

**I**t was on 10 November 1958, at a Soviet-Polish friendship rally to cap off the visit of Polish leader Władysław Gomuł

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Dulles on the matter of Berlin.<sup>20</sup>

If a conflict results, they know full well that we are in





strength, it's a sounding out of positions."

Aside from forcing the West to the negotiating table by his ultimatum, and using the CFM for a "sounding out of positions," Khrushchev saw the CFM as a way to buy time during which to improve the GDR economy and its competitiveness with West Germany and West Berlin. Khrushchev believed that after one to one and a half years, "They will be weaker and we will be stronger." "In 1961 the GDR will start to surpass the FRG in standard of living. This will have very great political significance. This will be a bomb for them. Therefore, our position is to gain time." Ulbricht agreed that "it's clear that the signing of a peace treaty with the GDR would exacerbate the situation, for which we are not now prepared. Economically we still cannot exert influence on the West; therefore, we must win time." GDR Prime Minister Otto Grotewohl reminded those at the meeting that "in our conditions economic problems turn into political ones." The final communiqué of the meetings, published in *Pravda* on June 20, stated: "The delegations emphasize that the main influence on the situation in Germany and also to a significant extent in Europe, in the sense of the

Berlin, after the interim period of a year or a year-and-a-half, the Western troops would have to leave West Berlin and the latter must be transformed into a demilitarized international "free city" with no subversive and propaganda activities directed against the GDR or the Communist bloc. The West would not agree to most of this. The Soviets also continued to insist that a peace treaty be signed with both Germans or a united Germany and called for an all-German committee, made up equally of East and West German representatives, to draw up plans for German unification. The West put forward a package deal of stages toward German unification (which would ultimately include free elections throughout Germany) which was incompatible with Soviet proposals. The West insisted on Four Power rights in Berlin, as guaranteed in the 1945 Potsdam agreements, and the Soviets insisted that those were no longer just.

After Gromyko announced on June 9 that the Western powers could maintain their rights in Berlin for one more year and Khrushchev announced on June 19 that an all-German commission could have a year-and-a-half to come up with plans for reunification and a peace treaty, the West, feeling these were deadline threats, called a recess to the CFM. Given that the East German delegation was in the Soviet Union at this very time, as Michael Lemke points out, there was reason for the West to believe that they were meeting to plan "new measures in case there was no agreement on West Berlin at Geneva. One should increase the 'pressure' on the Western Powers, urged Valerian Zorin, the First Deputy Foreign Minister of the USSR."<sup>5</sup> As the transcripts from the two summit conversations indicate, Khrushchev was clearly following a strategy of keeping up pressure on the West on West Berlin and a German peace treaty, although his feeling of "not wanting to set a deadline" and wanting to be "more flexible" clearly was momentarily forgotten when he and Gromyko set renewed deadlines in June. And the final communiqué of the Soviet-East German meetings states, in the usual threatening way, that if no agreement is reached on a peaceful resolution on the German question, the Soviet Union and other interested countries will sign a peace treaty with the GDR.<sup>6</sup>

In the meantime, in spite of President Eisenhower's vow that he would plan a summit meeting with Khrushchev only in the event of significant progress at the Geneva CFM, due to an apparent misunderstanding within the U.S. bureaucracy, an invitation for a summit meeting was issued to Khrushchev on July 11, and on August 3 it was announced that Khrushchev would visit the United States. Thus, when the CFM reassembled from July 13-August 3, it was not surprising that no progress was made. Khrushchev had already received his invitation to the U.S., something far more important to him than a CFM.

**Document No. 1**  
**"Short Summary of the Talks with the GDR Party-Governmental Delegation on 9 June 1959"**

Secret. 4 July 1959.

Soviet officials taking part in the talks: N.S.

Khrushchev [First Secretary, Presidium member, and head of delegation], A.I. Kirichenko [Presidium member and Central Committee Secretary], F.R. Kozlov [Presidium member and Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers], A.I. Mikoian [Presidium member and First Deputy Chairman of the Council of Ministers], V.V. Kuznetsov [First Deputy Foreign Minister], V.C. Semenov [Deputy Foreign Minister], M.G. Pervukhin [Ambassador to the GDR].

The following assisted in the talks: Deputy Head of the CPSU CC Dept. N.T. Vinogradov, [and] heads of departments at the Ministry of Foreign Affairs, N.M. Lun'kov, and A.Ya. Popov.

Taking part in the talks from the German side: the GDR party-governmental delegation. [The document does not list who was in the East German delegation. Minister President Grotewohl's files,<sup>7</sup> the published communiqué,<sup>8</sup> and the records of the summits indicate that the delegation included W. Ulbricht (First Secretary, Politburo member and head of the delegation), O. Grotewohl (Minister President and Politburo member), 5inisters], V.Vian [Presidi8rwohl's files,

Also in connection with the Geneva conference, the question is: what can our delegation do for the further development of initiatives[?] We would like to exchange views with you on this. We think that an important step for developing this initiative was Gromyko's proposal to create a commission of the representatives of the two German states. However, neither the West nor the Bonn government has responded to this proposal. Therefore, we should think about what we should undertake in this regard in the future.

Moreover, I would like to note that the proposals of the Western powers completely ignore the question of the prohibition of West German nuclear arms. Thus, our delegation in Geneva first of all raised the question of the prohibition of atomic arms and rocket installations in West Germany. This is the first issue which, in our view, must occupy the commission.

We also proposed to the FRG [Federal Republic of Germany] to conclude a non-aggression pact, a treaty on the renunciation of the use of force between the two German states. Adenauer refused this proposal, but it met with support among the West German population (in particular from the FDP [Free Democratic Party] and SPD [Social Democratic Party]). Our proposal was understood by all and accepted, because it demands that both sides renounce something. We gave you the draft of this treaty and would like to know your view on this issue.

However, in any case, the question of a peace treaty remains at the center of attention. As regards us, proceeding from the above considerations, we emphasize especially one part—the prohibition of West German nuclear arms, [a position] which has the understanding of the FRG population.

The second issue about which we would like to exchange views is West Berlin. As is well known, the Americans are raising the question of preserving their rights in West Berlin. But we think that the issue of the preservation of occupation rights can't be raised now. We think that since 14 years have passed since the end of the war, it is time for a peace treaty.

