

The Fall of the Wall: The Unintended Self-Dissolution of East Germany's Ruling Regime

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East Germany's sudden collapse like a house of cards in fall 1989 caught both the political and academic worlds by surprise.¹ The decisive moment of the collapse was undoubtedly the fall of the Berlin Wall during the night of 9 November 1989. After the initial political upheavals in Poland and Hungary, it served as the turning point for the revolutions in Central and Eastern Europe and accelerated the deterioration of the Soviet empire. Indeed, the Soviet Union collapsed within two years. Along with the demolition of the "Iron Curtain" in May and the opening of the border between Hungary and Austria for GDR citizens in September 1989, the fall of the Berlin Wall stands as a symbol of the end of the Cold War,² the end of the division of Germany and of the continent of Europe.³

Political events of this magnitude have always been the preferred stuff of which legends and myths are made of. The fall of the Berlin Wall quickly developed into "one of the biggest paternity disputes ever"⁴ among the political actors of that time, and it is not surprising that the course of and background to the events during the night of 9 November 1989 still continue to produce legends.

Was the fall of the Berlin Wall the result of a decision or intentional action by the SED leadership, as leading Politburo members claimed shortly after the fact?⁵ Was it really, as some academics argue, "a last desperate move to restabilize the country,"⁶ "a last desperate effort to ride the tiger, control the anger and the ebullience, that had challenged the government"⁷? Or was it, as disappointed supporters of the GDR civil rights movement suspected, the last revenge of the SED, designed to rob the civil rights movement of its revolution?⁸ Did Mikhail Gorbachev or Eduard Shevardnadze order the SED leadership to open the Berlin Wall,⁹ or was Moscow completely surprised by the events in Berlin? Were the Germans granted unity by a historical mistake, "a spectacular blunder,"¹⁰ or "a mixture of common sense and bungling"¹¹? Did four officers from the Ministry for State Security (MfS, or Stasi) and the Interior Ministry, the authors of the new travel regulation presented at the fateful November 9 press conference, trick the entire SED leadership?¹² And if the MfS was involved, could the fall of the Wall have been the Stasi's "opus magnum," as supporters of conspiracy theories want us to believe?¹³ The fall of the Wall—a final conspiracy of the MfS against the SED state?

Sociology and political science did not predict the collapse of the GDR, other Eastern bloc regimes, or even of the Soviet Union itself.¹⁴ Since 1990, post-mortem analysis of the communist system has taken place, but this is problematic methodologically. The Sovietologist Bohdan Harasymiw said, "Now that it has happened (...) the collapse of communism is being everywhere foreseen in

retrospect to have been inevitable." He labeled this thinking "whatever happened, had to have happened," or, more ironically, "the marvelous advantage which historians have over political scientists."¹⁵ Resistance scholar Peter Steinbach commented that historians occasionally forget very quickly "that they are only able to offer insightful interpretations of the changes because they know how unpredictable circumstances have resolved themselves."¹⁶

In the case of 9 November 1989, reconstruction of the details graphically demonstrates that history is an open process. In addition, it also leads to the paradoxical realization that the details of central historical events can only be understood when they are placed in their historical context, thereby losing their sense of predetermination.¹⁷

The mistaken conclusion of what Reinhard Bendix calls "retrospective determinism"—to view events "as if everything had to come about as it ultimately did come about,"¹⁸—as well as the opposing view, which seeks to grasp historical change as a random accumulation of "historical accidents,"¹⁹ can only be avoided by connecting structural history (*Strukturgeschichte*) and the history of events (*Ereignisgeschichte*), as will be attempted to a certain extent in the following essay. This paper focuses on the conditions and modalities of specific decision-making situations in 1989, through the reconstruction of the intended and actual course of events. It also examines the contingencies which helped to bring about the fall of the Wall, removing one of the most important underpinnings of the SED state. The analysis will primarily concentrate on the central decision-making bodies of the party and state apparatus, their perceptions of the problems, and their actions.²⁰

The paper is based on the documentary evidence from the relevant East German archives, specifically the SED Archive, as well as the archives for the Council of Ministers, the MfS, and Ministry of the Interior. The archival sources are supplemented by approximately 200 interviews with the "main actors" from both German states, the Soviet Union, the United States, Great Britain, and France, who were involved in the political and military decision-making process.²¹

It is generally accepted that developments and changes in the politics and economics of East Germany can only be analyzed within the framework of the political and economic relations "triangle" linking the Soviet Union, the Federal Republic, and the GDR. In addition, relations between the superpowers, i.e. the international context, cannot be ignored.²²

The internal and external conditions that contributed to the rapid collapse of the GDR after the fall of the Wall

developed during the ostensibly stable Honecker Era (1971-1989), gradually corroding the pillars upon which the political system was based. The Soviet empire had been in decline for at least a decade, the GDR economy was on the brink of ruin, the “leading role” of the party was exhausted, the SED leadership had become senile, the party cadre was worn down by years of crisis management, the ideology had become a hollow shell, and the security police were politically disoriented. Structural factors of the crisis restricted the range of possible decisions and options for action available to the SED leadership in the fall of 1989, but did not predetermine the actual course of events. The two most important factors were the exhaustion of the Soviet global strategy and the economic decline of the GDR.

The existence of the GDR as a state was, above all, legitimated by an outside force. The state’s existence was based on the military, economic, and political guarantee provided by the Soviet Union as well as the USSR’s imperial claim and will to power. The signs that the Soviet global strategy had run its course had increased since the early-1980s, and the superpower was increasingly unable to provide the necessary means of support for its empire.²³

Mikhail Gorbachev himself made it perfectly clear that the economic problems in his country had forced him to introduce political reforms after he took power in the Soviet Union in 1985, and affected its relationship with the satellite countries.²⁴ The Soviet Communist Party (CPSU) General Secretary first distanced himself from the Brezhnev Doctrine in November 1986 at a meeting of the party leaders of the COMECON [Council for Mutual Economic Assistance] member countries. He proclaimed “the independence of each party, its right to make sovereign decisions about the problems of development in its country, its responsibility to its own people” as unalterable principles of the relations among the socialist states.²⁵ It was not his intention at that time to dissolve the alliance; rather, the new principles of independence and autonomy of the national parties, equal standing in relations (with the USSR), and voluntary cooperation were designed to place the socialist community on a more solid basis. Gorbachev was still convinced in 1989, according to his closest foreign policy advisor, that “he would be able to reduce the confrontation [with the West] and retain competing socio-political systems.”²⁶

After 1986, it became increasingly clear that, due to the economic crisis, the Soviet leadership was forced to agree to Western demands at the East-West talks in Vienna. The United States and its alliance members made progress in disarmament negotiations, expansion of trade and economic aid contingent upon Soviet compromises on human rights. To the disgust of the SED leadership, Gorbachev and Foreign Minister Eduard Shevardnadze demonstrated their desire to create “peaceful and positive conditions abroad for domestic political reforms” in the Soviet Union without consulting with their allies.²⁷

Furthermore, in the opinion of the SED leadership, these far-reaching compromises on human rights issues would come at the expense of the Soviets’ allies.

Conversely, SED General Secretary Erich Honecker’s state visit to the Federal Republic of Germany (FRG) in September 1987, something the CPSU had blocked for years, fueled the Soviet leadership’s fears of a German-German *rapprochement* and detente behind their backs. Finally, sources inside the SED Politburo fully informed Moscow about the GDR’s desolate economic situation and its financial dependency on the West, especially the Federal Republic.²⁸ The German-German summit accelerated a change in Soviet policy toward Germany (*Deutschlandpolitik*) and served as an important turning point in the relations among Moscow-East Berlin-Bonn. The Soviet-West German relationship began to flourish. The German-German relationship on the other hand, stagnated.²⁹

The wide-ranging declaration of intent in the German-German “Joint Communiqué” of September 1987, particularly the creation of a mixed commission for further development of economic relations, proved to be a farce within a few months.³⁰ Rather than increasing, German-German trade decreased in 1987 and 1988. One last aspect that still flourished was the SED’s policy of using human beings as bargaining chips. In May 1988, the Federal Republic increased its lump sum payment from DM 525 million to DM 860 million for the 1990-1999 period in return for the GDR’s easing of travel restrictions for East Germans visiting the West. In all other respects, however, Bonn restricted its relations with East Berlin to the minimum that was diplomatically necessary and, above all, non-binding.

