the subject of détente with the FRG must be viewed in light of a lingering reservation about German unity and German political influence.

A far more realistic consideration, however, was the need to maintain an element of confrontation in Europe in order to block the likely hazards of a runaway détente process. Kremlin decision makers seemed to understand that an all-embracing relaxation of tensions in the region, pushed onward by a full-scale disarmament, would ultimately play into the West's hands. By spurring desires for East-West economic interdependence and even political liberalization in the countries of the Soviet bloc, it would above all play into West Germany's hands, chipping away at the rationale for the fortified barriers and repressive controls dividing the two halves of Europe. [...] Throughout the 1970s and the first half of 1980s, Soviet leaders regarded the main threat emanating from West Germany as political, not military.<sup>436</sup>

Anti-American rhetoric was also plentiful during this meeting. Brezhnev suggested , without prompting, that he would not wish the FRG to develop relations with the Soviet

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<sup>432</sup> MemCon, Meeting Chancellor Brandt and General Secretary Brezhnev in Oreanda, September 17, 1971, Mappe 1, Ordner 430, Depositorium Egon Bahr, 3.

<sup>433</sup> Ibid, 8.

<sup>434</sup> Ibid, 12.

<sup>435</sup> Ibid, 19.

<sup>436</sup> Michael J. Sodaro, *Moscow, Germany, and the West from Khrushchev to Gorbachev* (Ithaca : Cornell University Press, 1990), 394.

Union at the expense of its relations with other states, especially the U.S. He assured Brandt that “we had and have no such conniving plans.”<sup>437</sup> Yet at the same time he differentiated between the role of France and Great Britain on one hand, and that of the U.S. on the other. Brezhnev suggested that his main criterion for good and promising relations was the independence with which a country pursued its goals.<sup>438</sup> Ironically, he attributed the lack of political and economic interaction between the FRG and the Soviet Union during the 1960s to the fact that “the FRG was in a position vis-à-vis the East until recently in its foreign policy that didn’t allow it to make fundamental decisions. Forgetting that it was the Soviet Union that had isolated the FRG and not vice versa, Brezhnev continued to portray the Soviet Union as Germany’s new friend, one that would enable the FRG “to assume a place in the world that corresponds with its economic and technological prowess, so that the FRG could utilize its influence for the security and cooperation in Europe.”<sup>439</sup> In a stab at the Americans, he continued, “we know that there

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<sup>437</sup> Memo, Chancellor Brandt, “Gespräch mit Breschnew,” August 12, 1970, Mappe 1, Ordner 429A, Depositorium Egon Bahr, 3. Original: “Während Kossygin. Ganz – oder fast ganz – auf kritische Bemerkungen über unsere Verbündete oder einzelne von ihnen verzichtete [...] machte B[rezhnev] eine gewisse Differenzierung zwischen Frankreich/England und den USA. Andererseits sagte B. unaufgefordert, er möchte betonen, daß wir nicht die Absicht haben, eine Politik zu führen, die darauf hinausliefe, daß die BRD ihre Beziehungen zu uns auf Kosten der Beziehungen zu anderen Staaten, insbesondere zu den USA, entwickelt, da wohl die USA Ihr wichtigster Partner in der Außenpolitik sind. Wir hatten und haben keine solchen hinterhältigen Pläne, und ich glaube, daß dies ein wichtiger Faktor ist.“

<sup>438</sup> Ibid. Original: “Gleichwohl bleibt festzustellen, daß B. es – unter Hinweis auf Frankreich unter bzw. seit de Gaulle – zu einem Kriterium für gute und zukunftssträchtige Beziehungen zu machen versuchte, ob wir eine ‚unabhängige‘, and unseren eigenen Interessen orientierte Politik führen wollten.“

<sup>439</sup> Translator’s Protocol, Conversation of Chancellor Brandt with General Secretary Brezhnev on August 12, 1970, Mappe 1, Ordner 429A, Depositorium Egon Bahr, 7. Original: “Offen gesagt, es war völlig anormal, daß die BRD bis vor kurzem in ihrer Außenpolitik gegenüber der SU und den sozialistischen Ländern in einer Lage war, die es nicht gestattete, grundsätzliche Entscheidungen zu treffen. Die SU tritt dafür ein, daß die BRD in der Welt den Platz einnimmt, der ihrem wirtschaftlichen und technischen Stand entspricht, daß die BRD ihren Einfluß auf die Sicherheit und Zusammenarbeit in Europa nutzt. Solch ein Kurs ist bestimmt nicht schlecht für die BRD selbst. Wir wissen, daß es Kräfte gibt, die Profit aus den Spannungen zwischen der BRD und der SU und den sozialistischen Ländern schlagen wollen.“

are powers that want to benefit from the tensions between the FRG and the Soviet Union.

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Brezhnev then continued his policy of playing the generous friend toward the subjugated Germany.

Deviating from my prepared notes, I would like to say that the Americans have really entrenched themselves in Europe after the war, especially in the FRG. [...] I have no clear intelligence, how far the Americans have penetrated the economy of the FRG, but it is without doubt, that they did and continue to try. You have to make up your mind on what you want to read into this fact. I do not know if the FRG likes this situation but I could imagine that your people and party wonder how to free themselves from this oppression. I only want to say that you do not need such supervision, for example in economic and technological areas. I am sure that the FRG could be much more successful when deciding political, economic, and other questions independently. In the U.S. they understand this all too well. That is why they pursue a certain policy or swear loyalty to the allies and portray the Communists as the bad guys. And the people believe that these are now our protectors, the democrats, and the others are the bitches, the communists. I am convinced that it is the other way around and that history will prove me right. I remember very well the images of fraternization between Russians and Germans during World War I.<sup>441</sup>

The protocol does not reflect whether Brandt in any way argued for or contradicted these statements. While it is doubtful that Brandt actually believed this twisted rhetoric of the past, the fact remains that Brezhnev had offered Germany an active and leading role in a future Europe that would be marked by security and cooperation. While Brezhnev only provided a vague sense of what this new Europe would look like, he was very clear on the prerequisite for this Europe: Germany would have to act more independently from the

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<sup>440</sup> Ibid.

<sup>441</sup> Ibid, 10-11. Original: "Abgehend von meinem vorbereiteten Konzept, möchte ich sagen, daß nach dem Krieg sich die Amerikaner in Europa festgesetzt haben, darunter auch in erheblichem Masse in der BRD. [...] Ich verfüge nicht über genaue Angaben darüber, inwieweit die Amerikaner in die Wirtschaft der BRD eingedrungen sind, aber es ist unbestritten, daß sie es sind und daß sie es noch weiter versuchen. Sie selbst werden sich Gedanken darüber machen müssen, was sich dahinter verbirgt. Ich weiß nicht, ob diese Situation der Bundesrepublik gefällt. Aber ich könnte mir vorstellen, daß Ihr Volk und Ihre Partei sich überlegen, wie man sich aus diesem Joch befreien könnte. Ich möchte nur sagen, daß etwa auf wissenschaftlich-technischem Gebieten eine solche Bevormundung für Sie überhaupt nicht nötig ist. Ich bin sicher, die Bundesrepublik kann selbstständig und mit mehr Erfolg viele politische, wirtschaftliche und andere Fragen entscheiden. In den USA weiß man es besser als ich. Deshalb betreibt man auch eine bestimmte Politik, schwört Treue seinem Verbündeten und stellt die Kommunisten als Bösewichte dar, und das Volk glaubt, dies sind nun unsere Beschützer, die sind Demokraten und das andere sind die Hundesöhne, die Kommunisten. Ich bin überzeugt davon, daß das gerade umgekehrt ist; wird die Geschichte zeigen. Ich erinnere mich noch gut an Bilder der Verbrüderung von Russen und Deutschen im Ersten Weltkrieg."

United States. Having a stronger West European integration to fall back on, a more assertive Germany seemed quite feasible from a foreign policy perspective. Domestically, however, a majority of the new *Ostpolitik* was still razor thin.

Apart from gaining political support for a closer cooperation with the Soviet Union, the legal status of trade relations still had to be resolved. By early 1972, there were still many problems with a formalized agreement. While trade did increase vis-a-vis previous years, the trade structure was unbalanced: 98% of all exports were industrial machinery and large factories, and of the total imports, 32% were natural resources and 45% half-finished goods. The Germans wished to diversify the exchange. Ideally, the Soviet Union would import more consumer goods and export more finished products. The Soviets, on their part, demanded a complete liberalization of imports from the Soviet Union by the end of 1974 and long-term low-interest loans. Of course, the issue of Berlin remained a key problem in negotiations.<sup>442</sup>

Later that year Finance Minister Schmidt brought the issue of trade diversification back up. Schmidt's visit with Ambassador Falin emphasized that the trade imbalance had grown significantly—2 billion marks for Soviet imports verses one billion marks for Soviet exports. But the Soviet ambassador continued the Soviet game of divide-and-conquer. Falin noted that Japan would soon surpass the FRG in its trade with the Soviet Union. The year 1973 had show marked activity on the part of the Americans and the Japanese and he reiterated the concerns Brezhnev had voiced to Bahr, namely that the German industry worked too slowly, which gave other countries an edge.<sup>443</sup>

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<sup>442</sup> Memo, Economics Minister Schiller, "Deutsch-sowjetische Wirtschaftsbeziehungen," February 15, 1972, BA 102/100002, 1-4.

<sup>443</sup> Memo, Undersecretary Mommsen, "Das heutige Gespräch von Bundesminister Schmidt mit Botschafter Falin," October 24, 1972, BA 1002/100002, 2.

In mid-1972 the German industry was still euphoric about the seemingly endless possibilities connected with Soviet economic expansion. Certainly influenced by political successes, the German public viewed the Soviet Union as the one superpower most likely to be superior in the long run.<sup>444</sup> With the second natural gas pipeline deal agreement in place, the prospect that Soviet trade with the FRG was gradually moving toward a Western-style exchange based on hard currency reserves and increasingly intertwined economic structures appeared plausible.

Even the Soviets expressed strong interest in the success of these political and economic ties. Gravely concerned about the ratification process of the Eastern treaties, on the day before the vote Brezhnev invited the president of the Bundesrat, Heinz Kühn, for a conversation that went considerably longer than originally scheduled. Brezhnev asked Kühn to convey to Brandt that both he and many people in the Soviet Union had personal sympathy for Brandt. Repeatedly, Brezhnev and Gromyko “sometimes in the same words” mentioned that the treaty was well balanced and that one could not expect the impossible from the Soviet Union.<sup>445</sup> “No German government will find a person to talk to about changing the treaty, should the Bundestag refuse it.”<sup>446</sup>

Brezhnev even went so far as to threaten compliance: “A rejection of the treaties would be negative for the Federal Republic, negative for Europe, and negative for international politics as a whole.” After that, he reverted to a reflective mode and asked Kühn towards the end of the visit “What else can we do?”<sup>447</sup> Brezhnev was so eager to

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<sup>444</sup> Elisabeth Noelle-Neumann, ed., *Jahrbuch der öffentlichen Meinung: 1968-1973* (Allensbach: Verlag für Demoskopie, 1974), 545. See also Appendix B, Figure 2.

<sup>445</sup> Memo, Heinz Kühn, “Bericht über meine Moskau-Reise vom 3.-12. April 1972,” n.d., BA 1-2/100023, 4.

<sup>446</sup> Ibid, 5.

<sup>447</sup> Ibid, 6.

see the Eastern treaties approved that he leaned on the GDR to be supportive of the Brandt government in the crucial weeks before the vote in Parliament. The GDR even went so far as to implement a “Brandt- Schutzwoche,” taking great care to prevent any inter-German controversy that could harm Brandt politically.<sup>448</sup>

The Soviet backchannel contact to Brandt, Vyacheslav Kevorkov, also had a conversation with Egon Bahr, in which Bahr remarked flippantly that the Brandt government did not have the money to bribe members of the Bundestag, and thus “such means [of gaining a majority in the Bundestag for the ratification of the Eastern treaties] have little interest to us.”<sup>449</sup> In response to conversation Kosygin approved a plot to deliver over a million marks to Bahr in West Berlin for the express purpose of bribing members of the Bundestag.<sup>450</sup> Bahr ultimately declined this offer but this demonstrates how much the Soviet Union was willing to meddle in internal German politics to achieve the ratification of the Eastern treaties.

One strategy that Bahr would have liked to see come to fruition in helping him battle the opponents of the Eastern treaties went too far for the Soviets: upon learning that former Chancellor and CDU icon Konrad Adenauer had floated the idea of a peaceful rapprochement with the Soviet Union in the 1950s, Bahr urged his Soviet contact, Kevorkov, to have the protocol of this interchange publicized.<sup>451</sup> Gromyko, upon reviewing the document, refused its release as it was categorized as a confidential

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<sup>448</sup> Sarotte, 24.

<sup>449</sup> Keworkow, 109.

<sup>450</sup> Keworkow, 110-119.

<sup>451</sup> Keworkow, 104.



conversation and he feared the loss of international credibility should such a document come to light.<sup>452</sup>

Brandt's *Ostpolitik* had reached its high point thanks to this level of such Soviet support and an eager German industry and a German public that had gradually discarded its view of the Soviet Union as an enemy. The razor-thin majority in the German parliament that ultimately approved his leadership and his *Ostpolitik* on April 27, 1972 assured the ratification of the Eastern treaties on May 17, 1972. With all the political hurdles out of the way, the political and economic interaction with the Soviet Union could achieve an even greater level. With the Soviets, the Western allies, and even the majority of the West German public in (sometimes tacit) support, the recognition of the status quo—the first step in the plan to overcome it—had been achieved. While this first step toward recognition had been difficult enough, the second step, a period of political change in the East, would prove even more taxing. Yet, without question, Brandt's policies had reanimated the question of German reunification. Having overcome international skepticism and domestic opposition, Brandt had brought West Germany to accept to post-war status quo in Europe. Through economic diplomacy he had managed to open a line of communication to the Soviet Union and emphasize the strength of the FRG: economics. Increased cooperation with the East had normalized relations with the Soviet Union and the Eastern bloc, and had begun to normalize the image of the Communist states in the political culture of West Germany. For some, these accomplishments outweighed the political price he had to pay, as evidenced the Nobel Peace Prize Brandt received in 1971. For others, the recognition of post-war borders, trade deals that heavily favored the Soviet Union, and a threat to Western cohesion was too high a price to pay for the

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<sup>452</sup> Keworkow, 105-106.

normalization of relations with the East. However, the underlying conflict revolved around how to defeat Communism. The liberal argument, as advocated by the Brandt government, held that technology transfer and economic help for an enemy state could have a positive outcome, as the penetrating effects of trade and the necessary personal interactions would ultimately undermine the enemy regime and cause a positive change in the form of freedom and democracy. This was certainly Brandt's line of reasoning; by 1972 Kissinger seemed to have seen some value in it as well. Nixon, however, along with the conservative element in American society, were leery of such a liberal approach. The conservative argument characterized economic interchanges with enemy states as dangerous, and only to be pursued with caution; trade deals had to be weighed carefully so as not to fundamentally aid the enemy's economic infrastructure, social stability, or military readiness. Certainly, members of the CDU/CSU held similar opinions and voiced them publicly. However, the shift in perception of the Soviet Union from an enemy state to a normal one—a shift brought about mostly through politics and economic diplomacy—rendered the conservative argument increasingly less valid in West Germany. This would be *Ostpolitik's* lasting legacy and at the same time a divisive issue for the transatlantic alliance, as the United States had not undergone such a process and would soon shift to the more conservative stance.

## CHAPTER IV

### CONFLICT AND COOPERATION

‘Détente’ – a French word we employ to conceal the fact that we have only the vaguest idea what we are trying to say.<sup>453</sup>

George W. Ball, 1971

With the successful completion of the Four Power Agreement and the ratification of the Eastern treaties, Brandt’s *Ostpolitik* appeared more successful than ever. German business involvement in the Soviet Union was at unprecedented level, the West Berlin issue had apparently been resolved, and a military threat from the East seemed unlikely at best. The United States’ public support for Brandt’s initiatives had seemingly turned the Western alliance structures on its head. Akin to French Revolutionary Alexandre Ledru-Rollin’s adage “There go my people. I must follow them, for I am their leader,” Nixon appeared to tread in the footsteps of Brandt and Pompidou rather than directing Western détente.

Traditional interpretation holds that U.S. détente and German *Ostpolitik* were complementary, if not similar. As Gottfried Niedhardt argues, “the structural interdependence of American détente and German *Ostpolitik*” gave credence to Kissinger’s statement that “your success will be our success.”<sup>454</sup> Yet, despite Kissinger’s

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<sup>453</sup> Address by former Secretary George W. Ball at the World Affairs Council of Northern California Conference, May 8, 1971, Asilomar, California, as cited in Report 180/1971, German General Consulate in San Francisco, Dr. Motz, to German Foreign Office, “Deutsche Ostpolitik,” May 13, 1971, BA 136/6220, 5.

<sup>454</sup> Gottfried Niedhardt, “*Ostpolitik*: Phases, Short-term Objectives, and Grand Design” in David C. Geyer and Bernd Schaefer, eds., *American Détente and German Ostpolitik, 1969-1972* (Washington, DC: Supplement 1 to the Bulletin of the German Historical Institute, 2004): 80-92, 92.

words, the Nixon administration was never content to follow its allies on the road to Moscow nor did it approve of the qualitative level of interactions between its West European allies and the Soviet Union. With the Vietnam conflict largely out of the way, the Soviet-American Summit of May 1972 allowed the leaders of the Western and Eastern bloc to implement a superpower détente that turned détente to their advantage.

### Efforts at Superpower Détente

#### The Soviet-American Summit of 1972

In the Soviet-American agreement “Basic Principles of Relations,” signed by the two heads of state in May 1972, economic ties were considered “an important element in the strengthening of their bilateral relations and thus [we] will actively promote such ties.”<sup>455</sup>

These ties, naturally, were based on natural energy resources, as this was one of the few commodities the Soviets could export. The two proposed projects that resulted from this agreement, the North Star and the Yakutsk natural gas projects, called for heavy investments. Estimated at 4 billion and 2.5 billion dollars respectively, they involved the liquefaction of large quantities of natural gas that would then be shipped to the United States.

By 1972, the export of Soviet natural gas to the U.S. appeared less problematic than it had previously; the fact that it had become a politically acceptable source of energy was partially due to reservations over OPEC and the political instability in the

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<sup>455</sup> Robert J. Pranger, ed., *Détente and Defence: A Reader* (Washington, D.C.: American Enterprise Institute, 1976), 114.

Middle East and partly due to heavy lobbying by energy and energy equipment companies in Congress.<sup>456</sup>

The summit meeting drastically changed U.S. trade policy. Kissinger moved from a quid-pro-quo policy that restricting trade to a goodwill policy á la Brandt. Rather than requiring immediate political concession in exchange for trade deals, he now advocated long-term penetration brought by economic interaction.

Over time trade and investment may leaven the autarkic tendencies of the Soviet system, invite gradual association of the Soviet economy with the world economy and foster a degree of interdependence that adds an element of stability to the political equation.<sup>457</sup>

When Brezhnev visited the U.S. in 1973, Nixon even lobbied personally for such economic interactions. “The President indicated that the United States encourages American firms to work out concrete proposals on these projects and will give serious and sympathetic consideration to proposals that are in the interests of both sides.”<sup>458</sup> While this shift in policy may be surprising on the surface, it may simply reflect a change in the inner workings of the White House. Nixon’s preoccupation with his reelection campaign and later Watergate has often led to the assumption that by late 1972 Kissinger was taking over the management of U.S. foreign policy.

For Soviet natural gas to arrive on the U.S. mainland at a competitive price, however, the Soviet Union would have to receive MFN status. Furthermore, the perpetual crux when dealing with the Soviets—financing—had to be arranged. The Nixon administration therefore pushed for a change to MFN status in Congress, as well as

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<sup>456</sup> For a more detailed account of the political and economic factors, see Bruce W. Jentleson, “From Consensus to Conflict: the Domestic Political Economy of East-West energy trade policy,” *International Organization* 38, no. 4 (Autumn, 1984): 625-660, 646-660.

<sup>457</sup> Testimony by Henry A. Kissinger to the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, September 19, 1974, as cited in: Henry A. Kissinger, *American Foreign Policy* (New York: Norton, 1977), 158-159.

<sup>458</sup> Report, Senate Foreign Relations Committee, “Multinational Corporations and U.S. Foreign Policy,” pt. 10, page 109, as cited in: Jentleson, “From Consensus to Conflict,” 646.

expanding the financing of the Export-Import (EXIM) Bank from 20 to 30 billion dollars to cover the considerable sums involved in both of these deals.

U.S. and German trade policy – same difference?

Until mid-1972, cooperation between the U.S. and the FRG on trade issues with the Soviet Union had not been forthcoming. The Germans followed Brezhnev's hint that they pursue a more independent policy and dealt with trade as a national affair. Only after the Soviet Union changed its stance following the Soviet-American summit meeting and Prime Minister Novikov explicitly declared that he did not object if Germany cooperated with other countries did Undersecretary Mommsen explain to Deputy Assistant Secretary in the Department of Commerce Lazarus that "the Federal Republic does not consider the U.S.A. as an unwelcome rival."<sup>459</sup> Quite to the contrary, as far as the Germans were concerned, the FRG and the U.S. were in the same position, one in which true economic relations with the Soviet Union were about to be established.<sup>460</sup>

Information sharing between the U.S. and West Germany did not happen automatically, as Secretary Peterson had to probe Finance Minister Schmidt for a lively information exchange regarding financing questions with the Soviet Union or the formation of joint ventures. Peterson's underling, Lazarus, also pushed for a more concrete formula for consultation between Bonn and the U.S. embassy. His German counterpart, Mommsen, was very open to the idea, and even suggested joint ventures in dealing with the Soviet Union. The important thing, he underlined, was not to view each other as rivals but to cooperate. The Germans particularly hoped for cooperation when it

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<sup>459</sup> MemCon, Undersecretary Dr. Mommsen and Deputy Assistant Secretary of the Department of Commerce, Mr. Lazarus, on September 28, 1972, October 2, 1972, BA 102/115022, 1.

<sup>460</sup> Ibid, 2.

came to financing and insurance.<sup>461</sup> Minister Schmidt followed his visit up with a letter, again stating the benefits of collaborating on financing and insurance, generously offering any cooperation the American side desired.<sup>462</sup>

The usefulness of such cooperation is questionable. Despite German claims that the U.S. and the FRG were both on the threshold of intensive economic relations with the Soviet Union, the situation was quite different. The FRG had only economic incentives left to offer, given that its industry had a sizable part of its capital invested in the Soviet economy and was eager to avoid any disruptive effects.<sup>463</sup> West German exports were mostly heavy machinery—such as the large diameter steel press by Mannesmann Corp—which required domestically considerable investment. Yet despite selling a product that was in high demand by the Soviets, as a second rate power West Germany had little leverage in countering Soviet practices, be they political or economic, should these run counter to its interests.

The United States, on the other hand, was an equal to the Soviet Union and, should the need arise, could exert political or military pressure on the Soviet Union through simple, nuanced shifts in ongoing negotiations such as Mutually Balanced Force Reductions (MBFR). Furthermore, existing U.S. investments in the Soviet economy were minimal, since the bulk of its exports were surplus agricultural products. While having a guaranteed buyer for agricultural exports certainly seems favorable given fickle world market prices, the political and social ramifications of ending grain deliveries would likely have been significantly less than if industrial plants had to close down in Germany.

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<sup>461</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>462</sup> Letter, Schmidt to Secretary of Commerce, Peter G. Peterson, October 27, 1972, BA 102/115022, 1-2.

