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All-German Unity and East German Separation in Soviet Policy, 1947 - 1949

It is clear in historical retrospect that the years which followed the mid-1947 outbreak of the Cold War were most crucial for the communist system to establish itself separately in the Soviet-controlled part of Germany. Party and state structures were so shaped as to conform increasingly to the Soviet model. At the same time, however, the Soviet authorities instructed the SED to organize an interzonal German movement which was demonstratively directed at preserving, respectively re-establishing, all-German unity. Democratic commonality of all Germany rather than the Soviet zone's communist particularity was emphasized in this context. To complicate matters further, this effort actually resulted in founding the GDR (German Democratic Republic), i.e. the communist East German state, which, to be sure, claimed to be essentially all-German in character.

The question arises how these contradictions were perceived to fit together by the Soviet policy-makers. Can we see the two diverging lines of all-German unity and East German separation as something which resulted from propagandistic pretense on the one hand and actual intent on the other? Or can they be explained as resulting from a difference between minimum and maximum goals?

Historians who were confronted with the problem before Soviet and other Eastern archival sources had become available, have expressed different opinions. Both Hans-Peter Schwarz and Richard Löwenthal tended to feel that Stalin was unwilling to acquiesce in German partition during the 1947 - 1949 period, for he continued to hope for an all-German solution which would allow him to extend his influence to the Western occupation zones as well. Most pronounced in this was Löwenthal who stated in 1974 that the Soviet leader was "not prepared yet at the time to accept consolidation of non-communist Europe under the Marshall Plan as inevitable". To be sure, Stalin was "far from risking attack" on the Western countries but he saw a good chance for a gradual communist take-over of power in Western Europe on the basis of misery and chaos there being preserved. The Soviet challenge to the West in Germany and Berlin which became obvious in 1948, is put into this context.¹ Schwarz is more guarded in his judgement. He concluded in 1966 that Moscow "at least sought not to preclude an arrangement on Germany". In contrast to Löwenthal's assessment, Schwarz felt that the all-German option in Soviet minds was linked to the possibility of an understanding between the four occupation powers. Contrary to what Löwenthal may have perceived, this author saw not the all-German campaign launched by the SED in fall 1947 but the option of quadripartite negotiating as the basis of Stalin's expectation that German unity might result.²

1 Löwenthal, Richard: *Vom kalten Krieg zur Ostpolitik*. Stuttgart 1974, p. 3.

2 Schwarz, Hans-Peter: *Vom Reich zur Bundesrepublik. Deutschland im Widerstreit der außenpolitischen Konzeptionen in den Jahren der Besatzungsherrschaft*. Neuwied, Berlin 1966, pp. 261, 265-266.

Another approach has been taken by Boris Meissner in 1972 and by Christoph Kleßmann in 1984. Both of them are convinced that the Soviet leadership had essentially ceased to seek a solution which would imply one German state in fall 1947 when it embarked upon fostering the People's Congress Movement. In Meissner's view, the ultimate result, creation of an East German separate state, had obviously been envisioned from the very beginning.³ Kleßmann deemed the German situation to be determined by the general context of East-West confrontation which in turn resulted from a "mechanism of mutual misperception and conflict escalation". The USSR "increasingly withdrew to the region directly subjected to its power" after the effort to cooperate with the Western countries had failed.⁴

Hermann Weber directed his attention to the domestic aspect of the 1947-1949 events. The sole political actor he thus recognized is the East German SED that "adopted" the policy line proclaimed by the CPSU at the Constitutive Meeting of the Cominform in September 1947 and subsequently both promoted communization in East Germany and made the struggle for German unity its crucial task.⁵ According to the official line of the former GDR's historiography, there was a continuous policy which invariably united all the "anti fascist-democratic forces" under the aegis of the SED ever since 1945 and resulted in hard struggle against the "reactionary forces" until 1949 and beyond. The fact that the SED leaders acted on Soviet orders, is only indirectly hinted at by the formula that one of the crucial points of contention was the "right kind of relationship with the USSR", respectively the "necessary friendship" with Moscow.⁶

After secret files from Eastern archives have become available to historians, there is some chance that previous differences of opinion can be solved. The following study is based on recently declassified documents of the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs. These internal documents which originate primarily from the Soviet Military Administration in Germany (SMAG) allow inferences on what crucial Soviet policy-makers had in mind. To be sure, the new evidence is far from being complete. Nonetheless, the files provide important new insight as they contain those selected informations which the Soviet foreign policy-makers regarded as essential to be preserved in the long run.

The study submitted here will first address the SED's transformation into a "party of a new type", then turn to the changes to which the "bourgeois parties" in East Germany were subjected, and subsequently clarify what structures of separate statehood were developed. Afterwards, the activities of the SED-initiated movement under all-German slogans will be looked at. Last but not least, the problem of how Soviet policy-makers related East-German separation and all-German unity to each other will be analyzed. Since the archival files thus

3 Meissner, Boris: Die sowjetische Deutschlandpolitik, 1945-1949, in: Osteuropa-Handbuch. Edited by Dietrich Geyer. Volume Soviet Union, Part: Foreign Policy I (1917-1955). Cologne, Vienna 1972, pp. 467, 471.

4 Kleßmann, Christoph: Die doppelte Staatsgründung. Deutsche Geschichte 1945-1955, 3rd enlarged edition. Bonn 1984, pp. 178-179 (Schriftenreihe der Bundeszentrale für politische Bildung, Vol. 193).

5 Weber, Hermann: Kleine Geschichte der DDR. Cologne 1980, pp. 38-53.

6 Stöckigt, Rolf: Wilhelm Pieck und der Kampf um ein breites Bündnis mit allen antifaschistisch-demokratischen Kräften, in: Kampfgemeinschaft SED-KPdSU. Grundlagen, Tradition, Wirkungen. Edited by Horst Bartel, Heinz Heitzer, I. I. Mints, Gerhard Rossmann, V. I. Zapanov and P. A. Zhilin. Berlin [East] 1978, pp. 69-75 (Internationale Reihe des Zentralinstituts für Geschichte der Akademie der Wissenschaften der DDR).

far available do not include key documents on the decision-making process at highest levels, it is basically the results of this process which can be investigated. Accordingly, the perceptions which guided Soviet action in Germany cannot be found out directly but need to be inferred in indirect fashion.