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discuss this, since only by this path can we isolate  
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where you exerted certain pressure on us.

But we can only surpass West Germany by carrying out a quick reconstruction of industry. Without this we cannot resolve our main economic task. Besides, our intelligentsia compares not only our standard of living with the level of West Germany, but also the level of production. Therefore, it would have great significance also for the resolution of the question about the intelligentsia.

In sum, the issue is to strengthen [our] exchange and cooperation.

Your delegation which was in the GDR already gave us significant help in this regard. We hope that this cooperation will strengthen even more in the future.

We also think that it is time to [on R

Riga, Kiev and Gorki. Our meetings were a significant event in the development of friendship between the Soviet Union and the GDR. We are all very pleased with the trip, including the students who were also in our delegation. We are very grateful to you for everything, including also for the well-composed program. Regarding the visit to the Exhibition of the Achievements of the National Economy of the USSR (VDNKh), it is completely clear that we could only become acquainted with it in general outline. But already after that, it became clear to us that at home we have an entire series of unresolved problems [economically]. At home we are discussing things, but



important to emphasize that by preserving the current situation, we can find a way to normalize the situation in Berlin (pushing off from their concessions to bring about the stopping of subversive activity, propaganda, etc.). Their proposals on this are already a step towards the normalization of the situation. I must emphasize that normalization is possible not only on technical issues (connections, transport, etc.) but also in political relations. The normalization of life in the city is the basis of our proposals on Berlin. Thus we must obtain such a normalization more persistently and as soon as possible, since this will be understood by the whole population.

**Khrushchev:** I think that the comments made by Comrade Ebert are correct and they must be taken into account in preparing the communiqué.

**Bach:** We were very surprised that the last proposal of the Soviet Union in Geneva<sup>10</sup> was seen as an ultimatum by the Western powers. What Comrade Khrushchev said regarding the answer to Eisenhower is a question of diplomatic tactics. We all agree with these tactics. Comrade Khrushchev emphasized that even if we don't speak of time periods, the main issues remain in force.

**Khrushchev:** Yes.

**Bach:** We take this into account in our communiqué. If I understood correctly, we should write [in the communiqué] that, in case at Geneva there is no principled agreement reached regarding the signing of a peace treaty with Germany, the USSR is ready to sign a separate peace treaty with the GDR.

**Khrushchev:** We will not call that treaty separate. We must show that not only the USSR, but all countries which are ready for it can sign a peace treaty with the GDR. A number of countries have already declared their agreement to sign such a treaty with the German Democratic Republic.

**Homann:** On the question of the methods of the realization of our principles, we are ready to compromise, but on the main issues we must remain unbending. The main thing is that what we have said here must be reflected in the communiqué, since this will strengthen the certainty of those who are fighting for peace in Germany.

It is important to write this down, since we evaluated here developments in Germany and the progress of the conference in Geneva. And a basis would be established for further movement forward on the German question.

**Scholz:** I would like to emphasize that a peace treaty with the GDR is not only a means of pressure on the Western powers, but it also has great significance for the domestic political situation in the GDR. For a long time, we have mobilized the people of the Republic under this slogan. We made a series of concessions, but we must now emphasize that our position remains unchanged on basic issues.

However, it is necessary to emphasize this in the communiqué, but without naming a concrete time period. We already have experience with the date May 27 [the deadline for Khrushchev's 27 November 1958 ultimatum].

As is well-known, on that day everyone in the GDR expected that something would happen. Therefore, it is better not to decree a concrete date, but to preserve freedom of movement for oneself. It will alleviate our political work, although it may also seem that we are not consistent.

**Mikoian:** I would like to respond to Comrade Grotewohl regarding the analogy between the peace treaty with Germany and the peace treaty with Japan. Of course, there is a difference between a peace treaty with Germany and a peace treaty with Japan. But in this case, the issue is different. The analogy with Japan helps us. The Western powers fought against Japan together with us and signed an act on its capitulation. And we all should have signed a peace treaty with Japan together. But they themselves violated that principle. It is a very serious argument in our hands against them.

They think that so long as there isn't a peace treaty, all conditions connected with the capitulation are still active, and the occupation rights remain in force. When we proposed concluding a peace treaty with Germany, it was a correct and strong approach from our side. This proposal cut the ground out from under their feet. Before they didn't want to talk about Berlin at all, but now they are forced to carry out negotiations with us on it.

We would like to sign a peace treaty with a united Germany. We propose to give a certain time period for achieving agreement on this issue between the German states. If such an agreement is not reached, then we are ready to conclude a peace treaty with two German states. If the Western powers won't agree to this either, then we will sign a treaty with the GDR.

But they don't want the signing of a peace treaty at all. Therefore, if they will be afraid that there will be a peace treaty signed with the GDR, which would deprive them of their occupation rights, then they will be forced to find a new path for agreement. The threat of signing a peace treaty will force them to carry out negotiations with us.

I think that Comrade Scholz was right when he talked about the great significance of a peace treaty also for the GDR. It is important for the GDR, because it would raise its significance in the eyes of world public opinion.

**Khrushchev:** We could take examples from history. When, for example, the revolution occurred in Russia and the Soviet representatives carried out negotiations with Germany in Brest in early 1918, the German government signed a peace treaty with [Simon] Petliura and turned their troops on Ukraine, and not only on Ukraine, but all the way to Rostov. And Russia waged war with Germany being a united state.

Or take the example of Vietnam. In Geneva in 1954 the great powers agreed on the carrying out of free elections in Vietnam [after] a two year period. Were there elections? There weren't. Who fought against holding these elections? Mainly, the USA fought against this. It wasn't advantageous to them, and so they didn't even



think about elections.

It appears that capitalistic morals go like the wind blows—they do what is advantageous for them. When it is advantageous to them, they find the necessary arguments.

Now about proportional representation. They say, for example, that the GDR is one-third of Germany, and the FRG is two-thirds. But if we take China, 600 million people live in the PRC [People's Republic of China], and 10 million people live on Taiwan. And who do the Americans recognize, whose representative sits in the UN?

Such are the morals of a blockhead.

Or Guatemala. With the help of rough forces, the USA expelled the democratic government [of Jacob Arbenz in 1954] which they didn't like, because it was advantageous to them [to do so].

Furthermore, the Americans maintain, for example, that Franco's Spain is a free country, and they want to accept it in NATO.

