German Ideas and the "New Thinking"

Eberhard Schulz

Foreign policies are always a reaction to challenges coming from the outside world. This also applies to the Soviet Union, so that official Soviet ideology has never been as rigid as has often been considered by Western observers, and the developments of Soviet foreign policy have differed considerably from theorists' earlier assumptions. The Soviet Union was forced to cooperate with the "imperialistic" powers for the first time during the anti-Hitler coalition of World War II. And after the war, effective consequences derived primarily from the long SALT negotiations in the 1970s, negotiations which led to a thorough process of "learning" in the Soviet participants.[1]

In contradiction to this, the influences coming from the allied Communist parties were quite limited. Antonio Gramsci's ideas and later those of Palmiro Togliatti and other reformist and Eurocommunist thinkers initially found only scarce influence on Soviet ways of thinking. The doctrines of the Yugoslav Josip Broz Tito were made taboo as heretical deviations from the right doctrine, while the foreign policies of other Communist governments, namely of the German Democratic Republic, adhered strictly to the Soviet doctrine.

The latter country was considered by the Soviets as a political continuation of the formerly hostile German state, and was already in a highly exposed position from a geographical point of view. For more than three decades, there was no cause for doubt concerning the ideological submission of the foreign

policies of the German Democratic Republic. But circumstances have subsequently changed with time.

Honecker on his own

By the end of the 1970s, the Soviet Union under Leonid Brezhnev had forfeited its capacity for political leadership. Its policies of détente with the West had been frustrated by the strain of excessive armament. The invasion of Afghanistan had led the Soviets into complete isolation, and there were even rumours of an acute danger of war. This happened just at a time when the East European states were all heavily indebted and no longer able to cope with their own economic problems. After the summer of 1980, with an endless chain of strikes paralysing the Polish government, Erich Honecker saw no other way out than to close (once again) the borders with his Eastern neighbour, borders which had been opened only as recently as 1972. In his isolation, Honecker tried to enhance the SED's authority by capitalising on the country's widespread fear of a new war, and by building new rhetorical bridges towards the West.

He was favoured in this by diverse specific circumstances: first of all, the decline of Eurocommunism and the general crisis of the leftist parties of West Europe and, more specifically still, the change of the government in Bonn in October 1982.

Having contacts with a West German government headed by the CDU instead of the SPD gave no reason to suspect Honecker of being tempted to adopt an ideologically inadmissible "social democratic" position. It thus soon became evident that Federal Chancellor Helmut Kohl had larger margins of flexibility for *Ostpolitik* than his predecessor, also because there was no domestic opposition to challenge him. The swift succession of solemn funerals—Tito in 1980, Brezhnev in 1982, Andropov and Indira Gandhi in 1984, Chernenko and Palme in 1985—offered opportunities for a new "funeral diplomacy" and for many contacts with Western politicians, especially from the Federal Republic. Finally, in 1983, Honecker was able to pay his first state visit to Italy, an important Western European country.

As far as the Soviet leadership was concerned, Honecker knew that even Andropov would have gladly put an end to the Afghanistan adventure. He could also rely on the fact that the Politburo was unlikely to reach a unanimous

decision with regard to policies towards the West. While Gromyko's attitude strongly opposed the US, obviously others favoured more flexibility.[2]

In this situation, then, Honecker declared in April 1983 that the need of the moment called for realisation of the sincere desire of all political and moral authorities—regardless of their ideological positions and religious faiths—for cooperation, for the overcoming of class barriers, for the resolution of any separation, in order to safeguard peoples against the disaster of a nuclear war.[3] The defence of peace as mankind's supreme treasure had become the pre-eminent, common and uniting interest.

Six months later, on October 5, 1983—with the INF discussions in full swing in the Federal Republic—Honecker called for a "coalition of common sense",[4] and it was obvious that this coalition was to go beyond the limits of the Warsaw Pact. On November 25—two days after the Soviets had left the Geneva conference table—Honecker even asked for "damage limitation" on the occasion of the seventh session of the SED Central Committee.[5]

Three months later, on February 13, 1984, he made use of Andropov's state funeral to recommend dialogue with the Federal Republic[6] and in doing so, he used a word that had already been employed by Mikhail Gorbachev in April 1983 (i.e. while Andropov was still alive), on the occasion of an address delivered on Lenin's birthday.[7] However, Gorbachev's concept of "constructive dialogue" had emerged rather unexpectedly at the end of a remarkably tough speech on relations with the West. At that time, the GDR's efforts to create a link with the West were not isolated within the Eastern camp, Hungary being its most important ally. In 1984, the East German Premier Willi Stoph came back from Budapest, where he had just paid a visit to his Hungarian colleague, and declared that the fair security interests of all sides were to be taken into consideration.[8] This was, strictly speaking, a violation of the principle of "partiality" in international relations. Kurt Hager ventured even further, although using a very vague formula, when he began with the premise: "If one is to speak of an association of common responsibility or security partnership...". These were already clearly social-democratic terms.[9]

Max Schmidt, Head of the East Berlin Institute for International Politics and Economics, availing himself of the occasion of the thirteenth World Congress of the International Society of Political Sciences in Paris in 1985, held a lecture on Honecker's coalition of common sense.[10] The coalition of common sense,

said Schmidt, is "the expression of the cognition matured in the different partners that, above and beyond classes, above their antagonisms and rivalry, there is an absolute blessing deserving cooperation—peace, as a basic principle of the relations between the nations and as such to be set as a goal".

Schmidt made a clever reference to the pastoral letter of May 3, 1983, of the American Catholic Episcopal Conference on "War and Peace" and continued boldly: "It is not a question of getting any specific interest in classes and states accepted, but only and exclusively of guaranteeing political conditions for human survival". Schmidt classed the phrase, "the dominating principle between the states shall be the principle of common security", as part of the mutual interpretation of the coalition of common sense. This was a reference to the report of the Palme commission, and he said in an outspoken way: "Common security is a guideline underlying the idea and of the politics of peaceful coexistence. The social-democratic concept of security partnership is based on the same principle".