In the course of 1988, Moscow and East Berlin each grew increasingly uneasy about the other’s intentions. At the conclusion of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE) follow-up meeting in Vienna in January 1989, the signatory states pledged to observe the right of every individual “to travel from any country, including his own, and the unrestricted (right) to return to his country.” The GDR had signed similar international agreements many times before without ever putting them into effect domestically. But in Vienna, initially under steady pressure from the Soviets, it agreed to guarantee this right by law and to allow observation of its implementation.³¹ Soviet foreign policy forced domestic political obligations on East Berlin that, if implemented, would threaten at least the stability, if not the existence, of the GDR by softening its rigid isolation from the outside world.

The main source of domestic instability for the SED regime was the desolate state of the economy. In 1971, together with the CPSU, the SED had changed its economic strategy to the so-called “policy of main tasks,” which was memorably formulated in 1975 as the “unity of economic and social policy.”³² The SED leadership’s promise of welfare-state measures—such as a housing-construction

program, increases in salaries and pensions, an improved supply of consumer goods, as well as numerous social policy initiatives—was not based on sound economics, but on opportunistic political and legitimacy-oriented considerations. The latter stemmed from the inner condition of the regime, which it always considered to be precarious, as well as from the experience of the Prague Spring in 1968 and the workers' unrest in Poland in 1970. The "unity of economic and social policy" sought to "compensate for the lack of legitimacy by providing consumer goods and social security."³³

It quickly became apparent that this "real socialist" welfare program could not be supported by the GDR's economy, not least because of the changing international economic conditions. The (social-)political stabilization measures subverted the economy's productive capacity. Increasing the consumption quota burdened the economy's vitality and occurred at the expense of economic revitalization: the investment quota was lowered, the production capacity reduced, infrastructure decayed, buildings deteriorated, ecological exploitation occurred to an unprecedented degree. The changing terms of trade within the Soviet bloc to the advantage of the raw material supplier (the Soviet Union), and the deficit caused by the COMECON exchange of goods were compensated for by investment and consumer goods imports from the West, financed by credit. The debt spiral set in motion by such policies had been an object of concern and discussion at the highest levels of the SED since 1975, but the policy had not been changed despite the increasing severity of the crisis.³⁴

Transfer payments from the Federal Republic, especially the billion-mark loans in 1983 and 1984, had helped to cover the decreasing economic support from the Soviet Union (reduction in the delivery of crude oil beginning in 1982, or delivery for Western currency) and other shortages, and maintain the GDR's credit ratings in international financial markets. These payments, however, could not help the GDR master the heightening foreign and domestic economic crises that began in the mid-1980s. The German-German sense of a common bond sharpened, strengthened by "humanitarian gestures" like expanding travel opportunities for GDR citizens. This in turn resulted in further instability.

The proclaimed "unity of economic and social policy" changed the nature of the legitimacy of the party. The universalistic, humanistic utopia of the communist society as an association of free and equal individuals was reduced, via the technocratic promises of reform of the New Economic System, to a profane socialism based on consumption as the daily task.³⁵ The idea of socialism merged with the fulfillment of welfare-state goals, with the result that the revocation or even the failure of the latter would have to be considered the end of socialism itself. The unity of economic and social policy, as then Central Committee Secretary for Security Issues Egon Krenz told a small group of Politburo members in May 1989, "has to be

carried forward, because this *is* after all socialism in the GDR."³⁶ Consequently, the innovative development of alternatives was precluded at any level of government. Years of crisis management wore out the economic cadre and led to deep distress within the party bureaucracy in the second half of the 1980s.

All domestic and foreign political symptoms of the crisis intensified in the first half of 1989. On 16 May 1989, Gerhard Schürer, the head of the GDR State Planning Commission, told a small circle of SED leaders that the GDR's debt to the West was increasing by 500 million Valutamarks (VM)³⁷ a month, and that, if things continued along these lines, the GDR would be insolvent by 1991. The spending reductions that had already been introduced had to be complemented "by a number of economic measures related to consumption."³⁸ But fearing political repercussions, the Politburo did not dare lower the population's standard of living just five months before the 40th anniversary of the GDR.

At the Bucharest summit of the Warsaw Pact in July 1989, the Soviet Union officially revoked the "Brezhnev Doctrine" of limited sovereignty for the alliance's members. Their future relations were to be developed, as the concluding document put it, "on the basis of equality, independence and the right of each country to arrive at its own political position, strategy, and tactics without interference from an outside party."³⁹ The Soviet guarantee of existence for the communist governments was thereby placed in question—Moscow's allies could no longer count on military support in the event of internal unrest. After the communist parties in Poland and Hungary started down the path of democratic reforms designed to construct multi-party democracies, the SED was confronted with the necessity of legitimizing its rule to its "people" on its own.

After learning from media reports that the barbed wire along the Hungarian-Austrian border was being removed in early May 1989, growing numbers of GDR citizens, above all youth, began to travel to Hungary in the beginning of the summer vacation period in the hope of fleeing across the Hungarian-Austrian border to the Federal Republic. East Germans seeking to leave the GDR occupied the West German embassies in Prague and Budapest, as well as the FRG's permanent representation in East Berlin.

Effective 12 June 1989, Hungary agreed to abide by the Geneva Convention on Refugees. Three months later the Hungarian government decided to give priority to its international agreements and treaties over solidarity with the GDR. Following a secret agreement with Bonn, they opened the border to Austria for GDR citizens on 10 September. In return, the Federal Republic gave Hungary credit in the amount of DM 500 million and promised to make up the losses that Hungary might suffer from retaliatory measures by the GDR.⁴⁰ Tens of thousands of East Germans traveled to the Federal Republic via Austria in the days and weeks that followed. The GDR experienced its largest wave of departures since the construction of the

Berlin Wall in 1961.

This mass exodus demonstrated the weakness of the SED leadership on this issue and undermined the regime's authority in an unprecedented manner. The exodus was a necessary precondition for the founding of new opposition groups, and ultimately, the mass demonstrations. The dual movement of mass exodus and mass protest started the process of collapse in the GDR.

The SED leadership's options were increasingly reduced to the alternatives of either introducing—with uncertain results—political reforms, or constructing a “second Wall” between the GDR and its socialist neighbors Czechoslovakia and Poland and putting down the demonstrations by force.⁴¹ Closing the border to the ČSSR on 3 October 1989 to those without visas, the use of violence against demonstrators before and after the state celebrations for the fortieth anniversary of the GDR on 7 October, and the preparations for forcibly preventing the Monday demonstration in Leipzig on 9 October pointed to the leadership's preference for the second alternative. But in the end, too many people took to the streets, and the heavily armed forces of the state capitulated to the 70,000 peaceful demonstrators.⁴² After 9 October, the strategy of employing violence moved from the forefront to the background, although the possibility of announcing a state of martial law remained an unspoken option among members of the Politburo. Hence, the non-violent resolution of the crisis was not a matter of course in the aftermath of 9 October.

The essential structures of the system itself exacerbated the crisis once cracks had occurred. The party-state was guided, oriented and controlled from above, not integrated from below. The Party's mass organizations reached deep into society and functioned as information-gathering and early-warning systems for the party leadership, but did not possess their own decision-making capacity, let alone a capacity for addressing conflict or solving disputes. The state-controlled economy transformed every economic challenge into a challenge to the state, just as the union between Party and State transformed every criticism into a criticism of the Party. The centralized and personalized decision-making structure directed criticism via the local and district representatives to the top of the system: the Politburo and the Central Committee. The protests by the population, as well as the mood of party members, put the Party and State leadership for the first time in the history of the GDR under such enormous pressure that it had to respond directly through far-reaching personnel changes. The palace revolution against Erich Honecker on 17 October and the dismissal of Günter Mittag and Joachim Herrmann as SED Central Committee Secretaries of Economics and Agitation and Propaganda, respectively, was followed by the 7 November resignation of the Council of Ministers and the 8 November resignation of the entire Politburo.

The resignations not only compounded the Party's

loss of authority in the eyes of the population, but also increased the instability of the centralized leadership structure, since the nomenclature system was based on ties of personal loyalty and carefully developed cooptation rules. Gaining stability and coherence among the leadership would have taken much more time (as the relatively calculated and limited replacement of Honecker's predecessor Walter Ulbricht in 1971 had shown) than the leadership had to regain control under the circumstances.

Although Honecker had succeeded in restabilizing the power of the Party when he took power in 1971, his fall in autumn 1989 had the opposite effect. The change at the top of the party at a time when it had lost control of the masses only accelerated the decay of power. SED members lost their faith in the ability of the party leadership to control the situation; the loss of authority by the SED leadership over the party members was yet another factor in the crisis, adding to the problems that resulted from its loss of authority over the population.