Therefore we must always understand with whom we are dealing. They are bandits. If we were weak, they would long ago have resolved the German question to their advantage.

Adenauer decided to remain chancellor in order to carry out a "policy of strength" better than Dulles himself did.

So we must not forget that if we let down our guard, they will swallow us up.

However, we have the means to scratch them slightly on the throat.

Our cause is just. They will not start a war, and we all the more [won't].

Developments are going in our favor. This is true not only for the USSR, but all for the socialist countries, including also the GDR. The GDR must exert socialist influence on the entire West. We have everything we need to do this.

Look at how the situation changed in 1956. They didn't want to shake hands with us. And now Macmillan himself came to us. And soon [U.S. Vice President] Nixon and [Averell] Harriman will come travel around our country. And it is because a difficult situation has been created for them, and it will become more difficult.

If they accused us earlier of resolving social problems by force, now everyone can be convinced that we decide these issues by the force of the example of socialist organization.

Thus our communiqué will have great significance. It will also reflect our peace-loving firmness.

**Ulbricht:** Thank you very much for your explanation.

**Khrushchev:** We are very glad that our points of views coincide. This is especially important for such a pointed issue as the German one. Speaking of our united views, I have in mind the representatives of all the parties of the National Front of Democratic Germany.

**Ulbricht:** Comrade Khrushchev emphasized that the most decisive issue for us is the issue of the fulfillment of

the main economic tasks. We, on our side, are doing all to realize these tasks. Therefore we have set ourselves the goal of surpassing the FRG. This will have great significance also for the resolution of the Berlin issue. It isn't accidental therefore that [Berlin Mayor Willy Brandt recently said that the question of the struggle for Berlin is a question of the struggle of two systems.

However, for realizing the tasks before us, we ask you to give us help. Comrade Leuschner informed us about the talks which took place on this issue. We thank you for giving us help.

**Khrushchev:** Are we finished with the question of the communiqué? Let the responsible officials definitively edit the text of the communiqué keeping in mind also the comments of Comrade Ebert about how we are ready to eliminate in parts the phenomena which are interfering with the reduction of tensions, although it can't be done immediately. This would be a good beginning on the matter of the reduction of tensions, [and] it would lay the way for reaching agreement on the German question.

If there aren't other comments, let us move to economic issues.

Maybe the comrades who carried out negotiations on economic issues could inform us of the results.

**Ulbricht:** Maybe we could listen to Comrade Leuschner.

**Leuschner:** We conducted the negotiations on the basis of the lists which were presented by the German side. During the negotiations, Comrade [N.] Patolichev [Minister of Foreign Trade] noted that the Soviet Union acquires a series of goods for us which we need from the capitalist market.

We understood Comrade Patolichev such that the Soviet Union is prepared to grant us credit in 1960 in the amount of 250 million rubles, for which will be acquired wool, cocoa, coffee, southern fruits, leather, etc. (we asked for 400 million rubles); 200 million rubles in 1961 for the same goods (we asked for 400 million rubles); and in 1962 120 million rubles (we asked for 300 million rubles).

Regarding the payment for this, Comrade Patolichev suggested to fix that in the annual talks. We agreed with this proposal.

Now we can return to working on the seven-year plan. In September, Comrade Ulbricht submitted the draft seven-year plan to the Volkskammer [the GDR parliament], and we will have the opportunity to work with a clear perspective. Now all issues which were open for us have been resolved.

It is true that we didn't completely reach the level of demand in the FRG in certain goods. But that isn't the main thing. Our plan is strained, but we will apply all our forces to fulfill it.

**Khrushchev:** We already have some experience with talks with the u

**Khrushchev:** I had in mind here our workers. Aside from this, you must bear in mind that developments sometimes go better than we plan. Thus you must keep in mind that as for us, you can open additional possibilities which will facilitate the resolution of the problems before us.

**Mikoian:** The comrades pointed here to the necessity of buying southern fruits. These products could be acquired for the GDR from the lesser developed states of the East in exchange for their products, all the more since these countries are experiencing difficulties in selling fruits. This would also improve the political weight of the GDR in these countries.

**Khrushchev:** The GDR must study these markets and adapt to them.

**Mikoian:** From our side, we can help you with your foreign trade apparatus, and Yugoslavia can also give you this help.

I would like to make another proposal, if there aren't objections from your side, namely: to prepare in the next one-two months a plan of foreign trade exchange for seven years between our countries.

**Ulbricht:** That is a very good proposal. It would be desirable to sign an agreement on it before the meeting of the Volkskammer, that is, in August. Maybe Leuschner and Patolichev could agree on the basic conditions of this treaty still before the departure of the delegation?

**Khrushchev:** Good.

**Ulbricht:** In the name of the delegation, I would like to express great satisfaction with the results of the talks which have shown complete agreement on all questions. The business discussion during the negotiations showed that cooperation between our countries deepens more and more. We heartily thank you.

**Khrushchev:** And we would like to thank you and also express the hope that our meeting will serve the deepening friendship not only between our governments, but also with the entire German people. On the issue of how relations are turning out between the USSR and the GDR, not only are our countries interested, but all peace-loving peoples are also.

[Source: *Archive of Foreign Policy of the Russian Federation (AVP RF), Moscow, Fond 0742, Opis 4, Portfel' 33, Papka 31, ll. 71-87 for June 9 and ll. 88-102 for June 18; obtained and translated from Russian by Hope M. Harrison.]*

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<sup>1</sup> The foreign ministers representing the United States, Soviet Union, Great Britain, France, East Germany, and West Germany were, respectively Christian Herter, Andrei Gromyko, Selwyn Lloyd, Maurice Couve de Murville, Lothar Bolz (State Secretary and First Deputy Foreign Minister Otto Winzer was there too as the real political head of the delegation), and Heinrich von Brentano (Brentano refused to sit in same room as Bolz, so Wilhelm Grewe, the West German Ambassador to the U.S., sat there representing West Germany). On Brentano and Grewe, see Ann Tusa, *The Last Division* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc., 1997), p. 168.

<sup>2</sup> For detailed U.S. documentation on the Geneva CFM, see U.S. Department of State, *Foreign Relations of the United States, 1958-1960, Vol. VIII, Berlin Crisis, 1958-1959* (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1993); and for useful summaries of the CFM from the Western perspective, see Jack Schick, *The Berlin Crisis, 1958-1962* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1971), pp. 71-96; and Tusa, *The Last Division*, pp. 163-177. From the Soviet perspective, see Oleg Grinevskij, *Tauwetter* (Berlin: Siedler Verlag, 1996), pp. 157-168.