Restructuring the East German Socialist Unity Party (SED)

Stalin's confrontationist course vis-à-vis the West had far-reaching domestic implications for what was now definitely becoming the Soviet bloc. At the Cominform meeting of 22 to 27 September 1947, a detailed new policy line was proclaimed. The communists had to act on the assumption that there were two hostile camps vehemently fighting each other. It was their political and moral duty to oppose the Western "imperialists" without any compromise.⁷ For Germany which had been divided into four occupation zones, this evidently meant partition along East-West lines. Under Ulbricht's name, the Soviet concept was presented as a "German plan for saving Germany" and contrasted with the "American plan" designed to serve foreign interests. In accordance with that, Germany's new political order had to be based on central economic planning and large-scale expropriation of industry and land.⁸ The Second Party Congress of the SED on 20 - 24 September 1947 proclaimed intensified struggle against "reactionary forces", increased vigilance in ideological matters, and new efforts to assert all-encompassing hegemony over the "bourgeois" bloc parties.⁹

The following period is characterized by the build-up of institutions peculiar to a Soviet-type party. In particular, a research institute for Marxism-Leninism was founded.¹⁰ Simultaneously, the previous decision-making structures in the SED were undermined. The Central Secretariat de facto lost its supreme power due to the fact that it was the "technical apparatus" under Ulbricht which received the crucial instructions and informations from the SMAG. It was also Ulbricht's staff that acted as the operative body of policy-making in East Germany, and as the crucial one at that. Characteristically, this apparatus was free of former social

7 For the texts of the communiqué and the declaration see: Bol'shevik, 24 (1947) 19, pp. 9-13; Für Frieden und Volksdemokratie. Bericht über die Tätigkeit einiger kommunistischer Parteien, gehalten auf der Konferenz in Polen Ende September 1947. Berlin [East] 1947. The stand taken by Zhdanov at the Szklarska Poręba conference can be seen from the notes of one of the two Italian delegates: Reale, Eugenio: Avec Jacques Duclos au banc des accusés [notes of one of the two Italian delegates in French translation]. Paris 1958. See also: Sovetskii Soiuz - oplot mira i nezavisimosti narodov, in: Bol'shevik 24 (1947) 19, pp. 1-8; A. Zhdanov, O mezhdunarodnom polozhenii, in: Bol'shevik, 24 (1947) 20, pp. 10-26; Robel, Gert: Die Entscheidung von Schreiberhau/Szklarzka Poręba, in: Sowjetisches Modell und nationale Prägung. Kontinuität und Wandel in Ostmitteleuropa nach dem Zweiten Weltkrieg. Edited by Hans Lemberg. Marburg/Lahn 1991, pp. 286-305.

8 Ulbricht, Walter: Der deutsche Plan, in: Neues Deutschland, 2 September 1947. As Gniffke, Erich W.: Jahre mit Ulbricht. Cologne 1966, p. 253, has testified, the article had been provided by the SMAG.

9 Cf. Pieck, Wilhelm: Die Bedeutung des 2. Parteitages der SED, in: Einheit, 2 (1947) 9, pp. 801-808; Grotewohl, Otto: Zu unserem 2. Parteitag, *ibid.*, pp. 809-818; Appelt, Rudolf: Wesen und Ziele der Blockpolitik, *ibid.*, pp. 825-836; Gniffke, Erich: Organisation der Arbeiterbewegung im Nachkriegs-Deutschland, *ibid.*, pp. 836-844.

10 S. Tiul'panov (head of the SMAG Information Agency) to V. Semënov (Political Advisor of the SMAG), 19 January 1948, Arkhiv vneshnei politiki Rossiiskoi Federatsii (AVPRF), fond 0457a, opis' 5, papka 28, delo 7: listy 1-2.

democrats who were seen as security risks.¹¹ In May 1948, the Soviet zone's separate existence was officially seen as inevitable for the time being. In June 1948, the SED was proclaimed a "party of a new type" according to the Soviet model. Any compromise with Western ideas on the political order - as might have conceivably appeared appropriate in the interests of bridging the East-West gap between the two parts of Germany - was strictly rejected. In July 1948, the CPSU's principle of "democratic centralism" was expressly adopted. In September 1948, the SED once again emulated the Soviet model by introducing a Party Control Commission to ensure its members' strict discipline. One month later, intensification of both the "socialist build-up" and the domestic "class struggle" was put on the political agenda by Ulbricht.¹² As one of the final steps of sovietization, the SED chose to have a Politburo as its leading body in January 1949.

Thus the SED fully took the role of a Soviet-type cadre party whose purpose was to wage struggle against political enemies. After that, the SMAG began making additional efforts to reinforce SED control over the East German "Bloc of Democratic Parties". In spring 1949, a new program was worked out to guide the bloc's political activities. It emphasized uncompromising struggle against the West's alleged policy of dividing Germany, against what was presented as Western willingness to strengthen the "fascist and reactionary forces in West Germany" and against "war propaganda and the threat of a new war". At the same time, the bloc parties were obliged to commit themselves to the cause of the new order established in the Soviet zone. The respective text had been provided by the SMAG.¹³

At the same time, the SED members underwent an extensive mobilization campaign along Soviet lines.¹⁴ In spring 1949, there was a sustained effort to adapt the party organization fully to the Soviet model wherever this had not already been achieved. One of the proclaimed tasks was to make the principles of criticism and self-criticism the fundament of all party work. The Free German Youth which had originally been introduced as an allegedly above-party organization, was given the function of a "basic party reserve". The rule of parity between what had been communists and social democrats prior to 1946 was officially abolished after having been increasingly violated for a long time.¹⁵

The sovietization of the SED alone, however, seemed insufficient. The "bourgeois" parties which had been put under the SED's hegemony, had to be equally transformed so as to meet Soviet requirements of confrontation with the West. In fall 1947, the Christian Democratic Union (CDU) was seen by the Kremlin as the crucial political challenge. A number of months before, the party's chairman Jakob Kaiser and the head of its Berlin organization, Ernst Lemmer, had been prominent among those independently-minded politicians of East Germany who felt that a "national representation" was required to articulate the German in-

11 S. Tiul'panov to V. Semënov, 8 March 1948, AVPRF, 0457a, 5, 28, 7: 23-24. To cope with rising discontent among the members of the Central Secretariat, the SMAG then felt it had to demonstratively come to meet their grievances. The basic interaction pattern, however, did not change.

12 Staritz, Dietrich: Die SED, Stalin und der "Aufbau des Sozialismus" in der DDR, in: Deutschland Archiv, 24 (1991) 7, pp. 690-691 (evidence on the basis of documents in the former SED Central Party Archive).

13 S. Tiul'panov to V. Semënov, 25 March 1949, AVPRF, 0457a, 7, 38, 7: 71-80.

14 S. Tiul'panov to V. Semënov, 13 April 1949, AVPRF, 0457a, 7 38, 7: 81-88.

15 S. Tiul'panov to V. Semënov, 23 July 1949, AVPRF, 0457a, 7, 38, 7: 107-116.

terest given the occupation powers' inclination to split the country.¹⁶ When, in mid-1947, East-West confrontation eventually prevailed, the Soviet leadership decided to take up the idea and to instrumentalize it against the Western governments. That is, a German representation in alleged defense of the country's national interest was to be created under Soviet guidance which would blame the Western side for the nation's schism and support the USSR's anti-Western policies. The scheme resulted in formation of the People's Congress Movement which was initiated and controlled by the SED leadership. With overwhelming support from the CDU, Kaiser was unwilling to join the effort which he rightly saw as a complete reversal of his original idea. In contrast to the leaders of the other "bourgeois" party, the Liberal Democratic Party (LDP), he and his principal lieutenants, particularly Lemmer, did not allow themselves to be pressured into supporting the People's Congress Movement.