<sup>463</sup> Wolfgang Leonhard, *Dämmerung im Kreml: Wie eine neue Ostpolitik aussehen müßte* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags Anstalt, 1984), 206.

On another level, the strategic value of these export goods was qualitatively different. West German officials and experts were quick to point out that a famine creates significant instability within a society and, therefore, U.S. grain sales to the Soviet Union bolstered the Communist regime during harvest crises.<sup>464</sup> However, supplying the Soviet Union with sophisticated technological know-how and machinery did more than alleviate an immediate shortage in the Soviet planned economy. It allowed for technology transfer of unheard of proportions that enabled the Soviet Union to modernize its infrastructure and begin the next One or Five-Year Plan at a much higher level.<sup>465</sup>

The significant difference between what contribution the U.S. and the FRG could provide in trade with the Soviet Union is striking. For the FRG, exporting agricultural products was not feasible as they had not been able to feed their own population for close to a century; as a result, they had to export industrial goods that were more sophisticated than those the Soviets could produce themselves. As a consequence, while economic factors fostered Brandt's liberal attitude towards trade with the East, this was not as much of a factor for Nixon. Since *détente* was "a French word we employ to conceal the fact that we have only the vaguest idea what we are trying to say," each side chose to interpret *détente* to fit their needs.<sup>466</sup> This also held true for the Soviet Union, which redefined its version of *détente*: Soviet policy became politically more aggressive, becoming consistent with the literal translation of *détente*, namely the unloading of a gun.

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<sup>464</sup> Leonhardt, 283.

<sup>465</sup> Leonhardt, 284.

<sup>466</sup> Address by former Secretary George W. Ball at the World Affairs Council of Northern California Conference, May 8, 1971, Asilomar, California, as cited in Report 180/1971, German General Consulate in San Francisco, Dr. Motz, to German Foreign Office, "Deutsche Ostpolitik," May 13, 1971, BA 136/6220, 5.



## Soviet Pressures on West Berlin

Shortly after the Nixon-Brezhnev summit in May 1972 the Soviet Union started to pursue a more aggressive policy toward the FRG. By this time the Soviet Union had received the two elements it had sought from détente with the West: first, economic assistance to foster its economic growth and exploit its natural resources and second, a stable border in Europe that allowed it to focus more of its resources in the East, toward China. On the first point it was clear that they were well entrenched with the industry of Western Europe, if not yet with that of the United States. Large investments by West European banks and companies in long-term contracts closely tied the fate of both to the continued success of Soviet détente policies. The second goal, stability and the recognition of the status quo in Europe, had been achieved with the ratification of the Eastern treaties. Another important aspect, which cannot be overemphasized, was the visit of President Nixon to the Soviet Union. Not only did Nixon's visit lend a certain level of credibility to détente but—much more importantly—it recognized the Soviet Union as an equal, and tacitly accepted the Soviet occupation of Eastern Europe. With these two milestones out of the way, the Soviet Union and its Eastern allies showed more teeth in their relations with the FRG.

The first problem arose, of all places, in the arena of sports. On June 10, 1972, during a track meet between the delegates from the Soviet Union and FRG, the Soviets argued that the German team had to be labeled *Bundesrepublik Deutschland/West Berlin*, even though official German policy was to not allow the use of the term West Berlin if the team was mixed.<sup>467</sup> A more serious demonstration of the Berlin problem occurred at a

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<sup>467</sup> Excerpts from questions asked by CDU/CSU delegate Dr. Evers during a Q&A session of the German Parliament, June 8, 1973, 2268, Drucksache 7/653 Frage A 117, cited in: BA 136/18091.

trade fair for machine tools in Brünn, Czechoslovakia in September 1972. The organizers of the fair listed West Berlin as an independent country in the catalog and during the official ceremony, despite previously accepting the link between West Berlin and West Germany. When German ambassador Finckenstein objected to the printing of the catalog, he received the evasive reply that logistics would not allow any changes in the printing. When he protested the raising of the Berlin flag during the initial ceremony, however, the issue became more specific. The Czech representative indicated that “the treatment of West Berlin firms at fairs and exhibitions in the CSSR is linked to the question of normalization between the two countries.” Finckenstein interpreted this new Czech approach as a permanent problem since the CSSR would not budge on the issue, and linked this policy to a directive from the Soviet embassy.<sup>468</sup>

The source of these problems was the very ambivalent language of the Four Power Agreement. Essentially, it allowed West Germany and West Berlin to be linked on a case-by-case basis, depending on whether the two countries in question decided it should be or not. The Western allies, of course, interpreted a stronger link between the two. The vagueness inherent in the Four Power Agreement makes it clear that the German side was more concerned with making an agreement possible than forcefully explaining to the Soviet Union that the link between West Germany and West Berlin was without question. A CDU-sponsored press leak, meant to undermine the Moscow treaties by providing insight into the vague nature of this alleged resolution of the status of West Berlin. In response to the leak Bahr compared the situation to Lichtenstein: he explained in the interview that no one questioned Swiss representation of Lichtenstein despite the

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<sup>468</sup> Telegram, German Embassy Prague, Finckenstein, to German Foreign Office, “Beteiligung West-Berlins an Brünner Maschinenbaumesse,” September 7, 1972, BA 102/241886.

fact that Lichtenstein is a completely sovereign nation.<sup>469</sup> Likewise, he argued, “According to international law, Berlin does not belong to the Federal Republic of Germany [...]Lichtenstein is not part of Switzerland, either.”<sup>470</sup> Despite this undoubtedly valid point, the ambiguity in the negotiations and the subsequent conflict over its interpretation is logical if the Soviets took Bahr’s analogy between Berlin and Lichtenstein to mean that Berlin’s representation by the FRG would be a matter of negotiation at a later point in time and not automatic. Of course, it is not unusual in diplomatic circles to have two parties sign an agreement that both sides expect to interpret somewhat differently.

The problem of West Berlin’s status, as manifested in the Czechoslovakian trade fair, repeated itself in the Soviet Union in early May 1973. On this occasion the exhibits from West Berlin were—according to the Soviets—supposed to be opened by Berliner officials, and the flags of both Berlin and the Soviet Union would be raised. The Soviets insisted that FRG delegates would not participate in this ceremony. The Soviets argued that the military occupation forces were the sovereigns of West Berlin and that the FRG could represent them. The FRG, of course, did not share this interpretation, resulting in numerous discussions and the forceful removal of Undersecretary Rowedder from the scene of the opening ceremony by Soviet security forces. Apparently Rowedder, as an official West German representative, had attempted to push the West Berlin representative and the Soviet delegate aside to get to the center of the ceremony. Soviet

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<sup>469</sup> News clip, “Interview mit Staatssekretär Egon Bahr für die Sendung ‘Echo des Tages’ im WDR/NDR am 18. April 1972,” BA 136/16566.

<sup>470</sup> Memo, Chancellor’s Office, Minister Ehmke, “Aus den Protokollen zum Moskauer Vertrag,” [n.d.], BA 136/16566. This is a copy of the six pages that opposition leader Barzel handed to Brandt with the request to verify if this was the actual protocol.

security personnel claimed that they had feared for the Soviet delegate's life, and thus had him removed from the scene.<sup>471</sup>

An indication of the official Soviet line on the West Berlin issue came on the eve of the Brezhnev visit with the first Soviet book on Berlin after the Four Power Agreement. The German embassy in Moscow assessed it as follows: "It is remarkable with which intensity the author tries to prove that the special ties of the Berlin Accord between the FRG and West Berlin do not hinder the independence of West Berlin."<sup>472</sup>

The author continued to outline the Soviet interpretation of the Four Power Agreement:

From the viewpoint of sovereignty, West Berlin is a unique political organism that does not belong to any state. [...] West Berliners are as residents of such an organism neither citizens of the Federal Republic nor the GDR and hold special identification papers.

The Soviet position with regard to West Berlin has not changed and cannot change. The Berlin Accords do not contain decisions and do not introduce a procedure known to international law that would change the status of West Berlin.<sup>473</sup>

Accordingly to the Germans, the Soviet Union was focusing on the issue of sovereignty as outlined in the Four Power Agreement, and ignoring the clause that said it was a moral duty to strengthen ties between West Berlin and West Germany.

### Systemic Shifts in the Soviet Union

The increased diplomatic pressure to undermine the ties between the FRG and West Berlin must be seen as a systemic shift in the Soviet Union. A good indication of the strengthening of the hard-line position in the Politburo happened in March 1973 with the admission of Andrei Andreyevich Gromyko and Andrei Antonovich Grechko to the Politburo as full voting members. Grechko, as the commander of the Soviet troops that

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<sup>471</sup> Telegram, Governing Major of Berlin to Senator for Federal Affairs, "Sowjetische Handels- und Industrieausstellung 1973," May 7, 1973, BA 136/18091. See also attachment I.

<sup>472</sup> Telegram, German Embassy in Moscow, Lüders, to German Foreign Office, "Sowjetische Publikation zum Berlin-Abkommen," May 17, 1973, Mappe 1, Ordner 432, Depositorium Egon Bahr, 4.

<sup>473</sup> Ibid, 1-4.

had crushed the East German workers' rebellion of 1953 and the architect of the 1968 invasion of Czechoslovakia was no friend of an intensive cooperation between East and West. Nor was Gromyko—dubbed “Mr. No” for blocking many Western proposals during negotiations—a strong advocate of the kind of *Ostpolitik* Brandt envisioned. In this sense, there certainly was a shift to a more conservative Soviet foreign policy. For Bahr this Politburo shift was by no means a secret—he congratulated Gromyko on his election to the Politburo a month later.<sup>474</sup>

Bahr, however, did not interpret this as a categorical shift against détente but as a reprioritizing of potential partners within the Western alliance. In his view, the Soviet relationship with United States simply had gained greater priority with some in the Soviet Union.

There exists, so to say, a ‘pro-American faction’ in Moscow that argues that the relationship between the U.S.A. and the Soviet Union has absolute priority. The issue is by and large the question of Most-Favored-Nation status. The Russians need it; the decision should be made before the adjournment of the Senate for the summer. After that, the visit of the General Secretary [Brezhnev] to the U.S. is planned for June.<sup>475</sup>

Judging from the continued efforts of the East to undermine the ties between West Berlin and the FRG during the remainder of the 1970s it seems safe to argue that a permanent conservative shift in Soviet foreign policy accounts for some of the cooling relations between the FRG and the Soviet Union. If we presume, however, that the Soviet Union used Brandt’s *Ostpolitik* to force the United States to implement their own sweeping policy of détente, Nixon’s visit to Moscow was the culmination of their strategy to get a

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<sup>474</sup> Letter, Minister Egon Bahr to German Embassy in Moscow, Mr. Golowin, April 28, 1973, Mapped 2, Ordner 432, Depositorium Egon Bahr.

<sup>475</sup> Memo, Egon Bahr, “Nachricht von V. Lednew,” March 22, 1973, Mapped 2, Ordner 432, Depositorium Egon Bahr. Original: “Es gibt gewissermaßen eine ‘Amerika-Fraktion’ in Moskau, die argumentiert, daß das Verhältnis zwischen den USA und der Sowjetunion absolute Priorität habe. Es geht im wesentlichen um die Frage der Meistbegünstigung. Die Russen brauchen das; die Entscheidung sollte noch vor der Sommerpause des Senats fallen. Danach ist der Besuch des GS in den USA für Juni geplant.“

superpower détente in place. Once this had been achieved, they could discard *Ostpolitik* as a superfluous strategy, thus rendering the role of the FRG less important; this makes Bahr's assessment of a shift in Soviet priorities quite accurate. This interpretation gives credence to the idea that the Soviet Union used Germany to get to the U.S.

A report about the central committee's view on this matter, provided by Bahr's secret backchannel contact, Ledlev, further strengthens this argument. It should have cautioned Bahr about the primacy of superpower détente over Soviet relations with Germany. The fact that in this report Brezhnev quoted Lenin in the context of economic relations clearly indicated that they were using trade as a temporary measure to advance Socialism, not to build a path to permanent cooperation.

The Nixon visit was a turning point. For the first time he accepted the principles of coexistence and the borders of the Socialist world. The political fight against America will be continued because in many areas they are the enemy. Economic ties will continue to be developed. The already concluded treaty of about 10 billion dollars was just the beginning. [...]

The General Secretary [Brezhnev] spoke for almost an hour about the economic ties to the Western world. He cited Lenin, whose teachings had been forgotten in the meantime: Despite the differences of the systems, economic ties need to be strengthened. One can structure them in such a way that Capitalism works for the cause of Socialism. Not everyone in the Soviet Union understands this great potential.<sup>476</sup>

### Competing Visions of Détente

For the German-American alliance, however, the new favoritism of the Soviets toward the U.S. meant a reshuffling of international positions; however, Brandt and Bahr were slow to recognize this. Brandt did try to place greater emphasis on the EEC, shifting from

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<sup>476</sup> Memo, Egon Bahr to Chancellor Brandt, "Gang des Plenums des ZK," May 7, 1973, Mappe 2, Ordner 432, Depositorium Egon Bahr. Original: "Der Nixon-Besuch war ein Wendepunkt. Er habe zum ersten Mal die Prinzipien der Koexistenz anerkannt und die Grenzen der sozialistischen Welt. Der politische Kampf gegen Amerika werde weitergeführt, denn an vielen Stellen sei man Gegner. Die Wirtschaftsbeziehungen werden weiterentwickelt, der abgeschlossene Vertrag über rd. 10 Mrd. Dollar sei nur ein Anfang. [...]"

Fast eine Stunde habe der GS über die wirtschaftlichen Beziehungen zur westlichen Welt gesprochen. Er habe Lenin zitiert, dessen Lehre in der SU zwischenzeitlich vergessen wurde: Trotz der Verschiedenheit des Systems muß man die wirtschaftlichen Beziehungen ausbauen. Man kann das so organisieren, daß der Kapitalismus für die Sache des Sozialismus arbeitet. Nicht alle in der SU verstünden die großen Möglichkeiten."

a unilateral approach to the Soviets to a multilateral approach among the West European nations. In a conversation with Belgian prime minister Edmond Leburton, Brandt concluded that the “bilateral phase of our [West German] ‘*Ostpolitik*,’ which has dominated the last three to four years, is concluded. It created the preconditions for the multilateral phase, in which we currently are and will be for the next years.”<sup>477</sup> Yet in the framework of a multilateral *Ostpolitik*, the U.S. was moving too slowly for Bahr’s taste. He indicated to Leburton that the Nixon administration had only made progress in their negotiations with the Soviets because they were under domestic pressure to do so. He further voiced his frustration that neither the Soviets nor the Americans “had done their homework” when it came to specifying their negotiating positions, thereby delaying the process of a European Security Conference even further.<sup>478</sup>

Nixon and Brandt’s attitudes on the issue of a European Security Conference illustrate the striking qualitative differences in their respective versions of détente. Nixon did not view a European Security Conference as a necessary, or even desirable, political goal. For Brandt, of course, a European Security Conference was an absolutely essential element to his *Ostpolitik*. Only a European Security Conference could create the peace and stability necessary to allow fears of German revanchism to abate and thus make reunification possible. In essence, Brandt and Nixon disagreed on the level of cooperation the West should afford the East.

This difference between détente and *Ostpolitik* led to a sense of competition between the two allies. The invitation of General Secretary Brezhnev to Germany reflects this. Upon hearing from Bahr that Brezhnev was planning to visit Germany, the

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<sup>477</sup> MemCon, Conversation Chancellor Brandt with Belgian Prime Minister Leburton in Brussels on February 7, 1973, AAPD, Doc #38, 189-196, 196.

<sup>478</sup> Ibid, 196-197.

Americans “reacted somewhat surprised and floated the idea through Dobrynin whether it would not be more appropriate if Brezhnev first visited America.”<sup>479</sup>

To the Germans, Brezhnev’s visit did not reflect the sense of increased importance with which the German population and administration viewed the role of the FRG on the international scene. In particular, the economic struggles that the U.S. economy experienced had led to the increased perception that allying oneself with the U.S. had become much more of a burden than previously the case. On February 12, 1973, for example, the German Bundesbank had purchased 5.8 billion dollars to stabilize the U.S. currency against a heavy run on it. For the first time, the U.S. showed a negative balance of trade, which sent shock waves through the U.S. economy, which resulted in speculation on the dollar.

American pressure to discard the EC preferential tariffs also continued to rise. In February 1973, Ambassador Peterson warned Economics Minister Hans Friderichs of a potential spillover from the economic to the political arena.

The negative symbolism of the EC preferential policy was significant despite the limited economic impact on the U.S. [...] The EC needs to seriously ask itself if the continued pursuit of its preferential policy was worth the potential dangers for its political relations with the U.S.<sup>480</sup>

But the Germans had concerns of their own. Asked about whether American intended to cooperate with the Soviet Union behind the back of their European allies, Peterson discarded these concerns as ridiculous.<sup>481</sup> Despite the on-going frustrations over the level

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<sup>479</sup> Memo, Egon Bahr, ”Nachricht von V. Lednew,” March 22, 1973, Mappe 2, Ordner 432, Depositorium Egon Bahr.

<sup>480</sup> Memo, Dr. Abel, “ Aussprache zwischen Sonderbotschafter Peterson and Minister Dr. Friderichs am Donnerstag, 15. Februar 1973,“ February 22, 1973, BA 102/111905, 4. Original: “Die Gefahr eines ‚spill over‘ vom wirtschaftlichen in den politische Bereich sei in der gegenwärtigen Situation (zusätzlicher Schock des Handelsbilanzdefizits) groß. In diesem Zusammenhang sei die negative Symbolwirkung der Präferenzpolitik der EG trotz der bislang nur begrenzten wirtschaftlichen Auswirkungen auf die USA erheblich. [...] Die Gemeinschaft müsse sich ernsthaft fragen, ob ihr die Weiterverfolgung der Präferenzpolitik solche Gefahren für ihre politischen Beziehungen zu den USA wer sei.“

<sup>481</sup> Ibid.



of cooperation between the two states, Peterson received Friderichs' assurance (as he had gotten from Schmidt a year earlier) that the FRG was interested in a stronger information exchange between the FRG and the U.S. on trade talks with the East. As was the case a year earlier, they agreed that contacts needed to be established soon.<sup>482</sup>

Despite the rhetoric, stronger consultation—much less cooperation—did not occur. In a particularly revealing discussion with Secretary of the Treasury George P. Schultz on March 15, 1973, Brandt articulated his stance towards the United States at this particular time. He argued that “for the FRG it is essential to stay in close accord with France. Otherwise there would be a significant worsening of the situation in Western Europe.” He hoped that “our American friends not only look at the community as such, but also consider the elements that lead to the process of its formation.”<sup>483</sup> Not only were France and Western Europe thus more important to Brandt than the U.S., but he openly acknowledged that the U.S. should pay a price for the formation of the European Community.

Brandt also rejected Schultz's plan for a sweeping reform of the monetary sector to help the U.S. out, arguing that “one would not be able to solve all problems in one step.” Upon Schultz's announcement that Nixon would seek congressional authorization to levy import taxes for certain industries, Brandt warned against heavy use of such authority and even threatened retaliatory measures as “public pressure could otherwise

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<sup>482</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>483</sup> Memo, Economics Ministry, Sanne, “Über ein Gespräch des Bundeskanzlers mit dem amerikanischen Finanzminister Schultz am 15. März 1973 im Bundeskanzleramt,” March 16, 1973, BA 102/111917, 1-2. Original: “Für die Bundesrepublik sei es essentiell, im Einvernehmen mit Frankreich zu bleiben, andernfalls würde es eine wesentliche Verschlechterung der Lage in Westeuropa geben. Er hoffe, daß unsere amerikanischen Freunde nicht nur die Gemeinschaft als solche sähen, sondern auch die Elemente des Prozesses ihrer Formung in Betracht zögen.“

force the governments of the trade partners of the U.S. to implement countermeasures in the area of trade as well as investments.”<sup>484</sup>

He then sugar-coated this stance in his concluding remarks, indicating that his government was opposed to preferential tariffs in principle and that these tariffs had not really hurt American interests to the extent Schultz had suggested. However, considering the interests of Germany’s European partners, such as France, was “the price for the European unification.”<sup>485</sup>

As a consequence, the German-American summit meeting of May 1-2, 1973 proved to be somewhat tense. Despite Nixon’s lingering resentment over Brandt’s “ambivalent support” and implication “that [Nixon’s] decisions and actions have lacked humanitarian concern,” the Nixon administration felt compelled to raise numerous issues that they felt should be the subject of transatlantic cooperation.<sup>486</sup> Nixon specified his views on European integration as follows: “I have strongly supported European integration and intend to continue to do so, but as I believe we both agree, European integration should also be seen as a step towards increased Atlantic cooperation.”<sup>487</sup> Demonstrating the desolate condition of transatlantic cooperation and consultation he felt obligated to express that “[he] hope[d] that before any proposals are made final we will have an opportunity to express our views.”<sup>488</sup>

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<sup>484</sup> Ibid, 3. Original: “Öffentlicher Druck könnte sonst dazu führen, daß die Regierungen der Handelspartner der USA Gegenmaßnahmen sowohl auf dem Gebiet des Handels als auch der Investitionen treffen müßten.“

<sup>485</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>486</sup> Letter, Egon Bahr to Henry A. Kissinger, January 17, 1973, Mappe 1, Ordner 439, Depositorium Egon Bahr, and Letter, Henry A. Kissinger to Egon Bahr, January 18, 1973, Mappe 1, Ordner 439, Depositorium Egon Bahr.

<sup>487</sup> Letter, President Nixon to Chancellor Brandt via Henry A. Kissinger and Egon Bahr, March 3, 1973, Mappe 1, Ordner 439, Depositorium Egon Bahr.

<sup>488</sup> Ibid.

More important than economic issues were concerns about a rift in the alliance. Nixon asked Brandt bluntly whether it was not difficult for the FRG to be confronted by France or England about choosing to put either Europe or America first. Brandt responded that he had always made it clear to the French that “in questions of security or the world currency reform he could not proceed against the U.S.”<sup>489</sup> While this appeared to be a satisfactory answer, the qualifications – security and currency reform – left plenty of room between Nixon’s view of an alliance from that of Brandt. As Brandt explained to Brezhnev only a few days later, he rejected what had become Kissinger’s trademark: linking different aspects of negotiation.

When he, the chancellor, had been with Nixon, he had explained that he does not agree with linking different areas [of negotiations] and had publicly stated such. [...] Kissinger has tried to bring military, trade, currency, and diplomatic questions all together in one form and this did not correspond with reality. Military questions are discussed in the framework of NATO. [...] Trade issues are discussed in the framework of GATT where cooperation but also conflicts of interests are debated. Currency questions are discussed in yet other forums. One must bear in mind that the European states are closer to each other than to the U.S.A. Diplomatic questions, yet again, are a different area. To avoid any misunderstandings, he [Brandt] wanted to repeat that he desires a good relationship with the U.S. but also with Western Europe. How things would develop is not clear, but Western Europe will gain more its ‘own personality’ as the French call it, even in relations with the U.S.A., on whom they have depended to such large extent after the Second World War.<sup>490</sup>

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<sup>489</sup> MemCon, Conversation Chancellor Brandt with President Nixon at US Embassy in Paris, April 6, 1974, Mappe 2, Ordner 440, Depositorium Egon Bahr, 3. Original: “Nixon erkundigte sich, ob die Lage für die Bundesregierung nicht schwierig sei, wenn sie von Frankreich oder von England vor die Alternative Europa oder Amerika gestellt werde.