<sup>3</sup> For the text of the ultimatum and other related documents, see *Documents on Germany, 1944-1985* (Washington, D.C.: Department of State Publication 9446, n.d.), pp. 552-559. For background information on the ultimatum and Khrushchev's personal role therein, see Hope M. Harrison, "New Evidence on Khrushchev's 1958 Berlin Ultimatum," *Cold War International Hop3aies*

# The End of the Berlin Crisis: New Evidence From the Polish and East German Archives

## Introduction, translation, and annotation by Douglas Selvage<sup>1</sup>

**W**hy did Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev not keep his promise to sign a separate peace treaty with the German Democratic Republic (GDR) after the construction of the Berlin Wall in August 1961? Most scholars agree that after the construction of the wall, he was concerned in part that a transfer of Soviet control functions in and around Berlin to the GDR might spark a military conflict with the West.<sup>2</sup> Hope Harrison's work points to a second factor: a desire on Khrushchev's part to free himself from the leverage that the East Germans had achieved during the crisis by threatening to collapse. He saw the Berlin Wall, she writes, "not only as a way to save the GDR by stemming the refugee exodus, but also as a way to wall in Ulbricht in East Berlin so that he could not grab West Berlin by gradually usurping the Soviet border control functions."<sup>3</sup>

A third factor in Khrushchev's decision not to sign a separate peace treaty, I will argue, was his fear of a Western economic embargo against the GDR and the Soviet bloc in general. All scholars agree that Khrushchev approved the construction of the Berlin Wall first and foremost to stem the flow of refugees and prevent the immediate economic collapse of the GDR. Recently-declassified documents from the Polish and East German archives suggest that his decision not to sign a separate peace treaty with the GDR arose in part from a similar fear. A peace treaty with the GDR, he declared in private meetings after the construction of the wall, would most likely spark a Western economic embargo against the socialist bloc. Such an embargo, he worried, would undermine the stability not only of the GDR, but also of Poland, Czechoslovakia, Hungary and other Soviet-bloc countries. This group of states, dependent on trade with the West, had already demonstrated an inability or unwillingness to provide the GDR with the level of economic support that East Berlin had been demanding. In the wake of a Western embargo, they would have had difficulty providing for their own needs, let alone the GDR's. Even Soviet officials complained about the undue burden placed upon the Soviet economy by the GDR's endless demands. In February 1962, Khrushchev effectively ordered Ulbricht to end the GDR's campaign for a separate peace treaty and to focus instead on the GDR's economic difficulties, especially in agriculture. Ulbricht became the target of growing criticism in Moscow for his seeming inability to improve the GDR's economic situation.

stark contrast to his optimism of 1958-60 regarding the ability of the GDR and the Soviet bloc to withstand a Western embargo. On 10 November 1958, he had predicted in talks with Poland's communist leader, Władysław Gomuł

### **Khrushchev's "Economic Romanticism"**

Khrushchev's economic fears in 1961-62 stood in

### Poland, the Soviet Bloc and the Berlin Crisis

Khrushchev had clearly not consulted in advance with the other socialist states about his offer of increased economic assistance. Even while Ulbricht and Khrushchev discussed economic preparations for a peace treaty in July 1961, Poland rejected an East German request for additional aid. It would not grant the GDR an additional 150,000 tons of coal in 1961 unless it received raw materials in return. It also refused to lower the price of coal or to forego an increase in transit costs between the GDR and the Soviet Union.<sup>9</sup> Not only Poland, but also Czechoslovakia and Romania were apparently resisting the GDR's economic demands.<sup>10</sup> The growing opposition to the GDR's beggar-thy-neighbor economic policies most likely played a role in the somewhat cryptic report to Ulbricht on July 15 that despite his ongoing talks with Khrushchev, he should be prepared to discuss "political-economic" and military issues at the Warsaw Pact meeting in Moscow from 3-5 August 1961.<sup>11</sup>

Hope Harrison's analysis suggests that Khrushchev, under pressure from Ulbricht, agreed to the construction of the Berlin Wall some time by 26 July 1961.<sup>12</sup> New evidence from the Polish archives confirms that Ulbricht was pushing for a wall and Khrushchev was hesitating. Also pushing for the construction of a wall was Poland's Communist leader, Władysław Gomułka. The Polish leader later complained on at least two different occasions about Khrushchev's failure to act quickly. The flood of refugees through Berlin was creating a drain not only on the East German economy, but also on the economies of its allies, which felt compelled to assist the GDR (see Document # 1). In a speech before the Central Committee of the Polish United Workers' Party (PUWP) on 22 November 1961, Gomułka justified the Soviet bloc's

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*sometime yet in this century* [my emphasis].”<sup>20</sup>

In contrast to Ulbricht, Gomułka voiced his full support at the CPSU party congress for Khrushchev’s decision to withdraw the December 31 deadline.<sup>21</sup> This most likely reflected his own concerns about the effects of an economic embargo on Poland. During his stay in Moscow, Gomułka met with Khrushchev and Soviet Foreign Minister Andrei Gromyko to discuss developments since August 13 (see Document #2 below). Gromyko summarized Moscow’s talks with the West since mid-August, and Khrushchev drew his own conclusions. The United States, Gromyko reported, had voiced a willingness “to recognize the borders of Germany *de facto* and *de jure* (the border on the Oder-Neisse)” and “the border between the GDR and West Germany *de facto*.” Rusk, Khrushchev added, had suggested that the U.S. might also support a non-aggression treaty between the Warsaw Pact and NATO—a staple of Khrushchev’s diplomacy—and, more importantly, the non-dissemination of nuclear weapons to both German states. Khrushchev justified his decision to postpone a peace treaty by pointing, on the one hand, to the potential concessions that could be won by continuing talks with the West and, on the other hand, to the potential damage that an economic embargo might cause to Poland, the GDR, and the other socialist states. He told Gomułka: “The situation is favorable to us... The USA requested that we not force the issue of a peace treaty with Germany, that we wait 4-6 weeks so that it can work out its own position... There will not be a war, but signing a peace treaty with the GDR might exacerbate the situation... We must continue our game... What will we gain and what will we lose by concluding a separate peace treaty with the GDR [?] We will lose: The Americans, the English, the French might declare an economic blockade against the USSR and the socialist countries. Regarding the USSR, these are empty platitudes, but the other countries—the GDR, Poland, Hungary and to a lesser extent, Romania—might suffer if they do that. We should wait for 4-6 weeks, like they [the Americans] asked, to conclude a treaty... We should not pass any resolutions. The game continues, we must keep applying pressure. We should coordinate our position with Comrade Ulbricht. We should carry on salami tactics with regard to the rights of the Western countries... We have to pick our way through, divide them, exploit all the possibilities.”