In the SMAG's perspective, it was a "provocation" that Kaiser dared enter into "open conflict" by refusing to participate. The SMAG responded by organizing an intra-party opposition against the recalcitrant chairman. An attempt to have Kaiser deposed failed on 2 December 1947, since the majority of the party leaders stood firm in support of Kaiser. On 11 December 1947, the SMAG convened in secret some selected representatives of the intra-party opposition and made them replace Kaiser by two more palatable persons. Six days later, both Kaiser and Lemmer were ordered by the SMAG to resign. The Soviet occupation authorities' attempt to have their choices accepted by the CDU in all of East Germany, proved unsuccessful for quite a while. Kaiser declared that he remained the elected party chairman as before and that he would continue to work from West-Berlin. Both he and Lemmer demanded that a party congress should decide on whether they had the members' confidence. As the SMAG was aware, they would have collected strong majorities for themselves. For this reason, the Soviet side was unwilling to allow for a party congress before the situation would have fundamentally changed. Soviet pressure proved inapt to make sufficient impression on the CDU organizations for quite a while. The SMAG realized that its confident, Otto Nuschke, who had managed to take over the CDU newspaper "Neue Zeit" on 20 December 1947, could not afford to change its line at once. Otherwise "undesirable reactions" among both the party members and the paper's editors had to be expected. Being both guided and protected by the SMAG, Kaiser's opponents began to gradually cleanse the CDU apparatus in January 1948. But it was only in mid-December 1948 that the Soviet occupation power felt the CDU to be sufficiently under control that a party congress could be held. But even after such a long period of intensive preparation, SMAG representative Colonel Tiul'panov felt it was necessary to voice open threats so as to make the congress delegates comply. It was in this fashion that the CDU was subjected to the Soviet will at last.¹⁷

16 Kleßmann, loc. cit., p. 203.

17 A. Smirnov (head of the Third European Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs) to V. Semënov, 26 January 1948, AVPRF, 0458a, 5, 28, 8: 26-33; S. Tiul'panov to the Third European Department of the MFA, 19 March 1948, AVPRF, 0457a, 5, 28, 8: 61-62; Polozhenie v ChDS, 19 March 1948, AVPRF, 0457a, 5, 28, 8: 63-70; Col.Ltn. Guliaev (deputy head of the SMAG Information Agency) to V. Semënov, 4 December 1948, AVPRF, 0457a, 5, 28, 8: 297-299; Col. Radionov (deputy of the SMAG Information Agency in Saxony-Anhalt) to V. Semënov, 6 January 1949, AVPRF, 0457a, 7, 39, 11: 1-6; S. Tiul'panov to V. Semënov, 28 February 1949, AVPRF, 0457a, 7, 39, 11: 11-42. Cf. Tjul-

From the very beginning, the second "bourgeois" party, the LDP, was much less of a problem for the SMAG. The LDP did not refuse participation in the People's Congress Movement. Nonetheless, the Soviet authorities felt that this "bourgeois" party also tended to be unreliable. After all, the policy line prescribed by the USSR underwent occasional criticism among the LDP rank and file. To be sure, the SMAG saw the party majority to be loyal. But it deemed the leader to be insufficiently active in silencing the critics. In the SMAG's estimate, the influence of both "reactionary elements" and "Anglo-American agents" was intensifying and even threatening to derail the party's course.¹⁸ As it appears on the basis of the Soviet documents, the SMAG did not have great difficulties in imposing its will. The death of LDP Chairman Wilhelm Kuelz on 10 April 1948 further facilitated the task of having a new leadership of Soviet liking installed that was under Moscow's full control.

The SMAG documents reveal a surprisingly high degree of Soviet and SED animosity and concern relating to the "bourgeois" parties even after these had been deprived of any capacity to steer a course of their own. Therefore the SMAG felt it was insufficient that CDU and LDP had been made to comply unconditionally. Political emasculation was not enough given the perception that the two parties represented "bourgeois" social strata which tended to the enemy's side by sociological necessity. It is for this reason that the SMAG took an initiative designed to split the "bourgeois" forces in East Germany and to bring at least parts of them under even stricter communist control. The effort was targeted particularly at two strata of the population: both former military nazis on the one hand and the peasantry on the other.

To achieve its goal, the SMAG made the Central Secretariat of the SED prepare for the creation of a "National-Democratic Party" (NDP) in spring 1948. A special paper "National-Zeitung" was set up to appeal to "bourgeois" rightists such as resettlers, prisoners of war who had returned home and former members of the NSDAP. The express purpose was to involve the "bourgeois" rightist circles in the "struggle for national independence, against the monopolist capital and the American policies of colonializing Germany". NDP party organizations and party cadres were established in both East-Berlin and various parts of the Soviet zone. The SMAG schedule envisaged election of a provisional central party leadership at the end of May 1948, subsequent elaboration of crucial party documents such as a program and a statute, and finally a first party congress in September. Clearly, all the relevant posts were put into the hands of reliable communists who joined the new party at the orders of the SED. For this purpose, communist functionaries who were believed not to be known as such were selected. In September 1948, Lothar Bolz was elected NDP Chairman. This man had been a communist emigrant to the USSR since 1934 and served as a journalist in Stalin's 1943 National Committee Free Germany (NCFG). There were some doubts whether this choice was really optimal given the need of hiding the communist background: Bolz's involvement in NCFG activities was largely known among prisoners of war who had been in the Soviet Union. In general, however, the feeling prevailed in the SMAG that the creation of the NDP

panov, Sergej: *Deutschland nach dem Kriege (1945-1949). Erinnerungen eines Offiziers der Sowjetarmee*. Edited by Stefan Doernberg. Berlin [East] 1986, pp. 236-252; Richter, Michael: *Die Ost-CDU 1948-1952. Zwischen Widerstand und Gleichschaltung*. Düsseldorf 1991, pp. 32-153.

18 M. Gribanov (deputy political advisor of the SMAG) to A. Smirnov, 14 February 1948, AVPRF, 0457a, 5, 28, 8: 36-37; S. Tiul'panov to V. Semënov, 2 November 1948, AVPRF, 0457a, 28, 8: 214-231. Cf. Tjulpanov, loc. cit., pp. 261-263.

was a success, since this party appeared capable of mobilizing notably former NSDAP members and old military cadres for Moscow's purpose.¹⁹

The SMAG's other target was the rural population. In spring 1948, officially sponsored meetings in the "Länder" Mecklenburg and Brandenburg came up with the demand to create a peasant party. In various parts of these two regions, organization committees were founded which then convened in the city of Brandenburg on 28 May 1948 to initiate a party. The text of the program was duly submitted to the SMAG which required a verdict to be included against any conceivable "peasant separatism". Also, the postulate of a "close alliance with the working class" had to be included to describe the very basis of the new party's political activities. It was equally deemed necessary to have a distinctly anti-Western orientation stated. As the party's apparatchiks, "small groups of experienced and politically tested peasants" were made available. The SMAG let it be known to the cadres involved that the emerging Democratic Peasants Party (DBP) had to be strictly controlled by the SED. In July 1948, the preparations reached their final stages. An all-zonal DBP conference was held which elected 15 former SED members and four other persons as party leaders, with Ernst Goldenbaum as the chairman. The SMAG felt that a good job had been done, since it saw the DBP to be capable of mobilizing the rural population under communist guidance and for communist goals. At the same time, a weakening of both the CDU and the LDP was expected to result. In spring 1949, however, the SMAG concluded that these hopes had not matured to a satisfactory degree: The DBP had failed to become a mighty rallying force.²⁰