BK [Bundeskanzler] entgegnete, dies gelte natürlich in erster Linie für Frankreich. Er ließe sich jedoch nicht vor diese Wahl stellen. Er habe immer seinen französischen Gesprächspartnern klagemacht, daß er in Fragen wie der Sicherheit oder der Weltwährungsreform nicht gegen die USA vorgehen könne.“

<sup>490</sup> MemCon, Conversation Chancellor Brandt with General Secretary Brezhnev, May 20, 1973, Mappe 1, Ordner 435, Depositorium Egon Bahr, 8-9. Original: “Als er, der Herr Bundeskanzler, bei Nixon gewesen sei, habe er erklärt, daß er mit der Vermischung verschiedener Themenkreise nicht einverstanden sei, und dies habe er auch öffentlich erklärt. [...] Kissinger habe versucht, militärische, Handels-, Währungs- und diplomatische Fragen alle in eine Form zu bringen, und dies entspreche nicht der Realität. Militärische Fragen bespreche man im Rahmen der NATO. [...] Handelsfragen würden im Rahmen des GATT besprochen, wo die Zusammenarbeit, aber auch Interessenskonflikte beraten würden. Währungsfragen würden wiederum in anderen Gremien besprochen. Man müsse berücksichtigen, daß die europäischen Staaten näher zusammenstünden als diese zu den USA. Diplomatische Fragen wiederum seien ein anderer Themenkreis. Er wolle noch einmal wiederholen, um keine Mißverständnisse aufkommen zu lassen, daß er gute Beziehungen zu den Vereinigten Staaten von Seiten der Bundesrepublik, aber auch gute Beziehungen für Westeuropa wünsche. Wie sich die Dinge weiter entwickeln würden, sei noch nicht klar, aber Westeuropa werde wohl man an eigener Persönlichkeit—wie das die Franzosen nannten—gewinnen, auch

Nixon, of course, could in no way have been satisfied with this desire to separate issues, as it basically negated any European concessions in return for the military protection provided by the U.S. and theoretically allowed for unilateral advances in, for example, trade issues, without (supposedly) affecting the alliance as a whole. Nixon's holistic concept of an alliance was expressed clearly in the following conversation with Brandt:

He [Nixon] accepts that there is an economic competition between a united Europe and America. This does not trouble him. For him, it is also not important if Europe purchases more oranges or tobacco. What is important, however, is that the impression is not created that the Nine [West European Countries] are organizing against America in affairs of a certain political significance as the American defense readiness must suffer from this. [...]

Cooperation with the Soviet Union does not happen for love, but for bitter necessity. Western cohesion must not be impeded by provincial quarrels. [...] The problem, thus, is how the West can avoid a disintegration that would strengthen the enemy forces.<sup>491</sup>

In summary, Brandt's orientation toward French interests over American ones seems abundantly clear. With the Soviets still appearing to back Germany's pioneering role in world diplomacy, Brandt did not feel the need to bend over backwards to please the United States. In the name of Europe, the U.S. was expected to accept developments that ran counter to its interests.<sup>492</sup>

Before the Brezhnev summit, Brandt and Bahr were still confident that Germany was no longer just a pawn between the United States and the Soviet Union but an

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im Verhältnis zu den USA, von denen sie in der Zeit nach dem zweiten Weltkrieg in so starkem Maße abhängig gewesen seien.“

<sup>491</sup> MemCon, Conversation Chancellor Brandt with President Nixon at U.S. Embassy in Paris, April 6, 1974, Mappe 2, Ordner 440, Depositorium Egon Bahr, 4-5. Original: “Nixon führte aus, sein Problem liege darin, die gegenwärtige Struktur der Atlantischen Sicherheitspolitik trotz isolationistischer Strömungen in Amerika aufrechtzuerhalten, bis sich in Ost-West-Gespräch neue Möglichkeiten anbieten könnten. [...] Für viele Amerikaner sei es widernatürlich, wenn Amerika Europa unterstütze, obwohl die Europäer in Wirtschaft und Politik eine feindselige Haltung einnehmen. [...] Er akzeptierte, daß sich zwischen einem vereinten Europa und Amerika ein wirtschaftlicher Wettbewerb entwickle. Dies bereite ihm keine Sorgen. Für ihn sei auch nicht wichtig, ob Europa mehr Orangen oder Tabak kaufe, wichtig sei jedoch, daß nicht der Eindruck entstünde, die Neun organisierten sich gegen Amerika in Angelegenheiten von gewisser politischer Bedeutung, weil darunter die amerikanischer Verteidigungsbereitschaft leiden müsse.[...]“

Die Zusammenarbeit mit der Sowjetunion erfolge doch nicht aus Liebe, sondern aus bitterer Notwendigkeit. Der westliche Zusammenhalt dürfe in dieser Situation nicht durch provinzielle Streitigkeiten beeinträchtigt werden. [...] Das Problem laute deshalb, wie der Westen eine Desintegration vermeiden könne, die die gegnerischen Kräfte stärken werde.“

<sup>492</sup> Ash, 68.

independent player in international politics. By separating the issues, they thought they could create political room to maneuver, even though the world was still mired in the conflict of the Cold War. In Bahr's assessment of the relationship between Europe and the United States, self-confidence and a trust in the new German foreign policy were central. Furthermore, his sense that Germany would not need to contribute anything further to the transatlantic alliance is striking.

Judging by Kissinger's comments, Washington is thinking about redefining the relationship between America and Europe. His remark that they will bear the changes of the past years in mind must be interpreted to mean that America wants to rid itself of some of the burden. If it would be possible for Europe to assume full responsibility for its security, this would be worth contemplating; but this possibility does not exist. The geographical situation and the technology have resulted in the fact that for Europe an independent role vis-à-vis both superpowers is not possible in the near future. – On the other hand, Europe is not Asia: its industrial potential is so great that disengagement, as the U.S. are conducting in Indochina, is not permissible. [...]

Europe's weight increases proportionally as the relative importance of the security question declines. Over the past years, we have actively contributed in getting the two superpowers to come closer together and thus made them politically more easy to manipulate, despite being immovable militarily.

America guarantees today the security of its allies, just as the Soviet Union does, without either needing their respective alliances. Both systems are political coordination machines, while the Americans increasingly want to relieve their financial burdens. The Russians accomplish this with trade deals negotiated through blackmail for prices under world market levels in order to benefit from the occupied countries economically. The Americans do the same through unequal currency exchange rates.<sup>493</sup>

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<sup>493</sup> Letter, Egon Bahr to Chancellor Brandt, April 15, 1973, Mappe 1, Ordner 436, Depositorium Egon Bahr, 1-2. Original: "Aus Kissinger geht hervor, daß man in Washington an eine Art Neudefinition des Verhältnisses zwischen Amerika und Europa denkt. Sein Hinweis, dabei die Veränderung der letzten Jahre zu berücksichtigen, ist wohl dahingehend aufzufassen, daß Amerika sich entlasten will.

Wenn es eine Möglichkeit gäbe, daß Europa auch für seine Sicherheit volle Verantwortung übernimmt, wäre dies zu überlegen; aber diese Möglichkeit existiert nicht. Die geographische Lage und die Technik haben bewirkt, daß Europa eine selbstständige Rolle gegenüber den beiden Supermächten auf absehbare Zeit nicht mehr möglich ist. – Andererseits ist Europa nicht Asien: Sein industrielles Gewicht ist so groß, daß es ein Disengagement, wie es die USA in Indochina vornehmen, nicht gestattet. [...]

Europas Gewicht wächst in dem Masse, in dem die relative Bedeutung der Sicherheitsfrage geringer wird. Wir haben in den letzten Jahren aktiv daran mitgewirkt, die beiden Supermächte anzunähern und sie damit politisch relativ manipulierbar gemacht, was sie militärisch überhaupt nicht sind.

Amerika garantiert heute die Sicherheit seiner Verbündeten ebenso wie die Sowjetunion ohne daß beide dazu ihr jeweiliges Paktsystem brauchen. Die beiden Systeme sind politische Koordinierungsmaschinen, wobei die Amerikaner sich finanziell zunehmend entlasten wollen. Was die Russen über erpreßte Lieferverträge mit Preisen unter dem Weltmarkt machen, um aus den besetzten Ländern wirtschaftlichen Profit zu ziehen, machen die Amerikaner über das manipulierte Währungsgefälle."

Using such drastic language to equate the Soviet Union with the United States demonstrates how little Bahr thought the FRG had lost by loosening ties with the United States. Confident in the importance of Germany and the rest of Europe in the world, he was convinced that the United States would remain in Europe, no matter what the Europeans did. By creating peace and security in Europe, however, the superpowers could be manipulated. Therefore, for Bahr, it must have been central to maintain *Ostpolitik*'s emphasis on Europe and strong political ties to both superpowers.

Brezhnev's visit to Brandt and later Nixon, however, would demonstrate that the Soviet Union preferred the U.S. as a partner and that Brandt's role as a forerunner of détente was waning.

### The Opportunity and Failure of Superpower Detente

#### The Brezhnev Summits

The one issue that brought a change in Brandt's perception of the Soviet Union was undoubtedly the status of West Berlin. Any negative developments on this issue would adversely affect the Brandt government as they would undermine the overall validity of *Ostpolitik*. As previously outlined, the East was undermining the Western understanding of the Four Power Agreement, and Brandt felt compelled to touch on the issue when Brezhnev visited Bonn in May 1973.

It is clear that West Berlin cannot participate when touching on questions of [formal] status or military issues. But when dealing with issues of trade, economy, culture and sports, the basic guideline in accordance with the spirit of the agreement must be not to separate artificially. If we could agree on this, it would make life much easier.<sup>494</sup>

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<sup>494</sup> MemCon, Conversation Chancellor Brandt with General Secretary Brezhnev, May 20, 1973, Mappe 1, Ordner 435, Depositorium Egon Bahr, 10-11. Original: "Es sei klar, daß West-Berlin nicht teilnehmen könne, wenn Fragen des Status, militärische Fragen etc. berührt würden. Aber wenn es um Geschäfte, Wirtschaft, Kultur und Sport gehe, so müsse doch die Grundregel nach dem Sinn des Abkommens sein,

Brezhnev, however, responded with a stalling tactic. He refused comment on the grounds that he did not remember the text in detail and would have to consult with Gromyko. In a recollection of this event to the U.S. ambassador to Germany Brandt explained that Brezhnev never returned to the subject. Accordingly, Brandt—after issuing a final statement on the summit meeting—broke protocol and, walking up to Brezhnev, cautioned him in the presence of Gromyko that the Soviets had to accept not only the general declaration that West Germany and West Berlin were separate entities but also the concluding remarks that the ties between the two entities need to be strengthened. Brandt bluntly explained that not to do so would poison German-Soviet relations. The Soviet leaders acknowledged him but did not respond to his argument.<sup>495</sup> The fact that the Soviets were no longer willing to let the FRG represent West Berlin was also evident in lower-level negotiations. A workgroup consisting of Gromyko, Falin, and four German delegates (Bahr among them), met to work out the wording of the final declaration of the Brezhnev visit. The debate centered once again on the issue of mentioning West Berlin firms as being part of West German-Soviet economic relations. Bahr commented that the term “companies from the Federal Republic of Germany” also included companies from Berlin (West). Gromyko only responded “we do not know that. We do not know your contacts with companies there. We can only close our eyes.” Bahr replied “You do not

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nicht künstlich zu trennen. Wenn man sich hier einigen könne, so würde dies das Leben erheblich erleichtern.“

<sup>495</sup> MemCon, Conversation Chancellor Brandt with U.S. Ambassador Martin J. Hillenbrand, May 22, 1973, Mappe 1, Ordner 440, Depositorium Egon Bahr, 4. Original: “Nach der Unterzeichnung habe er, der Bundeskanzler, dem Generalsekretär in Gegenwart von Gromyko gesagt, die sowjetische Seite müsse begreifen, daß der betreffende Absatz in der Schlußklärung ernst zu nehmen sei. Wäre es anders, dann würde es unsere Beziehungen vergiften. Gromyko habe darauf geantwortet, er habe dies verstanden, Breschnew habe lediglich mit dem Kopf genickt.

Die Frage des amerikanischen Botschafters, ob die Sowjets zugegeben hätten, daß die Bindungen zwischen Berlin und dem Bund gestärkt werden müßten, verneinte der Bundeskanzler. Man dürfe aber nicht vergessen, daß man schließlich drei Abkommen unterzeichnet habe, in die Berlin einbezogen sei.“

have to close your eyes. We have a trade agreement that contains a Berlin clause.” Gromyko concluded “All right, then with open eyes.”<sup>496</sup>

A further argument between the Soviets and the Germans was fought over the inclusion of West Berlin in the supplemental agreement for science and technology cooperation. The Soviet representative, Bondarenko, objected to the German’s requirement that a Berlin clause be included in this document, arguing that the FRG were trying to change the Four Power Agreement on Berlin, which stated that the treaties of the FRG *may* be extended to West Berlin; now, he claimed, the FRG wanted to make this optional regulation a required one.

The German reaction to the changed Soviet stance was slow. The Soviets had been difficult negotiating partners all along and it is not surprising that they did not immediately proffer a countermove. Even German industry leaders, rebuffed by Brezhnev on their suggestions for vital changes in the economic structure of the *Osthandel*, remained enthused about the prospect of further economic ties with the East. The major issue in economic relations during the Brezhnev visit was the diversification of bilateral trade. This, so a report by the Economics Ministry, asserted could only be done through a multifaceted interweaving of the two economies via

an increase in cooperation between companies and the relevant organizations in both countries that goes beyond a simple order-delivery system. Here, as many varied forms of economic cooperation as possible need to be developed. Not just large barter deals, such as the natural gas – pipeline deal. These barter deals are valuable in certain cases but not always economically feasible. A common development of industrial products and a joint distribution of these in third countries should be our goal.<sup>497</sup>

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<sup>496</sup> Memo, Economics Ministry, Sanne, “Beteiligung Berliner Firmen an deutsch-sowjetischer Zusammenarbeit,” May 22, 1973, BA 136/18091, 1-2.

<sup>497</sup> Talking Points for Brezhnev Visit, “421 – Allgemeine Entwicklung der Wirtschaftsbeziehungen; industrielle Kooperation; Wirtschaftskommission; Großprojekte,” May 2, 1973, BA 102/100026, 1. Original: “insbesondere eine verstärkte Kooperation zwischen Unternehmen bzw. zuständigen Organisationen beider Länder beitragen, die über reine Lieferbeziehungen hinausgeht. Dabei müssen m.E. möglichst vielfältige Formen der wirtschaftlichen Zusammenarbeit entwickelt werden. Nicht nur große Austauschgeschäfte, wie das Erdgas –Röhrengeschäft, die in bestimmten Fällen gut, aber nicht immer



Brezhnev categorically ruled this out. No foreign investments or joint ventures with Soviet firms would be possible.<sup>498</sup> Abandoning the practice of barter deals was not something that could be counted on in the foreseeable future, either.<sup>499</sup> He even balked at cooperation between West European companies, that is, allowing German companies to conduct large-scale Soviet orders jointly with France, Japan, or other partners, which the Germans preferred as Soviet orders traditionally had had a magnitude that went above the customary size. Brezhnev indicated that the Soviet Union wanted to undertake manageable projects and that “he did not wish to rule out multilateral cooperation entirely [...] but first one had to talk bilaterally with each other.”<sup>500</sup>

Lastly, the demand for a greater diversification—both in terms of deals and orders so that the mid-sized industries could benefit—failed to some extent. Brezhnev agreed that these kinds of deals could be useful, “but [stated that] large-scale projects are more important.”<sup>501</sup> He even chided the German industry and government for not thinking long-term in this respect. Attributing the German interest in mid-sized orders to a lack of courage and a lingering effect of the strained relations of the last thirty years, he did not perceive this to be a new period of a long-term development of 50 years or true large-scale projects.<sup>502</sup>

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wirtschaftlich durchführbar sind. Anzustreben ist gemeinsame Entwicklung industrieller Erzeugnisse; gemeinschaftlicher Vertrieb auch in dritten Ländern.“

<sup>498</sup> MemCon, Conversation General Secretary Brezhnev with representatives of the German industry on May 20, 1973 in Bonn, BA 102/100026, 5.

<sup>499</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>500</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>501</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>502</sup> Ibid, 5. Original: “ Breschnew wies auf seine Gespräche mit Bundeskanzler Brandt und Bundesminister Scheel hin. Er habe festgestellt, daß unser Verhältnis zur Sowjetunion zum Teil noch von den Beziehungen zwischen beiden Ländern in den letzten 30 Jahren belastet sei. Eine ganz neue Etappe müsse jetzt beginnen, wofür vielleicht noch der Mut fehle. Er könne noch nicht feststellen, daß man von einer langfristigen Entwicklung über 50 Jahre und echte Großvorhaben spreche.“

Even after Brezhnev had openly rebuked the German industrialists during his visit to Germany for suggesting the concept of multi-national cooperation and foreign ownership in the Soviet industry, the German industry representatives still declared themselves willing to purchase “nearly every available quantity of natural gas” from the Soviet Union.<sup>503</sup>

Although this was a striking example of German wishful thinking when it came to *Ostpolitik* and *Osthandel*, Brezhnev’s comments on Berlin and economic cooperation did not have an immediate effect. Soviet unwillingness to modify their economic system to make its products more competitive and the subsequent rise in Soviet debt on the German money market did not have any effect on Soviet credit-worthiness.<sup>504</sup> By 1973, the Soviet Union had become “by far the greatest of our [German] debtors,” yet the German business community continued to foster trade with the East and was willing to consider further large-scale loans.<sup>505</sup>

Brezhnev’s summit meeting with Nixon was less eventful. Since they were unable to come to a unified stance on the two most contentious issues, the Middle East crisis and Vietnam, no groundbreaking agreements were concluded during the summit. The nine agreements that were signed dealt mostly with general commitments to cooperate on matters of trade, culture, taxation, and transportation. Perhaps the most notable of these was the Prevention of Nuclear War Agreement. However, even here Kissinger had managed, during preliminary talks, to whittle it down to insignificance.<sup>506</sup> The more

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<sup>503</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>504</sup> Talking Points for the German-Soviet conference, “Mögliche Gesprächsthemen im Bereich der deutsch-sowjetischen Wirtschaftsbeziehungen,” July 12, 1973, BA 102/100002, 2-3.

<sup>505</sup> Memo, “Sprechzettel für Messen und Ausstellungen 1974,” October 19, 1973, BA 102/100002, 2-3.

<sup>506</sup> For a detailed account of these negotiations see Jussi Hanhimäki, *The Flawed Architect* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2004), 277-280.

significant aspect to this summit was not what was actually signed, but the attitude with which it was conducted. Kissinger's visit to the Soviet Union in May 1973, which laid the ground work for the summit, was marked by Brezhnev's jovial attitude, willingness to compromise, and frank remarks.<sup>507</sup> The Soviet leader continued this attitude during his American visit with his affable presentation to the U.S. public, good-natured humor, and conciliatory statements. With his "I'm going to leave here in a very good mood" attitude he managed to pleasantly surprise the American public.<sup>508</sup> Even though he did not receive a firm commitment from Congress on the MFN status or a strong endorsement of the proposed liquefied natural gas deals, Brezhnev remained enthusiastic about his U.S. visit. So good-neighborly did Brezhnev present himself that some commentaries suggested America should overlook the insignificant agreements and rejoice in the spirit of cooperation that sprang from this visit.<sup>509</sup> Even behind the scenes, Brezhnev—content that the Soviet Union's position was considered on par with the U.S.—seemed to have gone beyond mere rhetoric, as his demand for a late-night meeting in Nixon's study to fix the Middle East problem demonstrated.<sup>510</sup> It seems clear that Brezhnev was enthusiastic about having achieved his goal of engaging the United States as its equal. If the 1972 Moscow summit meeting had initiated this development, Brezhnev's comfort level and affability had cemented it, not in words but in spirit. It became abundantly clear to everyone that the two superpowers were willing and able to cooperate.

For West Germany (and France), the public demonstration of superpower détente during the summit of 1973 was a mixed blessing. On one hand, an easing of superpower

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<sup>507</sup> Hanhimäki, 277-278.

<sup>508</sup> Hedrick Smith, "In Brezhnev's Baggage, A Supply of Ebullience," *The New York Times*, June 21, 1973, 1, 17.

<sup>509</sup> James Reston, "The Nixon-Brezhnev Promises," *The New York Times*, June 22, 1973, 35.

<sup>510</sup> Hanhimäki, 281.

tensions invariably alleviated confrontation in Europe; on the other there was the realistic fear of becoming an insignificant pawn in the European corner of the geopolitical superpower chess board. In this context, Kissinger's ill-fated public comments on the American proposal for a "Year of Europe" must have strengthened European concerns. Having distinguished between the United States' global interests and the European allies' regional interest in his interview of April 23, 1973, Kissinger had essentially sidelined the Europeans, and the summit meeting in Washington had then demonstrated how well the superpowers could actually get along.<sup>511</sup> In a clear demonstration of how disjointed the American and European flanks of NATO had become, Brandt vehemently refused a reassertion of American tutelage. Having interpreted Kissinger's announcement of a Year of Europe as such, he declared that "refurbished Atlantic relations in no case put in question West Germany's policy of reconciliation with the Communist states."<sup>512</sup> Despite Brandt's vehement affirmation of the success of *Ostpolitik*, Brezhnev's visits to Germany and the U.S. had shaken *Ostpolitik* at its core.

German historian Oliver Bange illustrates Brandt's *Ostpolitik* as a coin labeled "German unification," with a long-term strategy of undermining the Soviet Union on one side, and the creation of a security conference that would allow German reunification on the other. If we accept the central premises of Bange's illustration, then Brandt's coin was worn down on both sides, given Brezhnev's refusal to adjust the nature of German-Soviet interchanges and the emergence of a superpower détente that made the CSCE secondary, at best.

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<sup>511</sup> See Hanhimäki, 276.

<sup>512</sup> Flora Lewis, "Europe Reacts Warily to U.S.-Soviet Accords," *The New York Times*, June 25, 1973, 17.

Sodrano's analysis of Soviet attitudes toward détente with the FRG further illustrates that Brandt's *Ostpolitik* lost appeal once they could have the U.S. as a partner. For one, Sodrano identifies a traditional Soviet distrust of Germany that also permeated the Soviet leadership. They accordingly continued their military buildup, refusing to link military and political détente. Brezhnev's visit to Bonn also made it clear that it was not just military and political détente that they were unwilling to link, but economic and political policies, as well.<sup>513</sup> Undermining the Soviet system through rapprochement thus seemed fruitless.

As Brandt envisioned it, the establishment of an effective European security system would allow for an eventual German reunification. Within a European framework of peace and stability, Germany's reunification would no longer be perceived as a threat. While this was probably acceptable to Germany's European neighbors, it contradicted Soviet interests. A complete disarmament of Europe would seriously undermine control their over Eastern Europe and increase the influence Germany already exercised economically.

While a withdrawal of troops and weaponry from the continent might well reduce America's role in Europe substantially, it would also emasculate the Kremlin's controls over Eastern Europe. A West German government that could no longer be portrayed as a serious threat to the security of the region would only accelerate the East European's desire to free themselves from Soviet domination. To risk potentially irresistible pressures to establish a unified and powerful German state, while at the same time risking the disintegration of Moscow's security buffer in Eastern Europe, would be to jeopardize virtually everything Leonid Brezhnev and his generation of Soviet leaders had fought for in World War II and immediately afterward.<sup>514</sup>

Superpower détente allowed the Soviets to continue its rule over Eastern Europe, now with tacit Western approval. This entailed a hard-line pro-Warsaw Pact approach that vilified West Germany and enabled a stronger internal cohesion. At the same time, the

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<sup>513</sup> Sodaro argues that it was clear to the Soviet leadership by 1970 that foreign trade would only happen without domestic reform.

<sup>514</sup> Sodaro, 201.