Based on the U.S. documents declassified to date, Khrushchev and Gromyko—at best—exaggerated Rusk’s expressed willingness to make concessions. To the consternation of the West Germans, Rusk had suggested to Gromyko that the U.S. would be willing to negotiate about issues relating to “European security” as soon as the Western powers’ right to access to West Berlin were insured and reaffirmed by the Soviet Union (i.e., the U.S. was unwilling to enter into negotiations with the GDR). The U.S. Secretary of State had mentioned specifically a reduction of armaments in Central Europe (but no

“disengagement”), the establishment of safeguards against surprise attacks, and an exchange of “assurances” between NATO and the Warsaw Pact “that they could live peacefully.” He has also declared that it was in the interest of both the U.S. and the Soviet Union to prevent the “spread of national nuclear weapons.” Rusk did not, however, ask the Soviets for “4-6 weeks” to formulate a position, as Khrushchev implied to Gomułka, nor did he suggest that the U.S. was prepared to recognize Germany’s borders—let alone the inner-German demarcation line—*de facto* or *de jure*. It was Gromyko, not Rusk, who kept bringing up in their talks Western recognition of the existing borders and of the “sovereignty” of the GDR.<sup>22</sup>

Although Khrushchev and Gromyko embellished Rusk’s comments, they were not lying to Gomułka to the extent that there were serious differences among the Western powers and the FRG regarding European Security and a Berlin settlement. Privately, the U.S. State Department was contemplating broader negotiations with

Source: Gromyko, “On the New Line of U.S. Policy (NATO) against the USSR” (Dec 1959), in *Documents on the History of the USSR*, 1960, 100-101 (De

Gomułka only in terms of the West's alleged willingness to make concessions and a possible economic embargo against the socialist bloc, one should not discount the role of other factors in his decision. Moscow's worsening relations with China or a fear of Ulbricht's growing influence might still have played the key role; Khrushchev would not have necessarily informed Gomułka about such ulterior motives.<sup>26</sup> The concerns that he expressed about an embargo, which openly contradicted his earlier statements on the subject, were clearly meant to appeal to the Polish leader's own interests and gain his support. Nevertheless, Khrushchev would use a possible embargo as an excuse for avoiding a peace treaty once again, during Ulbricht's visit to Moscow at the end of February 1962.

### Ulbricht's Visit to Moscow, February 1962

By the time of Ulbricht's visit to Moscow in February 1962, the talks between Gromyko and the U.S. Ambassador to the USSR, Llewellyn S. Thompson, had reached an impasse. The West had quickly retreated on the issue of recognizing Germany's borders—specially the inter-German border—and was focusing first and foremost on guaranteeing access to West Berlin (see documents #3-4 below). Nevertheless, Khrushchev had clearly decided by this point to abandon a separate peace treaty with the GDR, while Ulbricht still wanted to force the issue.

Ulbricht brought up the issue of a separate peace treaty during his first session with Khrushchev on February 26. The failure to conclude such an agreement, he told Khrushchev, had undermined the authority of the SED and the Soviet Union inside the GDR. "In wide circles of the population," he said, "the opinion has arisen that the Soviet Union and the GDR have overreached themselves in the struggle for a peace treaty." Ulbricht pleaded with Khrushchev to conclude a separate peace treaty by the end of the summer. It would assist the SED in the upcoming election campaign to the East German parliament, the *Volkskammer*, and help restore the party's tarnished image. The conclusion of a peace treaty, he suggested, need not exacerbate relations with the West; the GDR was willing to sign a peace treaty that left open matters relating to transit to West Berlin. If the West proved recalcitrant, the Soviet bloc could still use access to West Berlin as a lever to compel the Western powers' acceptance of the separate agreement.

Khrushchev rejected Ulbricht's plea. Although the Thompson-Gromyko talks were a "step back" from the West's earlier statements, the Warsaw Pact could not afford to exacerbate the situation by signing a separate peace treaty with the GDR—at least for the time being. Khrushchev cited two major reasons. First, there was a possibility of war with the West if the Soviet Union turned over control of the access routes to West Berlin to the GDR. Second, there was the threat of an embargo against the socialist bloc. He explained:

One must see things the way they are. We are

disturbing the USA's air traffic [to and from Berlin]. It has to defend itself. The imperialist forces will always be against us. One must see that West Berlin is not in Adenauer's hands. *On August 13, we achieved the maximum of what was possible* [my emphasis]. I have the same impression as before that the conclusion of a peace treaty with the GDR need not lead to war. But one must consider the situation realistically. You want to give your signature, and we are supposed to give economically, because one must see the possibility that after the conclusion of a peace treaty, there will be an economic boycott. Adenauer will carry out an economic boycott, and we will have to give [the GDR] everything that is lacking....

The signing of a peace treaty would lead to a normalization of the situation in West Berlin. The main question, however, is not the peace treaty, but a consolidation of the economic situation [in the GDR]. That is what we have to concentrate on. I say once again with regard to a peace treaty, that I believe there would be no war, but who can guarantee that? What is pushing us to a peace treaty? Nothing. Until August 13, we were racking our brains over how to move forward. Now the borders are closed. One must always proceed from the idea that the conclusion of a peace treaty must serve us, that we will conclude it when we need it.... We support the GDR's measures, but we do not agree that it is absolutely necessary to use the peace treaty as a slogan for the elections to the *Volkskammer*."