When the party system appeared to be sufficiently under control, the SMAG took the initiative to tighten the reins to which the communists in West Germany were fastened. Until then, the KPD had been clearly committed to following the Soviet line, it is true, but had also enjoyed a large measure of autonomy as far as the modalities of executing Moscow's policies were concerned. In spring 1949, the Soviet decision-makers concluded that stricter guidance was appropriate. In May and June 1949, the SMAG arranged for several sessions at which KPD representatives were confronted with harsh criticism of both their party's orientation and efficiency. The gist of what the West German communists were blamed for, was lacking clarity in ideological and operational matters. The weaknesses had to be eliminated by complete subservience to the SED leadership and the SED Western Commission on the one hand and to the SMAG on the other. From then on, both the Soviet authorities in East-Berlin and the SED apparat (which in turn received its guidelines from the occupation power) provided detailed instructions on how the KPD had to operate. In return, the West German communists were henceforth amply and comprehensively supported by the SED. The input from East Germany included, inter alia, training of KPD cadres in SED party facilities and mas-

19 S. Tiul'panov to V. Semënov, 7 May 1948, AVPRF, 0457a, 5, 28, 8: 99-102; Major Mamontov (deputy head of the SMAG Information Agency) to V. Semënov, 6 September 1948, AVPRF, 0457a, 5, 28, 8: 183-184; S. Tiul'panov to V. Semënov, 16 September 1948, AVPRF, 0457a, 5, 28, 8: 185-189; S. Tiul'panov to V. Semënov, 13 April 1949, AVPRF, 0457a, 7, 39, 13: 53-61. Cf. Tjulpanov, loc. cit., pp. 266-272.

20 S. Tiul'panov to V. Semënov, 25 May 1948, AVPRF, 0457a, 5, 28, 8: 113; S. Tiul'panov to V. Semënov, 16 September 1948, AVPRF, 0457a, 5, 28, 8: 185-189; S. Tiul'panov to V. Semënov, 29 September 1948, AVPRF, 0457a, 5, 28, 8: 190-195; S. Tiul'panov to V. Semënov, 9 February 1949, AVPRF, 0457a, 7, 39, 13: 1-4. Cf. Tjulpanov, loc. cit., pp. 263-265.

sive deliveries of printed material relating both to intra-party education and to mass propaganda.²¹

Administrative State-Building

As early as in 1945, the USSR had initiated an interallied decision to create, under the aegis of the Allied Control Council, a number of German central administrations which would deal with matters relating to all four zones. The decision was not implemented, however, since France had not been a party of it and subsequently refused to accept what the other three powers had decreed. Therefore, the Soviet Union went ahead in setting up German central administrations of its own which, under strict SMAG guidance, served as a unifying element in East Germany. Eleven such administrations were created in July 1945; five additional ones were established during the following 18 months. Their purpose was to devise plans for production and distribution, to control implementation of these plans, and to coordinate all-zonal activities with regional self-government bodies. By early 1947, the SMAG had come to feel that the "Länder"-administrations impeded rather than promoted the zone's efficient transformation. It therefore sought to curb their competences. Therefore, elimination of decentralized structures as had been agreed upon by the occupation powers at the end of World War II was a high Soviet priority even before there was an open break with the Western side. On 5 January 1947, the SMAG did away with the principle of coordination between zonal and "Länder"-administrations; the central organs were accorded the right to give orders to their "Länder" counterparts. Thus they had not to seek mutual agreement any longer.²² This was clearly against existing four-power decisions which did not allow for German authorities to be put into place at a level higher than that of the "Länder".

At the same time, political cleansing of "unreliable elements" began to be energetically put on the agenda.²³ On 10 February 1947, the Soviet occupation authorities used their powers to have an agreement concluded between regional and central administrations which envisioned "common", i.e. centralized, activities. On 4 June 1947, Zonal Commander Marshal Sokolovskii issued an order which confirmed this accord. This is how the German Economic Commission (DWK) emerged which was to become the nucleus of economic centralization in East Germany.²⁴

During the first half of 1947, still another centralizing measure was taken. On 13 January 1947, an all-zonal administrative structure of the interior of set up at the orders of the SMAG. Its primary task was "to promote restructuring of Germany on the basis of democratic principles". What was meant by this, becomes clear when one takes a look at the kind of departments which were set up under this label. Except for those which related to general and personnel matters, all of them had to administer police and similar organizations

21 For both details and sources see Wettig, Gerhard: *Die KPD als Instrument der sowjetischen Deutschland-Politik. Festlegungen 1949 und Implementierungen 1952*, in: *Deutschland Archiv*, 27 (1994).

22 Third European Department in the Ministry of Foreign Affairs to A. Smirnov and V. Semënov, 5 January 1947, AVPRF, 0457a, 5, 32, 25: 1-4.

23 *Ibid.*, 4; P. Morenov (head of the Work Force Department of the SMAG) to M. Gribanov (deputy of the SMAG Political Advisor), 10 January 1948, AVPRF, 0457a, 5, 32, 25: 25-28.

24 A. Smirnov to V. Molotov (Foreign Minister), 19 June 1947, AVPRF, 06, 9, 43, 632: 14-15.

(including a fire brigade). The authorities of the "Länder" were ordered to provide analogous administrative structures which were to implement the instructions issued by the central agency of the interior.²⁵ In July 1947, this German Administration of the Interior (DVdI) was expressly given the task of issuing orders to all the police in the Soviet zone.²⁶

The DWK and the DVdI of 1947 became the nuclei out of which the hard core of the future East German central state apparatus was being developed. In 1948, the SMAG ordered the two administrations to be strengthened and expanded. On 12 February 1948, both composition and competence of the DWK were defined in more detail. On 26 November 1948, the SMAG permitted the personnel to be raised from 31 to 101 administrators. A few months later, the number was raised to 109. As an official of the Soviet Foreign Ministry expressly stated in a retrospective study for his superiors, the DWK was "actually the supreme legislative, administrative and executive organ in the system of the central and local German administrative organs" in East Germany prior to the GDR being created in October 1949.²⁷

On 9 - 10 July 1948, the land ministers of the interior and the heads of the land police organizations in the Soviet zone were called together to take measures in the interests of improving the work of the state apparatus. The head of the DVdI, Kurt Fischer, a CPSU cadre from 1924 to 1945, stated that the efficiency of the East German administrative organs did not live up to the needs resulting from the current two-year-plan and hence required "considerable reorganization, simplification, and uniformization". In particular, there were quite a few parallel structures in the various "Länder" which had to be straightened out. He recognized the feeling of independent self-government to be still running high. This sentiment had to be recognized as an "obnoxious idea" which must not be cultivated any longer. Therefore, land legislation had to be discontinued and the leading role of the SED strengthened. Fischer criticized the personnel departments of the "Länder" which did not care sufficiently for the SED's needs. Ulbricht added that any unreliable elements had to be eliminated as "criminals". He demanded that ideological work be intensified and a commission be formed to submit proposals within 10 days for the reorganization of the government apparatus. Another point of discussion was police reorganization along political lines and for the purpose of state security rather than public order. At the same time, military units were declared to be indispensable. Ulbricht instructed the DVdI not to restrict its activities to police matters only, but to set up a department dealing with all the administrative organs of the Soviet zone.²⁸ On the basis of both these guidelines and detailed instructions from the SMAG,

25 *Vremennoe polozhenie o nemetskom upravlenii Vnutrennikh del v Sovetskoi zone okkupatsii Germanii*, order issued by SMAG Deputy Commander Col.-Gen. I. S. Serov, 13 January 1947, AVPRF, 0457a, 4, 19, 48: 40-47.