Soviet Union could continue to benefit from its preexisting economic ties with Germany, even if a sense of disillusion about the inflexibility of Soviet trade patterns had set in.

### American Strength and Stalling *Ostpolitik*

If one had to pinpoint a date at which the U.S. held absolute sway over Western détente efforts, it would be the summer of 1973. This was not necessarily due to the skillful maneuvering of Nixon or Kissinger but because of the Soviets' actions. The summits between the Americans and the Soviets had made it clear that Brezhnev craved and enjoyed the recognition of the Soviet Union as an equal to the U.S. and also saw much prospect for an increase in trade. Indeed, the large U.S. economy and its global interests were an ideal match for Soviet demands. With the Soviets clearly favoring superpower détente, the Brandt government had to reorient itself and seek German reunification, as its predecessors did, under the auspices of U.S. leadership.

By May 1973, the Germans felt compelled to share their concerns about the Soviet's Berlin policy with the United States. Yet while Brandt commented on his difficulties with the Eastern interpretation of the Four Power Agreement during his summit meeting with Nixon in May 1973, he still believed in its value. What is most striking, however, is that for some time now the Germans had not remained in close consultation with the Americans over these issues. Thus, "the American side knew only partially of the difficulties that existed with the Four Power Agreement's interpretation and implementation."<sup>515</sup> This lack of awareness was a sign that the Brandt government had thought, after the Berlin Accords had been signed, that they could deal with the

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<sup>515</sup> MemCon, Chancellor Brandt, Nixon, et al. in the White House, May 7, 1973, Mapped 2, Ordner 440, Depositorium Egon Bahr, 1.

Soviet Union without the aid of the United States. Brandt's May visit to the U.S. demonstrated the Germans' need for closer consultation. Even so, a disillusionment with Brezhnev's policies, and a full awareness that the Soviet Union would not go along with *Ostpolitik*, had not set in.

In a clear attempt to have his cake and eat it too, Brezhnev wrote Brandt to warn him that anti-German rhetoric would be used during the upcoming Warsaw Pact meeting in August 1973. In particular, he emphasized his commitment to the continuity of the policy of peace that Brandt and he had pursued and attributed the agreement between the U.S. and the Soviet Union on the prevention of nuclear war to that policy. He described Nixon as "a statesman, who keeps his word as a solid partner" and saw the improvement in U.S.-Soviet relations as a "good support for the course our two countries are taking."<sup>516</sup>

Bahr, for one, believed Brezhnev's rhetoric. He believed Brezhnev's declaration of peaceful intent to be sincere and pointed to the fact that in his letter Brezhnev had twice used the term "turning point" ("Wende"). Not realizing that for Brezhnev the turning point was actually one toward a superpower détente, he concluded that "the Eastern Summit is of course used to calm the truly upset group of chickens that make up the Warsaw Pact. Most of them are no smarter than our allies: they are afraid to be sold out."<sup>517</sup>

But it was the Brandt government that would be sold out. The director of the Osteuropa Institut in Munich, Dr. Heinrich Vogel, brought increased number of contacts

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<sup>516</sup> Attachment to Letter, Egon Bahr to Chancellor Brandt, July 30, 1973, Mapped 2, Ordner 432, Depositorium Egon Bahr.

<sup>517</sup> Ibid. Original: "Der Ostgipfel dient natürlich dazu, die ungeheuer aufgeregte Hühnerschar des Warschauer Vertrages zu beruhigen. Die meisten sind dort nicht klüger als unsere Verbündeten; sie haben Angst, verkauft zu werden."

between certain Soviet foreign policy officials and the CDU/CSU to Bahr's attention. Using the example of Prof. Michail Sergeevic Voslenskij's visit to Germany, he explained that certain Soviet foreign policy experts saw the issue of German reunification as a dangerous one, were bothered by Bahr's emphasis on reunification, and hoped to find a partner in the CDU/CSU who would foster a policy that clearly delineated between the FRG and GDR.<sup>518</sup> More importantly than seeking contacts with the German opposition, though, was the rhetorical use of a revanchist West Germany as a cohesive element for the Warsaw Pact.

In a speech in August 1973, Brezhnev singled out the FRG as critically important to Soviet peace policy. First, though, he also implicated the Brandt government in a policy to undermine the Communist order, as he stated that this phenomenon was not just apparent in the opposition.<sup>519</sup> Vilifying West Germany as the *raison d'être* for the Eastern military alliance apparently exceeded Brandt's tolerance for what Brezhnev had warned him was rhetoric for domestic consumption, as Brandt felt compelled to respond to these accusations.

In a reply to Brezhnev, Brandt used an increasingly critical tone towards Soviet policy, but most of all he complained about the Berlin situation.

We have spent much effort to reach the Four Power Agreement. I would like to publicly voice my disappointment over the fact that this is still a problem between us that can overshadow the entirety of our relations. I would really hope that it is possible to reach a point at which no questions about Berlin bother us any more.<sup>520</sup>

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<sup>518</sup> Letter, Direktor Osteuropa Institut, Dr. Heinrich Vogel, to Egon Bahr, July 26, 1973, Mappe 2, Ordner 432, Depositorium Egon Bahr.

<sup>519</sup> Uwe Engelbrecht, "Breschnew tadelt Bundesrepublik" *Kölner Stadt-Anzeiger*, August 16, 1973, Mappe 2, Ordner 432, Depositorium Egon Bahr.

<sup>520</sup> Draft Letter, Chancellor Brandt to Brezhnev, [n.d.; after August 16, 1973], Mappe 2, Ordner 432, Depositorium Egon Bahr. Original: "Wir haben sehr große Anstrengungen unternommen, um das Vier-Mächte-Abkommen zu erreichen. Ich möchte in aller Offenheit meine Enttäuschung darüber Ausdruck geben, daß dieses Problem zwischen uns noch immer eine Rolle spielt, die die Gesamtheit unserer Beziehungen überschatten kann. Ich möchte wirklich hoffen, daß es möglich ist, einen Punkt zu erreichen, durch den uns keine Berlin-Frage mehr beschwert."



This, however, would not be the case. Starting in August 1973, the Czech authorities refused any contact with German administrations in Berlin who requested legal assistance. The reason was the absence of West Berlin in the corresponding agreement between West Germany and the CSSR. While the agreement previously had been interpreted to implicitly include West Berlin, now nothing short of an explicit mention of West Berlin would suffice.

The GDR continued this line of pressure. On September 25, 1973, immediately after they gained a diplomatic victory by being admitted to the Inter-Governmental Maritime Consultative Organization (IMCO), a sub-organization of the United Nations, the GDR delegates protested against the FRG's September 21, 1965 statement, which extended the validity of the IMCO agreements to "Land Berlin." The East Germans argued that this was a violation of "the quadripartite agreement of September 3, 1971, that Berlin (West) is not part of the Federal Republic of Germany and should not be governed by it."<sup>521</sup> In short, the GDR turned the West German success of the Four Power Agreement on its head by claiming that nothing short of an explicit mention of West Berlin would be valid in their eyes.

For the Brandt government, the question of West Berlin was truly its Achilles heel. As a former mayor of Berlin and having argued that his *Ostpolitik* would improve the life of West Berliners, Brandt could not afford to see the advances on West Berlin reversed. An internal document of the Brandt government suggested an immediate response in IMCO and evaluated the GDR protest as significant as it could weaken the German position overall.

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<sup>521</sup> Telegram, German Embassy at the United Nations, Gehlhoff, to the German Foreign Office, "DDR-Erklärung zu Berlin anlässlich IMCO- Beitritts," November 1, 1973, BA 136/18091.

This is the first case in which the GDR denounces the Berlin declaration of the German government on admission to a special organization of the United Nation. It must be expected that this procedure will repeat itself once the GDR joins other international organizations. This could weaken our position in the international arena in the long term simply by the fact that the circulating documents depict the inclusion of Berlin as questionable. It is therefore recommended to try in the next conversation with Undersecretary Kohl to keep the GDR from further protests of this kind.<sup>522</sup>

During consultations the following day the Germans' desire for a forceful response by its three Western allies was met with reluctance on the part of the British and the French. The British and the French representatives agreed that only Bonn should issue a statement while the three allies, through their silence, would give their tacit approval. Besides, with only four days before the next IMCO meeting, it would not be possible to agree on a statement. Only the US representative countered the opinions, and the Germans considered the French and British stance to be disappointingly weak. The U.S. position was that "we must counter the GDR in the same arena that it challenged us. If this would be left only for the FRG to do, the three powers would convey the impression that it is the role of the Federal Republic of Germany to enforce the Four Power Agreement." He further noted that the United States would issue a declaration by itself if no joint declaration by the three powers could be agreed upon.<sup>523</sup> Faced with this tough American and German stance, the next day the French and British delegates agreed to

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<sup>522</sup> Memo, Economics Ministry, Garmelmann, to Economics Minister, "Beitritt der DDR zur IMCO," November 8, 1973, BA 136/18091. Original: "Dies ist der erste Fall, in dem die DDR die Berlin-Erklärung der Bundesregierung beim Beitritt zu einer Sonderorganisation der VN beanstandet. Es ist zu erwarten, daß sich dieser Vorgang wiederholt, wenn die DDR weiteren internationalen Organisationen beitrifft. Das könnte im internationalen Bereich auf Dauer unsere Position in der Berlinfrage schon dadurch schwächen, daß die zirkulierten Dokumente die Einbeziehung Berlins als umstritten ausweisen. Es wird deshalb empfohlen, im nächsten Gespräch mit StS Kohl den Versuch zu unternehmen, die DDR von weiteren Protesten dieser Art abzuhalten."

<sup>523</sup> Memo, Vermerk 210-505.35, Lücking, Bonn, November 9, 1973, betr: Beitritt der DDR zur IMCO, BA 136/18091, 3. Original: "Wir müßten der DDR auf dem Feld entgegenreten, auf welchem sie uns herausfordert. Falls allein der Bundesrepublik dies überlassen bleibe, würden die 3 Mächte den Eindruck vermitteln, als sei es Aufgabe der Bundesrepublik Deutschland, das Viermächte-Abkommen zur Anwendung zu bringen. [...] Er wies darauf hin, daß der Sprecher der Vereinigten Staaten in der IMCO selbständig eine Erklärung abgeben würde, sofern eine gemeinsame Äußerung der 3 Mächte in der IMCO nicht zustande käme."

issue a joint answer by all four powers during the next IMCO meeting, on November 12, 1973.<sup>524</sup>

The wavering British and French support for the German cause on the international scene clearly illuminates that the United States was the only ally that offered unqualified support for German reunification. After such clear illustrations of loyalties, a renewed emphasis on the relationship with the U.S. was the obvious course of action. Brezhnev's unwillingness to continue to strengthen bilateral ties with Bonn to the extent that *Ostpolitik* would be a potential tool for German reunification drove Brandt back into the arms of the United States. With his West European allies lukewarm about reunification, Brandt could not even continue to emphasize the role of the EC over transatlantic ties. In essence, both his *Ostpolitik* and his *Westpolitik* with the EC had failed. What remained was not a special, ever-increasing cooperation between Western and Eastern Europe that would create a peaceful bubble in Europe. Ultimately, returning to the side of the United States tied the possibility of reunification to where it had been before his inauguration, namely American-style détente and the remote hope of a geopolitical peace rather than a European peace.

#### German disillusionment with *Osthandel*

By the summer of 1973, certain elements in the German government and industry became disillusioned with the state of German *Ostpolitik* and *Osthandel*. A year earlier, Otto Wolff von Amerongen had already identified the problems with the Eastern trade. The two major ones were the lack of diversification in the range of Soviet products, which limited trade flow and improved the trade balance in favor of FRG's exports, and the lack

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<sup>524</sup> Ibid.

of Soviet willingness to engage in establishing cooperation agreements between Soviet and German firms.<sup>525</sup>

In addition to the problems of increasing trade to counter the huge trade imbalance that forced the Germans to subsidize Soviet imports with German credit, the potential for Soviet exports had not been reached. Crude oil exports from the SU were lagging behind the quotas that the FRG assigned to the Soviet Union and were well behind the demand in Germany (2.8 million tons delivered versus 4.4 million tons expected). This was especially striking as Italy and France were able to purchase considerably higher quantities of crude oil from the Soviet Union (11 million and 6 million tons, respectively). Even after the German government had raised—at the Soviets’ request—the quota for heating oil from 1.5 million to 2.8 million tons, this did not result in higher crude oil exports.<sup>526</sup>

As a result, Soviet debt increased drastically, putting it by far at the top of all of Germany’s debtor countries. By late summer it was estimated that in 1973 the Soviet Union would double its debt from 1972, putting it at a staggering 3.6 billion marks.<sup>527</sup> With the political impetus for *Osthandel* somewhat dampened, negotiations on the major showcase deals dragged on unsuccessfully.

Trying to make the most use out of their natural resources, Brezhnev had pushed for the continuation of large-scale orders for industrial plants to be built in the Soviet Union on German credit. The next showcase would be the steel plant Kursk which was to

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<sup>525</sup> Talking Points for the German-Soviet conference, “Mögliche Gesprächsthemen im Bereich der deutsch-sowjetischen Wirtschaftsbeziehungen,” July 12, 1973, BA 102/100002, 2-3.

<sup>526</sup> Ibid, 6.

<sup>527</sup> Memo, “Sprechzettel für Messen und Ausstellungen 1974,“ October 19, 1973. BA 102/100002, 2-3. Includes Chart:

| Soviet Debt to Germany in Million DM |      |      |       |       |       |            |
|--------------------------------------|------|------|-------|-------|-------|------------|
| 1967                                 | 1968 | 1969 | 1970  | 1971  | 1972  | 1973 (est) |
| 230                                  | 570  | 550  | 1,290 | 1,250 | 1,890 | 3,600      |

be of such a magnitude that the German industry balked at assuming responsibility for constructing such a project, much less financing it. Their refusal was especially due to the fact that the Soviets wanted to improve on the conditions they had been offered before. They refused to include the financing cost in the overall price of the project and would not pay these financing costs until the construction was completed.<sup>528</sup> The Soviets also insisted on a 12-year loan at an interest rate of 6%, which would mean a federal subsidy of 1.5 billion marks.<sup>529</sup>

It was at this point that the U.S. became an acceptable partner for trade with the East, someone to share information with and to try to avoid as a potential competitor. During a visit by Secretaries Schultz and Dent, Economics Minister Friederichs inquired about how the Americans handled loan conditions with the Soviets. "This is a problem that the FRG imminently has to deal with. It is our [Germany's] opinion that a race of Western industrial countries for better loan conditions should be avoided."<sup>530</sup>

But with the German government less enthusiastic about continuing to bankroll trade with the Soviet Union, the Soviet trade delegations threatened a possible cooling of relations with the FRG over the issue of loan conditions in December 1973.<sup>531</sup> Yet, without political pressure, the German industry was not willing to go the extra mile. In an essay on trade with the Soviet Union, Amerongen was now convinced that trade with the East was a special case, to be treated differently from trade with the West. The fundamental realization here was that the Soviet Union was unwilling to modify its

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<sup>528</sup> Draft Memo, Dr. Barth, "Kursk-Projekt," September 18, 1973, BA 102/135253, 2.

<sup>529</sup> Memo, Dr. Gebert, "Hüttenwerksprojekt Kursk," July 26, 1973, BA 102/135253, 2.

<sup>530</sup> Memo, "Besprechung zwischen US Finanzminister Schultz, US Handelsminister Dent und Wirtschaftsminister Friderichs," October 5, 1973, BA 102/111917, 2-3.

<sup>531</sup> Memo, "Deutsch-Sowjetische Wirtschaftsbeziehungen," December 10, 1973, BA 102/100002.

system of a planned economy for the sake of Western investments.<sup>532</sup> While he offered the possibility that heavy Soviet indebtedness might be offset by limited Soviet purchases during the years 1974/75 (so as to end the Five-Year Plan with a balanced trade volume), even with the prospect of increased Soviet oil revenues due to the Middle East Crisis, the article predicted that *Osthandel* had only limited growth potential in the coming years.<sup>533</sup>

Amerongen also rejected Soviet demands for a further liberalization of import restrictions, as over 90% of all goods could already be freely imported. He blamed the Soviet Union for a lack of initiative in trying to penetrate the German market. Lack of knowledge of the German market and customer care, as well as limited Soviet attendance at trade fairs, hampered the marketability of Soviet imports. The problems for German exports, on the other hand, was not a question of the desirability their goods but of a Soviet lack of hard currency, which meant that German sales to the Soviet Union always had to involve the issue of credits.<sup>534</sup>

Lastly, cooperation between companies in both countries that extended beyond a simple purchase and deliver system was not fostered. Apart from the question of property ownership in a Communist country, cooperation on taxes, tariffs, and the status of foreign workers were essential to the vitalization of *Osthandel*, yet they remained unresolved. Overall, Amerongen's assessment was, therefore, pessimistic.<sup>535</sup>

This publicly-voiced pessimism places the start of the German industry's disillusionment over *Osthandel* in the latter part of 1973 and not, as Rudolph claims, to 1975. Certainly, a 1975 CIA warning of a significant Soviet trade deficit, which

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<sup>532</sup> Otto Wolff von Amerongen, "Wirtschaftsbeziehungen mit der Sowjetunion," *Osteuropa*, 1 (1974): 3-12, 4.

<sup>533</sup> *Ibid*, 5.

<sup>534</sup> *Ibid*, 6-7.

<sup>535</sup> *Ibid*, 8.

Economics Minister Friderich tried to keep under wraps, as well a Deutsche Bank calculation of a record Soviet deficit of over four billion dollars with Western countries, offered more concrete reason for investors to be wary.<sup>536</sup> Yet already in 1973 the “gold rush” excitement that the Soviet economy could save the German economy from the ups and downs of a market economy had worn off.

#### The Jackson- Vanick Amendment

Had the trend of superpower détente continued, Kissinger’s claim to have “harnessed the beast of détente” would have fulfilled itself some three years later.<sup>537</sup> Yet, just as he had failed to realize the economic ties Brandt had established with the Soviet Union as a crucial and lasting element in international relations, he proved once again to be blind to the dangers of trade issues. With the question of economic benefits of central importance to the Soviet leadership and a determining factor in its foreign policy, it seems negligent at best for Kissinger to assure Brezhnev rather flippantly that MFN status for the Soviet Union was a sure thing. Overly confident in his strategy, he assured Nixon that Brezhnev “should be deeply committed to a more positive relationship with the U.S.”<sup>538</sup> He was right, of course, that Brezhnev strove for an intensification of ties with the U.S. By looking at foreign policy issues, however, Kissinger forgot the adage that all foreign policy is also domestic policy and as such, domestic pressure could seriously harm international ambitions. As Hanhimäki illustrates, the domestic influence of President

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<sup>536</sup> Memo, “Analyse der Volkswirtschaftlichen Abteilung der Bundesbank,” April, 1976, Nachlaß Otto Wolff von Amerongen, 72-413-1, Rhein-Westfälisches Wirtschaftsarchiv, Köln. Also contains the CIA report. For a more detailed illustration of the “difficult year 1975,” see Rudolph, 325.

<sup>537</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 534.

<sup>538</sup> MemCon, Henry A. Kissinger to President Nixon, May 11, 1973, folder: “Kissinger’s Conversations at Zavidovo, May 5-8, 1973,” Box 75, NSC Files, NPMS, NA.

Nixon was a crucial component in implementing foreign policy. With Watergate discrediting the President's image and political strength on an almost daily basis in the fall of 1973, domestic opposition to the president's policies grew proportionally in strength.<sup>539</sup>

The Jackson-Vanick amendment was the political issue that would wipe out Kissinger's vision of détente with the Soviet Union. As James Goldgeier illustrates, the irony of Senator Henry Jackson's opposition to Kissinger was that he employed the same linkage strategy Kissinger used. The only difference with Jackson's approach was that he linked the carrots—in this case American economic incentives—with internal behavior of the Soviet Union, while Kissinger exclusively looked at external behavior.<sup>540</sup>

To Jackson, the exit tax the Soviets imposed in August 1972 on Jewish citizens who wished to leave the Soviet Union constituted foul play. In October 1972, Jackson and Representative Charles Vanick introduced bills in both the Senate and the House that linked the question of Jewish emigration to improvements in trade. Little came of this in 1972 and early 1973. As Kissinger suggests, the novelty of Nixon's détente with the Soviet Union and a strong presidential power base prevented excessive criticism of Nixon's foreign policy. Kissinger links the strengthening criticism of increased trade with the Soviet Union to the Soviet crackdown on dissidents, for example on Andrei Sakharov in August 1973.<sup>541</sup> As outlined before, however, the conservative shift in the Soviet Politburo had already taken place in March 1973, making U.S. congressional opposition

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<sup>539</sup> Hanhimäki, 340-344.

<sup>540</sup> James M. Goldgeier, "The United States and the Soviet Union: Lessons of Détente," in: Richard N. Haass and Meghan L. O'Sullivan, eds, *Honey and Vinegar: Incentives, Sanctions, and Foreign Policy* (Washington, D.C.: The Brookings Institution, 2000): 120-136, 125.

<sup>541</sup> Kissinger, *White House Years*, 1255.



to any intensification of trade more likely. In fact, when the Jackson-Vanick amendment was formally introduced on March 15, 1973 public support for it was already increasing.

Brezhnev was eager to rid himself of this problem and stopped the practice of exit fees in April, but Jackson went one step further, insisting that the Soviets needed to specify a minimum number of exit visas and extend the same right to non-Jewish emigrants.<sup>542</sup> Clearly demonstrating how much the Soviets wanted MFN, in preparation for the summit Brezhnev told Kissinger that “all those who want to can go.”<sup>543</sup> Kissinger, however, discarded the issue as “peripheral,” thereby allowing the issue to become a public power struggle in the U.S. that the Soviet Union could only regard as meddling in their internal affairs. Whether we can believe Kissinger’s one-sided account of Jackson’s ever-increasing demands for Soviet Jewish emigration over the next year, which culminated in Gromyko’s warning that “the Soviet government would, however, stop short of forcing its citizens to emigrate in order to please the American Congress” matters little. The fundamental issue here revolves around Kissinger’s failure to recognize the dangers of a politicization of the issue in the U.S. Congress. As Goldgeier stresses, “Kissinger’s emphasis on great power realpolitik led to his failure to appreciate the lack of control that big powers had over little ones and to his failure to recognize how his own society and their representatives in government could disrupt his strategy.”<sup>544</sup>

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<sup>542</sup> Hanhimäki, 341. For a strongly anti-Jackson account, see Kissinger, *Years of Renewal*, 128-135.

<sup>543</sup> MemCon, Henry A. Kissinger to President Nixon, May 11, 1973, folder: “Kissinger’s Conversations at Zavidovo, May 5-8, 1973,” Box 75, NSC Files, NPMS, NA.

<sup>544</sup> Goldgeier, 134.

## The Arab-Israeli War

### Crisis

The delay in MFN approval proved fateful to superpower détente. On October 6, 1973, the highest of high holy days for Jews, Yom Kippur, Egypt and Syria initiated a surprise attack on Israel. Egypt's forces swiftly crossed the Suez Canal and overran the Bar-Lev line. Syria moved into the Golan Heights and nearly reached the 1967 border with Israel. With Israel's general staff convinced of Israel's safety from future Arab attacks, neither U.N. Resolution 242 nor Egyptian President Sadat's peace initiative had led Israel to withdraw to the pre-1967 armistice lines. Sadat's threats of war throughout 1972 and much of 1973 to the contrary, neither the U.S. nor the Israelis conceived that an Arab attack was a realistic possibility. Therefore, they misinterpreted the buildup of armed forces along the canal as military exercises rather than preparations for an attack and were completely surprised by the turn of events.<sup>545</sup>

The damage to the Soviet-American relationship came when the tide of war turned on October 10. Having regained lost ground, Israel began to advance into Syria proper and the Soviet Union felt compelled to respond with an airlift of military supplies to Damascus and Cairo. Since the U.S. was allied with Israel, a proxy war ensued; the U.S. responded to the Soviets' actions on October 12 and 13 with massive U.S. airlifts to Israel. Israeli forces crossed the Suez Canal and surrounded the Egyptian Third Army on October 21.