Khrushchev even expressed understanding for Kennedy's position. He openly voiced his concern—already posited by Hope Harrison—about what Ulbricht might do if the Soviet Union granted him control over the access routes to West Berlin.<sup>27</sup> "The Thompson-Gromyko talks are a step backwards in comparison to the earlier talks. The USA wants to raise its price. We have said openly that these are no foundations for negotiations. Previously, [U.S. President John F.] Kennedy presented his viewpoint on the borders of Poland and the CSSR [Czechoslovak Socialist Republic]. Of course he cannot ratify the German border between the GDR and West Germany. One cannot expect that of him. He is trying to reach an agreement—for example, on an international [border] control. In one interview, he posed the question himself of what one can do and to whom one can turn if, for example, Ulbricht infringes upon the [existing] order regarding access routes to Berlin. To whom can one turn in such a situation?" In case Ulbricht was hoping for assistance from the Chinese, Khrushchev dispelled his illusions. "The Albanians and the Chinese," he said, "are criticizing us with regard to the peace treaty and West Berlin. What are they doing themselves? (Portuguese colonies in India, Hong Kong, etc.)."

In effect, Khrushchev ordered Ulbricht to give up his campaign for a separate peace treaty and to focus instead on strengthening the GDR's economy, seriously weakened by the crisis over Berlin. The Soviet leader remained committed to granting the GDR more assistance than his



views, every major issue was touched upon. Nevertheless, it was stressed in the conversations that this is only a preliminary exchange of views before official talks.

From the very beginning, Rusk<sup>34</sup>, Macmillan and Kennedy declared that we should discuss on the basis of the actual situation what would be acceptable to the Western countries. It has to do with access to West Berlin. Rusk emphasized that we should guarantee free access to West Berlin. We utilized Comrade Khrushchev's discussion with [Belgian Premier Paul-Henri] Spaak<sup>35</sup> and tried to justify ourselves by emphasizing that the GDR and the USSR have declared that they will respect the general order of the people of West Berlin. Our position was very understandable to them.

The question of access to West Berlin: Regarding this question, there have not been any statements. They are of the opinion that some new legal changes will have to be introduced or else the occupation regime will have to be maintained. Regarding Germany's borders: Rusk declared with Kennedy's approval that the government of the USA is prepared to recognize the borders of Germany *de facto* and *de jure* (the border on the Oder-Neisse). With regard to Czechoslovakia's borders, they are thinking over some form of commitment to recognize that country's borders. They are prepared to recognize the border between the GDR and West Germany *de facto*.

Comrade Khrushchev: Everything that we say here must remain top secret because our position corresponds to their position.

The West Germans are afraid that the USA will say more than it should about Germany's borders.

In the third discussion, Rusk also touched upon the following questions: security in Europe —(1) the conclusion of a non-aggression pact between NATO and the Warsaw Pact. Home also spoke about this. (2) Rusk declared that the USA is in favor [of the idea] that the GDR and West Germany should not produce nuclear weapons and that other countries should not supply these countries with such weapons. (3) The USA declared itself in favor of reducing the size of armies on both sides of the front in the heart of Europe.

The first two matters should be resolved simultaneously. With regard to the other matter, the prevention of sudden aggression — that matter will have

to be resolved at a later date.

Conclusion: They consider the question of security in Europe a concession to our advantage.

With regard to the sovereignty of the GDR, there were no statements. They did ask us, however, how we understand [the issue of] respecting the GDR's sovereignty.

The situation is favorable for us.

The USA proposed that we continue the exchange of views. We voiced our approval.

The exchange of views will be continued with the USA's ambassador in Moscow.

The basis for further discussions is not bad.

Comrade Khrushchev: The USA requested that we not force the issue of a peace treaty with Germany, that we wait 4-6 weeks so that it can work out its own position. Comrade Khrushchev spoke further about the incidents on the border to West Berlin, about how access was suspended to West Berlin, which has become an island.

He spoke further about the incident with the tanks [i.e., the tank standoff at Checkpoint Charlie on October 27] and how the police are checking every route leading to Berlin.

In a conversation with Comrade Khrushchev, Kennedy always stressed that we are a great country and that we should respect each other.

There will not be a war, but signing a peace treaty with the GDR might exacerbate the situation.



they asked, to conclude a treaty.

We are of the opinion that we should continue with our [current] line, should keep applying pressure and exploit the weaknesses of the enemy. We should strive to remove the official representatives from West Berlin and liquidate Adenauer's pretensions to West Berlin....

The economic situation of the USSR is outstanding, We should not force the conclusion of a peace treaty with Germany, but continue to move forward....

We should not pass any resolutions. The game continues, we should keep applying pressure. We should coordinate our position with Comrade Ulbricht. We should carry on salami tactics with regard to the rights of the Western countries....

We have to pick our way through, divide them, exploit all the possibilities.

Our situation is good, but if we do not apply pressure, then we will have to give up on signing a peace treaty with the GDR.

We cannot permit the reunification of Germany.

Why does [Konrad] Adenauer want to remain [West German] Chancellor? Because, he says, if we want to make contacts in the future with the Soviet Union, I can do it best.

Nobody supports West Germany in its desire for reunification.

I think that Adenauer is better than [West Berlin Mayor Willy] Brandt.

West Germany's ambassador [Hans Kroll] thinks that Adenauer should meet with Comrade Khrushchev.

We should set a meeting place....

[Source: AAN, KC PZPR, p. 115, t. 39, pp. 318-23.]

### Document No. 3

#### Note on the Discussion between Khrushchev and Ulbricht in Moscow, 26 February 1962 (Excerpts)

... Comrade Ulbricht pointed out that everything that the German side proposed to discuss had been fixed in writing.

Comrade Khrushchev stated that the declaration on the future of Germany can be designated as good; the responsible divisions in the foreign ministry and central committee have studied this statement and have several minor remarks, which one can accept or not. He did not yet have time to read the other documents. It would be useful, however, to talk over the economic problems in Gosplan, work out a position, and then discuss it. The German side agreed.

Comrade Ulbricht then pointed out that the documents were prepared on the basis of the last plenum of the CC [Central Committee of the] SED.

Since then, Adenauer has brought up the question of a change in the GDR's government. That means that Bonn

is realizing a decision reached a year ago. Adenauer is turning directly to the population of the GDR and calling for diversion and sabotage (radio). We have begun to do this as well, we are turning directly to the West German population with corresponding demands. It is, so to say, a period of unpeaceful coexistence. A campaign is being officially organized by Bonn for reunification through so-called free elections. The implication is that it would be possible to speak with the "Soviet zone" if it had a different government. In the last few days, it has been suggested that with such a change, help could be given to raise the standard of living [in the GDR], which is allegedly 20% lower than in West Germany.