Up to now, official Soviet comments have only seldom referred to concepts such as "common security" or "security partnership". For a long time Moscow has preferred formulations which maintain a little more distance from the "imperialist" countries. But this would change if Nikiforov's formulation of non-antagonistic relations between capitalist and socialist states were to be accepted.[11] Gorbachev's definition of the "party of peace" within the imperialist countries points in the same direction, and takes up an idea expressed in the German Democratic Republic as early as in 1985.

At that time two GDR authors had established the thesis that the struggle for peace was not fought against capitalism (imperialism) as a social formation, but rather against "the most aggressive parts of imperialism".[12] Another GDR political scientist had mentioned a process of differentiation and different nuances in the capitalist system and in the single capitalist countries.[13] Reflections of this kind must also have been underlying the words quoted by Gorbachev.

With the exception of Hungary, there was no other country of the Warsaw Pact with as many theoretical foreign policy games as the German Democratic Republic, and the above mentioned Max Schmidt and some of his assistants were among the most productive brains. They again quoted the concept of "active peaceful coexistence"[14] introduced into the discussion two years earlier by the Russian Fedor Burlatzkiy,[15] even refining it somewhat into "cooperative peaceful coexistence", and subsequently discovering "cooperative points of common security", "security beyond systems" and "the positive peace".[14] The latter term comes from the Western political and scientific discussion of the late 1960s and had its important role with Johan Galtung. While, so far, most of these creations of 1986-1988 have not been admitted into the Soviet vocabulary, Max Schmidt's idea of "the world as a united house" (under the influence of Brezhnev's and Gorbachev's "Common European House")[16] was accepted in an article in Pravda.[17] Gorbachev himself still preferred the metaphor of the world sitting in a single boat.

Offering peace

Although GDR politicians and scholars have made tremendous efforts for the further evolution of the general ideology of Marxism-Leninism, they have always been extremely cautious in the discussion of military problems. Yet there have been some who deserve consideration. Georg Gresnick, Schmidt's

deputy, has invented the theory that security based on military equality (thus concealing the same insecurity for both sides) is getting more and more problematic because of the continuation of the arms race.[18] This approach has been accepted only by a few Soviet authors[19] and, as a rule, is not accepted in the West, although there are some points that the principle of equality, applied to a great number of different criteria, continues to give new nourishment to the armaments race.

A further important definition was made by Heinz Kessler, minister of defence of the GDR who, in a very carefully worded essay, has dealt with the problem of justifying East German armament efforts, in spite of the fact that in the Warsaw Pact the principle of intimidation is considered as an aggressive NATO idea and is generally rejected. Kessler's Soviet colleagues, beginning with Defence Minister Yazov, have never been disturbed by the contradiction evident in the fact that while on the one hand, they were condemning intimidation, they were on the other hand claiming the capability of "imparting a crushing defeat to a potential aggressor" of the Warsaw Pact.[20] Kessler dealt with his tasks in a more elegant way: he assigned to the Warsaw Pact armies the "function of preserving, even offering, peace".[21]

The Warsaw Pact always gave a rather marginal consideration to all concrete political disarmament suggestions presented by the GDR. Like Poland, the CSSR and Bulgaria (in most cases in agreement with Poland and the CSSR), the GDR routinely recommended regional agreements (on the removal of nuclear weapons, chemical weapons and heavy conventional offensive arms), while the Soviet Union was giving open preference to global or, at least, pan-European solutions. While the relevant policies of Poland and the CSSR could be explained by their local perceptions of national interests, in the case of the East German leadership the question was whether it really believed in the feasability of its proposals, or whether it was simply keen on cheap propagandistic effects.

Research into the reasons for the various efforts of GDR politicians and authors (in their statements on the relations between "socialist" and "capitalist" countries) to give a more obliging interpretation of the hitherto confrontational ideology of Marxism-Leninism cannot overlook the self-interest of the GDR leadership. After the downfall of Poland's Gierek, Honecker knew that he could hardly count on Soviet intervention in the event of an internal crisis that would upset his leadership, or in case the call for a "fresh face" happened to

come from within the SED. He therefore did not hesitate to try to guarantee his own leadership through means similar to those adopted by Alexander Dubcek in 1968, i.e. trying to secure the consensus of the majority of the population. As there was a diffused fear in the GDR that the militaristic policies of the Soviet Union might lead to a war, he recommended himself to the people of the GDR by a highly visible policy of appeasement to the West and, in particular, to the Federal Republic.

Honecker was of course aware of the fact that Moscow's anger could be deadly for him if his policies compromised ideology. The interplay between Honecker's statements and the theoretical argumentation of political scientists such as Max Schmidt gives the impression of a close coordination; this may be due to the fact that in that sense Honecker had deliberately entrusted them with a specific task.

However, these scholars were sufficiently experienced and careful to base themselves on earlier statements of their Soviet colleagues, such as Fedor Burlatzkiy, Anatoly Gromyko and Lev Lomeyko; it is true that these statements did not arouse a particular attention in the Soviet Union, but neither were they openly condemned. Honecker had the good luck that Chernenko's successor in Moscow was Gorbachev and that the latter's less dogmatic approach to foreign affairs became predominant.

The fact that in 1987 the ideological innovators in the SED were, once again, left behind by Moscow may be due to two different reasons: first of all, Gorbachev was obviously less impressed by the progressive ideas coming from the GDR than by the far more pragmatic ones from the German Federal

Eberhard Schulz, a professor at Bonn University, has been Deputy Director of the Research Institute of the German Society for Foreign Affairs since 1966. Dr. Schulz is a commentator for various radio stations throughout West Germany, and the author of *Die Deutsche Nation in Europa*, Europa Union Verlag, 1982.