The war started an international crisis when Egypt pleaded the Soviet Union to save its Third Army by threatening to send troops to assist Egypt. Brezhnev complied, suggesting a joint operation with U.S. forces to maintain a previously negotiated cease-

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<sup>545</sup> For a detailed account, see Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 450-467.

fire agreement based on U.N. resolution 338, which had already been broken. Brezhnev threatened Nixon, however, that “if you find it impossible to act jointly with us in this matter, we should be faced with the necessity to consider the question of taking appropriate steps unilaterally.”<sup>546</sup> The U.S. countered this threat by raising the alert of its military forces to DEFCON III on October 24, demonstrating and later communicating to Brezhnev that the U.S. would not stand for unilateral Soviet action. Before the situation could escalate any further, the U.S. managed to pressure Israel into accepting a second cease-fire on October 25, 1973, sparing the embattled Egyptian Third Army.

#### European Opposition to American Actions

European criticism focused in part on America’s unrestrained support for Israel but mostly on the unilateralism with which the U.S. had implemented its policies, particularly its raising of the DEFCON level without consulting the European allies. Beneath this obvious issue of consultation was the question of the cohesion of an alliance in which members had different interests and perspectives. As Kissinger put it:

The deeper problem raised by the October war was the proper conduct of allies in an emergency when they sincerely disagree with one another either about causes or about remedies: Should they use the occasion of their partners’ embarrassment to vindicate their own views? Or do they have an obligation to subordinate their differences to the realization that the humiliation of the ally who, for better or worse, is most strategically placed to affect the outcome weakens the structure of common defense and the achievement of joint purposes?<sup>547</sup>

Yet if consultation was not an essential part of an alliance, then, by Kissinger’s argument, NATO would become merely a stepping stool for the U.S. to extend its power. The U.S. and Western Europe had developed fundamentally different interests vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, which Kissinger recognized but did not validate. In his lament over the fact that

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<sup>546</sup> Letter, Brezhnev to Nixon, October 24, 1973, folder: “Dobrynin/Kissinger Vol. 20 (October 12-November 27), “ Box 69, HAK Office Files, NPMP, NA, 1-2.

<sup>547</sup> Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 708.

one NATO ally after another refused to let the U.S. use the bases in their country for the airlift to supply Israel he points at the underlying conflict.

Dissociation from us in the Middle East war was thus coupled with an attempt to opt out of any possible crisis with the Soviet Union. [...] they would not risk over the Middle East the web of their economic relations with the Communist world—which grew increasingly vital to them for economic reasons as the oil crisis triggered a worldwide recession.<sup>548</sup>

In essence, Kissinger wished to involve the European allies in a fight that they perceived, rightly or wrongly, as not their own. In a twisted way, the Europeans' reactions proved the validity of Kissinger's thoughts on the Year of Europe: the Europeans were most concerned about, and gave priority to, their regional interests, which in this case involved good relations with the Soviet Union. Even so, unilaterally raising the DEFCON level rendered the Europeans as nothing more than pawns in the superpower game.

With major NATO partners such as Spain, Greece, Turkey, France, and Great Britain refusing to let the U.S. use their bases for the airlift to Israel, the FRG was in a somewhat unusual position. Not being fully sovereign and acutely aware of the need for U.S. backing on the Berlin question, it pursued a don't ask, don't tell policy. Yet when it became public knowledge on October 24 that Israeli ships had docked in Bremerhafen in order to be loaded with military supplies, the Brandt government told the U.S. to halt all arms shipments to Israel from German soil.<sup>549</sup>

In his memoirs Kissinger condemned this step, noting that as “we were already carrying out the Federal Republic's private request, the purpose of the public statement could only be to distance Bonn from Washington for the benefit of a presumed Arab constituency in the midst of an acute crisis.”<sup>550</sup> In the true Machiavellian approach that

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<sup>548</sup> Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 710.

<sup>549</sup> “Bonn Bids U.S. Halt Arms to Israel Via Germany,” *The New York Times*, October 26, 1973, 20.

<sup>550</sup> Kissinger, *Years of Upheaval*, 714.

had let Kissinger to ignore the lack of American domestic support for détente with the Soviet Union, he now overlooked the fact that the German public might hold a different view regarding the prospects of an escalating conflict with the Arab nations and the Soviet Union than the Americans. Instead, the entire Nixon foreign policy team squarely blamed the German reaction on a lack of support from its leaders.

The following day, October 26, Nixon publicly chastised his West European allies for their lack of support in a crisis that would have affected them even more than the United States. Flanked by his Secretary of Defense, James R. Schlesinger, they conducted the supposedly first direct criticism of the European allies since NATO's beginnings. Schlesinger even hinted at a partial withdrawal of U.S. forces from Germany as "the reaction of the Foreign Ministry in Germany raises some questions about whether they view enhanced readiness in the same way that we view enhanced readiness."<sup>551</sup> The clashing views between the Americans and the Germans are perfectly illustrated in a discussion between Kissinger and the German Ambassador von Staden that same day.

18. The German Ambassador said that there was a serious problem of communication which had developed in the last 14 days.

19. The Secretary said he recognized this aspect of the problem. He had given instructions that as negotiations for a solution in the Middle East develop, a means should be found to inform our European Allies more swiftly and completely. There was a problem here, however. It was difficult for the allies to insist on a right to private briefings when their fundamental attitude was either slightly or openly hostile.

20. The German Ambassador insisted that if information were provided more promptly the policy adopted by the European Allies was less likely to be divergent.

The Secretary said this was perhaps so, unless our underlying philosophies were different.<sup>552</sup>

With this, Kissinger summed up the underlying dynamics and the problem that had beset the transatlantic alliance with the onset of European détente. The issue of military shipments from German soil would largely be resolved within a couple days with the

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<sup>551</sup> David Binder, "Bonn Is Singled Out," *Special to The New York Times*, October 27, 1973, 65.

<sup>552</sup> Cable, U.S. Embassy in Bonn to State Department, "Secretary's Meeting with FRG Ambassador von Staden, October 26," October 27, 1973, RG 59, SN 70-73, POL 7 US/Kissinger, NA.

compromise that the U.S. could only ship its military equipment on U.S. vessels, giving the German government the opportunity to feign ignorance over where the shipments were going. Even so, European reservations over American unilateralism remained heated.<sup>553</sup> As Bahr reported from London,

I have never seen Heath so brutal or refreshingly realistic. He was bitter and critical vis-à-vis the Americans. Distance between London and Washington was the fundamental impression in my conversations. [...] He [Heath] had not been consulted before the Americans had given that alert. Maybe Kissinger understands something of the Europe of the past century, but in Washington they do not understand the Europe of today.<sup>554</sup>

The aftermath of the Yom Kippur War remained a divisive issue for the transatlantic alliance, as well. “The gulf that the Europeans have chosen to open between themselves and the U.S.,” as German Finance Minister Schmidt put it in a letter to Kissinger, made itself felt in the Americans’ attempt to reestablish adequate oil deliveries from the Middle East.<sup>555</sup> For the West Europeans, the solution to the crisis was of utmost importance, not the standing of the U.S. in the region. Hence, they were eager to involve all parties in the talks. Despite Kissinger’s efforts they encouraged active participation by the Soviets. In his backchannel with Ledlev, Bahr encouraged the idea of Soviet-Israeli talks.

It is a valid question whether the Russian side wishes a line of communication with Israel. If this is the case the Chancellor [Brandt] would be happy to arrange it. [...] Important: If the Americans talk with the Egyptians, why should the Russians not talk with the Israelis?<sup>556</sup>

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<sup>553</sup> John W. Finney, “U.S. Reports Accord With Bonn on Shipments to Israel,” *Special to The New York Times*, November 13, 1973, 13.

<sup>554</sup> Letter, Egon Bahr to Chancellor Brandt, October 31, 1973, Mappe 2, Bundeskanzler, WBA, 1. Original: “Ich habe ihn noch niemals so brutal oder erfreulich realistisch erlebt: England habe nicht nur das Empire, sondern auch seine militärische Vormachtstellung verloren; deshalb gehe es nach Europa. Er war im übrigen bitter bzw. kritisch gegen die Amerikaner. Die Distanz in London gegenüber Washington war überhaupt der entscheidende Eindruck aller Gespräch mit Heath, Sir Alec, Amery und den Abteilungsleitern im Auswaerigen Amt. [...]

Heath war bitter über die Äußerungen Nixons, Kissingers und Schlesingers; man bezieht dort auch alles auf sich selbst. Er jedenfalls sei nicht konsultiert worden, bevor die Amerikaner jenen „alert“ gegeben haben. Es könne sein, daß Kissinger etwas vom Europa des vergangenen Jahrhunderts verstünde. Das heutige Europa hätte man in Washington nicht begriffen. Sicher brauchen wir Amerika. Amerika braucht aber auch uns.“

<sup>555</sup> Letter, Henry A. Kissinger to Finance Minister, Helmut Schmidt, [n.d. after November 5, 1973] , Mappe 1, Ordner 436, Depositorium Egon Bahr.

<sup>556</sup> Letter, Minister Bahr to Chancellor Brandt, November 9, 1973, Mappe 190, Bundeskanzler, WBA, 1. Original: “Außerdem sei die Frage zu stellen, ob von russischer Seite ein Gesprächskontakt mit Israel

Some of the European allies equated the idea of more diplomatic weight as a peacemaker, with more military power, as well. Eager to replace American military influence with the military power of Europeans, Pompidou floated the idea of a European Defense Council. This, of course, would profoundly undermine the separation of issues that allowed the FRG to maneuver internationally, and Bahr strongly opposed the idea.

There can only be security with America. After we blocked Kissinger's nonsense to provide the alliance with functions that would go significantly beyond security, we now have to stop the French danger: A European Security Council would divide the alliance. There can be only one strategy and the French have to return to it.

Allowing France to pull eight countries to its position would be the beginning of the end of NATO. The American echo to a European Security Council can not only be devastating but will disassociate America from Europe. In any case it will be an Insecurity Council because if it does not have anything to say it will confuse and be a new sign of European helplessness. Why does Europe not focus on its strength: the economy and politics, instead of belaboring its weakness, its defense?<sup>557</sup>

While Bahr might have perceived the international situation in a pro-American perspective, overall the political climate after the Yom Kippur war benefited the Soviet Union. However much Brandt and Bahr wanted to separate military, diplomatic, and economic issues, the fact remained that they were invariably linked, if for no other reason than that the other nations linked them. For Brezhnev, for example, the Yom Kippur War had given him a new impetus to enlarge the gulf between the U.S. and Western Europe

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gewünscht wird. Falls dies der Fall ist, würde der Bundeskanzler das gern versuchen. Wir hätten auch nichts dagegen, wenn die sowjetische Seite den Hintergrund der von Wilson eingeladenen Sitzung und der Teilnahme des BK Sadat wissen läßt, sofern man dies in Moskau für angebracht hält. Zu gegebener Zeit, und wenn das von allen für nützlich gehalten wird, würde der BK natürlich gern mit Sadat zusammentreffen. Wesentlich: Wenn die Amerikaner mit den Ägyptern reden, warum sollten die Russen nicht mit den Israelis reden?“

<sup>557</sup> Letter, Egon Bahr to Chancellor Brandt, Bonn, December 14, 1973, Mappe 1, Ordner 436, Depositorium Egon Bahr. Original: “Es kann nur Sicherheit mit Amerika geben. Nachdem wir Kissingers Unsinn abgeblockt haben, dem Bündnis wesentliche über die Sicherheit hinausgehende Funktionen zu geben, muß man die französische Gefahr abwenden: Ein europäischer Sicherheitsrat wäre der Spaltpilz des Bündnisses. Es kann nur eine Strategie geben und die Franzosen müssen zu ihr zurück. Wenn wir gestatten, daß Frankreich acht Länder zu seiner Position hinzieht, ist dies der Anfang vom Ende der Nato. Das Echo aus Amerika auf einen europäischen Sicherheitsrat kann nicht nur verheerend sein, sondern wird Amerika von Europa desintegrieren. Es wird in jedem Falle ein Unsicherheitsrat; denn wenn er nichts zu sagen haben sollte, wird er verwirren und ein neues Zeichen europäischer Ohnmacht. Warum konzentriert sich Europa nicht auf seine Stärke: Wirtschaft und Politik, statt an seiner Schwäche, der Verteidigung herumzulaborieren?“

and it mattered little to him whether that was achieved via diplomatic, military, or economic means.

### Soviet Hopes for More Transatlantic Dissent

The Middle East crisis did not simply allow the Soviet Union to count on West European countries as neutrals in the Soviet-American proxy war; instead it triggered another round of divide and conquer. Bahr's backchannel contact in the Soviet Union, Ledlev, was quite excited about West Germany's public stance on the Israeli transport ship. As Bahr explained to Brandt,

during our meeting on November 7 L. emphasized that we had made a huge mistake not to inform his side [Soviets] about our [German] treatment of the Israeli ship at least a couple hours in advance. He was really excited: This German government stance vis-à-vis the U.S.A. was not just bold but had provided support for General Secretary [Brezhnev] in this difficult situation. We could have gotten anything we wanted on Berlin for this.<sup>558</sup>

Bahr noted that Brezhnev had chimed in on this point, giving an impromptu dictation of his thoughts to Brandt as a way to "foster the close and trusting contact." According to Bahr, Brezhnev said that he blamed the U.S. for the crisis, as they "had been driven solely by their own selfish interests." In a very frank and provocative manner he continued that

It seems that they [the Americans] only need their partners when they find it necessary for the completion of their goals. This was the way it happened in Korea and Vietnam, where they dragged their allies into the conflict. In other cases, they not only ignored the interests of others but have no problem to gain advantages at the cost of others if their interests don't coincide with the American ones. [...] Of course everyone in Washington knew that the support for Israel and the emerging confrontation with the Arab world would trigger crude oil sanctions. But since,

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<sup>558</sup> Letter, Minister Bahr to Chancellor Brandt, November 9, 1973, Mappe 190, Bundeskanzler, WBA, 1. Original: "Bei der Zusammenkunft am 7.11. betonte L.: Wir hätten einen riesigen Fehler gemacht, seine Seite auf einem indirekten Kanal nicht wenigstens ein paar Stunden vorher über unsere Behandlung des israelischen Schiffes unterrichtet zu haben. Er war ganz aufgeregt: Diese Haltung der Bundesregierung gegenüber den USA sei nicht nur mutig, sondern in der schwierigen Lage des Generalsekretärs für diesen eine Unterstützung gewesen. Wir hätten dafür in Berlin kriegen können, was wir wollten."



unlike Europe, they are much less dependent on oil, they did not pay any mind to this possibility.<sup>559</sup>

Pouring oil into the fire, Brezhnev belabored the issue of the DEFCON alert.

Their [American] selfishness became particularly apparent when they decided to raise the readiness level of the American forces in Europe. For us it is not understandable that they did this in the FRG without informing you. We are sure that you, chancellor, know that this did not happen because we had done anything that threatened security. In such a case there would have necessarily been consultations by the Americans with their allies, but also with us. We cannot fathom the reasons why they orchestrated this production. We could even leave the reasons with the conscience of the orchestrator of this game if it were not so provocative. You must realize that such a step could force the other side to implement the necessary safety measures.

According to reports from your country and also from France and England the actions of the U.S. have been criticized. The reactions in these countries demonstrate the kind of responsibility that has developed over the last years. But we are still not safe from relapses.<sup>560</sup>

Brandt responded to this provocative propaganda piece with an earnestness that it did not deserve. After assuring that he understood Brezhnev's fears, he did not try to rectify the provocatively one-sided account but only offered a lame reference to internal politics as a reason for the "hard to explain American reactions." Further expressing his view that the

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<sup>559</sup> Letter, Minister Bahr to Chancellor Brandt, November 5, 1973, Mappe 190, Bundeskanzler, WBA, 1. Original: "Die Erfahrungen mit den USA in diesen Tagen haben bewiesen, daß sie sich zu ausschließlich von ihren egoistischen Interessen leiten ließen. Sie haben es Israel gestattet, den Beschluß des Sicherheitsrates zu ignorieren, zusätzliches Territorium zu erobern und zusätzliche Schwierigkeiten zu schaffen. Die USA haben auch alles getan, damit möglichst nur sie an der Regelung aller mit dem Konflikt zusammenhängenden Fragen aktiv teilnehmen. Es scheint, sie brauchen ihre Partner nur dann, wenn sie es zur Erreichung ihrer Ziele für nötig finden. So war es schon in Korea und Vietnam, als sie ihre Verbündeten hineingezogen haben. In anderen Fällen ignorieren sie nicht nur die Interessen anderer, wenn sie nicht den ihren gleichen, sondern haben auch nichts dagegen, Vorteile auf Kosten anderer zu erzielen. Man muß sich nur an das Streben erinnern, an einigen Punkten an die Stelle ihrer Verbündeten zu treten, die vorher vertrieben wurden. Natürlich war man sich in Washington darüber klar, daß sie Unterstützung Israels und die entstehende Konfrontation zu den Arabern entsprechende Erdöl-Sanktionen hervorrufen würde. Weil man aber im Unterschied zu Europa sehr viel weniger abhängig ist, haben sie dieser Möglichkeit keine Aufmerksamkeit geschenkt. Manche der amerikanischen offiziellen Persönlichkeiten erklären nach vorliegenden Informationen: Es sei gut, daß Sanktionen der Araber vor allem europäische Länder, nicht zuletzt die BRD, treffe, die eine ausgewogene Stellung eingenommen haben."

<sup>560</sup> Ibid, 2-3. Original: "Besonders deutlich wurde der politische Egoismus als sie entschieden, für die amerikanischen Streitkräfte auch in Europa erhöhte Bereitschaft zu erklären. Für uns ist nicht verständlich, daß sie das auch in der BRD taten, ohne Sie zu informieren. Wir sind sicher, daß Sie, Herr Bundeskanzler, wissen, daß dies nicht geschah, weil wir irgend etwas getan hätten, was die Sicherheit bedroht. In einem solchen Falle hätte es unbedingt Konsultationen der Amerikaner mit ihren Verbündeten, aber auch mit uns gegeben. Uns sind die Gründe schwer verständlich, warum sie so etwas veranstaltet haben. Eigentlich könnte man diese Gründe dem Gewissen der Veranstalter dieses Spiels überlassen, wenn es nicht zu herausfordernd wäre. Sie müssen sich klar sein, daß ein solcher Schritt die andere Seite zwingen könnte, die nötigen Vorsichtsmaßnahmen zu ergreifen."

Laut Meldungen aus Ihrem Lande, aber auch aus Frankreich und England, hat man dort mißbilligt, wie sich die USA benommen haben. Das zeugt von der Verantwortung, mit der dort auf die Lage reagiert wird, wie sie sich in den letzten Jahren entwickelt hat. Aber wir sind eben noch nicht sicher vor Rückfällen."

people involved (a clear reference to the U.S.) “had not always been angels,” he drew a clear line between the U.S. and West European foreign policy and even cautioned that an Arab oil embargo could change the independent stance of Western Europe vis-à-vis the United States. Thus selling out alliance cohesion for Arab oil, he even suggested an increase of oil shipments from the Soviet Union.

The position of my government was and is not easy. We are militarily not involved there [the Middle East] and will not be. Politically, the West European states try to develop a common stance, which, of course, cannot in all points coincide with the American one. The Arab countries, to put it mildly, do not act very smart. A policy of blackmail does not create solidarity but could even lead to a point where the Arabs trigger a change in the independent stance for which the West European countries strive; which would certainly not be in favor of the Arabs.

Of course it would all be somewhat easier if we were not as dependent on oil. The question would be of interest whether and to what extent the Soviet Union would be willing and able to conduct short- or medium-term oil deliveries. In the long term, we will make great efforts to become independent from future blackmail.<sup>561</sup>

On March 4, following the lines of what Brandt indicated to Brezhnev, the EC members decided to pursue negotiations with the Arab countries over the oil crisis independently from the U.S. and without consultation, leading to a further separation of policies.<sup>562</sup>

Political issues were not the only means used to undermine the transatlantic alliance. During Economics Minister Friederich’s visit with Kosygin, the Soviet expert on international trade touched on a vulnerable spot in U.S.-German relations. For the new

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<sup>561</sup> Letter, Chancellor Brandt to Prime Minister Brezhnev, November 7, 1973, Mappe 1, Ordner 432, Depositorium Egon Bahr. Original: “Ich kann Ihre Sorge verstehen, die Sie mir haben übermitteln lassen. Manche nach außen dringende Reaktion der USA ist kaum zu erklären, wenn man die innenpolitische Situation vergißt. [...] Ich bezweifle, daß die dort beteiligten Mächte immer Engel gewesen sind. Aber jetzt muß man zum Frieden kommen, um unkontrollierbare Entwicklungen zu verhindern. [...] Die Haltung meiner Regierung war und ist nicht einfach. Wir sind militärisch dort nicht engagiert und werden es auch nicht sein. Politisch versuchen die westeuropäischen Staaten, eine gemeinsame Haltung zu entwickeln, die natürlich nicht in allen Punkten mit der der USA übereinstimmen kann. Die arabischen Länder verhalten sich dabei zum Teil—um es milde auszudrücken—nicht besonders klug. Eine Politik der Erpressung ruft nicht nur Solidarität hervor, sondern könnte sogar dazu führen, daß die Araber damit die unabhängige Haltung, um die sich westeuropäische Länder bemühen, verändern, sicher nicht zum Gunsten der Araber.

Natürlich wäre alles etwas leichter, wenn wir nicht so sehr vom Öl abhängen wären. Die Frage wäre interessant, ob und inwieweit die Sowjetunion zu kurzfristigen oder mittelfristigen Lieferungen bereit oder in der Lage wäre. Langfristig werden wir große Anstrengungen machen, um künftig von Erpressungen unabhängig zu werden.“

<sup>562</sup> Letter, President Nixon to Chancellor Brandt, March 15, 1974, Mappe 2, Ordner 440, Depositorium Egon Bahr, 3.

Five-Year Plan the Soviets indicated that they wanted to involve the FRG even more than before. However, he noted that as a result of the devaluation of the dollar U.S. products had become cheaper, and that therefore there was now a stronger competition between the U.S. and Germany with respect to their economic relations with the Soviet Union.”<sup>563</sup> Later on he expressed his conviction that “combining the possibilities of European countries (FRG, France, Italy, and England) provides solid ground for further efforts” in the economic sector.<sup>564</sup>

Kosygin played the same card a week later with Bundesbank president Karl Klasen. After describing Soviet efforts not to devalue the ruble, he indicated that “U.S. equipment was much cheaper these days.” He also mentioned the large dollar reserves that the FRG held, stating and reiterated the financial dependence of the U.S. on West German currency holdings.<sup>565</sup>

The week his letter to Klasen, Kosygin pursued this line with German labor Union leader Otto A. Friedrich. As Friedrich explained to Economics Minister Friedrichs,

especially Prime Minister Kosygin pointed out that competition in trade and services would become fiercer for the German economy thanks to the American efforts and their advantages through the dollar devaluation and lower wage increases. Even so, Kosygin expressed his confidence that the trade relations and technological cooperation with the German industry would continue to grow. [...] Kosygin emphasized that even with a weakening Western economy, the Soviet economy would continue to expand as planned.<sup>566</sup>

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<sup>563</sup> Telegram, German Ambassador in Moscow, Sahn, to German Foreign Office, “Gespräch O. A. Friderichs mit Kossygin,” October 5, 1973, BA 102/135258.