The document before you about the historical role of the GDR, which was prepared by the appropriate authorities in the GDR, reflects the current situation. It shows with which forces an opening for the German nation can be found. It is to be approved at the congress of the National Front. One cannot fail to recognize that a certain difficulty has arisen due to the postponement of a peace treaty. In wide circles of the population the opinion has arisen that the Soviet Union and the GDR have overreached themselves in the struggle for a peace treaty. This is connected to a large campaign that is currently being organized in and through West Berlin. It also has to do with the mobilization of the revanchist organizations. The task stands before us to strengthen the GDR; the way has been worked out and certain circles of the workers are being won over to it. Currently, there is broad discussion of how even better results can be achieved in the mobilization of production [*Produktionsaufgebot*]. Now, the question arises of how to move forward with regard to a peace treaty and West Berlin.

In the Thompson-Gromyko talks, the respective standpoints are being tested. One has to see that the USA has raised its demands — e.g., with regard to controls on the autobahn. Kennedy is doing what Adenauer has proposed, but with more skillful methods.

It is a matter of clarifying prospects for the future. The document before you deals with the historical role of the GDR. It is of the greatest importance for the strengthening and future development of the GDR. It must be considered whether the GDR will make its own proposals regarding the problems of disarmament and the Geneva Conference. Perhaps with regard to the stance of the two German states towards disarmament. A broad campaign could be unfolded over what it means [to recognize] the results of the Second World War and gradually to eliminate its remnants. It must be examined, whether a conference of the consultative committee of the Warsaw Pact states or the foreign ministers with regard to changing the anomalous status of West Berlin would be useful, or whether a declaration should be published by both press bureaus.

Up to now, we have been silent on a number of questions because we do not want to come under suspicion of seeking to disturb the talks that are being held at the

highest level. We are in favor of a continuation of the talks between Thompson and Gromyko, but it must be weighed whether or not we should keep in sight the conclusion of a peace treaty near the end of summer. A commission would be necessary for this. What will come of it, if we go too fast? Crudely put, a bad peace treaty. That is, the questions of the borders and the capital would be regulated, and a number of the war's remnants would be eliminated. [The question of] air traffic would remain open, while the general traffic would remain as it has been. All of this would mean a strengthening of the German Democratic Republic. We are of the opinion that the USA would not have any formal reason to exacerbate the situation. One must consider the possibility of continuing to use the tactic used up to now of exploiting West Berlin as a means of pressure.

Hence, there is the proposal to conclude a peace treaty, including a protocol that expresses the matters in which the Soviet Union and the Western Powers stand in unanimity and that also states what still remains open.

In terms of strengthening the GDR, such a step would be greeted warmly; the conclusion of a peace treaty would be expedient for the elections to the *Volkskammer*. From

situation. The preparations for the 1962 plan foresee a 7% increase in investments, and the growth in production will amount to around 6%. Overall, the standard of living remains the same as it was. Wage increases of around 1% will follow.

We want to try to carry out a mobilization of production for the conclusion of a peace treaty by this fall. One should not forget, however, that often the material incentive is missing. We are currently working with large savings measures, including a reduction in higher wages; the incomes must be cut. That means domestically a certain political risk.

We are having difficulties with investments because the investments in part are in areas with little economic return — e.g., metals [*Buntmetalle*] and coal. For us, the costs of production in these areas cost many times the world-market price. The plan for 1961 was not achieved. The workforce is lacking. We have a long-term agreement with the Soviet Union, but it cannot be completely fulfilled. It is necessary to develop further the specialization and the deliveries of raw materials. In the trade treaty with the Soviet Union, there are a number of quotas that cannot be met.

In terms of carrying out the plan, there is a greater orientation towards those branches of production that are profitable. A higher worker productivity absolutely has to be achieved by using the best machines, which are now going in part for export. A reorientation of industry in this way is necessary. Then the GDR will be in a situation to repay its credits.

In response to an objection by Comrade Kosygin, Comrade Khrushchev replied that we cannot act like petty traders. It has to do with creating a profitable economy in the GDR.

Comrade Kosygin is in agreement with the plans as they were presented. He pointed out that in the GDR there is, in part, higher consumption than in West Germany. A great deal is paid out in the form of social support, but the German only sees what passes through his fingers. He believes that the reduction in investment in agriculture is incorrect. Unprofitable branches of industry must be cut. The plan for 1962 is not yet ready; it will be necessary to work out the material in 1-2 days in order to reach an acceptable decision.

Comrade Ulbricht referred to the necessity of rebuilding several city centers. It is a political, not an economic, question.

In the construction of housing, a reduction in costs absolutely must be achieved, but he is of the opinion that for the time being, construction should not be touched.

Comrade Khrushchev referred to the difficulties in agriculture and asked whether it is true that the GDR bought potatoes from Poland.

Comrade Kosygin interjected that the GDR is importing sugar and before, it was exporting it.

Comrade Khrushchev pointed out that the transformation of agriculture is a protracted process —

e.g., the development of combines.

A long conversation evolved over the development of agricultural machinery.

At the end of the discussions, it was decided to carry out the next discussion on the afternoon of the 27<sup>th</sup> around 1600 hours. In the meantime, talks were to be held between [Chairman of the State Planning Commission] Comrade [Bruno] Leuschner and Comrade Kosygin.

[Source: Dölling, *Ambassador*, "Note of the Discussion on 26.2.1962," 7 March 1962. *Politisches Archiv des Auswärtigen Amtes (PA/AA), Außenstelle Berlin, Ministerium für Auswärtige Angelegenheiten (MfAA)*,<sup>39</sup> *Ministerbüro (Winzer), G-A476.*]

#### Document No. 4

#### Note on the Discussion between Khrushchev and Ulbricht in Moscow on 27 February 1962 (Excerpts)

Comrade Kosygin reported on the discussion that had taken place between him and Comrade Leuschner; as the first problem, he dealt with the prospective plans for 1963-65. He touched upon the following questions: control numbers, 1963-1965; investment questions; balancing of industrial branches; coordination and reorganization of individual branches of industry.