Republic, from the Social Democrats in particular. Secondly, there was no *perestroika* in the GDR. By the end of 1987, it had become clear that Honecker's efforts not to pay any attention to the internal political changes in the Soviet Union were a blunder; although he had granted the East German population a greater degree of communication with the Federal Republic, he had maintained within the GDR the "closed system" and hypocritical propaganda. At the turn of that year, Honecker had to intensify his drastic repression against protesting adolescents. Thus, the effort to make Honecker appear the protagonist of a strategy of peace was made less credible by the intensification of the domestic dictatorship and by his lagging behind the Soviets in their opening to the West. The only hope left to the inhabitants of the GDR was the possibility of a change of power in the not-too distant future.

It is, however, remarkable that in 1988 the GDR started signalling its readiness for appeasement concerning a point always considered extremely delicate by the Federal Republic: the Berlin question. Even though the Berlin Senate was officially criticised, the idea of including West Berlin as "equally entitled" to dialogue[22] was a positive sign.

It is certain that the Soviet Union also sent out some friendly signals regarding Berlin on the eve of Kohl's visit, but the German Democratic Republic—quoting, for the first time in many long years, the unabridged and genuine formula of the "full application of and strict adherence to" the Berlin Agreement—placed itself at the forefront of the struggle for détente. The same trend featured in the request that the West Berlin Senate should utilise the advantages of the city's location for the purpose of developing the economic relations with the Socialist countries.[23]

Regarding the relationship between the Soviet Union and the GDR, the problem of Berlin has always been somewhat ticklish; however, at that time there appeared to be a good deal of agreement.

This short period during which the GDR could play its own role in European policies, with only limited influence from Big Brother's foreign policy, was soon over. But things in the GDR were not merely the same as they had been before. After the contribution made by the GDR itself, Gorbachev has inaugurated a new season in East-West relations in which the GDR has had to forgo the previous hothouse effect of its isolation and has had to cope with the rough winds of sharper competition.

Although the Soviet Union has no intention of giving up the German Democratic Republic, its present security policy is giving a clear priority to appeasement with the West, first of all with the US, but also with the Federal Republic, rather than worrying about its Eastern and Central European bulwark. Similarly as far as the commercial partnership is concerned, in the years to come the German Democratic Republic may have to feel more clearly the competition of the Federal Republic.

The devilish league

Considering the history of the East-West conflict, one five year period has to be clearly distinguished from any other stage: the first half of the 1970s. This has been the only moment in time when both of the Western powers with the most important views on *Ostpolitik*—the US, wishing to disengage from Vietnam, and the German Federal Republic—were available for détente with the Communist countries. There was a short time when the persistent courtship of Moscow and Peking by these two powers might have led to a *modus vivendi*, in spite of the differences of their systems and interests. This might have really happened, had the Soviet leadership had the strength and the good judgement to decide on a drastic limitation of its excessive armaments programme.

However, independently of what might have been—and was not—on a world scale, the contacts established at that time between the German SPD and the Communist parties in power in the Eastern bloc, were not interrupted when the climate changed, and some Social Democratic politicians—especially Willy Brandt and Egon Bahr—have, since that time, enjoyed the personal trust of Moscow and East Berlin. This was supplemented by the fact that Willy Brandt, as president of the Socialist International, has exercised his worldwide influence to help ease tension in East-West relations.

The so-called "Palme Commission" also had a very special role in the appeasement efforts between East and West Europe. Bahr reports that Olof Palme, then Sweden's Premier and Chairman of the Social Democratic party, asked him in December 1980 to provide some fresh thinking on the concept of security in the nuclear age.[24] Bahr then came up with the concept of "common security", a concept that was adopted in 1982 by the Palme Commission, in which the Soviet Union was represented by Georgiy Arbatov, Director of the US and Canada Institute of the USSR Academy of Science.

Bahr's idea that, because of the fact that in a nuclear war neither side could be the winner, the enemy has to be accepted as a partner, was adopted by the Palme Commission.[25] However, some Soviet authors were hesitant in following Bahr that far.[26] Overcoming the ideological gap between East and West was not so easy, after all; and because of these opinions Bahr himself was severely attacked in the West. (Any German making statements of this kind would soon be suspected, and by both sides, of wanting to withdraw from the "community of values", though no one took offence when Mitterand presented himself as a "friend" of the Soviet Union, when he spoke of a "countervailing axis" between Paris and Moscow, or when he thanked the Soviet Union for its having "contributed to our freedom".[27] And nobody was amazed when the meeting among Reagan, Bush and Gorbachev, scheduled for December 7, 1988, was qualified as "cordial" by the White House speaker.[28]

Not only were the above statements considered as sensational in the West as in the East; at this point, both sides were confronted with the crucial problem: can a West German Social Democrat treat as an equally entitled partner the representative of a Communist dictatorship? Can an East German socialist recognise as such a West German revisionist (in the double sense of being ideologically deviated and still believing in the continuity of the German Reich)? The genuinely amazing fact was that representatives of the Commission on Basic Values of the German Social Democratic Party and those of the Academy of Social Sciences of the SED's Central Committee were able to issue a joint statement on the topic: "The dispute of ideologies and common security".[29] Both parties have had discussions on the subject since 1984, but preparation started as early as in 1981.

In the meantime, the media of the GDR as well as those of the Soviet Union, have revoked and toned down to objective discussion their attacks on the Socialist International as a whole, and specifically, on the German Social Democratic Party. In Moscow, Gorbachev himself received a delegation of this once so "devilish" league, and the Communist Party of the Soviet Union has given up its pretense of being the "sole representative" of the working class. By then, Gorbachev had also received a delegation of the International Federation of Free Trade-Unions, a worldwide organisation of unions of Western orientation.