It was not only short-term foreign and domestic political pressures that led to restraints on the unconditional use of police and military force; economic realities in particular argued against the compatibility of a hard-line approach and the demands of long-term stabilization.

By the end of October 1989, the GDR's debt had increased to the point that the country's leading economists considered drastic changes in the economic and social policy necessary, accompanied by a reduction in the standard of living by 25 to 30 percent. However, out of fear of a further loss of power, they considered such an austerity policy impossible. Violent repression of the protests would have ruined the SED's last resort, suggested by the economists in the Politburo on 31 October 1989. They argued that in order to guarantee the solvency of the state, it was absolutely necessary “to negotiate with the FRG government about financial assistance in the measure of two to three billion VM beyond the current limits.”⁴³ While that would increase the debt, it would win time and avoid a possible diktat by the International Monetary Fund. In order to make West Germany's conservative-liberal government more amenable to an increase in the GDR's line of credit, the FRG should be told, albeit expressly ruling out any idea of reunification and the creation of a confederation, “that through this and other programs of economic and scientific-technical cooperation between the FRG and the GDR, conditions could be created even in this century which would make the border between the two German states, as it exists now, superfluous.”⁴⁴

If it had been the original intention of Schürer and his co-authors to open discussion of a possible confederation in light of the threatening bankruptcy, their effort was carefully disguised. Out of consideration for those Politburo members whose primary orientation was toward the Soviet Union, Krenz had pushed Schürer to exclude

any reference to reunification or confederation from the draft, to avoid a discussion of these issues. In the version adopted by the Politburo, the passage in the draft that “put the currently existing form of the border” on the table was eliminated.⁴⁵ The editing alone could not eliminate the fact that the leading economists had suggested using the Wall as a bargaining chip with the FRG government for new loans, as a final resort to guarantee the GDR’s political and economic survival.

Justifying his draft in the Politburo, planning chief Gerhard Schürer explicitly emphasized his idea of trading the Wall for money: “On the last page, we go as far as to address high politics—the form of the state border. We want to make it clear how far considerations should reach. These suggestions should bring to your attention that we could now extract economic advantages from the FRG for such ideas.” He continued, warning that “if the demands are made first from the streets or even from the factories, it would once again eliminate the possibility of us taking the initiative.”⁴⁶

Schürer’s fears have to be seen against the background of the growing protest movement against the SED which, by the end of October, had swept the entire country, including small and middle-sized cities. The MfS had registered a total of 140,000 participants in 24 demonstrations in the week of 16–22 October; the following week, 540,000 people participated in 145 demonstrations, and from 30 October to 4 November, some 1,400,000 people marched in 210 demonstrations. Their main demands were free elections, recognition of opposition groups, and freedom to travel. In addition, the number of applications to leave the GDR increased by 1,000 per week, reaching a total of 188,180 by 29 October.⁴⁷

The issue of travel and permanent exit connected the GDR’s foreign, domestic, and economic problems at the beginning of November. When he took over power on 18 October 1989, SED General Secretary Egon Krenz had promised expanded travel opportunities; a new law was to take effect in December. But the Ministry for State Security dragged its feet on the issue, since it feared that hundreds of thousands would leave the GDR. The State Planning Commission raised the objection that no funds were available to provide those traveling with foreign currency.

One day after the Politburo discussion of the debt crisis, on 1 November, Egon Krenz reported in Moscow on the desolate situation in the GDR to USSR General Secretary Mikhail Gorbachev.⁴⁸ But Gorbachev made it clear to Krenz that he could not count on economic help from Moscow, due to the Soviet Union’s own economic crisis. Gorbachev’s advice was essentially that the government had to tell its already dissatisfied populace, which was leaving by the tens of thousands, in as positive a manner as possible that it had been living beyond its means and had to adjust its expectations to a more modest level. If Krenz did not want to accept this logic, with its uncalculable results for the political stability of the GDR,

then his only remaining option was to follow the economists’ recommendation and discreetly attempt to expand German-German cooperation as quickly as possible.

Hence Alexander Schalck-Golodkowski, who had been responsible for secret negotiations with the FRG for years, was sent to Bonn on 6 November with the assignment of negotiating informally with CDU Interior Minister Wolfgang Schäuble and Minister of the Chancellery Rudolf Seiters a comprehensive expansion of German-German relations. The central issue in the negotiations was the GDR’s hope for loans totaling DM 12–13 billion. The most pressing request Schalck made was that the FRG government participate, in the short-term run, in the financing of the tourist traffic expected with the adoption of the travel law. The aid requested amounted to DM 3.8 billion, based on estimates of DM 300 for some 12.5 million tourists per year.⁴⁹

The FRG government displayed a willingness to discuss the issues, but made increased economic cooperation contingent upon political conditions. Seiters told Schalck in confidence on 7 November that if the SED relinquished its monopoly of power, allowed independent parties, and guaranteed free elections,⁵⁰ Chancellor Helmut Kohl was prepared, as he announced the next day during a *Bundestag* debate on the state of the nation, “to speak about a completely new dimension of our economic assistance.”⁵¹ Due to the Chancellor’s forthcoming state visit to Poland, the SED’s negotiation channels in Bonn were blocked until 14 November.

Thus the SED leadership was ahead of its people in its secret orientation toward the Federal Republic. The chants of “we are one people” and “Germany, united fatherland” would not dominate the demonstrations until the second half of November. The Party’s goal was admittedly the opposite of that of protesters: the SED leadership intended to stabilize its rule with Bonn’s help, while the demonstrators sought to eliminate the SED state and bring about German unity under democratic conditions.

On 6 November, the SED leadership published the promised draft travel law. Fearing a “hemorrhaging of the GDR,” the party and ministerial bureaucracy limited the total travel time to thirty days a year. The draft also provided for denial clauses that were not clearly defined, and therefore left plenty of room for arbitrary decisions by the authorities. The announcement that those traveling would only be given DM 15 once a year in exchange for GDR marks 15 demonstrated the GDR’s chronic shortage of Western currency and proved to be the straw that broke the camel’s back. Instead of reducing the political pressure, the draft legislation spurred even more criticism during the large demonstrations taking place that same day in a number of cities. At first, the demonstrators chanted sarcastically “Around the world in thirty days—without money,” and then demanded “Visa free to Shanghai,”⁵² “We don’t need laws, the Wall must go,” and, ultimately, “The SED has to go!”

As early as 1 November, the threat of strikes in southern districts had forced the SED to remove the ban on travel to the ČSSR. The Prague embassy of the Federal Republic immediately filled with a new crowd of GDR citizens eager to depart for West Germany. Under pressure from the ČSSR, the SED leadership decided to allow its citizens to travel to the FRG via the ČSSR as of 4 November. With this move, the Wall was cracked open not only via the detour through Hungary, but also through its direct neighbor, the ČSSR. Within the first few days, fifty thousand GDR citizens used this path to leave the country. The ČSSR objected strenuously to the mass migration through its country, and gave the SED the ultimatum to solve its own problems!

A majority of the Politburo on the morning of 7 November still considered immediate implementation of the entire travel law inappropriate, given, for one thing, the ongoing negotiations with the FRG about financial assistance. As a result, the ministerial bureaucracy was given the task of drafting a bill for the early promulgation of that part of the travel law dealing with permanent exit.⁵³ Foreign Minister Oskar Fischer reported these limited plans to the Soviet ambassador, Vyacheslav Kochemasov, on the same day, and asked for Soviet approval.⁵⁴ Meanwhile, the four ministerial bureaucrats' (officers from the MfS and the Interior Ministry) charged with redrafting the bill felt that their assignment had not been thoroughly thought through. After all, doing what they had been charged to do, these officials argued, would privilege those who were seeking permanent exit as opposed to those who were only interested in short visits and who wanted to return to the GDR. Thus it would have forced everybody to apply for permanent exit. Acting out of loyalty to the government and a desire to uphold the state, the officers revised the draft to fit what they perceived as the needs of the situation, expanding the regulation of shorter visits to the West. These changes, however, went beyond the plans that had been presented to the Soviet Union for approval just two days earlier.

At no time did the officers intend to grant complete freedom to travel as further clauses in the draft made clear. Private trips had to be applied for, as had been the case before, and only those who possessed a passport for travel could get a visa. Only four million GDR citizens had passports; all others, it was calculated, would have to apply for a passport first and then would have to wait at least another four weeks for a visa. These regulations thus effectively blocked the immediate departure of the majority of GDR citizens. The officers decided to place a media ban on the release of the information until 4 a.m. on 10 November, hoping that a release of the information by the GDR media at this early hour would not attract as much public attention. The local offices of the Interior Ministry and MfS and the border patrols were to be instructed about the new regulations and had until that morning to prepare for the mass exodus.