26 *Polozhenie. O nemetskom Upravlenii Vnutrennikh Del v Sovetskoi zone okkupatsii Germanii*, order issued by SMAG Deputy Commander Lt.-Gen. Dratvin, July 1947, AVPRF, 0457a, 4, 19, 48: 48-56.

27 *Ministerstvo inostrannykh del, Istoricheskoe-diplomaticheskoe upravlenie: Germanskii vopros vo vzaimootnosheniakh SSSR, SShA, Anglii i Frantsii v period ot Berlinskoi konferentsii do obrazovaniia dvukh germanskikh gosudarstv (1945-1949gg.)*. Obzor podgotovil G. P. Kynin. Redaktor: A. M. Aleksandrov (Obzor Kynina), chast' III, AVPRF, fond Arkhivno-operativnaia biblioteka (AOB), 11zh, 71, 20: 598.

28 Major Liul'ka (Civil Administration of the SMAG) to A. Gribanov, 15 July 1948, AVPRF, 0457a, 5, 33, 27: 162-168.

Ulbricht, Fischer, the land ministers of the interior, and the land prime ministers took basic decisions at a conference on 23 - 24 July 1948.

Military State-Building

Once Stalin had decided to prepare for a German state, he felt that the build-up of a national army had to be part of the effort. Soviet declared adherence to the four-power principle of German disarmament notwithstanding, German armed forces were envisioned from the very beginning. Early in fall 1947, the Kremlin's principal confidant, Ulbricht, was already busy with devising plans for a military build-up. To be sure, the preparations went under the label of creating a centralized, powerful police force but it was clear from the very beginning that troops other than civil or border police units were envisaged. The Soviet initiators intended to provide for an armed instrument which would allow the Soviet occupation forces to withdraw one day.²⁹ This must be seen against the background that the USSR was pressing for a peace treaty with Germany which would imply the country's evacuation by all occupation troops. If at some future date such an arrangement would be made, the German communists would be the only side which would have an army in Germany.

The military preparations took place in the framework of the DVdI. The department which dealt with military was officially termed "Main Administration for Training" (HVA). In mid-1948, the effort had reached a stage which allowed formation of units to be started. On 2 July 1949, the Soviet Foreign Ministry submitted to the Council of Ministers, i.e. to Stalin as its head, a draft which envisioned armed units with 10.000 men to be set up in barracks. They were to receive automatic weapons and other military armament from German World War II arsenals. The personnel was to consist of both reliable police cadres in the Soviet zone and former prisoners of war to be selected in the USSR. The personnel thus provided was to receive "regular military training".³⁰ The draft received immediate approval by the supreme Soviet leader. Thus it was only one day later when the SMAG issued its corresponding order to the German Administration of the Interior to set up barrack-based units plus schools for the training of military cadres. At the end of the year, a minimum of 7.500 had been recruited for the units. From the outset, Soviet military advisers who worked under the supervision of a Major General were directing the military process.³¹

29 Gniffke, Jahre mit Ulbricht. loc. cit., pp. 262-263. Cf. the testimony given by Army General Heinz Hoffmann in an official East German publication: *Ich schwöre. Eine Bilddokumentation über die Nationale Volksarmee*. Edited by Deutsches Armeemuseum. Berlin [East] 1969, p. 251.

30 Obzor Kynina, chast' III, AVPRF, AOB, 11zh, 71, 20: 602-603.

31 Forster, Thomas M. (pseudonym): *NVA. Die Armee der Sowjetzone*, 3rd edition. Cologne 1966/67, p. 19; Bericht über den Aufbau der Volkspolizei in der SBZ. Stand: Sommer 1950. Edited by the Federal Ministry for All-German Issues. Bonn 1950, pp. 3-5. Unter sowjetischem Befehl [paper written by staff members of the Eastern Bureau of the SPD in 1951]. Bonn, pp. 13-16; *Zeittafel militärpolitischer und militärischer Ereignisse 1945-1964*. Edited by the Institute for Military History. Berlin [East] 1965, pp. 12, 28-29; Kunze, Gerhard: Feind und Kamerad - Zweimal "Kehrt marsch!", in: *NVA. Zeitzeugen berichten über ein Stück deutscher Militärgeschichte*. Edited by Manfred Backerra. Cologne 1992, p. 78. The three West German works of the 1950s and 1960s mentioned here are evidently based on very detailed and accurate information: The documents and lists they reproduce are identical with the corresponding materials in the AVPRF.

On 18 June 1949, Stalin signed another instruction which obliged the SMAG to create German military cadres. In a first phase, 35.000 NCOs and 11.000 officers had to be recruited. The SMAG was also ordered to select both 150 SED party members who deserved highest trust plus 100 "tried leaders" from the armed units. These top cadres had to be sent to the Volga Infantry School in the USSR for higher training.³² On 8 August 1949, the SMAG issued two orders to implement the order it had received from Stalin. Formation of 24 A-type (i.e. infantry) units with 950 men each, 8 B-type (i.e. artillery) units with 750 men each, and 3 V-type (i.e. tank) units with 1.100 men each were envisioned. At the same time, the four military training institutions which had been set up in April 1949 to provide for several hundred men to be trained at each of them, were now seen as insufficient. Therefore, a total of 11 military schools for thousand trainees each were created. Both units and schools had to complete their recruitments by 1 September 1949; two weeks later the training programs were scheduled to start. Supervision of the process was put into the hands of the head of the SMAG Domestic Affairs Section.³³

On 11 August 1949, the SMAG issued an order on the Soviet military advisers assigned to the East German military organizations. The text suggests that the Soviet military advisers had not worked on the basis of systematic regulations until then. The chief adviser ranking as a Major General was to reside with the top East German authority for military affairs, the HVA. Each of the military schools was to receive guidance from a Soviet officer ranking as a Colonel or Lieutenant Colonel. In each of the military units, the presence of a Soviet Lieutenant Colonel or Major was envisioned. There were clauses which provided for clear relationships of subordination: The advisers in both the military schools and military units had to act on the orders of their superior who in turn was responsible to the head of the SMAG Military Section. The military advisers were obliged to write reports on a regular basis and to meet every two weeks to give oral reports and to evaluate their work. Provision was also made for technical equipment: Inter alia, everyone received a car. The details of how the work had to be done and supervision efficiency had to be assured, were contained in a document which had been put together two days before. The regulations emphasized the right, and indeed the duty, of the Soviet adviser to take action whenever there was any indication to violation of professional and/or political normalcy among the East German military.³⁴

As a result, the Soviet occupation power had prepared for the build-up of East German cadres for future ground forces under strict Soviet control before the East German state had been created. This effort which was made in secret was clearly in contradiction to the four-power principles and agreements on German demilitarization. Moscow's willingness to make German soldiers reappear on the international stage, if only covertly for some time to come,

32 Sovet ministrov SSSR. Postanovlenie No. 2625-1044 of 18 June 1949, signed by I. Stalin and counter-signed by M. Pomaznev, AVPRF, 0458, 264ss, 314, 0036: 1-5.