Initially, the Communist Party of the Soviet Union was more reticent about taking over social democratic formulae than was the SED; on the other hand,

the former was better able than the latter to deal with ideological contacts of this kind. Certainly there has been, and still is, lively discussion within the Soviet Union on Gorbachev's reform course: whether aimed at cleansing socialism of Stalinist adulterations or whether leading the Soviet Union back into capitalism. In any case, the reproach that "reformism is the final result of the reform course" has been rare. This is all the more remarkable as Gorbachev had openly distanced himself from the Stalinist assertion that socialism was and is the real democracy. An influential Soviet ideologue has gone as far as raising with the Social Democrats the question of common defence against the contemporary "neo-conservative" wave.[30]

The joint declaration with the SPD caused sharp discussion inside the SED, mostly in relation to two specific points: the thesis that "both systems have to consider each other as being capable of peace" was bitterly opposed by orthodox SED ideologues. Some leading officials tried to draw up some formula of compromise or explanation, but dissociated again from the joint explanation.[31] They did not go back to the starting point of confrontation, but resorted to Gorbachev's compromise formula on the "party of peace".[32]

No ideology, no peace

Gretchen Binus, editor-in-chief of *IPW-Berichte*, the journal of the East Berlin Institute of Politics and Economics, admitted during a conference organised by the IPW that imperialism is not necessarily aggressive. She spoke of a "basic peaceableness" and mentioned the differences existing between the single imperialistic countries. Horst Heininger thought that the idea that socialism ought to impose the peaceableness of imperialism from the outside was a simplification, but that socialist policy was sound support for the development of an active readiness for peace within imperialism. Another participant warned against inclusion of any big industrial group in the military industry.[33] All this points to a kind of discomfort with the traditional SED propaganda. On the other hand, the usually rather flexible Otto Reinhold could not help making the cynical observation that "specifically any citizen of the GDR" could see that the "struggle for disarmament and détente is connected to an aggravation of the ideological dispute".[34] Is there anyone who is not reminded of Stalin's sinister words on "the aggravation of the class conflict"?

The SED's second sore point refers to the "interference in home affairs" for which the West has been repeatedly reproached. The joint declaration

comments: "The ideological dispute shall be carried out in such a way as to exclude the interference in home affairs by other states". This phrase was quoted verbatim by a diligent SED dogmatist and suggests that, as a consequence, there could be no possibility of criticism of the internal affairs of the German Democratic Republic. He forgot, however, to quote the phrase following directly after the one mentioned above: "Criticism, even when sharp, shall not be rejected as 'interference in domestic affairs' by the other side".[35]

The SED did not feel strong enough to get away with tricks like this, at least not for the time being. On the contrary, just at the time when the journal of the Moscow Institute of World Economics and International Relations (*MEMO*) affirmed existing discrepancies notwithstanding the common traits of Communists and Social Democrats, the journal of its partner institute in East Berlin published a wildly slanderous article against the German Social Democratic party.[36] Eric Hahn, the leading SED philosopher, argued in a two hundred-page book that the struggle for the safeguarding of world peace could not exist without ideologies.[37] Being a good German, he treated the problems in an "in principle" way. It is true that his "dance on eggs" is understandable, in view of the internal problems that the SED is faced with, but there is also the refreshingly simple confession of Lomeyko, the Soviet special envoy, after his visit to "Haus Risse": "We are on the look out". With all their difference in opinions, Germans and Russians have no choice but to consider themselves "partners", or even "friends".[38] He gave voice to his inner conflict in the paradoxical title of his essay: "Are we unseparable enemies or irreconcilable friends?"

Other ideological influences from the Federal Republic entered the Soviet Union by way of the Pugwash Movement. Since the early 1970s, alternative defence strategies have regularly been discussed within the Federal Republic. A first attempt in the limitation of conventional defence was made on the occasion of the thirty-third yearly Pugwash convention in Venice and was discussed, for the first time, with East Europeans. A Pugwash seminar on the topic of "Conventional Forces in Europe" was conducted by Professor A. Boserup from Denmark and by Dr. Albrecht A.C. von Muller from Eastern Germany, and has led to the formation of an East-West research team. Since 1984, it has worked out various detailed suggestions. Four Western scientists prepared a position paper on this topic, at the request of the Soviet leadership which was acknowledged on November 11, 1987, in a personal letter from Secretary General Mikhail Gorbachev to Albrecht von Muller.[39]

There is reason to presume that some of the terms used with increasing frequency since 1987 by the representatives of the Soviet Union and the Warsaw Pact countries, such as "reasonable sufficiency", are a Soviet response to the above Western reflections. Also, the concept of "sufficiency" is anything but new. By the end of the 1960s, the principle of "sufficiency" for defence planning had been vividly discussed in the United States. This example reveals a special problem of East-West relations: ideas appearing plausible to one side at a given time may be accepted by the other only after having been discarded for quite some time by their authors. An understanding can be reached, however, if ideas are shared (by chance) at the same time.

The examples presented may lead to the conclusion that the Soviet Union takes up Western ideas only when they come from opposition forces and are suitable for use as a lever to spread dissent in the Western camp. The fact that the Soviet Union exploits disagreements in the West is not very surprising and can

hardly be considered unlawful nor even labelled as a "new way of thinking". By now, GDR and Soviet publications contain definitions commonly adopted by both the Federal Government and the Bonn government coalition. For instance, in at least eight passages in his book *Perestroika,* Gorbachev uses terms such as "freedom of self-development" or "the right to self-determination of each nation with regard to its social development".[40]

However, what is more important than words is that the Soviet leadership has come to appreciate the practical *Ostpolitik* of Kohl's government. Even though individual members of the Politburo, probably including the late Gromyko, might still mistrust—or have mistrusted—the motivation behind Bonn's policies, the Federal Republic's commitment to détente policies within the Atlantic Alliance is no longer seriously being doubted. Moscow has acknowledged the Federal Chancellor's decision to renounce the Pershing A-1 missiles with a kind of amazed reverence.[41] Private or government-guaranteed loans to East and Central European countries that Pravda was still violently opposing as late as August 1984[42] were valued positively, even though the German Federal Government linked them to various humanitarian concessions.