The officers' draft, including the prepared press

release, was presented to the Security Department of the Central Committee and the ministries participating—the MfS, the Interior Ministry and the Foreign Ministry—for approval around mid-day. In the course of the Central Committee meeting (which had begun the day before), or to be more exact, during a “smoking break,” several members of the Politburo approved the draft. The draft was then submitted to the Council of Ministers in a “fast track procedure” (*Umlaufverfahren*), which was designed to guarantee a quick decision—by 6:00 p.m.⁵⁵

One copy of the draft went to Egon Krenz. Around 4:00 p.m., he read the proposed regulation to 216 Central Committee members and added, “No matter what we do in this situation, we’ll be making the wrong move.”⁵⁶ The Central Committee showed approval for the measure nonetheless. At this point, the travel regulation was nothing more than a “proposal,” as Krenz emphasized, or a draft. The Council of Ministers had not yet made a formal decision. Krenz, however, spontaneously told the government spokesman to release the news “immediately,” thereby canceling the gag order in passing.

This decision could have been corrected since government spokesman Wolfgang Meyer had been informed about the blackout and its background. But Krenz's next decision could not be reversed. He handed the draft and the press release to Politburo member Günter Schabowski, who was serving as party spokesman on that day, and told him to release the information during an international press conference scheduled for 6 p.m. that evening. This interference by the Party in the government's procedures led to the collapse of all of the MfS and the Interior Ministry careful preparations for the new travel regulations.

Without checking, Schabowski added the draft for the Council of Ministers to his papers. He had not been present when the Politburo confirmed the draft travel regulation that afternoon, nor had he been present when Krenz read the travel draft to the Central Committee. He therefore was not familiar at all with the text. Around 7 p.m., during the press conference, carried live by GDR television, Schabowski announced the new travel regulations. It was possible to apply for permanent exit and private travel to the West “without presenting [the heretofore necessary] requirements,” and GDR officials would issue approval certificates “on short notice.”

Journalists asked when the regulations would go into effect. Schabowski appeared a bit lost, since “this issue had never been discussed with me before,” as he later said. He scratched his head and glanced at the announcement again, his eyes not catching the final sentence that stated that the press release should be made public no earlier than 10 November. Rather, he noticed the words “immediately,” and “without delay” at the beginning of the document. Thus, he responded concisely: “Immediately, without delay!”⁵⁷

Tom Brokaw, anchorman for the American television

station NBC, who did not have any advance knowledge of the announcement,⁵⁸ succeeded in organizing an exclusive interview with Schabowski immediately after the press conference.⁵⁹ Brokaw believed that the broken phrases that the interpreter cobbled into English meant that the border would be opened. In the second floor of the press center, he now hoped to extract a clear, unmistakable statement from Schabowski. Hence Brokaw and his team of reporters were even more surprised at Schabowski's improvised and uncertain answers, which gave the interview a surrealistic atmosphere.⁶⁰ According to Brokaw and his colleague Marc Kusnetz, Schabowski asked his assistant to show him the text once more in the course of the conversation:⁶¹

Brokaw: "Mr. Schabowski, do I understand correctly? Citizens of the GDR can leave through any checkpoint that they choose for personal reasons. They no longer have to go through a third country?"

Schabowski: "They are not further forced to leave GDR by transit through another country."

Brokaw: "It is possible for them to go through the Wall at some point?"

Schabowski: "It is possible for them to go through the border."

Brokaw: "Freedom to travel?"

Schabowski: "Yes. Of course. It is not [a] question of tourism. It is a permission to leave GDR."⁶²

In spite of the information gleaned from consulting his "notes" again, Schabowski's confusion could not have been greater. On one hand, he confirmed that the new regulations meant the freedom to travel; on the other hand, he emphasized in the next sentence that it was not a matter of tourism, but the ability to leave the GDR, meaning permanent exit. "When I sat down with him for an interview, he was still learning about the policy," Brokaw noted before airing the interview.⁶³

A short time after his exclusive interview, Brokaw stood in front of the Berlin Wall at the Brandenburg Gate. NBC had opened a direct line to New York the day before, and Brokaw reported live to America from the historic stage that was, at that point, nearly empty. "Tom Brokaw at the Berlin Wall. This is a historic night. The East German government has just declared that East German citizens will be able to cross the Wall from tomorrow morning forward—without restrictions."⁶⁴ Brokaw had boiled down Schabowski's convoluted answers to the shortest possible—and correct—statement. He had grasped correctly when the new regulation would come into effect ("as of tomorrow morning"), and left open the question whether the right to cross the border included the right to return to the GDR.

The German public was not as correctly informed as the American one. Schabowski's announcement was the lead story in both the East and West German nightly news broadcasts that aired after the press conference, between 7 p.m. and 8:15 p.m. Western press services—including West

German television—interpreted the contradiction-laden statements from Schabowski to mean an immediate "opening of the border." The Associated Press headline from 7:05 p.m. read "GDR opens borders," and the German Press Agency released the "sensational information" at 7:41 p.m. that "the GDR border is open." The climax of these instances of reporting leading events was the late news from the West German public station First German Television (ADR). Anchorman Hanns Joachim Friedrichs announced that "the gates in the Berlin Wall stand wide open," while a live shot immediately following the announcement showed the still-closed border, a picture that was quickly declared an exception. The media suggested to an audience of millions in East and West a reality which had yet to come about. The distribution of this false image of reality contributed significantly to transforming the announced events into reality. It was the television reports in particular that mobilized ever greater numbers of Berliners to go to the border crossings.

Without any information on the new policy or orders from the military leadership, the GDR border patrols stationed at the Berlin border crossings faced growing crowds that wanted to test the alleged immediate freedom to travel. Initial inquiries by the border patrols to their superiors did not yield any results, since during the evening only deputies, or deputies of deputies, were available. They, in turn, could not reach their superiors because the meeting of the Central Committee had been extended to 8:45 p.m. without notice. The highest echelons of the party and the government were therefore unaware of the press conference, the media reaction it had engendered, and the gathering storm on the border crossings.

The crowds were the heaviest at the Bornholmer Strasse crossing, located in Berlin's densely populated Prenzlauer Berg district. At first, the border guards reacted by telling the gathering crowds to wait until tomorrow. To relieve some of the pressure, they allowed certain individuals to exit, but they placed an "invalid" stamp in their identification cards. Without knowing it, the first East Berliners who crossed Bornholmer Bridge into West Berlin had been deprived of their citizenship by this maneuver to "let off steam."

When the Central Committee meeting finally ended and the higher levels of the party hierarchy were available to formally make decisions, they were shocked by the news. But they had already missed the time for corrective action. The room for maneuvers that would not destroy the plans for the coming days had been reduced to a minimum. The dynamic of the events, constantly accelerated by the live reports of the Western media, overtook the decision-making process. In contrast, the exchange of information between the SED leadership, the MfS, Interior and Defense ministries moved like a merry-go-round; the decisions that were ultimately made were based on information that no longer was up-to-date.

The maneuver "to let off steam," rather than reducing the pressure at the border crossings, had raised it to the

boiling point instead. Passport controllers and border soldiers at the Bornholmer Strasse crossing, fearing for their lives, made the decision on their own to cease all controls at 11:30 p.m. “We’re opening the floodgates now!” announced the chief officer of passport control, and the barriers were raised. The border guards gave way to the pressure from the crowds until midnight at most of the border crossings in the inner city, allowing East Berliners to cross without papers. The same thing happened until 1:00 a.m. at the border control points around Berlin and on other parts of the German-German border. Thousands of Berliners crossed the fortifications and the Wall at the Brandenburg Gate, and then strolled for several hours around Pariser Platz. Dances of joy erupted along the Wall; the symbol of the division of Germany had fallen.

The governing apparatus in East Berlin, Bonn, and in the capital cities of the Four Powers were caught by surprise. In a matter of hours, the East Germans had overpowered the armed forces of the GDR and outmaneuvered the cleverest border regime system in the world. US President George Bush managed to utter in a first reaction that he was “very pleased,” but appeared pensive and reserved.⁶⁵ British Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher spoke of a “victory for freedom,” but was very concerned about a possible destabilization of Gorbachev’s position and the prospects for German reunification.⁶⁶ French President François Mitterrand described the fall of the Wall as a “joyous event” and “progress for freedom in Europe.”⁶⁷ Internally, however, he reacted with horror. Gorbachev could never accept this development, he believed; the Germans were risking a world war without realizing it.⁶⁸ Chancellor Helmut Kohl learned of the events in Berlin during his state visit to Poland. Cut off from his most important information channels, the chancellor felt “like [he was] on another planet” in Warsaw.⁶⁹ He interrupted his visit the next day and returned to Bonn via Berlin. The politicians in the Western capitals looked to Moscow with anticipation: How would the Soviet Union react?