33 Prikaz glavnonachal'stvuiushchego Sovetskoi Voennoi Administratsii - glavnokomanduiushchego gruppoy sovetskikh okkupatsionnykh voisk v Germanii No. 0035, 8 August 1949, AVPRF, 0458, 264ss, 314, 0036: 6-10; Prikaz (as above) No. 0036, 8 August 1949, AVPRF, 0458, 264ss, 314, 0036: 11-13. - A, B, and V are the first three letters of the Russian alphabet.

34 Prikaz (as above) No. 0038, 11 August 1949, AVPRF, 0458, 264ss, 314, 0036: 20-21; Polozhenie signed by Major General S. Gorokhov, 9 August 1949, AVPRF, 0458, 264ss, 314, 0036: 22-23.

may appear surprising given the fact that it was the Soviet side which advocated German disarmament most vehemently and was prone to blame the Western occupation powers for allegedly seeking "German remilitarization". Soviet action makes sense, however, if one assumes that tilting the intra-German balance of power in favor of a communist regime subservient to the Kremlin was the ultimate goal.

Initiative for a Campaign Directed at German Unity

Communist restructuring of both the party system and the administrative pattern in East Germany reflected Soviet awareness that cooperation between the four occupation powers had terminated and that hence there was no need any longer to take Western objections into account. A process of unveiled partition had begun, and the Kremlin's obvious interest was to make the Soviet occupation zone an anti-Western bulwark. This was, however, only one aspect of Moscow's policy toward Germany. Stalin and his aides also directed their efforts at maintaining, respectively underlining, their previous claim to have a say in all of Germany. They were definitely unwilling to give up the veto in West German affairs they had insisted upon. As a basis for this, they raised a sustained demand for German unity and emphasized Germany's "right" to be accorded a peace treaty by the four powers. This line of argument was combined with an anti-Western stand on the one hand and with appeals to the German people on the other. The Germans were urged to side with the USSR against the West for the sake of national unity. This was the rationale underlying the People's Congress Movement which the Soviet side initiated through the SED in fall 1947.

The underlying policy concept had been devised immediately after the Truman administration's announcement of the Marshall Plan. The Soviet policy-makers had instantly understood that the US initiative implied both long-term American commitment in Europe and American unwillingness to allow the USSR to stall West European, notably West German, development. As the SMAG reported to Moscow at that time, the United States and Britain were shifting policy-making from the Allied Control Council to Western bodies and seeking agreement with the Germans rather than the Soviet Union. To cope with the new situation, it was recommended to Foreign Minister Molotov in summer 1947 to put German unity on the political agenda, to convene German representatives for discussion on this topic, to initiate a German referendum, and to use the Allied Control Council as a forum against Western policies in West Germany.³⁵ The Soviet effort was essentially aimed at preserving, respectively restoring, past patterns of interaction: The Western occupation powers were to respect Moscow's veto with regard to West Germany again.³⁶

35 Ivanov and Gribanov (deputies of the Political Advisor of the SMAG) to V. Molotov, 20 June 1947, AVPRF, 06, 9, 43, 632: 16-20.

36 Accordingly, the Soviet delegation to the preparatory talks for the London session of the quadripartite Foreign Ministers Council in November 1947 was instructed by Stalin to keep scrupulously to the proposals submitted at the Moscow Conference in spring (Obzor Kynina, loc. cit., chast' II, AVPRF, AOB, 11zh, 71, 19: 338). The position that the USSR upheld its previous claims on a say in West Germany (linked, in particular, to the postulate of a peace treaty), was reasserted in both spring and fall 1948 (see note of the Soviet government to the governments of the three Western powers, 6 March 1948, in: *Sovetskii Soiuz i Berlinskii vopros (dokumenty)*. Edited by Ministerstvo inostrannykh del SSSR. Moscow 1948, pp. 19-20; Molotov's speech at the 31st anniversary of the October Revolution on 6 Novem-

This was, more specifically speaking, the purpose of the People's Congress Movement. Acting on the Kremlin's behalf (which did not want to be directly involved in intra-German politics and therefore used its East German subordinates³⁷), the SED leadership took a decision on 26 November 1947 to call for a "German People's Congress for Unity and a Just Peace" to meet on 6 - 7 December 1947 which was to elect emissaries for the impending London session of the quadripartite Council of Foreign Ministers. That is, delegates from all over Germany were to assemble in East-Berlin, voice their concerns over alleged Western splitting policies, and decide upon a respective protest in London. The SED organized the envisioned conference which was attended by 2.215 delegates including 664 ones from West Germany. When the First People's Congress took place, both discussions and decisions proceeded as had been planned. 17 delegates were elected into a body which was to continue political work until the next meeting. Both leadership and the executive structure beneath were staffed by reliable cadres. As the body's chairmen the zonal bloc party leaders Pieck, Kuelz, and Nuschke were installed. For the purpose of spreading the views expounded through the German People's Congress Movement, a newspaper called "Deutschland-Stimme" was created.³⁸ Also, People's Committees were founded throughout the Soviet zone in order to create a basis of public support. Similar efforts in West Germany were resisted by the German political forces there (except, of course, the communists who acted upon instructions from East-Berlin) and hence were largely unsuccessful.³⁹

Preparations for a German State

A Second German People's Congress met in East-Berlin on 17 - 18 March 1948. This was the date of the anniversary of the 1948 democratic revolution in Germany which had been deliberately chosen to provide an opportunity for linking the national program promoted by the communists to the cause of German democracy in general. Accordingly, "The Lessons of the March Revolution" was one of the topics for discussion, the other one being "The Democratic Rebirth of German Economy". The underlying motto was that the Germans were caught in a national emergency and had to rely on self-help to cope with it. This effort had, of course, to be directed against the Western occupation powers and their alleged stooges in the Western zones. The German People's Congress set up a solid permanent representation of 300 members which co-opted 100 West Germans in closed session so as to keep their identities secret. This body which was labelled German People's Council, elected 30 members (including 9 from the Western zones) to form a presidium with Pieck, Kuelz, and Nuschke as chairmen. The German People's Council was declared responsible for providing guidance to the German People's Congress Movement until another meeting would be con-

ber 1948, in: *Bol'shevik*, 25 (1948) 21, pp. 11-12; SSSR v avangarde bor'by za prochnyi demokraticeskii mir, in: *Bol'shevik*, 25 (1948) 23, pp. 3-5.