The "coalition of common sense"

As was to be expected, recent changes in the political situation of the Soviet Union have had a great echo in West Germany. Indeed, any development or problem in the East inevitably concerns Bonn much more than its allies, for the obvious reason that the division of Europe puts it geographically directly on the boundary between the two military alliances. But this also means that positive changes within the Soviet Union are welcomed with special satisfaction by both the population and the government of the Federal Republic. As has been seen above, however, it can be assumed that to a certain extent, German influences from both of the two German states have promoted changes in Soviet policies.

The basic idea behind West German foreign policy, i.e. that different political systems, or even essentially conflicting interests, do not make cooperation impossible in other fields of common or parallel concern, has by now permeated the official policy of the German Democratic Republic as well as that of the Soviet Union. Furthermore, neither of the Geman states any longer fears discreet and pragmatic collaboration over humanitarian questions in both parts of Germany, even if this sometimes makes the respective ally extremely

nervous. This also applies to the regular consultations of their Foreign Ministries about questions as delicate as disarmament, where German competence is strictly limited on either side. It is obvious that this type of policy can be kept up only because it does not call into question the basic prerequisite of stability in Europe, namely the absolute loyalty of both of the German states to their respective alliances.

This leads to the peculiar fact that influences coming from both Germanies have facilitated the evolution of Soviet thinking.

The *raison d'etre* of the GDR and Erich Honecker's personal ambitions have both suggested a "coalition of common sense". Similarly, the pragmatic approach that characterised the Schmidt-Genscher administration as well as the Kohl-Genscher government has been determined by the priority given by both of them to the maintenance of peace and to interests of the people in the two parts of Germany.[43] And it could be pointed out, without diminishing either the Soviet scholars' and politicians' courage and ability in revising their attitudes or the ideological influences coming from other parts of the world, that this change in approach of the two German leaderships started at a time when the official Soviet ideology had not yet openly questioned Stalin's orthodoxy. This parallel evolution does not simply mean a similarity of attitudes due to the objective situations of the two German governments when presenting their concrete problems in Moscow. Rather, the pragmatism of the two German leaderships has strongly influenced the domestic developments of the Soviet ruling group, and this at a stage when radical changes are probably in the offing.

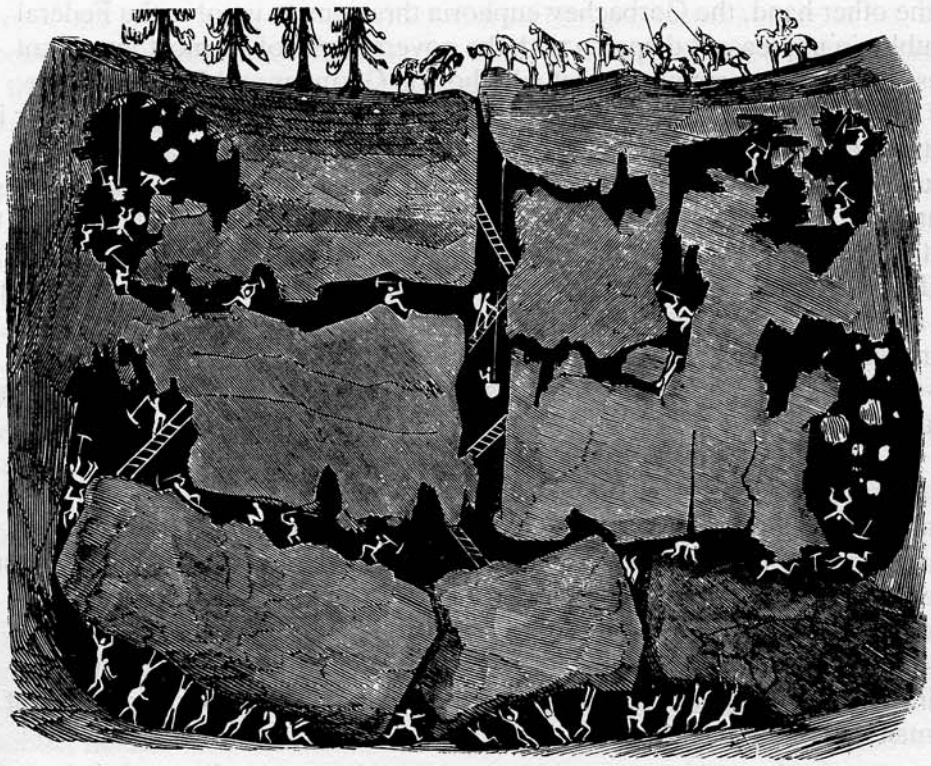
From Moscow's point of view, the "coalition of common sense" is not only a German-German combination, but also concerns East-West relations at the level of the Soviet Union's grand strategy towards its American counterpart. It requires, first of all, a pragmatic agreement between "socialism" and "imperialism", as well as a coinvergence of orthodox Communists and Social Democrat "revisionists", thus shaking the very basis of Stalinist ideology. This means interference in the discussion on the fundamental principles of the regime, that is, the essence of "socialism" and the legitimacy of the Communist monopoly of power, a discussion which is at present being carried on in the Soviet Union with typical Russian passion. The political meaning of the "coalition of common sense" extends therefore beyond the problems of the day and reveals its full significance only in a longer-term perspective.