While the fall of the Wall occurred during prime time television in the United States, because of the time difference, Moscow was at a disadvantage. It was two hours later there than in Berlin. When the border crossings were “flooded” and East Germans were dancing on the Wall, the Soviet leadership was sound asleep. Mikhail Gorbachev reported that “I learned what had happened during the night of 9 November on the morning of 10 November from a report from the ambassador. I asked him what the GDR leadership had done, and he started to explain the situation and told me about Schabowski’s press conference. He informed me that they had opened all border crossings along the Wall. I told him that they had taken the proper action, and asked that he inform them of that.”⁷⁰

The CPSU Politburo met a few hours later. As then Foreign Minister, Eduard Shevardnadze, remembered:

“Before the meeting, a phone conversation took place between Mikhail Gorbachev and myself. We had made contact as usual, whenever we had to discuss such important issues [...] We spoke about different options, and we only rejected one possibility from the beginning, that of the use of force [...] The events were the result of a mass movement that could not be held back by any government.”⁷¹ While the question of whether to recreate the former *status quo* was not debated by the high-level politicians, such discussions occurred in the military. But, Shevardnadze said, “the Soviet Army was very disciplined and would not have done anything without a specific order. If we had used force to close the Wall, we would have started a spiral of violence that would have started World War III.” Gorbachev, according to Shevardnadze, therefore strongly recommended to the East German leadership that “they not shed blood under any circumstances.”⁷²

Since military intervention was not to be part of the equation, the Soviets’ political room for maneuver in reaction to the fall of the Wall was also very limited. Gorbachev’s conclusion was “that politics must now be guided by the people’s will.”⁷³ The conclusion he drew from the situation was “We had to adapt policies to the situation at hand.”⁷⁴ Adapting policies to the situation at hand first required an analysis and definition of the situation. To criticize the obvious incompetence of the SED leadership at this point, or to expose Krenz as a “fool” or a “dead man on vacation” in this situation, as Central Committee staffer Nikolai Portugalov later did,⁷⁵ would only weaken the GDR further and increase the Soviet Union’s problems. Therefore, according to Portugalov, Gorbachev gave orders to back Krenz.⁷⁶ Foreign Minister Shevardnadze explained to the press that the Soviet Union viewed the “events in the GDR entirely as an affair of the new leadership and its people, and wished them much success.” He praised the “border and travel regulations” as a “correct, clever, and wise decision.”⁷⁷

In the late afternoon and evening, Gorbachev sent verbal messages to Chancellor Kohl as well as François Mitterrand, Margaret Thatcher, and George Bush. The message to Kohl, passed from the Soviet ambassador in Bonn, Yuli Kvisinski, to Horst Teltschik, the advisor to the chancellor, reached the chancellor during a rally in West Berlin.⁷⁸ Gorbachev asked the chancellor “in the spirit of openness and realism” to take “the necessary and pressing measures to assure that a complication and destabilization of the situation is not permitted.”⁷⁹

With reference to what he considered the “correct and far-reaching decision of the new GDR leadership,” Gorbachev immediately informed Bush, Mitterrand and Thatcher about his message to Kohl. He expressed his concern about a possible “destabilization of the situation not only in the center of Europe but also beyond” if the “postwar realities, meaning the existence of two German states” were called into question. Gorbachev added that the Soviet ambassador in East Berlin had been told to make

contact with the representatives of the three Western Powers in West Berlin in order to work together to assure that “the events do not take an undesirable path.”⁸⁰

Even during the rally in Berlin, Teltschik and Kohl puzzled over whether Gorbachev’s message was “a request based on concern” about renewed spontaneous breakthroughs in the Wall or rather “a veiled threat.”⁸¹ Upon his return to the chancellor in Bonn, Teltschik received a call from Brent Scowcroft around midnight. The National Security Advisor to the US President informed him about the verbal message from Gorbachev to Bush. For Teltschik, the interesting part of the message was Scowcroft’s confidential notification “that Gorbachev had ordered the SED leadership to guarantee a ‘peaceful transition’ in the GDR.”⁸² This news solved the puzzle for the chancellor and his advisor: “There would not be a repetition of 17 June [1953]. Gorbachev’s message, which he also passed on to George Bush, was the request to work together to assure that politics did not allow events to spin out of control.”⁸³

The restrained reaction of President Bush and Secretary of State James Baker sent the clear message to Moscow that US foreign policy welcomed the changes in East and Central Europe, but was not hoping for instability or to gain advantage at Soviet expense.⁸⁴

After conversations with Thatcher, Bush, Krenz, and Mitterrand,⁸⁵ Kohl called the Soviet party chief midday on 11 November. He assured Gorbachev that he “rejected any form of radicalization and [...] did not wish to see any destabilization of the situation in the GDR.” Gorbachev forcefully asked the chancellor to give the reforms in the GDR time to develop. “Under no circumstances,” according to Gorbachev, “should the developments be forced in an unforeseen direction, turned toward chaos [...] And I hope, that you will use your authority, your political clout, and your influence to keep others in line, as the time and its demands require.”⁸⁶ Kohl and Teltschik both breathed a sigh of relief after this call. Teltschik wrote in his journal: “No threat, no warning, just the request to be circumspect. Now I am absolutely sure that there will not be a violent return to the *status quo ante*.”⁸⁷

The early hopes of the SED leaders to regain control of the Wall and restore order the next day or the day after were not fulfilled. The crowds in Berlin and at the German-German border over the weekend were huge. For reasons unknown, elite units of the GDR army were still placed on higher alert at midday on 10 November, and the entire MfS was called on duty until further notice—but neither were deployed. The fall of the Wall proved to be irreversible.

The historical reconstruction of the political decisions and actions that led to the fall of the Wall eliminates explanations that portray the event as a planned action by the SED leadership, a masterminded plot to oust the party and the state leadership, or even as the “opus magnum” of the MfS.

The fall of the Wall can be analyzed as a classic case of an unintentional result of social action, a concept

developed by Robert Merton.⁸⁸ In particular, Merton’s category of a self-fulfilling prophecy can be applied to the circumstances surrounding the fall of the Wall.⁸⁹ Merton made use of the well-known “Thomas theory:” “When people define situations as real, they become real in their consequences.” People do not react only to the objective aspects of a situation, Merton explains, “but also, and often primarily, they react to the meaning that the situation has for them.” Once they had given a situation a meaning, he continued, it determined “their subsequent actions, and some results of these actions.”⁹⁰

On the evening of 9 November, it was the media that decisively influenced the “definition of the situation” as a result of the uncoordinated decisions by the SED leaders and the dissynchronization of the leadership structures. The restrictive details of the planned travel regulations were not covered up by the press agencies and the television reports, but were very quickly pushed into the background by the far-reaching and heavily symbolic interpretations.

The interpretations publicized by the Western media (“GDR opens border”), incorrect assumptions (“The border is open”), and “false” images of reality (“The gates of the Wall stand wide open!”) ultimately caused the action that allowed the assumed event and the “false” image of reality to become fact. Those television viewers who actually had only wanted to be a part of the event and therefore had hurried to the border crossings and the Brandenburg Gate actually brought about the event they thought had already happened. A fiction spread by the media took hold of the masses and thereby became reality.

The prerequisite for that occurrence was admittedly that “real existing” reality, meaning the political and military leadership of the GDR, border soldiers, passport controllers, and the people’s police did not stand in the way of these actions. The most important condition for the peaceful outcome of the storming of the Wall was, again, that the Soviet leadership under Gorbachev—after the democratic upheavals in Poland and Hungary—kept the 350,000 Soviet soldiers in the GDR in their barracks and accepted the fall of the Wall without military intervention. It is certain that they did not anticipate that the “pearl of the Soviet empire” would be lost in less than a year.

The fall of the Wall, however, created a completely new situation. With the end of the forced detention provided by the Wall, the SED government lost control of “its” citizens over night. The lack of legitimacy became obvious and led to the dissolution of the SED state. Hans Modrow, newly elected chairman of the Council of Ministers, was deprived of his most important negotiating tool with the FRG government for the billion-mark loans needed to stabilize the GDR’s economy—the people had destroyed the last real collateral in the GDR by breaking through the Wall.⁹¹ The people nullified Modrow’s idea of at least allowing free elections and relinquishing the party’s leadership claim in the GDR constitution in return for emergency loans from the FRG government. The mass demonstrations against the

government continued during the second half of November and forced these concessions even before the negotiations with Bonn could be completed.