<sup>564</sup> Ibid.

<sup>565</sup> Telegram, German Ambassador in Moscow, Sahn, to German Foreign Office, “Besuch Bundesbankpräsident Klasen in der SU,” October 12, 1973, BA 102/135258, 2. Original: “Kossygin fuhr fort, daß man sich bemühe, den Rubel nicht abzuwerten. Die preise in Europa stiegen überall. Die SU möchte erreichen, daß dem ansteigen des Nominallohns ein entsprechendes Wachstum des Reallohns entspreche. [...]”

Kosygin kam dann auf die großen Dollarreserven der Bundesrepublik zu sprechen. Heute kreditiere die BRD die USA—es sei wie ein umgekehrter marshallplan. Nach einem Exkurs, ob der Dollar sich halten werde—was Klasen glaubte—kam Kossygin darauf zu sprechen, daß die amerikanischen Ausrüstungen der SU heute sehr viel billiger kämen als früher.“

<sup>566</sup> Letter, Otto A. Friedrich to Economics Minister Friderichs, “Zusammenfassende Notiz über einen Besuch in Moskau vom 1. bis 5. Oktober 1973,” October 17, 1973, BA 102/135258, 2-3. Original: “Ich wurde insbesondere von Ministerpräsident Kossygin darauf hingewiesen, daß sich der Wettbewerb im

The Soviet preoccupation with the strength of the German economy, as Friedrich put it, clearly indicated that the Soviets were contemplating a shift in its economic strategy.<sup>567</sup> Their underlying premise is logical: if the U.S. could not deliver the products they needed, the question became whether or not the German economy was strong enough to take up the slack. Sowing discord among the Western allies certainly was a nice by-product to reviving trade, especially in previously-protected areas such as nuclear or high-tech computers.

#### Reviving Trade with the East

For the Soviet leadership domestic in-fighting was nothing new. Ending a political career over the breaking of local laws was probably another matter. In this sense, Dobrynin's claim that neither Watergate nor the impeachment process had an appreciable effect on the conduct of Soviet leaders seems reasonable.<sup>568</sup> The events surrounding the Yom Kippur War, however, brought the confrontation over geopolitical power back to the forefront.

If we accept Blacker's argument that for the Soviet Union détente meant lowering the possibility of a military escalation with the United States as American power declined

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Handel und in den Dienstleistungen durch die offenkundigen Bemühungen der Amerikaner und deren Erleichterung durch die Dollar- Abwertung und durch geringere Lohnsteigerungen für die Wirtschaft der Bundesrepublik verschärfen werde. Trotzdem bekundete mir Kossygin sein Vertrauen, daß sich die Handelsbeziehungen und die technologische Zusammenarbeit mit der Wirtschaft der Bundesrepublik stetig erweitern würden; denn man habe inzwischen sehr gute Erfahrungen mit deutschen Firmen gemacht. Kossygin hob hervor, daß auch bei einer sich abschwächenden Konjunktur in den westlichen Ländern die Sowjet-Wirtschaft weiter planmäßig expandieren werde.“

<sup>567</sup> Ibid, 4.

<sup>568</sup> Dobrynin, 313.

throughout the world, then the Yom Kippur War must be seen as a disappointment.<sup>569</sup> Not only did Israel retain the upper hand militarily, but Kissinger managed to conclude a ceasefire agreement, essentially excluding the Soviet Union and leaving the U.S. as the central power broker in the region.

Potentially more damaging for the Soviets than being shut out of the Middle East peace process, however, was the re-shelving of the trade act in Congress that would have granted the Soviet Union MFN status. With East-West tensions at a new high, the Nixon administration saw no prospect of getting such legislation passed. Senator Jackson had won the battle over Soviet MFN status and the Soviets realized that no close economic cooperation with the U.S. would be forthcoming. The particularly damaging aspect of this situation was that the two proposed liquefied natural gas deals would not come to fruition. The process of liquefying the gas before transporting it across the Pacific left little financial maneuvering room. Adding a significant tariff surcharge rendered Soviet prices way above market level. In essence, the possibility of a close *détente* on a political or economic level would be severely limited.

With the U.S. no longer a viable partner for *détente*, the most likely source for future investment and high-tech know-how were the Europeans. In order to reinvigorate the stalled negotiations on Kursk, the Soviet Union was now willing to at least partially accommodate Western concerns. Until October 1973, Soviet strategy had been to deal with Western countries on a bilateral basis, which enabled them to play companies and governments from one country against those of another. After October, Kosygin seemed willing to entertain the notion of conglomerates of companies from different nations

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<sup>569</sup> Coit D. Blacker, "The Kremlin and *Détente*: Soviet Conceptions, Hopes, and Expectations," in Alexander L. George, ed., *Managing U.S.-Soviet Rivalry* (Boulder, CO: Westview Press, 1983), 119-137.

(FRG, France, Italy, and GB) in large-scale, investment-heavy projects. These projects, of course, should focus on metalworking.<sup>570</sup> In an interview in Brussels a month later, it became clear that this was just a temporary concession to revitalize trade. Soviet ambassador Falin stated that the Soviet Union would remain entrenched in the principle of bilateral agreements, even if the EC countries transferred their authority to Brussels in 1974.<sup>571</sup>

While using multi-national conglomerates overcame the difficulty of the size of Soviet projects, financing remained the central problem. In December 1973, after the visit of a Soviet trade delegation led by Deputy Minister for Foreign Trade, Komarov, the entire Kursk project was settled—with the exception of the financing. Economics Minister Friederichs reminded Brandt of the great symbolic meaning of the project and that they could not “overestimate the gravity of this project for the Soviets” and asked him to let him know “if, for political reasons, you do not wish to risk failure of this project over the question of the interest rate.”<sup>572</sup> Brandt agreed with Friederich’s assessment of the significance of the project “also in regards to our overall relations with the Soviet Union” and asked Friedrich to nail down the Soviet demands during the next meeting.<sup>573</sup> By the end of the Soviet trade delegation’s visit on December, 17, 1973, the Salzgitter/Krupp/Korf consortium had come closer to finalizing the financing. The Soviets insisted on 6.05% while the market rate was much higher.<sup>574</sup>

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<sup>570</sup> Memo, “Sprechzettel für Messen und Ausstellungen 1974,” October 19, 1973, BA 102/100002, 1-3.

<sup>571</sup> Letter, Chief Editor, *Industriemagazin*, Peter K. Pernutz, to Berthold Beitz, November 29, 1973, Mappe „Ernst Wolf Mommsen,” Ordner 108, Depositorium Egon Bahr.

<sup>572</sup> Letter, Economics Minister Friderichs to Chancellor Brandt, December 6, 1973, BA 102/135253, 1-2.

<sup>573</sup> Letter, Chancellor Brandt to Economics Minister Friderichs, [n.d., before December 10, 1973], BA 102/135253.

<sup>574</sup> Letter, Chairs of Salzgitter, Krupp, Korf Konsortium, Hans Birnbaum, Willy Korf, and Ernst Mommsen to Economics Minister Friderichs, December 17, 1973, BA 102/135253, 3-4.

Implementing a carrot-and-stick approach, in January 1974 a high-ranking Soviet trade delegation led by Deputy Prime Minister W. N. Novikov embellished the benefits of continued trade with the Soviet Union. Trade Minister Friderichs received note upon note that “the Soviet Union is willing to devote much effort into utilizing these [plentiful Soviet] natural resources but requires help in financing these undertakings from countries that want these resources.” The Soviet Union needed not only technical but also financial assistance in utilizing its resources.<sup>575</sup>

If the FRG wants to have electrical power or natural gas from us it must help us construct and finance the power plants, pipelines, and equipment. Also, the FRG could become a good partner in the area of machine tooling. It would, for example be possible that its companies produce half-finished goods in our country since production here would be cheaper.<sup>576</sup>

Brandt was quick to acquiesce to the Soviets’ demands during his meeting with Novikov. He stated that the financing of the Kursk project was “somewhat unusual” but felt that “if the Soviet side would be flexible, the German one would not be a problem, either, and that one could come up with a positive result in time for the deadline.”<sup>577</sup> However, Brandt’s willingness to bankroll another Soviet project at discounted interest rates was blocked in the cabinet by Finance Minister Schmidt and Economics Minister Friderichs, for whom these concessions went too far.<sup>578</sup>

After his unsuccessful negotiations in Germany, Novikov returned home and decided to use the stick. In a conversation with German ambassador Balser, he reiterated

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<sup>575</sup> Letter, Minister Heinz-Herbert Karry to Economics Minister Friderichs, “Tagung der deutsch-sowjetischen Kommission für wissenschaftlich-technische Zusammenarbeit,” January 18, 1974, 2.

<sup>576</sup> Memo, “Resumé der Ansprache des stellv. Vorsitzenden des Ministerrats der UdSSR Nowikow am 15.1.1974 anlässlich einer Weinprobe im Kloster Eberbach,” January 15, 1974, BA 102/99998, 3. Original: “Wenn die Bundesrepublik Deutschland z.B. elektrischen Strom oder Erdgas von uns haben will, muß sie uns helfen, die Kraftwerke, Pipelines, Ausrüstungen etc. zu errichten und zu finanzieren. Auch auf dem Sektor des Maschinenbaus könnte die Bundesrepublik ein guter Partner werden. Es wäre z.B. möglich, daß ihre Firmen in unserem Lande halbfertige Produkte fabrizieren, da die Herstellung hier billiger wäre.“

<sup>577</sup> MemCon, Chancellor Brandt with Deputy Chair of the Ministerial Council of the Soviet Union, Novikov, on January 18, 1974, BA 102/99998, 9.

<sup>578</sup> Rudolph, 318.

the Soviets' financing demands. Novikov spoke of a frustrated mood and the chairman of the Soviet EXIM bank, Ivanov, threatened that the FRG did not realize the implications of unfavorable German export credits "for German-Soviet economic relations and a continuation of *Ostpolitik*. If the German side will persist in their ideas about credit conditions, he fears that the project [Kursk] will fail just as the proposed Daimler-Benz involvement in the Kama [River] project had failed."<sup>579</sup>

Despite the Soviets' rhetoric, the German consortium remained reserved about the prospect of a deal. By the beginning of February 1974, the Kursk project had been postponed indefinitely because the German consortium did not see a way to accommodate the financing the Soviets demanded.<sup>580</sup> Soviet ambassador Falin approached Economics Minister Friderichs to express his dismay about the German consortium's rejection of the Soviets' offer to continue negotiations. He pushed hard for the continuation of talks.<sup>581</sup> Yet only the direct intervention by Bahr and a supporting letter from Brandt helped save one of the largest projects of the German industry.<sup>582</sup> It is interesting to note here that the dynamics had changed somewhat. For the first time since 1969 the Soviets could not get satisfactory financing but still agreed to the deal. After Bahr personally intervened with Brezhnev, the Soviet side agreed to pay the first stage of the project in cash (2.5 billion marks out of 6 billion for the entire project) and thus

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<sup>579</sup> Telegram, German Embassy in Moscow to German Foreign Office, "dritte Tagung Wirtschaftskommission," January 21, 1974, BA 102/99998; Telegram, German Embassy in Moscow to German Foreign Office, "Gespräche von Bundesminister Bahr in Moskau," February 3, 1974, BA 102/99998.

<sup>580</sup> Letter, Chair, Salzgitter Corp, Hans Birnbaum, to Finance Ministry Undersecretary Hans Hermsdorf, "Projekt Kursk," February 5, 1974, Mappe 1, Ordner 432, Depositorium Egon Bahr.

<sup>581</sup> Letter, Economics Minister Friderichs to Chancellor Brandt, February 27, 1974, Mappe 1, Ordner 433, Depositorium Egon Bahr.

<sup>582</sup> Letter, Chair, Krupp GmbH, Ernst Wolf Mommsen, to Chancellor Brandt, April 2, 1974, BA 102/135253.



brought the process forward again.<sup>583</sup> The remaining stages of the project would not go smoothly, either. A mixture between COCOM restrictions, Soviet administrative difficulties, and the inclusion of East European contractors left the West German consortium with a severely truncated role, one that focused mostly on the high-tech parts.<sup>584</sup>

The increase in oil prices significantly benefited the Soviet Union in its negotiations with the FRG. It stands to reason that the Soviet Union would have been hard pressed to finance a huge project like Kursk without the extra hard-currency inflow. Even so, the Soviets soon demanded that the second stage of the Kursk project would have to be financed with German credits. The reason for this may be the lack of oil the Soviet Union was actually able to export to West European countries. Already unable to meet the import quota for crude oil to West Germany in 1972, the Soviet Union's export capacity was reduced even further because it had to supply its East European allies with oil that they could no longer afford on the world market. While Soviet natural resources were plentiful, exploiting them—given the difficult terrain in which they were located—was another matter.

Soviet interest in cooperating with the German industry also revolved around nuclear issues. Here, Soviet plans were two-fold. They wished the Germans to build a sizable nuclear power plant, and also wished to sell their uranium ore to fuel West German reactors. As early as the German-Soviet summit of 1973 Brezhnev repeatedly

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<sup>583</sup> Letter, Chancellor Brandt to General Secretary Brezhnev, March 14, 1974, Mapped 1, Ordner, 433, Depositorium Egon Bahr.

<sup>584</sup> Memo, Economics Ministry, Gayman, "Ausfuhr eines Hüttenwerks in die UdSSR (Kursk)," October 25, 1974, BA 102/135253, 1-2; Telegram, German Ambassador to Moscow, Sahm, to German Foreign Office, "Hüttenwerk Kursk," December 13, 1974, BA 102/ 135253.

and forcefully pushed for both of these projects.<sup>585</sup> Uranium deliveries were a politically sensitive issue, as the U.S. had so far been the sole provider of uranium for German nuclear power plants. During the Brezhnev visit, however, the Brandt government expressed no objection to a one-time delivery of uranium. The Soviet Union, however, wished to break into the American monopoly on uranium supplies through low-cost, long-term offers. Because the U.S. government would “react indignant over close ties of the German industry with the Soviet Union in this sensitive area,” the German negotiation approach was “generally open but without any firm commitments.”<sup>586</sup> It would take a few years longer before uranium would become another Soviet fuel supplying West German energy needs.

The construction of a nuclear power plant was actually an alluring potential project to the Germans. In 1972, the Economics Ministry had expressed concern over the long-term supply of electricity to West Berlin.<sup>587</sup> When Novikow met with Brandt in January 1974, he suggested supplying Berlin with electricity as part of the payment for the construction costs of the plant.<sup>588</sup> The Soviet delegates had very clear ideas about the plant.

The Soviets expect a complete offer by the end of February and have clear intentions to make a deal with the KWU [Kraftwerk Union AG, Mülheim Ruhr] if the simultaneously conducted financing negotiations will turn out satisfactorily for the Soviets. Here, the entire deals would be conducted on the basis of compensation (electricity). Herr Kuljow frequently mentioned the political goodwill of the federal government.<sup>589</sup>

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<sup>585</sup> MemCon, General Secretary Brezhnev with Representatives of the German industry on May 20, 1973 in Bonn, BA 102/100026, 2-5.

<sup>586</sup> Talking Points for the Brezhnev Visit, “413 – Bezug von angereichertem Uran aus der Sowjetunion,” May 2, 1973, BA 102/100026, 1.

<sup>587</sup> Memo, RD Kreuzberg to MinDir Kleindienst, “Sprechzettel für den Breschnew-Besuch,” May 3, 1973, BA 102/100026.

<sup>588</sup> MemCon, Conversation Chancellor Brandt with Deputy Chair of the Ministerial Council of the Soviet Union, Novikow, on January 18, 1974, BA 102/99998, 4.

<sup>589</sup> Memo, Ministerialrat Bernhard Kahl, “Bericht über die am 16. und 17. Januar 1974 durchgeführten Dienstreisen Nr. 131/74 und Nr. 137/74 nach Erlangen und Mülheim/Ruhr,” February 5, 1974, BA 102/99998, 2-3.

Even more striking than assuring a stable supply of electricity to West Berlin, the Soviets were very outspoken in their desire to have this deal come to fruition. Deputy Chair of the State Committee Kuljow used an unusual diplomatic tactic, visiting the German embassy in Moscow, to arrange for a meeting with Undersecretary Bahr. He reminded Bahr that the German companies should submit their offers for constructing a nuclear power plant at the agreed time (February 28) and promised that the Soviet Union would respond in a speedy manner. Kuljow did not fail to mention that Finland or Italy operated much more speedily than West Germany and that the Soviet Union would have to look somewhere else if the Germans would not quickly complete the deal and agree to a loan of 6.7% (Bahr had offered 10%).<sup>590</sup>

With all the economic aspects in place, the political implications eventually ruined the deal. The Germans felt that it was necessary to gain COCOM approval for the exports of nuclear power technology, and the American attitude on this subject proved difficult to reconcile with Soviet policy. The U.S. government had indicated that it would only agree to the COCOM exception by Soviet acceptance of International Atomic Energy Organization visits and safety checks. The U.S. government felt unable to justify the proposed COCOM exception to the American public without IAEO safety checks.<sup>591</sup> The Germans pointed to the fact that the Soviets had continually refused to be bound by IAEO safeguards and had already rejected any deal that committed them to such

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<sup>590</sup> Telegram, German Embassy in Moscow to German Foreign Office, "Gespräche von Bundesminister Bahr in Moskau," March 2, 1974, BA 102/99998

<sup>591</sup> COCOM Record of Discussion, COCOM Doc (74) 2018, October 15, 1974, BA 102/135253, 2; Telegram, Dr. Rupperecht to Diplogerma, Dr. Schroembgens, "Ausfuhr eines 1300 MW Kernkraftwerks in die UdSSR," October 21, 1974, BA 102/135253.

regulations.<sup>592</sup> As a consequence, the deal failed because neither superpower was willing to budge. The conflict over the reactor deal is an excellent illustration of the intermediate position in which the FRG found itself again after the Yom Kippur War.

With U.S. companies unable to finance and implement the pioneering work on the new gas fields that were developed, German companies took up the slack. The project of foremost interest was the completion of the Iranian Gas deal of October 1974. After Brandt decided on a pipeline route through the Soviet Union as opposed to Greece and Turkey, negotiations had faltered on the proposed role the Soviets should play in this deal. The Germans wished to buy the gas directly from the Iranians, treating the Soviet Union as nothing more than a transit country. The Soviets, however, preferred to act as an intermediary, thereby assuming a more influential role. In January 1974, however, Brandt used the word “triangle,” implying an equal part for the Soviet Union in front of Soviet officials, much to the concern of the German ambassador. So far, the term triangle had been strictly avoided, as it seemed counterproductive to the Germans’ negotiating stance.<sup>593</sup> Yet, seemingly, the tides had turned in favor of the Soviet Union and the deal was concluded in October 1974. The deal never resulted in any transportation of natural gas as after the 1979 Iranian Revolution the Iranian government broke the contract.<sup>594</sup> Nevertheless, this illustrates a strengthening of the Soviet position in economic matters. Neither the uranium imports, the triangular Iranian gas deal, nor the third gas pipeline deal in 1975 (in which the Germans took over the development of the gas fields

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<sup>592</sup> Letter, Diplogerma, Dr. Schroembgens, to Economics Ministry, “COCOM” October 18, 1974, BA 102/135253, 2.

<sup>593</sup> Telegram, German Embassy in Moscow to German Foreign Office, “dritte Tagung Wirtschaftskommission,” January 21, 1974, BA 102/99998; Telegram, German Embassy in Moscow to German Foreign Office, “Gespräche von Bundesminister Bahr in Moskau,” February 3, 1974, BA 102/99998.

<sup>594</sup> Rudolph, 318.

earmarked for American companies) triggered any warnings about too much Soviet influence on West Germany.<sup>595</sup> The Soviet Union had become a normal state with which to do business, even if political concessions had not materialized. In this, West Germany had assumed its own foreign policy, creating a substantially different international position from the that of the United States.

#### Continued Political Pressure on Berlin

In early 1974, the Soviet-orchestrated barrage of attacks on the legal bond between Berlin and Bonn continued. On January 21 1974, the CSSR protested against the inclusion of West Berlin in the Convention on the High Seas (Hohe See und Fakultativprotokoll), followed on February 1, 1974 by a protest against the inclusion of Berlin in the Protocol to Amend the Convention for the suppression of traffic in women and children (of 1921), of the traffic in women of full age (1933), and of the white slave traffic (1904).<sup>596</sup> The GDR also chimed in with a protest over the inclusion of Berlin in the IAEO in February 1974 and a protest of the inclusion of Berlin before the General Assembly of the United Nations on March 27, 1974.<sup>597</sup>

The establishment of the Environmental Protection Office (Bundsumweltamtes) in Berlin created another escalation of the Berlin issue in which the Soviets stood squarely behind the GDR and would not embrace the fostering of West German-West Berlin relations as stipulated by the Four Power Agreement. The unilateral establishment of this German federal office had resulted in harsh reactions from the Eastern bloc. In a

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<sup>595</sup> Memo, Dr. Jahnke, "Deutsch-sowjetische Wirtschaftsbeziehungen," April 25, 1974, BA 102/100002.

<sup>596</sup> Memo, Lücking, "Einbeziehung Berlins in multilaterale Verträge," March 19, 1974, BA 136/18091.

<sup>597</sup> Memo, Lücking, "Protest der DDR gegen die Einbeziehung von Berlin (West) in das IAEO-Statut," March 19, 1974, BA 136/18091; Telegram, Genf and Herbst, to German Foreign Office, "Proteste der DDR gegen die Einbeziehung Berlins (West) in multilaterale Verträge," April 2, 1974, BA 136/18091.

conversation with Deputy Foreign Secretary Rush Bahr expressed grave concerns about the Soviet stance on the issue and the potential crisis that might ensue. In particular, he was worried about the GDR's announcement that they would potentially refuse transit to Berlin to employees of the Environmental Protection Office and their dependents. Furthermore, the GDR threatened potential actions if trading with East German mark was not prohibited by the West German government, giving the GDR government a pretext to implement controls on transit traffic. Bahr saw all of this as instigated by a Soviet policy to counter the creation of the Environmental Protection Office in West Berlin.<sup>598</sup>

Clearly, any independent German foreign policy that the Brandt government had hoped might ensue from the signing of the Four Power Agreement had been thoroughly undermined by this development. Bahr was ready to throw himself on the mercy of the Americans.

It must be made unmistakably clear to the Soviet Union how gravely the situation was viewed in the West, whereby the U.S. opinion would be of special significance. Furthermore the Soviet Union must be reminded what impact the concluding of the Four Power Agreement has had on President Nixon's trip to Moscow in 1972 and for the MBFR and CSCE. [...] He [Bahr] therefore believes that a binding interpretation of the Four Power Agreements has become necessary. For this, consultations in accordance to the mechanisms mentioned in the agreement seem unavoidable. The FRG will accept any interpretation that it receives from the three Western allies.<sup>599</sup>

Once again the Americans came through for the Germans. After indicating U.S. support for the German interpretation, Rush explained that "the true reason for this Soviet behavior was not so much Berlin but the intention to exert pressure on the FRG in order

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<sup>598</sup> MemCon, Minister Bahr and Deputy Foreign Secretary Rush, January 31, 1974, Mappe 2, Ordner 302, Depositorium Egon Bahr, 1.