There is, finally, a specific military aspect that has to be pointed out. Since the end of World War II, the Soviet Union has imitated the American model to a quite amazing extent: from technological evolution and the structure of the armed forces, up to military doctrine and various aspects of foreign policy. It was therefore more than unexpected that a concept such as "structural non-aggression" should have become a topic of serious discussion in Moscow. And more so because it was, at least at first sight, incompatible with the character of a great power. Also, in this case as in other aspects of Soviet attitudes, the pressure of the catastrophic economic situation has had its influence. But would it be too far fetched to suggest that Gorbachev could hardly have approached ideas as radical as this, if he had not fully trusted the sincerity of the German Social Democrats, the most energetic advocates of that concept? The world is watching with great interest, mixed with scepticism and expectation, to see to what extent these fundamental changes will finally enter the Soviet Union's actual political praxis.

Allies and partners

Despite the fact that the Federal Republic (under Helmut Schmidt as well as under his successor Helmut Kohl) behaved, even after the crisis of détente at the end of the 1970s, as though it were committed more than any other Western country to the continuation of dialogue with the East, the Soviets persisted in their distrustful, even hostile, defensive attitude against Federal Germany. Western rationality may hardly be able to understand the causes of this strange phenomenon, particularly as it was the Federal Republic to be most directly threatened by the massive armament build-up during Brezhnev's time. It may be possible that the Soviets misunderstood the accidental coincidence of later medium-range weapon armaments on German territory with the enhanced *Deutschlandpolitik* rhetoric of Kohl's new goverment to be the backbone of its actual political programme. It may even be that the Soviet leaders felt seriously threatened by the 1983 NATO manoeuvres, as asserted by a KGB deserter.[44] The persisting unrest in Poland and the signs of weakness in the GDR might also have played their role. In any case, there had been an odd, persistent state of suspense within the bilateral relationship until October 1988, when Kohl and Gorbachev gave an eloquent start to the oft-announced "turning of new page" in the Moscow-Bonn relationship.

The Moscow leadership may not have been fully aware that taking such a step was not without creating some problems for the Federal Chancellor.



Moles under the USSR.

It is true that there was—before Kohl's visit to Moscow, as well as at the time of Gorbachev's visit to Bonn—tremendous euphoria, as though decisive changes were to be expected. It is also true that, as far as home affairs were concerned, the Chancellor may have welcomed these great expectations, more so as demoscopic polls had revealed that, at the time, the government coalition was at a low in public opinion support. There was little hope, however, that the euphoria would introduce lasting changes. The Federal Republic could not expect real, tangible advantages as a consequence of the numerous agreements signed in Moscow. After all, economic relations had always gone on, as far as was compatible with circumstantial conditions, even through periods of increased tension. The governments' assiduous promotion of hopes for agreements on further steps in disarmament (after the INF agreement) was quite unrealistic.

On the other hand, the Gorbachev euphoria threatens to involve the Federal Republic in unpleasant disputes with the governments of its most important allies. If the stereotype of the mutually hostile Germans and Russians were now to be wiped out and if everyone were to understand not only that a war in Central Europe would be politically senseless, but also that, in a climate of mutual trust, military conflict—even by error—is most unlikely, could the Germans still be persuaded that they had to adhere over their dead bodies to the military alliance? The potential rift within the alliance, and within Germany itself, was thus building up. However, Kohl and Gorbachev were aware of this risk and avoided any over-emphatic display of friendship. The communiqué clearly stated that the settlement both parties were looking for included the non-disturbance of third party interests and, in this connexion, spoke explicitly of "allies and partners".

It was quite evident that the Soviets wished to save part of the not over-abundant substance of possible agreements for Gorbachev's countervisit in Bonn. The "common political document" published on that occasion could still have caused quite a headache for the Federal Chancellor, especially on the delicate issue of German unity. As compensation, he was thus granted in Moscow a series of concessions he was particularly interested in, namely a distinct improvement of their human rights policy towards Soviet citizens of German nationality.[45]

Across the Elbe

The improvement in Moscow-Bonn relations once again made obvious the tensions existing in the relations between the Soviet Union and the German Democratic Republic. In his interview with the West German *Spiegel*, Gorbachev, who cannot quickly forget personal offences, mentioned casually that *perestroika* is not just a housepainting and upholstering task—a clear reference to Kurt Hager's boorish remark.[46] Gorbachev had Honecker informed about the results of Kohl's visit by Bondarenko, the competent official of the Foreign Ministry. Even though, for that purpose, Bondarenko had been appointed his "proxy", the choice of a subaltern official for such a delicate task was a slap in the face for Honecker. The latter had his revenge. He forbade the Russian magazine *Sputnik* in the GDR, and cancelled diverse Soviet theatrical performances in such a provocative manner that some worried East European observers raised the question as to whether Honecker might have seen some omen indicating Gorbachev's impending downfall.

There is one issue, however, on which Gorbachev and Honecker are in full agreement: their attitude to West Berlin. Both of them have signalled to Bonn that they are absolutely ready to discuss improvements on practical points, provided they do not go against the Statute.[47] They left no doubt that they considered a part of the requests made by the Federal Republic and the Senate of Berlin to be a clear violation of the Statute.

In his *Spiegel* interview Gorbachev warned against "acting as the strong man" but then, answering a relevant question, he said that Europe's architecture was not complete without an open door to Berlin.[48] The new head of the International Department of the Central Committee, Valentin Falin, even declared that the "Four-Power Agreement shall be fully applied and strictly adhered to".[49] These two concepts have their origin in Bonn, but more humbly, in inverted sequence. The Soviets have never mentioned the full application in a positive sense, but rather have the item translated, if at all, as "fully complied with" (in the sense of a contractual condition).