Even before the fall of the Wall, the choruses of “Germany—united fatherland” were heard at demonstrations, but they were submerged in the volume of slogans. After 9 November, the choruses changed quickly: instead of “We are *the* people,” demonstrators chanted “We are *one* people.” Banners with “Germany—united fatherland,” as well as black-red-golden flags without the GDR emblem, were soon the prevalent image of demonstrations throughout the country. Leaders of citizens’ movements, authors, artists, and intellectuals, who had until then considered themselves the spokespersons and protectors of the demonstrators, distanced themselves from these new slogans. Their attempts to play on anxieties about a sell-out of “our material and moral values” and to propagate the GDR’s independence from the FRG as a “socialist alternative” to the Federal Republic, however, failed,⁹² and ended with a marginalization of the civil rights movement’s *avant garde*.

Movement into the FRG again rose dramatically: more than 120,000 people left the GDR from 10 November to the end of 1989; in all of 1989, 343,854 left; in January 1990, 73,729 left; in February, 63,893 left, and in March, the total was 46,241. Under the continued pressure of the demonstrations and increasingly from the SED membership, the central party structures disintegrated—the Politburo, Central Committee Secretariat, and the Central Committee dissolved themselves. The Party’s ability to direct the mass organizations also collapsed, as did the cadre nomenclature system. Without the guiding central point of the Party, the state government structures crumbled.

After the fall of the Wall and the end of the SED, which later reconstituted itself as the Party of Democratic Socialism (PDS), the Soviet Union was the last guarantee for the GDR’s existence as a state. At first, the Soviet leadership energetically opposed all tendencies toward unification by both German states. But the USSR’s internal problems—increasing nationality conflicts, severe economic and supply crises, threatening insolvency to the West, and the signs of deterioration of the Warsaw Pact—and the unstoppable deterioration of the SED’s power accelerated the recognition in January 1990 that the GDR could no longer be saved.⁹³ Gorbachev agreed to unification in principle with Modrow, Baker, and, on 10 February, finally, with Kohl. The first free parliamentary elections on 18 March 1990, from which the CDU-lead “Alliance for Germany” emerged as the strongest force with 48.1% of the vote, finally presented an unambiguous statement by the East Germans in support of a rapid path to a currency, economic, and social union⁹⁴ and to German unity.

The self-dissolution of the SED state after the collapse of the ruling system marked the German special path (*Sonderweg*) to the end of communist one-party rule in

Central and Eastern Europe. The reference to the German nation-state, however, was “not a new expression of a nationalistic consciousness,” as Rainer Lepsius has correctly pointed out. Rather, the nation-state was “the existing frame of reference,”⁹⁵ which had retained its normative claim to validity throughout the years of the division of Germany.



DOCUMENT No. 1
Memorandum of Conversation Between
Egon Krenz, Secretary General of the
Socialist Unity Party (SED),
and Mikhail S. Gorbachev,
Secretary General of the
Communist Party of the Soviet Union (CPSU),
1 November 1989

Top Secret

To all members and candidates of the Politburo
 [1 December 1989]
 signed Egon Krenz

Berlin, 1 November 1989

After the extremely friendly welcome, Comrade Egon Krenz pointed out that he had read in *Pravda* about the slogans by the CC CPSU on the occasion of the 72nd anniversary of the October Revolution. He had been touched in particular by the slogan “Greetings to October, greetings to the socialist countries”.

Comrade Mikhail Gorbachev expressed his pleasure about the fact that Comrade Krenz had come to Moscow even before the October [Revolution] festivities. This symbolized that both parties and countries were striving to implement the ideals of the October Revolution.

He sincerely welcomed Comrade Krenz to Moscow on behalf of all comrades of the Politburo of the CC CPSU and of the leadership of the Soviet Union as well as in his own name. Despite an extremely tight schedule, they had tried to make arrangements in order to free up this day for extensive conversations with Comrade Krenz. He [Gorbachev] was hoping in particular for vivid information on developments in the GDR. Although information about them had come in, the report by Comrade Krenz would be of extraordinary importance for him. Even the most extensive information needed to be evaluated thoroughly, and who could do this more precisely than the comrades from the GDR?

Presently, the entire world was witnessing that the SED had embarked on a course of fast changes. But the events were moving very fast as well, and one should not

fall behind. This had been the long-standing experience of the Soviet Union. Comrade Gorbachev pointed out that he had already said in Berlin [on 7 October 1989] that one must not miss the time for changes. A dialogue with society was necessary. There was no other way for a leading party to act. On the one hand, it [the Party] had to take the time to analyze the situation thoroughly and work out its political orientation. On the other hand, life was developing with its own dynamism, and one had to prevent a knot of problems from being created that could not be sorted out.

Comrade Gorbachev recommended not to be deterred by the complicated problems. From his own experience he knew that comrades were at times depressed because even after several years of *perestroika* in the Soviet Union there were still such great problems to resolve. He then always told them that the Party itself had wanted *perestroika*. It had involved the mass of people in politics. If now some processes were not running as expected, if there were stormy and emotionally charged arguments, then one would had to cope with that, too, and not become afraid of one's own people.

He did not mean to say that *perestroika* had been fully achieved in the Soviet Union. The horse was saddled but the ride was not over. One could still be thrown off. On the other hand, much experience had already been gained, which had great significance. Now the phase of intensified work for the continuation of *perestroika* was beginning in the Soviet Union.

The people and the Party in the GDR were presently also facing profound changes. He wished Comrade Krenz success for this. The Soviet Union would, of course, stand at the side of the comrades in the GDR in this process. This had never been in question, not even as problems emerged which should actually have been discussed openly. There had never been any doubt for the Soviet Union and the CPSU that the German Democratic Republic was its closest friend and ally. Second to the people of the GDR, the Soviet people were probably the one wishing the GDR the most success in its endeavor. In this vein he wished to welcome Comrade Krenz to his visit in Moscow.

Comrade Egon Krenz expressed his thanks for the welcome and communicated cordial greetings from the comrades of the Politburo of the CC SED. He appreciated that Comrade Gorbachev had so quickly found time for this talk. He also thanked him for his visit to Berlin on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the establishment of the GDR, and in particular for his conversation with the entire Politburo of the CC SED, which had moved ahead many things. This applied above all to the remark that one cannot be late [in adapting to changes], otherwise one will be punished by life [*daß man nicht zu spät kommen darf, sonst werde man vom Leben bestraft werden*].

Comrade Gorbachev interjected that he had actually been speaking about himself.

Comrade Krenz explained that this remark by Comrade Gorbachev and his entire appearance had met great

resonance within the Politburo. It had initiated the process of discussing the future policy of the Party.

The SED could state rightfully that it had made great strides since its last party convention. On the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the establishment of the GDR, one could draw the balance that a lot of good and lasting things had been done for the people. One could also build upon a good foundation.

The population, however, resented the Party for having the mass media in particular create a world of illusion that did not coincide with the practical experience of the people and their everyday life. That caused a break of confidence between Party and people. This was actually the worst thing that could happen to a party.

Some say that the cause for this is to be found in the fact that the party leadership misjudged the domestic political situation in the last three months. It proved to be speechless when so many people left the GDR. This was a tough accusation. In addition, besides political mistakes, important psychological mistakes were also made in this difficult situation: In the newspapers it was stated that we did not weep any tears after these people left. This deeply hurt the feelings of many mothers and fathers, relatives, friends and comrades of these people whose leaving caused them great pains.

Despite these facts the Politburo of the CC of the SED agreed that the political crisis in which the GDR currently found itself had not just begun this summer. Many problems had been accumulating for a long time.

Today one can say that the main reason [for this situation] was the mistaken approach of the XI SED Party Congress, which was not based on a realistic estimate of the situation. The solution of economic questions was derived from subjective opinions that failed to reflect the opinions prevalent in the Party and the population. Incorrect conclusions were drawn from important international developments—in the Soviet Union, in other socialist countries—as well as from the domestic developments in the GDR.

Comrade Krenz asked not to be misunderstood; if one had an ally and wanted to go through thick and thin with him, one could not just state this friendship in declarations and communiqués and one should not distance oneself when it came to the solution of concrete economic and other questions. But one had to stand together as friends and solve the emerging problems together.

He saw a great problem in the fact that young as well as older people had reservations about the development of socialism in the GDR since they suddenly felt that, on the basic questions of the evolution of socialism, the Soviet Union and the GDR were not seeing eye to eye any longer. This was the GDR's problem; the barriers had been build on its part. The people today, however, were educated and smart. They perceived very well that while the right words were used, the deeds did not follow suit.