<sup>599</sup> Ibid, 1-2. Original: "Die SU müsse deshalb in aller Deutlichkeit klargemacht werden, wie ernst man die Lage auf westlicher Seite beurteile, wobei vor allem die Haltung der USA von besonderer Bedeutung sei. Außerdem müsse die SU daran erinnert werden, welche Rolle das Zustandekommen des VMA für die Reise Präsident Nixons nach Moskau im Jahre 1972 für MBFR und KSZE gehabt hätte. [...]"

Er, BM, glaube deshalb, daß eine verbindliche Interpretation des VMA erforderlich sei, wofür ihm Konsultationen nach den im Abkommen vorgesehenen Mechanismen unausweichlich erschienen. Die Bundesregierung werde jede Interpretation akzeptieren, die sie von den drei Westmächten erhalten würde."

to push them to faster and bigger concessions in the area of trade and cooperation.”<sup>600</sup> However, he also admonished the FRG for not having sufficiently consulted with the U.S. before establishing the Environmental Protection Office and expressed his government’s interest “if with future Berlin initiatives the German government could consult the Western powers before it went to the press and thus became part of the public discussion.”<sup>601</sup> In yet another demonstration on how much of an Achilles heel Berlin was to the Brandt government, Chancellor Brandt personally wrote to President Nixon to ask for his support on the matter. While it almost took a month for Nixon to respond to his letter, Nixon nevertheless stood squarely behind Brandt and protested against any Soviet obstruction.<sup>602</sup>

Soon afterwards Brezhnev warned against an interpretation of the Four Power Agreement that established close links between the FRG and West Berlin. To avoid misunderstandings, he advised that “one must view the Four Power Agreement as a balancing of interests of all sides und not try to pry more from the agreement than it contains.”<sup>603</sup> For the Soviets the issue would become even more charged. On February 28, 1974, the Soviet ambassador Falin protested against the Environmental Protection Office in Berlin and even demanded the removal of the Federal District Court (Bundesverwaltungsgericht) from Berlin. Furthermore, he protested against the fact that Berlin residents could vote for the German President, even though this had already been

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<sup>600</sup> Ibid, 2.

<sup>601</sup> Ibid, 3.

<sup>602</sup> Letter, Chancellor Brandt to President Nixon, January 28, 1974, Mappe 2, Ordner 440, Depositorium Egon Bahr; Letter, President Nixon to Chancellor Brandt, February 21, 1974, Mappe 2, Ordner 440, Depositorium Egon Bahr.

<sup>603</sup> Letter, General Secretary Brezhnev to Chancellor Brandt, February 9, 1974, Mappe 1, Ordner 432, Depositorium Egon Bahr.

the case for several years.<sup>604</sup> Clearly, the Soviets were not going to leave West Berlin to the FRG without a fight, despite having a Four Power Agreement.

In a meeting with Brezhnev Bahr expressed his grave frustrations with the Soviet stance. He explained that in Chancellor Brandt's opinion:

nothing had harmed his government as much as the stagnation of *Ostpolitik*. [...] The goal of my visit is not only trade but, equally important, to explore if the questions surrounding Berlin can be solved between us. For this, I will stay as long as it is sensible. These questions are like small stones in a shoe. If you do not get rid of them, they start to hurt and you cannot walk any more, despite still having a long ways ahead of us. It is not sensible but a sign of failure if the same topics will be discussed at a chancellor's visit that have already been discussed last year in Bonn.<sup>605</sup>

Yet Soviet attempts to strike the FRG in their Achilles heel would continue throughout the 1970s. In April, they exerted pressure on Austria to change its use of "Land Berlin" in its treaties with the FRG. Austrian ambassador Willfried Gredler indicated his "disappointment about the firm German line" in response to Austrian probing on whether a change would be feasible. Clearly, the Austrian government wanted to avoid ending up in the crossfire in a battle that was not theirs. In response to the German insistence on keeping the formulation "Land Berlin" in the treaties, Gredler suggested a note of support from the Western Allies in this regard.<sup>606</sup> Upon receiving such a note, the Austrians held the German line for a year longer.

The Soviets renewed the pressure on Austria in meetings on June 12–13, 1975 with Soviet ambassador Bondarenko, who complained about the inclusion of Berlin in a

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<sup>604</sup> Memo, Lueders, "Konsultation mit den vier alierten Botschaftern," February 28, 1974, Mappe 1, Ordner, 433, Egon Bahr Depositorium.

<sup>605</sup> MemCon, Egon Bahr with Brezhnev in Moscow, February 27, 1974, Mappe 2, Ordner 433, Egon Bahr Depositorium, 9-10. Original: "Ich entwickelte darauf die Überzeugung des Kanzlers, daß nichts der Regierung so geschadet hätte, als wie die Stagnation der *Ostpolitik*. [...] Ziel meiner Reise sei nicht weniger wichtig, als das wirtschaftliche Gebiet, den Versuch zu unternehmen, ob diese Fragen Berlins zwischen uns lösbar seien. Dafür würde ich so lange hier bleiben, wie es sinnvoll sei. Diese Fragen seien wie kleine Steinchen im Schuh. Wenn man sie nicht entferne, lauf man sich wund und könne nicht mehr laufen, obwohl wir doch noch einen weiten Weg vor uns hätten. Es sei nicht sinnvoll, sondern ein Eingeständnis des Fehlschlages, wenn bei einem Besuch des Kanzlers noch immer dieselben Themen besprochen würden, die Gegenstand des schwierigen Teils der Gespräche im letzten Jahr in Bonn gewesen seien."

<sup>606</sup> Telegram, German Embassy in Vienna, Dungern, to German Foreign Office, "Berlin-Klausel in deutsch-österreichischen Verträgen," April 17, 1974, BA 136/18091, 1.



treaty that had nothing to do with Berlin at all (such as the agreement to use the Salzburg airport by both the FRG and Austria). However, “much stronger was his criticism of the formulation “Land Berlin.” Despite the assurances that the Western powers condoned this formulation, Austrian ambassador Michael Steiner viewed the matter with “grave concern.”<sup>607</sup> The matter escalated further when the Soviets accused the Austrians of breaking their constitution (Staatsvertrag) in which Austria committed itself to accept any agreement by the allied powers that served to reestablish peace for Germany. The Soviets felt that “Land Berlin” violated the Four Power Agreement, as no such term was used in the agreement. The German side placed a strong emphasis on the term “established procedures” in the agreement, which guaranteed the continued use of language that had previously been established.<sup>608</sup> A year later, in December 1976, they finally found a semantic compromise that pleased both sides. The Austrian government intended to reuse the phrase “Land Berlin” as the FRG had insisted but wanted to include a, yet unspecified, form that would indicate that this refers to the Berlin.<sup>609</sup>

The year of the conclusion of the CSCE, 1975, saw more protests by Eastern Europe over the Berlin issue. The Soviet Union (6 June 1975), Hungary (2 July 1975), and the CSSR (11 July 1975) protested in Washington and London against the inclusion of West Berlin in the Non-Proliferation treaty.<sup>610</sup> Rumania chimed in with the other Eastern bloc states when it refused to agree to the inclusion of Berlin in a basic treaty between the FRG and Rumania on scientific-technological cooperation. From one day to

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<sup>607</sup> Ibid.

<sup>608</sup> MemCon, “Gespräche zwischen Herrn D2 und Botschafter Steiner,” December 22, 1975, BA 136/18091.

<sup>609</sup> Harry Schleicher, “Formel ‘Land Berlin’ bleibt: Österreicher wollen Moskau und Bonn zufrieden stellen,” *Frankfurter Rundschau*, December 22, 1976, 2.

<sup>610</sup> Telegram, German Foreign Office to German Embassy in Washington, “Östliche Proteste gegen die Erstreckung des V-Vertrages auf Berlin,” October 9, 1975, BA 136/18091.

the next, after the details had already been worked out to everyone's satisfaction, the Rumanian side presented new suggestions that would have eliminated the inclusion of Berlin in the agreement. The German ambassador's assessment was

The same problems that we are experiencing for years in negotiations with other East European states and for example prevent the conclusion of a framework agreement for scientific-technological cooperation with the Soviet Union, have now occurred with Romania for the first time. Romania has so far been the only East European country with which we have such a framework agreement that contains a satisfactory Berlin clause. The execution of this agreement seems to create difficulties here, as well.<sup>611</sup>

In the CSCE the FRG was also unable to establish a legal bond to Berlin. The FRG pushed for an inclusion of Berlin but had to content itself with the general application of the conference's results in all of Europe.

The signing of the CSCE did not bring closure to the problem of Berlin. In 1976, the German government sparred with the Soviets in the international press over the issue of Berlin. Op Ed pieces, supporting the Western position, called on the Soviet government to no longer hinder East-West cooperation and to abide by the Four Power Agreement, especially on the international representation of West Berlin.<sup>612</sup> The Foreign Office entirely agreed with this article and its interpretation and wanted to gain as much exposure of this viewpoint as possible. It thus sought to reprint it in several languages, first in the "Bulletin der Bundesregierung," and, upon the refusal of the German Press Office due to the confrontational tone of the article, in the government-financed *German Tribune*.<sup>613</sup> An interesting element of this article is the clashing viewpoints on foreign policy towards the Soviet Union between the SPD and FDP.

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<sup>611</sup> Telegram, German Embassy in Bukarest, Mehr, to German Foreign Office, "Rumänien verweigert Einbeziehung Berlins, betr: Abschluß wissenschaftlich-technischen Teilabkommens," March 6, 1975, BA 136/18091.

<sup>612</sup> MD van Well, *Europa-Archiv*, 30, no. 20 (1976).

<sup>613</sup> Memo, Economics Ministry, Sanne, to Chancellor Schmidt, "Artikel von MD van Well im Europa-Archiv," October 27, 1976, B 136/19209, 1-2.

The article reflects a line of argument that has become more and more visible over the last months. I recall Foreign Minister Genscher's remark that as long as he is Foreign Minister, the Federal Republic will not conclude a treaty without a Berlin clause. I further point to the accompanying study which the Foreign Ministry has submitted to the Group of Four without involving other parts of the government or the Berlin Senate. This study demands a firmer stance vis-à-vis the Soviet Union from the three powers and, thus, undermines exactly like the article in the magazine *Europa-Archiv* all efforts to deescalate the Berlin controversy with the Soviet Union through limited compromise. I would not rule out that the article, the study, and certain public remarks were done with regards to the coming coalition negotiations.<sup>614</sup>

The "Eastern Interpretation" of the Berlin issue continued to materialize in 1977, this time in German relations with Yugoslavia. In a report by the German embassy in Belgrade, Ambassador Jesco von Puttkamer points to a gradual shift away from an acceptance of West Berlin as part of the FRG. Apart from smaller issues, such as Yugoslav officials avoiding visits to West Berlin or listing of the Berlin Ensemble as being from West Berlin rather than the FRG, the contentious area was the Berlin clause in official treaties. On October 12, 1968 Yugoslavia had already agreed to a Berlin clause ("gilt auch für das Land Berlin") in the Agreement on Social Security, just as it did a year later in the Agreement on Culture on July 28, 1969. In the negotiations for a fourth two-year Cultural Program in 1977, however, the Yugoslavs balked at including a reference to Berlin and only upon personal initiative by the Yugoslav minister of culture were the objections of the Yugoslav foreign ministry overridden. Any supplements to the Cultural Agreement itself failed because the Yugoslavs were no longer willing to include the Berlin clause in the agreement.

The most striking point is the agreement on double-taxation, which had already been initialed in 1973. In June 1977, the Yugoslavs presented a list of desired changes,

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<sup>614</sup> Ibid, 2-3.

among them the removal of the Berlin clause. These negotiations also failed, as the Germans insisted on it while the Yugoslavs categorically refused.<sup>615</sup>

### Legacy of Ambivalence

In summary, the period between the Soviet-American summits in 1972 and 1973, while a period of domestic weakness for President Nixon, became a period of increased U.S. influence in inter-allied politics. With the Soviet Union trying to implement a superpower détente that its psychological standing as the supreme military power of the Eastern bloc called for, West European partners in détente efforts became less important. The Soviet Union had used Western European powers to force the hand of the United States while, at the same time, binding the economies of the FRG (and other European powers) to the success of its own economy. Brandt, however, saw his *Ostpolitik* reach the limits of its success when Brezhnev balked at integrating the German and Soviet economies beyond an order-delivery exchange. The inherent conflict of *Ostpolitik* courting the Soviet Union on one hand and ultimately trying to reduce superpower conflict and influence on the other caused *Ostpolitik* to stall. Even worse, by the summer of 1973 it became evident that the Soviet Union would not permit an increase in ties between West Berlin and West Germany, the Achilles Heel of *Ostpolitik*, go unchallenged. By portraying West Germany as a revanchist power, they brought greater cohesion within the Warsaw Pact.

The effects of this period on the German-American relationship were significant, if somewhat delayed. Brandt, having compartmentalized different areas of international relations, felt confident that the security aspect was guaranteed by the Americans

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<sup>615</sup> Telegram, German Ambassador in Belgrade, von Puttkamer, to German Foreign Office, "Jugoslawische Haltung zu Berlin," June 12, 1978, BA 136/19209, 2-6.

regardless of his actions. In an attempt to further his ultimate plan of pan-European integration, he sought to limit American influence within the EC and pursued a largely independent policy, always protected by cloaking his policy “in Europe’s name.” Support for the U.S. on the monetary crisis, Vietnam, and other geopolitical goals was reluctant at best and the summit meeting of May 1973 reflected American fears of an ultimate separation between Western Europe and the United States. Only with Brezhnev’s clear rejection of any solution on West Berlin did the Brandt government come around. With the Soviet road to German reunification at an apparent dead-end, the FRG had to hope for a superpower détente at the side of the U.S. as the road to German reunification. This led to more intensive transatlantic consultations and the opportunity for the Nixon administration to cement its leadership in détente through trade. With Kissinger’s refusal to acknowledge domestic opposition, however, the Jackson-Vanick amendment was able to block Most Favored Nation status for the Soviet Union and with it the opportunity to competitively market Soviet natural gas on the American market.

Soviet involvement in the Yom Kippur War ended all hope for the ratification of MFN and made economic dealings with the Soviet Union difficult at best. The political ramification was a Soviet disillusionment with superpower détente and a return to a divide-and-conquer game with the West European countries. Trade with Germany had stalled during 1973 as the political incentives had not outweighed the significant disadvantages that trade with the Soviet Union entailed for West German companies. Realizing that they had to offer more incentives to revitalize trade, the Soviets temporarily allowed for the creation of multi-national conglomerates to meet large-sized

orders, abandoned their unrealistic financing demands, and paid hard currency for the first stage of the Kursk steel mill project.

With the West Germans frustrated over American use of their harbor to supply Israel's defense force and the raising of the DEFCON level without prior consultation, the Soviets were also able to use political issues to foster a rift in the transatlantic alliance. Ultimately, though, it was the different concepts on the nature of the transatlantic alliance and divergent foreign policy interests vis-à-vis the Soviet Union that opened a rift in the alliance. While *Osthandel* revitalized in Germany and stagnated in the U.S., neither Nixon nor Brandt managed to implement a concise and clearly delineated détente policy. Nixon, battered by the Watergate affair, did not manage to reassert his moral leadership over the transatlantic alliance or find a plausible (and politically viable) balance between his Cold War ideology and the need for cooperation with the enemy. Brandt could not muster domestic enthusiasm or Soviet support to fully implement his *Ostpolitik*, as he was constantly bombarded with new Soviet accusations on West Berlin. Just like Nixon, Brandt was not able to find a plausible balance between the portrayal of the Soviet Union as the new friend that would help reunite Germany and the central power behind oppressive regimes weakening West German ties to Berlin. Secretary Ball's description of détente as "a French word that we employ to conceal the fact that we have only the vaguest idea what we are trying to say" reflects the fact that neither statesmen was able to leave a legacy that would have brought the two pillars of the Atlantic alliance back in unison.

## CONCLUSION

On May 6, 1974, Willy Brandt resigned as German chancellor because of numerous adulterous affairs, which the East German spy, Günther Guillaume, had tried to blackmail him with. The White House's relief over his replacement, Helmut Schmidt, was short-lived. Almost three months to the day, on August 9, 1974, Nixon also resigned over the looming impeachment process. Born in the same year, assuming the leadership of their respective countries the same year, and now resigning the same year, they left an alliance that would never fully recover from the divisions that had emerged during their tenure.

The starting point for this rift was the Berlin Wall crisis of 1961. Brandt underwent a drastic evolution in his ideology throughout the 1960s. While at first he was decidedly pro-Western, the more his *Ostpolitik* took shape, the more he moved away from the U.S. and sought a unilateral reconciliation with the East. Brandt and Bahr believed that different aspects of international relations—political, economic, military, currency, etc.—had to be separated in order to provide enough maneuvering room within the Cold War context. Thus, Brandt's assertive and more independent policy is more apparent in some areas than in others.

The United States remained the guarantor of military security for the FRG and, indeed, was necessary to allow Brandt to negotiate with the Soviet Union without having to give in to Soviet threats. However, the willingness of former administrations to accommodate American wishes in financial or political respects in exchange for this military protection ended with the Brandt administration. American unwillingness to defend West Germany's interests in East Germany, and the subsequent disillusionment with the

rejection of inter-alliance nuclear sharing programs, made Brandt understand the U.S. military presence to be a self-interested projection of military might by a superpower over a territory it considered vital to its geopolitical interests. Being convinced that the U.S. would not surrender Germany for this reason allowed Brandt to pursue an independent policy course without fearing a loss of security.

This independence is most prominently reflected in his diplomatic initiatives. While in 1959 Brandt was still willing to yield to American diplomatic initiatives when it came to defending German interests, he gradually came to believe that Germans should develop their own initiatives. Beginning with humanitarian efforts in East Germany, and extended to economic and cultural areas a few years later, his efforts eventually reached political levels. At first only with consent of the allies, and later alone, Brandt gradually moved out from underneath the blanket of American diplomatic tutelage, advocating a shift away from a transatlantic to a European framework, all in the interest of German unification.

This breakup of old Cold War structures had to first occur on the ideological level. Without the prospect of a German reunification through Western strength, the Soviet Union became the gatekeeper to a unified Germany and Europe, a neighbor with whom good relationships were essential. By virtue of necessity the Soviet Union changed from an aggressive empire with which one should not negotiate to a state with legitimate security interests. The East European states also became more significant as these were the other states through which the interim goal of a pacification and cooperation in Europe would be realized. The strategy for such a European vision also shifted from military strength and confrontation to carefully balanced arms reductions through which



the risk of nuclear war could be avoided. Close pan-European cultural, economic, and political cooperation would make a German unification either on a state level or within a European framework a reality.

Possibly one reason why Kissinger got along so well with Brandt and Bahr was that this separation between the different areas of international relations appealed to Kissinger. As a practitioner of high diplomacy, he was blind to economic diplomacy and insensitive to domestic shifts in public perceptions. Brandt's compartmentalization of issues allowed Kissinger to operate in a world of high politics until the German-Soviet economic ties and the subsequent increasingly positive German public opinion of the Soviet Union as well as the breakdown of U.S.-Soviet economic ties and the accompanying negative American public opinion of the Soviet Union, brought down his intricate web of international relations.

Like Kissinger, economics did not play a significant role in Brandt's thinking during the beginning stages of his new *Ostpolitik* in the early 1960s. The economic difficulties over the 1962 pipeline embargo had, if anything, worsened German-Soviet relations. It was only after the Soviet invasion of Czechoslovakia, when Brandt wanted to reestablish a dialogue with the Soviet leadership, that trade would become the avenue to high-level talks.

For Nixon, trade with the Soviet Union had ideological undertones. While he campaigned for an "era of negotiation," he still operated under a Cold War ideology that did not allow for intense cooperation with the Soviet Union without concessions on their part. Initially, Nixon's assurances of a continued commitment to Western Europe, while giving them greater political flexibility, led to enthusiasm about the new American

leadership. When, first as Germany's foreign minister and later as its chancellor, Brandt put theory in practice, and became the leading figure in an economical, social and political détente with the Soviet Union, his selective détente generated tremendous conflict with the United States. Brandt's policy of compartmentalization, which separated military, political, and economic matters, was incompatible with Nixon's vision in two respects. First, separating military from diplomatic matters eliminated the moral and diplomatic tutelage within NATO that their military security role had afforded the U.S. in the past. Operating very much under the Cold War paradigm (reminiscent of his vice presidency under Eisenhower), Nixon expected his allies to fall in line with American leadership once their interests had been listened to by the Americans. When Brandt pursued détente with the Soviet Union in a much more intensive way than the U.S., Nixon became disillusioned with his European allies. Secondly, separating the military and political from the economic allowed Brandt to pursue an intensification of *Osthandel* to a degree the Nixon administration felt was harmful to its geopolitical position. Providing Western technology to the Soviet Union allowed for the exploitation of energy resources and improvements in the Soviet economy. Here, two world views clashed; Brandt's liberal belief that engaging Communist countries would eventually undermine their political system, and Nixon's conservative ideology that trading with Communist countries would strengthen their power base.

While Nixon resented Brandt for his "leftist" ideology and, therefore, became wary of his policies, Kissinger initially appreciated the apparent flexibility that Brandt's détente policies afforded the United States. Yet, Brandt's economic policies vis-à-vis the Soviet Union actually undermined the negotiation position of the United States. Only

after a surprising display of popular German nationalism during the inter-German summit meeting in Erfurt did Kissinger also recognize the dangers of Brandt's policies: Brandt's honeymoon period was over.

By the spring of 1970 *Ostpolitik* had already been set in motion. The gas pipeline deal of 1970 in particular triggered excitement about trade with the Soviet Union. German industrialists considered many projects simply for the prestige of trading with the Soviet Union. This excitement turned into a real gold rush in 1971 and 1972 as reports of the vast economic potential and virtually unlimited natural resources were reported back to the FRG. From the first gas pipeline deal to the Kursk steel mill project in 1974, Brandt facilitated these deals politically, granting federal loan guarantees, encouraging German business leaders, alleviating German security concerns, intervening with Soviet officials and negotiating for a German-Soviet trade agreement. *Osthandel* had become the platform on which *Ostpolitik* could be carried out. More importantly, though, *Osthandel* had become the medium through which the German public slowly altered their threat perception of the Soviet Union. The Soviet Union would quickly turn into a wonderland of economic opportunity in which the 1968 threats of a Soviet invasion into West Germany were soon forgotten. Of course, this was not the case for all politicians, and the CDU/CSU in particular continued to obstruct progress on *Ostpolitik*. The economic dependency of the West German industry on continued cooperation with the Soviet Union—both for payments and for jobs—created an advocate in the German political process that fundamentally separated the German from the U.S. position. West German political parties of all sides now had an intrinsic motive to retain good relations with the Soviet Union.

The American situation was quite different. With the U.S. engaged in a proxy war with the Soviet Union in Vietnam, economic cooperation proved to be somewhat more challenging. Ford Motor Company, for example, had to retract a bid to participate in the truck manufacturing plant at Kama River once concerns were voiced that these trucks could be used on the Ho-Chi-Minh Trail. Furthermore, while Brandt was willing to level the path for economic cooperation while receiving little in return, the Nixon administration demanded quid-pro-quo on Vietnam. Soviet-Chinese rivalries, however, made any assertive stance on Vietnam virtually impossible. With Kissinger pushing the rope of Soviet support for a negotiated Vietnam ceasefire, only limited economic cooperation could take place. While the American public tired of the Vietnam War, the image of the Soviet Union had not improved to the same degree as it had in West Germany.