Never has there been, since the time of the Four Power Agreement, such an accumulation of references to readiness for discussion of the Berlin problem. However, the conditions connected to this cannot be overlooked. The Soviet Union will never agree to West Berlin's full incorporation into the Federal Republic; neither will the three Western Powers. Whoever wants to improve Berlin's position will have to look for ways and means without skirting the fundamental interests of the Four Powers, i.e. the winners' rights. This demonstrates that the Berlin problem is still a part of the German question and, therefore, not a purely German, but a European problem.

Wherever the "new political way of thinking" may lead, it shows clearly that the traditional political structures of Europe are changing within the course of the history. The form of East-West conflict which Europeans have been used to since the end of World War II will no longer dominate future European politics. It is time, therefore, to become aware of the new forces emerging, so that eventual new tasks may not be missed. Let us hope, at the same time, that the Germans will not allow themselves to be seduced into chasing phantoms—and thus to risk losing again what they conquered after 1945 (in the Western part of the country, at least) for the first time in their history: freedom.

References

[1] - Some mistaken interpretations of developments within the Soviet Union are based less on prejudice than on methodological shortcomings. According to Lenin's ideology, purpose sanctified nearly any means. At that time, the party was considered infallible and whatever was done in its name was deemed positive. Where errors and criminal offences could not be denied, they were attributed not to the party nor to the state but to individuals. Criticism and self-criticism were intended only for individuals and for the sole purpose of exculpating the acting leadership. Considering the actual events in the Soviet Union in the light of that ideology, anything might be explained as being tactics or rather, as being disinformation. However, the actual changes within the Soviet Union can be understood only by going beyond purely ideological considerations. In doing so, special attention must be paid to those of the Soviet State's actions which clearly deviate from former attitudes. Firstly, one should take into consideration that Gorbachev's *perestroika* is consciously creating problems. He could have avoided these by choosing purely opportunistic premises. Any analysis which does not fully grasp the entire spectrum necessarily misses its scientific aim.

[2] - For a synopsis of the disputes between the GDR and the Soviet Union, cf. Schulz, Eberhard and Danylow, Peter: *Bewegung in der deutschen Frage?*; Bonn, 2nd edition, 1985.

[3] - Quoted in Bruns, Wilhelm: "What is new in the 'new thinking' of the GDR? The policy of peace and security is at the centre"; see *Aus politik und Zeitgeschichte*, v. 13, 1987, p. 5, with note 11.

[4] - Letter to Federal Chancellor Helmut Kohl (*Neues Deutschland*, hereafter *ND* , October 1, 1983).

[5] - *ND*, November 26, 1983.

[6] - Cf. Oldenburg, Fred: "Is the SED going its own way within the Soviet empire?" in *Deutschland Archiv*, 5, 1984, p.491.

[7] - *Pravda*, April 23, 1984.

[8] - *ND*, March 23, 1984.

[9] - *ND*, May 25, 1984.

[10] - Revised version printed in *Sicherheit und Frieden*, 4/1985, p. 219.

[11] - A.V. Nikiforov, "Mirnoe sosuscestvovanie i novoe myslenie", in *SSA*, 12/1987, p. 3. Nikiforov is editor-in-chief of this important journal.

[12] - Gorbachev, in *Pravda*, February 19, 1988; Berg, Frank and Reisig, Rolf: "For the dialectics of peace, security and social progress in our time", in *Deutsche Zeitschrift für Philosophie*, October 1985, p. 865 . Quoted in Bruns (endnote 3).

[13] - Maier, Lutz. quoted in ibid. p. 10.

[14] - Notwendigkeit und Erfordernisse umfassender internationaler Sicherheit, in: *IPW-Berichte*, 7/1987, p.1. This reference on p. 5. Amusingly enough, the concept of "active peaceful coexistence" belongs to Titoist doctrine. Tito himself used it in a speech in Bandung on December 25, 1958, cf. Josip Broz Tito, *Ausgewahlte Reden und Schriften 1928-1978*, vol. III, Stuttgart 1984, p. 359). My thanks to Peter Danylov for having drawn my attention to this.

15 - Vostok and Zapad: "Civilizovannye otnosenija. Neobchodimost? Realnost? Utopija?" in *Literaturnaja Gazeta*, June 26, 1985.

16 - Schmidt, Max: "Neues Denken in Handeln umgesetzt" in *Horizont*, 9/1986, p. 8.

17 - J. Plimak, "Der Marxismus-Leninismus und der revolutionäre Geist am Ende des 20. Jahrhunderts", in *ND*, November 26, 1986, (quoted from *Pravda*). .

18 - Grasnik, Georg "Angebot zum Überleben der Menschheit", in *Horizont*, 5/1986, p. 4.

19 - Zurkin et al, "Ausreichende Verteidigungsfähigkeit oder Wie kommt man aus dem Teufelskreis?" in *Neue Zeit* , 40/1987.

20 - Defence Minister Yazov avoided this formula in his *Pravda* article of February 2, 1988, but the very same sense was expressed by the commander-in-chief of the United Armed Forces of the Warsaw Pact organisation, Marshal Viktor Kulikov, on the Hungarian TV (February 20, 1988).

21 - Keßler, Heinz: "70 Jahre Sowjetarmee. Hochster Daseinszweck: Schutz des Friedens" in *Horizont*, 2/1988, p. 3.

22 - Richter, Brigitte: "Wo es auf Vernunft und guten Willen ankommt." in *Horizont* 8/1988, p. 10 (quoted in Wilhelm Bruns, "Außenpolitik" in *Deutschland Archiv* 10/1988. p. 1040).

23 - Haß, Marion: "Strukturelle Probleme der Westberliner Wirtschaft" in *IPW-Berichte* 7/1988, p. 30-35.

24 - Bahr, Egon: *Zum Europaischen Frieden. Eine Antwort auf Gorbatschow*. Berlin 1988; p. 23.