He reported that the consultations had concluded in a decision to appoint groups of experts, who will prepare the appropriate materials and come to the negotiations without binding directives. These preparations should provide a basis for the 7-Year-Plan. Deadline for the work of the groups of experts: one month.

Comrade Khrushchev stressed that it is necessary to see the new bases for economic relations between the two states. It has to do with the unification of the economies of both states and the harmonizing of their plans. Whatever is decided upon must be maintained by both sides. The economies of both countries must be treated as a united whole, and all possibilities must be considered. He proposed that relations with the GDR be governed in the same way as, for example, the plan and settlement with the Ukraine are binding. He illustrated this strive-worthy condition by referring to a discussion that [Klement] Gottwald<sup>40</sup> had once led.

Comrade Ulbricht pointed out that until 1954, there had already been closer economic relations than is currently the case.

Comrade Khrushchev countered that the cooperation then was different, it was a mutual agreement. He is of the opinion, for example, that the question of investments in copper and potash must be agreed upon in the mutual plans, which [each side] must be obliged to keep.

Meeting the quantities agreed upon must be an obligation. Comrade Ulbricht voiced his agreement. He then made several supplementary remarks regarding economic-technical cooperation and suggested that a

direct cooperation of the [Party] secretaries working in this area should take place. Currently, things are not in order because very many matters regarding the transfer of patents and experience are being regulated by state security. He is of the opinion that the exchange and transfer of such things should take place through the "Committee for Coordination." He proposed that suitable guarantees be made for such cooperation.

Comrade Kosygin then reported on his conceptions for the plan in 1962, at which point he stressed that deliveries to the GDR have been fully agreed upon, but that the balance is still 215,000,000 rubles short.

He then drew attention to the following particulars:  
Activation of trade with Bonn to the maximum extent.  
Scrutiny of military expenditures.

The establishment of technically-based norms, esp. the alteration of norms.

The alignment of investments in crucial areas.

The standard of living in the GDR in comparison to the Federal Republic.

From the latest numbers he reached the conclusion that there are good possibilities for real propaganda in the GDR. He further stressed that great possibilities still exist to balance the plan in 1962, though with a larger credit from the Soviet Union. He suggested that it is better to discharge an investment with 6% than with 7%, but also to fulfill and surpass the plan. By all means, that is politically better. With regard to the standard of living, he drew attention to the fact that it seems expedient to give more in the form of direct wage increases and less through the social funds, because the latter is barely taken into account by the population.

Comrade Khrushchev interjected that after the 20<sup>th</sup> Plenum, the Soviet Union also went over to presenting the plan in such a fashion that a larger surplus [*Übererfüllung*] was guaranteed. That is of political consequence. Regarding the credit, he proposed that a suitable agreement be made and then signed in Leipzig.

Comrade Ulbricht expressed his agreement to the proposals and drew attention to the situation that had developed in terms of the individual matters in the most recent time period.

With regard to military expenditures, he referred in particular to the fact that it had become necessary to equip the army with new rail and radio equipment.

Comrade Khrushchev interjected that it cannot be that such an increase could arise on these grounds. One must check. It has to do with limiting the non-productive expenditures.

Comrade Ulbricht referred to the need to achieve an increase in production through additional material stimuli and reported on the struggle being waged to create technically-grounded work norms.

He pointed out that an acceleration of this struggle [to create technically-based work norms] is impossible.

Comrade Kosygin pointed out that the GDR is among those [states] with the highest norms in housing. In

discarding ruins and constructing new city centers one cannot proceed from the desirable shape of the city centers; instead, money must be placed first of all at the disposal of factories. In the GDR there are accommodations, city centers, etc., that are not planned for the Soviet Union until 1970. One must make reasonable use of the funds available. The main thing is to use these means for production.

Comrade Khrushchev said that he is upset that little is being invested in agriculture. We cannot accept special circumstances with regard to the large number of *kulaks*. If a decision [has to be made], whether city centers are to be built or investments made in agriculture, then the latter. One must promote production with all means and not simply pay more for the work units in the agriculture. In general, agriculture is the sore point of all the people's democracies. He then referred to the reorganization of the administration of agriculture in the Soviet Union that had been discussed at the March plenum.

In response to Comrade Ulbricht's letter, he said that the campaign for a peace treaty is settled. We will pursue the campaign aggressively, for the signing of a peace treaty. We will exploit every possibility for negotiations, but we will decide at what point to conclude it.

He is in agreement with a joint protest against the Western states' discrimination against the GDR. It would be incorrect, however, to strive, for example, for a general boycott in the field of sports. Stalin did that. One must make reasonable policy and not declare a boycott as a principle. That would only be to the advantage of the reactionary forces....

Comrade Ulbricht then referred to the articles being printed in the press about comrades who perished in the period of the Stalin-cult and stressed that this is of a certain importance to the GDR. Until now, nothing has been done in this direction, and there is no intention to do so. It is nevertheless necessary to agree upon the tactics in these cases.

There are cases in which the Soviet comrades do not understand our tactics — e.g., a delegation of writers who expressed the opinion that there is not enough freedom [in the GDR]. That was expressed at a writers' congress. The GDR is not publishing materials about Stalin's victims, and such books and publications will be refused by us — e.g., a book about the events in 1953 and the case of [Lavrentii] Beria.<sup>41</sup>

He voiced a request that in exchanges on the state level a certain order be created, so that — for example — writers cannot be used against the policies of the GDR. To this end, it is necessary that the party get involved.

Comrade Khrushchev agreed to speak with Comrade [Mikhail] Suslov and Comrade [Leonid] Il'ichev<sup>42</sup> about it.

[Source: Dölling, *Ambassador in Moscow*, "Note of a Discussion on 27 February 1962," 5 March 1962.

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*Berlin, MfAA, Ministerbüro (Winzer), G-A476.]*

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<sup>2</sup> John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p. 149; Vladislav M. Zubok, *Khrushchev and the Berlin Crisis (1958-1962)*, Cold War International History Project (CWIHP) Working Paper No. 6, (Washington, DC: Woodrow Wilson International Center for Scholars, May 1993), 22; Hope Millard Harrison, "The Bargaining Power of Weaker Allies in Bipolarity and Crisis: The Dynamics of Soviet-East German Relations, 1953-61," Ph.D. Diss., Columbia University, 1993, 239-40 and fn #625.

<sup>3</sup> Hope M. Harrison, T