37 Cf. Gniffke, loc. cit., pp. 250-251.

38 *Obzor Kynina, chast' III, AVPRF, AOB, 11zh, 71, 20: 606-607*; Goroshkova, G. N.: *Dvizhenie nemetskogo narodnogo kongressa za edinstvo i mimyi dogovor*, Moscow 1959, pp. 54-59. Goroshkova was a trusted person who could use official files at the time of her writing. Her book was subsequently used as a quasi-official document in the Soviet Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

39 Cf. Goroshkova, loc. cit., pp. 60-73.

vened. It was given an elaborate administrative structure including a system of 30-member-committees which were to work out proposals for a constitution, for a peace treaty, and for policies in the realms of economy, law, culture, agriculture, and social relations. These committees began their work on 15 April 1948.⁴⁰

The efforts of the German People's Council amounted to designing political structures and basic policies for a future German state. This was done on the alleged mandate of the whole German people. The claim was allegedly justified by the fact that West Germans participated in the discussions and decisions of the presidium and all the committees (if only in disproportionately small numbers). The crucial suggestions and wordings were fed into the process by the SED leadership which in turn drew upon recommendations from the Soviet side. The guidelines prescribed an "all-democratic" approach which was based on an alleged commonality of interest and policy between communists and democrats. As a result, the crucial constitutional committee declared the constitution of the Weimar Republic to be the basic model for the draft it was formulating. In a "dialectical" fashion typical for Soviet-type communists, the constitution which Stalin had imposed on the USSR in 1936 was simultaneously prescribed as a guideline to be followed.⁴¹

There were many activities designed to prepare the ground for the envisioned German state. Sessions of the German People's Council plenum were organized. A "people's discussion" on the prospective constitution was held by the SED network in the Soviet zone. A similar effort of the KPD in West Germany failed. A Third German People's Congress was convened which then elected a Second German People's Council. Whatever the forms of activity, there was a perfect continuity of organization, personnel, and direction which resulted from the fact that the SED was fully in control of the process.⁴² The East German communists in turn had to accept full Soviet control. Through the SMAG, at least all wordings of some relevance such as, in particular, the successive drafts of the prospective constitution's various parts were submitted to the Foreign Ministry in Moscow and occasionally even to Stalin himself. They elicited very detailed responses from the Soviet side.⁴³ The resulting corrections to rectify texts which had been based on Soviet proposals in the first place, were tantamount to binding instructions.

At an advanced stage of the preparations, also the "anti fascist-democratic" party bloc which had been formed in 1945, was restructured so as to suit the requirements of "anti imperialist" discipline better than the old arrangement which had provided the communist hegemon but with the political weapon that unity must not be violated by other parties' deviations. After the Third German People's Congress of 29 - 30 May 1949, the newly elected Second German People's Council initiated a "broad people's movement". What resulted from

40 Obzor Kynina, chast' III, AVPRF, AOB, 11zh, 71, 20: 608-610; Goroshkova, loc. cit., pp. 73-80.

41 Grotewohl, Otto: *Im Kampf um die einige Deutsche Demokratische Republik. Reden und Aufsätze*, Vol. I: *Auswahl aus den Jahren 1945-1949*. Berlin [East] 1959, pp. 288-294 (statement of 5 December 1948).

42 For details see Obzor Kynina, chast' III, AVPRF, AOB, 11zh, 71, 20: 610-620; G.N. Goroshkova, loc. cit., pp. 81-120.

43 For examples see V. Molotov to I. Stalin, 21 October 1948, AVPRF, 06, 10, 36, 488: 39-41; M. Gribanov to A. Smirnov (head of the Third European Department of the Ministry of Foreign Affairs), 25 January 1949, AVPRF, 082, 36, 187, 40: 1-12; M. Gribanov to A. Vyshinskii (who by then had succeeded Molotov as Foreign Minister), August 1949, AVPRF, 082, 36, 187, 40: 82-83.

this effort was a "National Front of Democratic Germany" which obliged all East German parties to join. The crucial parts of the National Front's platform were provided by the SED leadership. Much space was devoted to polemics against the West which was invariably accused of having split Germany. In an effort to counter alleged Western policies of partition, the National Front had to commit itself to a sustained struggle aiming at the withdrawal of the occupation troops from German soil and at the conclusion of a peace treaty with a united Germany. This clearly reflected the demands raised by the Soviet side vis-à-vis the three Western powers. The National Front also declared that the communist order in East Germany had to be consolidated and strengthened. Prior to publication of the platform, its wordings underwent close Soviet scrutiny so as to ensure that they conformed to Moscow's intent to the last nuance.⁴⁴

The All-German Claim Underlying the East German State

One of the National Front's fundamental claims was the thesis that both the regime and the order of East Germany reflected the political will of the whole German people. For this reason, the founders of the GDR referred to the German People's Council and its preparatory work when they created the East German state on 7 October 1949. Despite the fact that all the decisions which related to the founding act had required approval by the Soviet authorities in every detail,⁴⁵ the GDR was presented to the public as resulting from the will of all Germans and as hence being the German people's only legitimate democratic republic. It was argued that the constitution of the East German state had been worked out by representatives of the German people in both East and West. After the GDR had been proclaimed, the German People's Council was given the status of the East German parliament and adopted the constitution it had worked out. Since this body had allegedly been based on an all-German mandate, also the GDR's constitution was said to be. The fact that the German Council was not legitimized by elections of any kind was ignored. In the official Eastern view, the GDR was the "bulwark of the German people's struggle for the country's unity and for peace".⁴⁶ This claim was voiced again and again.

As the crucial SED representative to appeal to non-communist all-German sentiment, Otto Grotewohl stressed that the German People's Council had to be seen as "the only legitimate representation of the German people". The "bourgeois" forces in West Germany did "not represent the people and its interests".⁴⁷ He added that the constitution provided by the German People's Council had fixed the political fundament on which the future Germany would be built. He also generally claimed all-German legitimation for the German People's

44 Cf. S. Tiul'panov to V. Semënov, 25 March 1949, AVPRF, 0457a, 7, 38, 7: 71-73; *Obzor Kynina, chast' III*, AVPRF, AOB, 11zh, 71, 20: 620-621; Goroshkova, loc. cit., pp. 162-243.

45 See for example W. Ulbricht to V. Semënov, 4 October 1949, AVPRF, 0457a, 7, 38, 9: 89-91; Gen. Chuikov and V. Semënov to A. Gromyko, 6 October 1949, AVPRF, 06, 22a, 10, 138: 5-9; A. Gromyko to I. Stalin, 8 October 1949, AVPRF, 06, 22a, 10, 138: 1; A. Gromyko to I. Stalin, 10 October 1949, AVPRF, 06, 22a, 10, 138: 10-16. Soviet control encompassed, inter alia, the question which East German politicians could be accepted as members of the GDR government.

46 Goroshkova, loc. cit., p. 214. Similarly *Obzor Kynina, chast' III*, AVPRF, AOB, 11zh, 71, 20: 634; Grotewohl, *Im Kampf*, loc. cit., p. 508 (statement of 23 November 1949).

47 *Ibid.*, pp. 263-264 (statement of 22 October 1948). Similarly in retrospect Goroshkova, loc. cit., p. 87.