Comrade Gorbachev interjected that the people in the GDR also received information from the Soviet Union

which they evaluated independently. They were also informed from the West and drew their conclusions.

Comrade Krenz stated that they in the GDR had unfortunately left many questions regarding *perestroika* in the Soviet Union to the judgment of the enemy and failed to have a dialogue with the people about it. This happened despite the fact that Comrade Gorbachev had advised Comrade Erich Honecker at one of their first meetings to deal with the opinions which had appeared in Soviet publications and with which he disagreed.

Comrade Krenz pointed out that the prohibition of [the Soviet magazine] *Sputnik* in the GDR had led to a situation in which the enemy could raise questions about the GDR citizens's right of access to information. The comrades and citizens outside the Party who complained about it were not primarily concerned about the contents of *Sputnik*. The problem was that the GDR leadership on the one hand was watching as the population was receiving broadcasts from the Western TV stations every evening for many hours, but, on the other hand, prohibited the reading of a Soviet newspaper. This was an important turning-point in the political thinking of GDR citizens. After the 9th Plenum of the CC of the SED [on 18 October 1989], one of the first steps to be ordered therefore was the return of *Sputnik* onto the list of permitted newspapers.

Comrade Gorbachev interjected that the GDR still has the right to criticize statements by Soviet news media with which it disagreed. You could read the most diverse things in Soviet newspapers nowadays; hardly anything could shock him in this regard. As an example he mentioned that a newspaper from a Baltic republic had recently cited a well-known Soviet economist to the effect that a conspiracy was being prepared in Moscow.

Comrade Krenz agreed that when the newspapers at home raise critical questions, one could quickly enter into a dialogue. Today one could hear among the GDR citizens that the [GDR TV show] "Aktuelle Kamera" was now already more interesting than Western TV [shows].

Comrade Krenz emphasized that despite all the imperfections and problems in the GDR and in face of the fact that there was still no coherent concept for the future developments, one thing had been achieved after all: The problems of the GDR were now not being brought into the GDR from the West, but were discussed in our country [by ourselves].

This was very important, Comrade Gorbachev interjected.

Comrade Krenz explained that even though he knew that Comrade Gorbachev was well informed about the developments since he personally had had many extensive conversations with [Soviet] Ambassador [Vyacheslav] Kochemassov, he nevertheless wanted to say that the road to the 9th Plenum of the CC of the SED had been very complicated.

When Comrade Krenz returned from his trip to China,⁹⁶ he decided to act. After consultation with Comrade Willi Stoph [Deputy Chairman of the Council of State] it was

agreed that he would propose a declaration by the Politburo on the current problems of the situation in the GDR. The draft of this declaration was basically very watered-down, since it was initially intended just to overcome the situation of paralysis together with Comrade Erich Honecker. Therefore they were willing to agree to a number of compromises.

Comrade Krenz handed the draft resolution to Comrade Honecker who later called him and stated the following:

1. If Comrade Krenz introduced the resolution in the Politburo, he [Honecker] would consider this as a move against him personally. He himself had never undertaken anything against Comrades Wilhelm Pieck [former GDR president (1949-1960)] and Walter Ulbricht [former SED First Secretary (1953-1971)]. Comrade Krenz commented that this was not the truth but had been stated [by Honecker] in this way.

Comrade Gorbachev interjected that he himself remembered Comrade Ulbricht's affair still very well.⁹⁷

2. Comrade Honecker declared that if Comrade Krenz introduced the resolution in the Politburo, he would divide the leadership of the Party. Comrade Honecker would try to prevent this resolution from being adopted.

3. If Comrade Krenz introduced this resolution in the Politburo, he would have to expect that the cadre decisions, which would sooner or later be introduced in the Politburo, would look different from those that had been planned. He was thereby referring to Krenz personally.

Comrade Krenz introduced the draft resolution in the Politburo against the will of Comrade Honecker. Comrade Honecker, who chaired the session, stated this fact explicitly. After a long discussion all other members of the Politburo, with the exception of one comrade, spoke out in favor of the declaration. On the evening of the first day of this two-day Politburo session, the attempt was made to constitute a commission composed of Comrades Günter Mittag [SED CC Secretary for Economics] and Joachim Herrmann [SED CC Secretary for Propaganda], along with Comrade Krenz. The objective was to water down the resolution even more. At the demand of Comrade Krenz, Comrade Günter Schabowski was involved in the work of the commission. Both fought together for the adoption of the resolution, which was eventually achieved.

Comrade Gorbachev remarked in this regard that, politically, this was all clear to him. In human terms, however, he viewed this development as a great personal tragedy for Comrade Honecker. He had always had a good personal relationship with him, and there had been no problems in this area. He had, however, noticed with surprise certain changes in Comrade Honecker within the last years. Had he [Honecker] made some basic policy changes two or three years ago at his own initiative, such deficits and difficulties as they currently existed would have been neither necessary nor possible. Comrade Erich Honecker obviously considered himself No. 1 in socialism, if not in the world. He did not really perceive any more

what was actually going on.

Comrade Krenz explained that he had personally been very much affected by this development since he had been close to Comrade Erich Honecker throughout much of his life.

Comrade Gorbachev interjected that this had also caused a certain amount of speculation in the West. But they should not be afraid of this.

Comrade Krenz went on to say that the change of Comrade Honecker had occurred in 1985 when Comrade Gorbachev was elected as secretary general of the CC of the CPSU. Suddenly, Comrade Honecker saw himself confronted with a young dynamic leader who approached new questions in very unconventional ways. Until that time he had viewed himself in that role. Slowly he lost his sense of reality. The worst thing was that he relied less and less on the collective and more and more on Comrade Günter Mittag.

Comrade Gorbachev asked about the role of Comrade Joachim Herrmann.

Comrade Krenz explained that Comrade Herrmann had, for the most part, followed orders by Comrade Honecker without his own input. Comrade Mittag, by contrast, had manipulated Comrade Honecker, created mistrust toward other members of the Politburo, and influenced tactical as well as strategic decisions by Comrade Honecker in selfish ways.

Comrade Krenz reported that the Politburo had discussed an analysis of the economic situation yesterday. Prior to the meeting they had requested to get an untarnished picture of the real situation of the GDR economy. Such an analysis had never before been discussed in the Politburo.

Comrade Gorbachev pointed out that he had found himself in the same situation. He had also had no knowledge about the state budget when he became secretary general. As early as during the tenure of Comrade [Yuri] Andropov [CPSU General Secretary from 1982 to 1984], he and Comrade [Nikolay] Ryzhkov [President of the Council of Ministers of the Soviet Union (1985 to 1990)] had been tasked to analyze the situation of the economy since it was felt that something was rotten there. But when they tried to find out the full truth they were ordered to back off. Today it was clear to him why this had happened. Basically a national budget no longer existed. They were still coping with the consequences today.

Comrade Krenz explained that they had begun the 9th Plenum on the premise that they would face up to the truth. But if he stated the truth about the state of the economy before the CC, this could cause a shock with bad consequences.

Comrade Gorbachev interjected that they had known about the real state of the GDR economy in the Soviet Union. They also were informed about the relations with the FRG and about the problems that were arising in that respect. The Soviet Union had always tried to fulfill its obligations towards the GDR. Apart from the fact that 2

million tons of oil [deliveries] had to be canceled due to great domestic problems, they had always understood that the GDR could not function without the help of Soviet Union. This support was the internationalist responsibility of the Soviet Union. They had wondered at the same time, however, why, given this situation, the GDR [leaders] was constantly lecturing about GDR successes. This was particularly hard to take since they knew about the real situation in the GDR. Comrade Gorbachev said that he once tried to talk to Comrade Honecker about the GDR debt. This had been curtly repudiated by him [Honecker] as such problems would not exist [in the GDR]. Comrade Honecker apparently thought he was the savior of his homeland. The entire development was a great personal tragedy for him.

Since he held such a high office, this [personal tragedy] turned into a political tragedy. Comrade Gorbachev emphasized he had tried to maintain a good personal relationship until the end. This had not been easy as he was aware of Comrade Honecker's statements and real opinion. He had, however, tolerated this since other things were more important.

Comrade Krenz emphasized that one had to take into consideration that many comrades had been aware of the problems for a long time. They, however, remained silent to maintain the unity and cohesion of the Party. He had distinctly realized for the first time in the Politburo session on 31 October 1989, how much of an impediment the [otherwise] correct principle of unity and cohesion could become in certain situations when problems are not faced frankly and honestly.