Soviet interest in strengthening relations, an eager German industry, and a German public that gradually discarded the enemy paradigm of the Soviet Union meant that in 1972 Brandt was experiencing the pinnacle of his *Ostpolitik*. Despite a razor-thin majority in the German parliament, he ultimately gained approval for his leadership and *Ostpolitik* on April 27, 1972, and then assurance for the ratification of the Eastern treaties on May 17, 1972. With these political hurdles out of the way, political and economic interaction with the Soviet Union could assume an even greater level. With the Soviets, the Western allies, and even the majority of the West German public in (sometimes tacit) support of *Ostpolitik*, the recognition of the status quo (as the first step in the plan to overcome it) had been achieved.

As evidenced by Brandt's Nobel Peace Prize in 1971, for some these accomplishments outweighed the political price he had to pay. For others, the recognition of post-war borders, trade deals that heavily favored the Soviet Union, and a threat to Western cohesion was too high a price for the normalization of relations with the East. However, the underlying conflict lies with the assumption on how to defeat Communism. The liberal argument, advocated by the Brandt government, held that technology transfers and economic help for an enemy state had a positive outcome as the penetrating effects of trade would ultimately undermine the enemy regime and cause a positive change. This was certainly Brandt's line of reasoning, and Kissinger also seemed to have seen some value in it by 1972. Nixon, however, and parts of American society were leery of such a liberal approach. Heeding the conservative argument that perceived economic interchanges with enemy states as dangerous and only to be pursued with caution, he believed that trade deals had to be weighed carefully as to not fundamentally aid the enemy's economic infrastructure, social stability, or military readiness. Certainly, members of the CDU/CSU held similar opinions and voiced them publicly. However, the shift in perception of the Soviet Union from an enemy state to a normal one, caused mostly through politics and economic diplomacy, rendered the conservative argument less and less valid in West Germany.

The rise of Germany's international standing also reflected on the German-American relationship. Once the Four Power Agreement on Berlin had been concluded, Brandt's policies reflected a primacy of European (mainly French) interests over American ones. The argument that there was a need to strengthening European integration was used to exclude the U.S. from political consultations, information on

trade with the Soviet Union, and from an EC preferential tariff zone. The Nixon administration was gravely concerned about the situation, claiming that sacrifices to obtain European integration would only be sensible if they improved overall transatlantic relations.

It was, however, the Soviets who resolved this conflict. Having clearly recognized the long-term implications of Brandt's *Ostpolitik*—the reduction of superpower tensions in Europe—Brezhnev was unwilling to extend cooperation beyond a simple order-delivery trade with the FRG. Fearing that if relations with the FRG became even friendlier they would undermine Socialism and lead to the loss of Soviet legitimacy in Eastern Europe, Brezhnev ensured that *Ostpolitik* remained within certain boundaries.

In a countercyclical manner, Brandt's *Ostpolitik* and *Osthandel* succeeded until mid-1972 while American détente failed, largely because the Nixon-Kissinger team made significant American economic concessions contingent on Soviet support on the issue of Vietnam. The Soviet Union was unwilling or unable to provide such support and, thus, it had to import Western technology and high-tech industrial goods from West European countries instead. After Nixon's visit to Moscow in 1972, however, American détente succeeded while *Ostpolitik* stalled, as the Soviet Union had already gotten the most significant political and economic concessions West Germany had to offer. The concept of superpower détente, with its implicit recognition of Soviet parity with the U.S., Western acceptance of the status-quo in Europe, and the possibility of economic cooperation with a Western power more capable of meeting the large-scale orders of the vast Soviet economy, seemed more in line with Soviet interests than the implicitly revanchist goals of Brandt's *Ostpolitik*.

By 1973, the Soviet Union also began to exploit the Achilles Heel of Brandt's government: the ties between West Berlin and West Germany. Utilizing the vagueness of the Four Power Agreement that regulated these ties, the Soviet Union and its East European satellite states vilified West Germany as a revanchist power and sought to undermine any link with West Berlin. Brandt stood to lose his credibility as his vision of a European peace order would remain illusionary if he could not achieve a permanent solution to the West Berlin question.

After Brezhnev directly rejected any concessions on Berlin at the German-Soviet summit in Bonn, Brandt was forced to turn to the U.S. for its leadership in pursuing a détente that would ultimately allow for German reunification. By the fall of 1972, Bonn had submitted its diplomatic initiatives to the leadership of the U.S.

Kissinger's inability or unwillingness to recognize the significance of trade for the Soviet Union, however, spoiled this opportunity for Nixon to regain said moral leadership over détente efforts by the Western Allies. In light of Watergate, the increased politicization of the Jackson-Vanick Amendment in an increasingly more assertive Congress effectively prevented the Soviet Union from gaining Most-Favored-Nation status and, with it, the possibility of exporting its most valuable commodity, natural gas, at competitive prices in the U.S.

Kissinger's failure to cement political opportunity with economic realities to the same extent that it had happened in West Germany left the U.S. with few moderating voices during the ensuing Yom-Kippur war. The result of these West German ties to the Soviet Union and the lack of the same in the U.S. precipitated West Germany's normalization of relations with the East which left the U.S. at odds with its ally over the

treatment of the Soviet Union long after West German criticism over American involvement in the Yom-Kippur war had been forgotten. This West German paradigm shift, brought on in large part by Brandt's new *Osthandel*, led to further transatlantic differences.

The most striking illustration of this difference in the new Cold War paradigm between the FRG and the US is the 1982 Euro-pipeline debate. Here, ideological positions were so contradictory that a compromise, amidst a heated political debate, took more than one year to achieve. President Reagan reiterated the conservative view of dealing with the Soviet Union, blocking any American cooperation in the construction of a new pipeline because this would strengthen the industrial potential of the Soviet Union by allowing more inflow of Soviet hard currency. Indeed, the Soviet Union was highly dependent on energy exports to earn convertible currency. In 1970, the country earned 444 million dollars from its energy exports, which represented 18.3% of its hard currency revenues. After a decade of détente, in 1980, these revenues amounted to 14.7 billion dollars, or 62.3% of hard currency revenues. The Soviet Union had relatively few additional products of interest to the world market. Consequently, Soviets gas export deals did significantly aid the Soviet economy to utilize its most important natural resource.<sup>616</sup> The escalated disagreement that ensued over the construction of this pipeline demonstrated just how deep the rift between the U.S. and Western Europe had become.

In a recent *Wall Street Journal* article the same issue, namely economic ties dividing political reactions vis-à-vis the Soviet Union, was evident.

As U.S. and European leaders consider how to handle an increasingly authoritarian Russian President Vladimir Putin, energy may be one big reason

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<sup>616</sup> Bruce Jentleson, *Pipeline Politics: The Complex Political Economy of East-West Energy Trade* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 1986).



they are taking different approaches. A series of actions by Mr. Putin—such as eliminating gubernatorial elections in Russia, endorsing November's Ukrainian presidential elections ruled fraudulent by that country's Supreme Court and effectively re-nationalizing OAO Yukos, which had been Russia's most Westernized oil company—have led the Bush administration to start rethinking its policy toward the Kremlin. U.S. officials have delivered some sharp public criticisms, returned in kind by Mr. Putin.

In Europe, by contrast, there has been no similar shift among larger countries such as Germany, Britain, France or Italy. In November, for example, after the faulty Ukraine elections, German Chancellor Gerhard Schroeder was asked on television whether he thought Mr. Putin was a "crystal-clear democrat." He answered, "Yes, I am convinced that he is."

One underlying reason for this difference in approach, analysts say, is the drastically different economic relationships between Russia and the U.S., and between Russia and the European Union. That difference also is likely to complicate efforts to achieve a unified Western approach to the Kremlin.<sup>617</sup>

In summary, this analysis has proven the centrality of *Osthandel* for the success of *Ostpolitik*. Trade was the key that allowed Western leaders to establish a line of communication with the Soviet Union. The analysis of economic diplomacy, however, has also brought the competitive nature of the transatlantic alliance to the forefront.

While the historiography holds *Ostpolitik* and U.S. détente to be similar, complementary, or structurally interconnected, this study demonstrates that, if anything, *Ostpolitik* and American détente were countercyclical. To the extent that the Soviet leadership received the necessary credits and high-tech equipment from West Germany, it had little interest in pursuing détente with the United States. After a superpower détente had been established, however, *Ostpolitik* clearly took the back seat. Apart from this, it is evident that U.S. détente and German *Ostpolitik* were some very distinct policies, both in quality and in purpose.

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<sup>617</sup> Marc Champion and Gregory L. White, "Europe, U.S. Diverge on Russia Policy: Nature of Energy Ties Shapes Responses to Putin's Moves on Yukos, Ukraine Election" *Wall Street Journal*, January 5, 2005, 5.

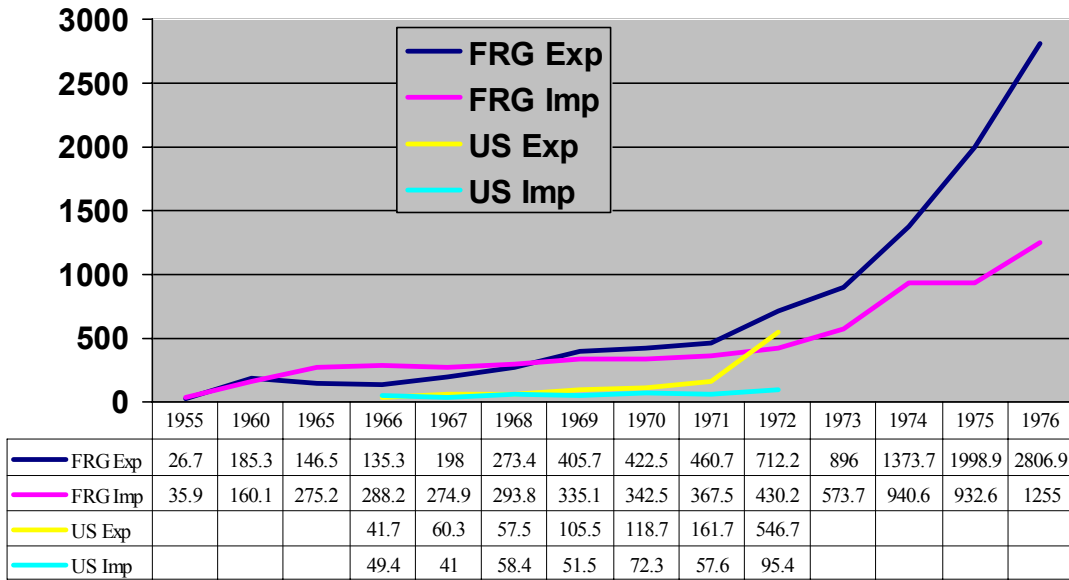
The competitive element between the FRG and the U.S. also leaves little room for the kind of silent cooperation between Brandt and Nixon that Jeremi Suri suggests. Even though they were the same age, one almost has to speak of a generational conflict to explain their disparate views. While Nixon and certainly Kissinger would have entertained the idea of a conservative leadership alliance to suppress domestic unrest within the U.S., Brandt's sympathies lay with the protesters and one gets the feeling reading his personal correspondence that he would have liked to have become as actively involved in the Vietnam protests as his son Peter was.

As to the nature of the transatlantic alliance, the emergence of a European Community and the increased assertiveness of its allies attest to the fact that NATO was a true alliance of willing members and not a military empire like the Warsaw Pact. As non-military matters, such as trade and currency policies, became more important, the power dynamics within the alliance shifted. The relative easiness with which Brandt was able to initiate his *Ostpolitik*, and the grin-and-bear-it approach the Nixon administration employed in response, demonstrate how well the alliance actually functioned. Aside from the matter of military strength, which probably suffered from this multitude of opinions and approaches, the political transparency and democratic aspects of this alliance is clearly evident. The lack of European support for America's geopolitical role of the defender of democracy against Communism is one of the more disappointing element of European foreign relations. However, even here this study illustrated that American foreign policy during the era of détente did not adequately address the needs of the FRG. In this sense, the unilateralism of *Ostpolitik* was a breakdown on both sides of the Atlantic.

Brandt's ascension to the chancellorship resulted in an increased independence from the United States. Unwilling to pursue a foreign policy course that was not in Germany's interests, he implemented the first truly independent West German foreign policy initiative. While its ultimate success is debatable, the rifts within the NATO community continue to this day.

APPENDIX A  
TRADE STATISTICS

Figure 1: FRG and U.S. Trade with the Soviet Union in Million US \$ <sup>618</sup>  
(\$1=3.475DM)



<sup>618</sup> Warenverkehr USA-UdSSR and Warenverkehr BRD-UdSSR by VC 5, Bonn 13 March 1973, BA 102/111917-

APPENDIX B  
OPINION POLLS

Figure 2: Survey of West German population with the question “Which country will be more powerful in 50 years?”<sup>619</sup>

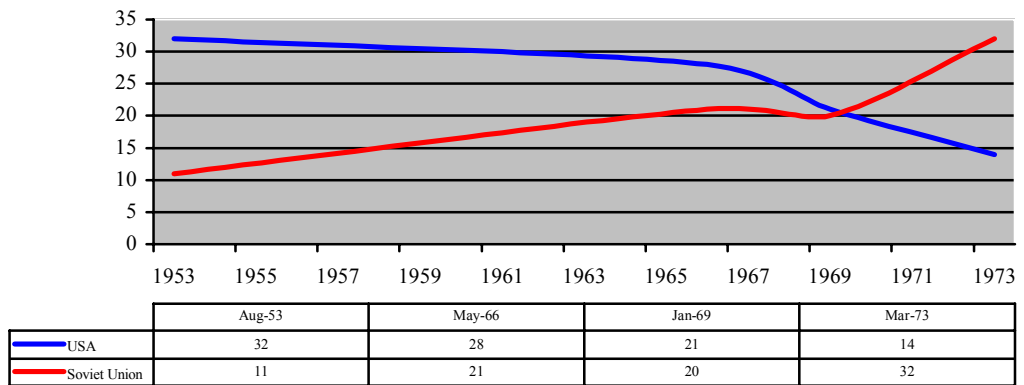
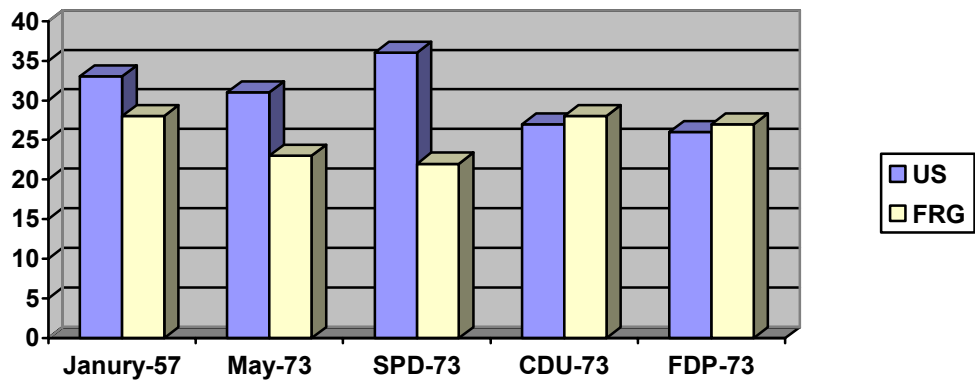


Figure 3: Survey of West German population with the question “Who has the stronger interest in and benefit from German-American cooperation?”<sup>620</sup>



<sup>619</sup> Noelle, “In fünfzig Jahren,” 545.

<sup>620</sup> Noelle, “Das Bündnis,” 558.

Figure 4: Survey of West German population on perceived Russian Threat level.<sup>621</sup>

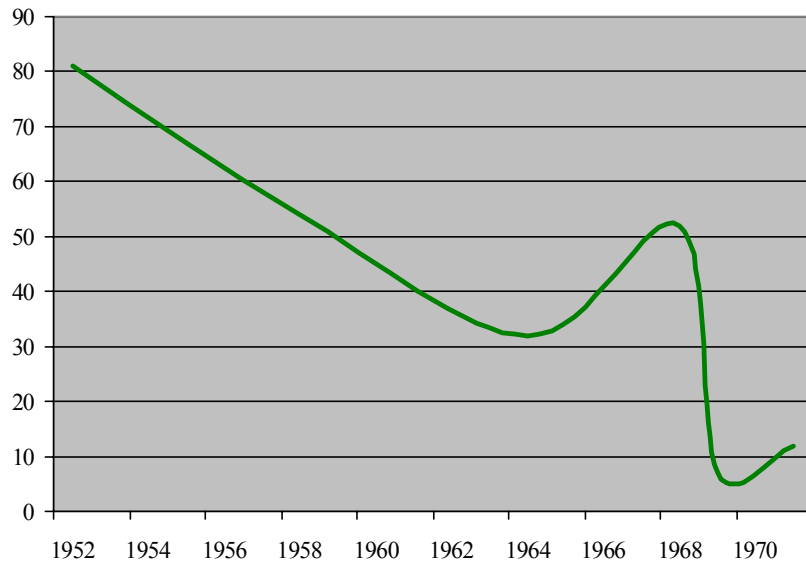
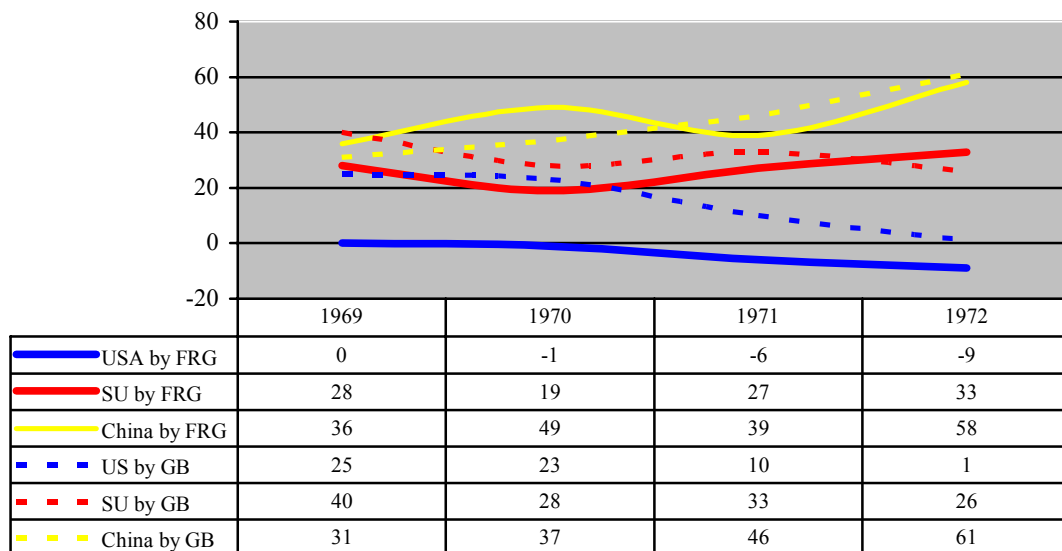


Figure 5: Survey of West German and British population with the question “Will the next year bring an increase or decrease in power for the following countries?”<sup>622</sup>



<sup>621</sup> Noelle, “Sowjetunion,” 575.

<sup>622</sup> S.H. Drescher (ed.), “Jahresend-Befragung in 7 Ländern (End of Year Poll 1968)” in *EMNID-Informatonen*, 21,1 (January 1969), A1-A3; S.H. Drescher (ed.), “Jahresend-Dokumentation von Gallup-International” in *EMNID-Informatonen*, 21,11/12 (November/December 1969), 5-6; S.H. Drescher (ed.), “Internationale Gallup-Jahresendbefragung 1970” in *EMNID-Informatonen*, 22,11/12 November/December 1971), 5-6; S.H. Drescher (ed.), “Internationale Gallup-Jahresendbefragung 1971” in *EMNID-Informatonen*, 23,11/12 (November/December 1971), 5-6.

Figure 6: Survey of West German population with the question “With which countries should we work with most closely?”<sup>623</sup>

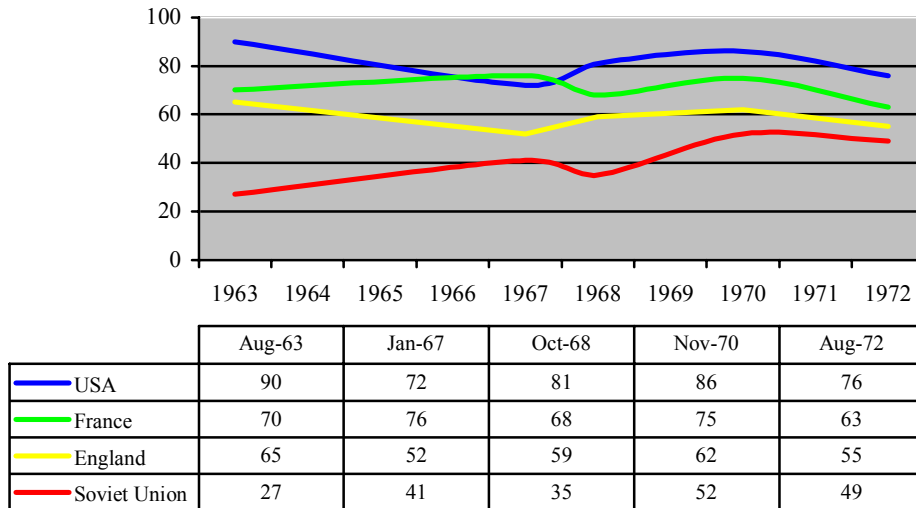
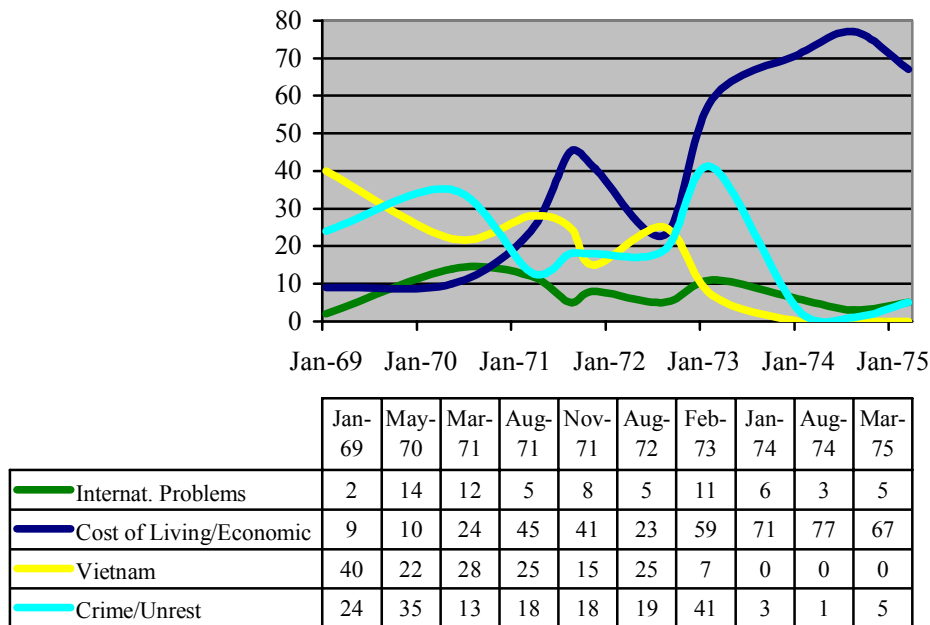


Figure 7: Survey of U.S. Americans as to the most important Problems facing the US today (1969-1975)<sup>624</sup>



<sup>623</sup> Noelle, “Zusammenarbeit,” 533.

<sup>624</sup> Gallup Organization (publ). *The Gallup Poll*. [CD-ROM] Wilmington, DE: Scholarly Resources, 1997, 2252, June 18, 1970; Gallup, 2292, March 18, 1971; Gallup, 2338, December 19, 1971; Gallup, 48, Aug 6, 1972; Gallup, 230, Jan 31, 1974; Gallup, 353, Sep 12, 1974; Gallup, 443, April 3, 1975.

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