Council and for the GDR which had been set up by it.⁴⁸ It was for this reason that he deemed it necessary to "develop a political and economic basis for all of Germany which is in conformity with the Potsdam decisions, to eliminate the economic zonal frontiers, to allow for a central government, to democratize Germany, to mobilize its peace economy and to re-develop the initiative of the German people under its own responsibility."⁴⁹

In the Soviet view, the communists' decisive political position and the resulting Soviet-type order in East Germany were indispensable preconditions for the possibility to create a "broad front of struggle for German unity".⁵⁰ This implied that the creation of the GDR was but a stage in the Soviet struggle for Germany which had to continue for a long period of time.⁵¹ On the basis of this perception, Stalin concluded that the "formation of the German democratic peace-loving republic" was a "turning point in the history of Europe". On the fundament thus provided, the "peace-loving Soviet Union" confidently looked forward to having a "peace-loving democratic Germany" at its side - a change of the international configuration which promised to exclude the possibility of new wars in Europe, to put an end to bloodshed in Europe and to prevent further "enslavement" of European peoples by the "world imperialists". The Soviet leader made expressly clear that he envisioned the whole German people to be united with the people of USSR in a common effort as a result of the GDR having been created.⁵²

Simultaneous pursuit of all-German unity and East German separation did not reflect political divergence in Moscow which might be traced back to different "fractions" among Soviet policy-makers. Stalin was ultimately in charge.⁵³ No one could dare to have an opinion of his own and thus to differ with the supreme leader who was ascribed god-like qualities. Equally, the idea that simultaneous all-German campaigning and partitive policy-making might be viewed as self-contradictory, was rejected by Eastern actors. In their portrayal, national unity and assertion of the communist system were not mutually exclusive. The two objectives rather reinforced each other for it was the lesson of German history that the country had a future but on an "anti fascist-democratic" fundament, i.e. along the lines prescribed by the USSR. Thus all-German unity and "implementation of the [1945] Potsdam decisions" (as East German communization was officially termed) had to be simultaneously sought. Since 1947, this argument was blurred with the thesis of the two hostile world camps which were engaged in a relentless struggle against each other. The Western powers were accused of betraying the consensus which had allegedly been reached in Potsdam on a new kind of

48 *Ibid.*, p. 434 (statement of 29 May 1948).

49 *Ibid.*, p. 464 (statement of 26 July 1949).

50 Goroshkova, *loc. cit.*, p. 172. Cf. Grotewohl, *Im Kampf*, *loc. cit.*, pp. 288-294 (statement of 5 December 1948).

51 Goroshkova, *loc. cit.*, 320-321.

52 Stalin's congratulatory telegram at the occasion of the GDR's foundation, 13 October 1949, in: *Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik der Sowjetunion*, Vol. I. Berlin [East] 1957, pp. 238-239.

53 As a rule, the basic policy issues were decided by Stalin alone. The highest decision-making body, the Politburo, met but very rarely and then usually discussed problems of personnel and organization (see Aksënov, Iu. S.: *Apogei Stalinizma. Poslevoennaia piramida vlasti*, in: *Voprosy istorii*, 66 (1990) 11, pp. 100-101). As far as measures of implementing a given policy course were concerned, the respective bureaucracies appear to have enjoyed considerable leeway in submitting proposals to Stalin.

Germany. It was logical in the context of this portrayal that the Germans, irrespective of their ideological affiliations, rallied behind the Eastern side which fought for their country's future.

Among communists, this argument was supplemented by another one. The issue of German unity had to be seen in the light of the ongoing "international class struggle". That is, German unity had to be seen not as an independent purpose but as a dependent objective which had to be subordinated to the supreme purpose of fighting Western "imperialism" and hence promoting the Soviet cause. This ideological tenet implied that maintenance, respectively restoration, of German unity could not be bought from the other side which, after all, was the enemy. The iron law which determined relations in Germany was zero-sum in character: The gains of the one side were the losses of the other - and vice versa. Accordingly, doctrine postulated that success could be achieved only by obeying to the laws of class struggle. There was no way to German unity but through efforts of fighting the West.

Conclusions

Soviet policies relating to Germany in the period of 1947 - 1949 do not indicate willingness to allow for compromise with non-communist political actors. Therefore, it is most unlikely that any kind of negotiated solution on Germany has been sought at any moment with either the Western powers or political forces in West Germany. The Soviet effort was aiming at an alliance with non-communist German nationalism "from below", i.e. in such a fashion that the German "allies" were mobilized, organized, and directed by communist leaders at these leaders' discretion. German longing for unity was to be absorbed into the SED network and to be instrumentalized for the USSR's political purpose. The question arises, of course, whether Stalin and his aides could possibly believe that such a concept would work and bear fruit. As an independent critical observer at the time might have clearly seen, the premises underlying the ideological concept were grossly at variance with political realities in Germany. It is hard to imagine that the lesson of the Berlin Blockade of June 1948 through May 1949 could have been lost on the Soviet decision-makers. A clear indication to this is that Moscow's representatives at the Paris Conference of May - June 1949 were unwilling to accept any arrangement which would permit the Germans any leeway in handling their matters.⁵⁴ On the other hand, however, there is unambiguous archival evidence that the ideological concept according to which advocacy of German unity had to be used but as a tool to promote anti-Western struggle, was operationally underlying Soviet action in Germany.⁵⁵

The obvious contradiction can be plausibly explained if one takes Soviet ideology seriously. That is, the idea that Germany might be politically conquered for both the communist system and the Soviet power sphere by appeals to the Germans' national longing for unity (which was indeed strong at the time), has to be seen as not a pretended but genuine conviction which crucially determined policies. Contrary to reality, Stalin and his aides believed that they had a good chance of overcoming German objections against communism and the

54 For details and sources see Wettig, Gerhard: *Entmilitarisierung und Wiederbewaffnung in Deutschland 1943 - 1955. Internationale Auseinandersetzungen um die Rolle der Deutschen in Europa*. Munich 1967, pp. 255-259 (Schriften des Forschungsinstituts der Deutschen Gesellschaft für Auswärtige Politik. Vol. 25).

55 S. Tiul'panov to V. Semënov, 29 July 1949, AVPRF, 0457a, 7, 39, 10: 74.

USSR by promising them national unification. This must have been the feeling in Moscow at least when the German People's Movement was initiated in fall 1947. It is plausible to assume that the confident expectation of success was shattered by subsequent events which demonstrated that the vast majority of the Germans outside the comparatively small communist spectrum did not follow the national slogans but were deterred by the pro-Soviet overtones. If this hypothesis were accurate, the Kremlin would have understood at some point of time that it could not hope to be successful for the time being. This would then have been the moment when the all-German claim would have become simply a rationale for justifying creation of a communist GDR. The emphasis with which the all-German mission of the East German separate state was formulated, to be sure, points to the Soviet politicians' assessment that the chance of extending their power to West Germany by means of reunification appeals was seen to continue, if in the long run.

The hypothesis outlined here is supported by a number of observations in Soviet archival documents. Soviet assessments of the moods prevailing among Germans tend to be highly overoptimistic when policy-makers at higher levels vent their opinions on the situation in general. They are likely to reflect better the negative attitudes prevalent among the Germans when Soviet observers at lower levels report their judgement on specifics. Also, recurring events which demonstrate the Germans' true feeling, tended to impress the Soviet side with some feeling that previous expectations had become more or less illusory. But - all these caveats were insufficient to shatter the original general conviction that the fixed policy line was promising in principle. Expectations may have been frustrated at the given moment and perhaps also for some time to come, but the opportunity was always seen to arise necessarily again at some later date. In retrospect, this can be viewed but as a fundamental misperception which was not based on any real world indicator. The historian can only speculate about the reason for this. One may find an explanation in psychological insights which point to the near-impossibility of cognitive dissonance. Accordingly, a Soviet policy-maker would have been almost unable to perceive the world in terms which deviated from the images projected by his ideology. The fact that the ideological guidelines had been prescribed by god-like Stalin, may have increased the inclination to allow for only those perceptions to be held which appeared justified by the supreme leader's superhuman wisdom.