25 - The term "partner" (referred to East-West relations) had already appeared in the first official declaration of the Brandt government (October 28, 1969). Federal Chancellor Schmidt used the term "security partnership" for the first time in a speech of May 25, 1978. It was later included in the White Book of Defence of 1979, (art. 80).

26 - "At that time, the ideas of the (Palme) Commission were not accepted unconditionally by everyone in the Soviet Union." wrote Andrei Kokoshin, in "Die beste Verteidigung ist nur Verteidigung." cf. *Neue Zeit*, 33/1988, p. 18.

27 - Cf. Mitterand's interview on Soviet Television, November 21, 1988, 19.20 GMT.

28 - Fitzwater, Marlin: "White House report", November 22, 1988, in *U.S. Policy Information and Texts*, No. 219, of November 23, 1988.

29 - Verbatim in *Vorwärts*, August 29, 1987, p. 31.

30 - Krasin, Jurij Andreevic: "Novoe myslenie vo vzaimootnosenijach kommunistov i social-democratov", in *MEMO* 4/1988, p. 23. Prof. Krasin is the Chancellor of the Institute of Social Sciences of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party.

31 - Hager, Kurt: "Friedenssicherung und ideologischer Streit" in *ND*, October 28, 1987, and Reinhold, Otto, interview in *ND*, November 11, 1987.

32 - More or less in this sense. Klein, Dieter: "Politökonomische Grundlagen fur einen friedensfähigen Kapitalismus", in *IPW-Berichte*, 2/1988, p. 1., or Koch, Burkhard: "Streit der Ideologien im nuklear-kosmischen Zeitalter", ibid.,

3/1988, p. 22.

33 - "Aggressivität und Friedensfähigkeit del heutigen Imperialismus", in *IPW-Berichte*, 9/1988, p. 11.

34 - "Voice of the GDR" (Stimme der DDR), September 16, 1988, 16.00 GMT (quoted in *Monitor-dienst, Deutscher Teil*, September 20, 1988, p. 6.

35 - Koch, *Pravda*, May 27, 1988, p. 24. Thesis 10 deals with foreign politics, and establishes amongst other things that the "new political thinking" permits better comprehension of the world, and a contribution to the formation of more civilised international relations.

36 - Rachel, Gabriele: "Sozialdemokratische Positionen zur Demokratie in den 80er Jahren", in *IPW-Berichte* 4/1988, p. 16.

37 - Hahn, Erich: *Friedenskampf ohne Ideologie?* East-Berlin, 1988.

38 - Lomeyko, Vladimir: "Nerazlucnye vragi ili neprimirimye druz'ja?" in *literaturnaja gazeta*, April 6, 1988.

39 - Kister, Kurt: "Dominanz der Defensive" in *Suddeutsche Zeitung*, February 5, 1988. Gorbachev did not allow publication of his letter to von Müller. It seems obvious that he wanted to avoid giving the impression of striving for cheap propagandistic effects.

40 - The concept of "Freiheit der Eigenentwicklung" (freedom of self-development) was introduced into the discussion by Richard Löwenthal in 1971 (*Außenpolitische Perspektiven des westdeutschen Staates*, vol. 1, Munich 1971, p. 11.) Gerhard Basler of the Institute of International Policy and Economics of the GDR has also adopted it elsewhere (cf. footnote 14).

41 - In an interview for Moscow radio, a Soviet diplomat called "the active support" of the dismantling of nuclear strategic weapons given by the Federal Republic "a great help to common sense and to the new thinking". This relatively amiable interview was given in German and referred to the announcement of the Federal Chancellor's Moscow trip. At the end, the interviewer asked the German listeners to make suggestions for the improvement of the Bonn-Moscow relationship, which the radio would then forward to the Soviet Foreign Ministry. March (16, 1988, 18.40 GMT; quoted in *Monitor-Dienst, Deutscher Teil*, March 18, 1988).

42 - Na loznom puti, *Pravda* , August 2, 1984.

43 - It is significant that during a conversation in Bonn, the Soviet expert Vjaceslav Dasicev mistakenly attributed the expression *Koalition der Vernunft* to Hans-Dietrich Genscher instead of Honecker.

44 - For more information may be found cf. Hoagland, Jim: "A Principled KGB Defector Has Changed History" in *International Herald Tribune*, November 24, 1988.

45 - Demands for the re-establishment of territorial autonomy similar to the ASSR within the framework of the RSFSR, as expressed in readers' letters, have been repeatedly published.

46 - *Der Spiegel*, 43/1988, p. 20, here p. 25.

47 - e.g. the answer to the Aide-Memoire of the Three Powers of December 29, 1987, as far as the published text

corresponds, (*Bild am Sonntag*, September 25, 1988). Cf. Zjubanov, S., "Ambicii vmesto real'nostej", in *Pravda*, October 2, 1988, where the "as yet by far unexhausted great possibilities" of the Four-Power-Treaty are mentioned. The diplomat Vladimir Mitrofanov stated that the inhabitants of West Berlin would have to take part in the pan-European process just as all Europeans, and that the Soviet Union had nothing against international manifestations in the city; neither did the USSR in any way question the establishment and *development* (italics Schulz) of relations between West Berlin and the Federal Republic; "almost" all treaties between the Soviet Union and the Federal Republic contained the (Berlin) clause, (Radio Moscow in German, October 8, 1988, 18.12 GMT, quoted in *Monitor-Dienst, Osteuropa*, October 10, 1988, p. 12; foreign affairs spokesman mentioned the "permanent exploitation" of possibilities, (*TASS*, October 17, 1988, in *Monitor-Dienst, Deutscher Teil*, October 18, 1988, p. 1.)

48 - Cf. note 46, p. 30.

49 - Cf. interview in *Die Welt*, October 21, 1988.