Comrade Gorbachev expressed his conviction that if Comrade Honecker had not been so blind and had not relied exclusively on Comrade Mittag, but had also consulted with Comrade Krenz or Comrade Stoph, things might have developed differently. He had particularly felt badly for Comrade Stoph because he had effectively been very much humiliated by Comrade Honecker.

Comrade Gorbachev remarked that he had been struck particularly badly by the way Comrade [Hans] Modrow [SED leader in Saxony] had been treated.

Comrade Krenz related on this point that he had actually received an order as early as two years ago to depose Comrade Modrow. Back then the artists at two Dresden theaters had demanded to implement *perestroika* in the GDR, too. Comrade Honecker was on vacation during that time. He called Comrade Krenz on the phone and ordered him to go to Dresden. There he was to lead the discussion with the objective of deposing Comrade Modrow. Comrade Krenz went to Dresden and had a very frank talk with Comrade Modrow. They found a tactical solution to the effect that Comrade Modrow was to be criticized but not dismissed from his office.

Comrade Gorbachev said that Comrade Krenz had addressed a very deep and important issue, namely that a mere formal unity within the Party was to be avoided. Unity had to be created based on a variety of opinions [and] respect for the opinion of others. Problems always

arose when a leader tried to maintain his position at any price and merely expected his [comrades] to agree. In the Soviet Union, they had watched Comrade Honecker enlarging the Politburo further in order to be able to play one comrade against another in this large committee. This had not been right.

Comrade Gorbachev reported that nowadays everybody was speaking their minds freely within the Politburo of the CC of the CPSU. If anybody would get to listen in, he would conclude that the Party was on the brink of collapse. But this was not the case. Even staffers of the comrades who participate in the sessions are at times allowed to speak up.

Comrade Krenz interjected that for such a procedure a lot of time was necessary.

Comrade Gorbachev explained that the Politburo of the CC of the CPSU took the time for this. Sometimes he would like to put an end to the long debates, but then would bite his tongue and made sure that the conclusions he drew would not offend the comrades. He would push through the line that he considered correct, but always in consideration of the opinions of the other comrades. This had created an entirely new situation. This way prevented them from making major mistakes.

Comrade [Georgy] Shakhnazarov, personal assistant of Comrade Gorbachev, who participated in the talks, added that policy would not be implemented by administrative means, but by argument and persuasion.

Comrade Krenz expressed his view that he had never experienced the Politburo of the CC of the SED [to be] as emotional as recently.

Comrade Gorbachev interjected that such controversial sessions, lasting for more than two days, had also taken place in the Politburo of the CC of the CPSU—once during a discussion on the letter of Nina Andreeva,⁹⁸ and another time during the debate on the long-term economic orientation.

Comrade Krenz explained that while the Soviet comrades were well-informed about the political and economic situation, he still wanted to describe the current economic situation since it was strangling the hands of the SED leadership in making urgently necessary political decisions. [...]

On the GDR balance of payments, Comrade Krenz provided the following information: Until the end of 1989, the foreign debt would grow to USD 26.5 billion, that is, 49 billion valuta [West German] mark.

The balance in convertible foreign exchange at the end of 1989 would look like this:

Income: USD 5.9 billion

Expenses: USD 18 billion

The deficit thus ran at about USD 12.1 billion. This meant that they had to take on new loans. It was likely that this imbalance would increase further.

Astonished, Comrade Gorbachev asked whether these numbers were exact. He had not imagined the situation to be so precarious.

Comrade Krenz explained that the GDR had to take on new loans in order to pay of old debts. Currently, they had to spend USD 4.5 billion on interest payments alone, which equaled 62 percent of the annual export profits in foreign currency.

Comrade Krenz emphasized that the high foreign debt was created above all because they had to take on loans at very high interests during the time of the Western financial blockade of the socialist countries. The situation grew particularly precarious due to simultaneously emerging new demands on the economy and new expectations by the population that could not be satisfied. The state of the balance of payments was currently not known in the GDR. If one would go on realistically and base the standard of living exclusively on the own production, one would have to lower it [the living standard] by 30 percent immediately. But this was not feasible politically.

Comrade Gorbachev gave the following advice on the issue based on his experience: Comrade Krenz and the SED leadership generally had to find a way to tell the population that it had lived beyond their means in the last few years. Comrade Krenz could not yet be held personally responsible for this. But it was increasingly necessary to tell the full truth. First one needed time for a comprehensive analysis. But later full information [of the population] was unavoidable, since otherwise Comrade Krenz would be blamed himself for the growing difficulties. Slowly the population had to already get used to this idea today. [...]

[Comrade Krenz] stated that he also agreed with the remarks by Comrade Gorbachev on the relationship with the FRG. He asked [Gorbachev] to explain more clearly what role the USSR ascribed to the FRG and the GDR in the all-European house. This was of great significance for the development of relations between the GDR and the FRG. He went on to explain that there was an important difference between the GDR and other socialist countries. The GDR was, in a certain sense, the child of the Soviet Union, and one had to acknowledge one's paternity with regard to one's children.

Comrade Gorbachev agreed with this and made reference to a conversation between Comrade Yakovlev and [former US National Security Advisor to President Carter] Zbigniew Brzezinski. They had, among other things, discussed whether one could imagine a situation in which the reunification of Germany could become a reality. Brzezinski emphasized that to him this would be the collapse.

Comrade Gorbachev welcomed Comrade Krenz bringing up this question. The GDR, the Soviet Union, and the other socialist countries had thus far followed a correct course on this question. This [course] had led to the recognition of the existence of two German states, to the international recognition of the GDR, to its active role in the world, to the conclusion of the [1970] Moscow Treaty, and other treaties, and ultimately to the [1975] Helsinki Conference.

In recent talks with [British Prime Minister] Margaret

Thatcher, [French President] François Mitterrand, [Polish leader Gen. Wojciech] Jaruzelski and [Italian Prime Minister Giulio] Andreotti, it had become clear that all these politicians presumed the preservation of the postwar realities, including the existence of two German states. They all viewed the question of German unity as extremely explosive in the current situation. Nor did they want the Warsaw Pact and NATO to dissolve, and therefore they favored Poland's and Hungary's remaining in the Warsaw Pact. The balance of power in Europe was not to be disturbed since nobody knew what repercussions this would have.

Even the US had thus far taken a similar attitude. However, currently many discussions among the FRG's allies were taking place. One sympathized in words with the FRG's concerns about a divided Germany. There were some nuances in the USA in this regard which would still have to be analyzed.

Comrade Shakhnazarov interjected that those statements were probably all made for domestic consumption.

Comrade Gorbachev agreed and emphasized that in practice the US was continuing its old policy. To his mind, the best policy now was to continue the current line. [Former West German Chancellor] Willy Brandt was of the same opinion. He had declared that for him the disappearance of the GDR would be a spectacular defeat for Social Democracy since it considered the GDR as a great achievement of socialism. While he distanced himself from the communists, he nevertheless considered Social Democracy as a branch of the labor movement and continued to cling to the socialist idea. [Egon] Bahr [West German Social Democratic Party (SPD) leader] had expressed this openly [and] with much clarity.

For the socialist countries, Comrade Gorbachev emphasized, the best thing was to emphasize that the current situation was a result of history. Nobody could ignore, however, that manifold human contacts existed between the two German states. These [contacts] could not be prevented; one had to keep them under control and steer them in the right direction. For this reason it was necessary to make some changes in policy to gain the understanding of the populace. Comrade Gorbachev offered that they could consult with the Soviet comrades about this question.

It would be very damaging to reduce or even sever the relations between the GDR and the FRG. In this connection, he [Gorbachev] wanted to point out the following factors:

1. It was important to improve coordination of the relations in the triangle GDR—FRG—Soviet Union. He had also talked about this with Comrade Honecker. The Soviet Union knew from other sources how relations between the GDR and the FRG were developing. They even knew within three days what had been discussed in the National Security Council of the United States. On the other hand, the US was also well-informed about developments in the

Soviet Union. Such after all was the situation. Therefore it was completely unnecessary to keep secrets from close allies.

Comrade Gorbachev pointed out that years ago there had been a joint office which coordinated the relations of the GDR and the Soviet Union with the FRG. At the time, it had been headed by Comrades Mittag and [Nikolai] Tikhonov [Chairman of the Council of Ministers, 1980-85]. It had silently ceased its activities, but it had to be revived.

Comrade Krenz mentioned that Comrade Honecker had been pleased that he could decide on trips to the FRG or China on his own. He very much favored finding ways at the working level through which common policies towards the FRG and West Berlin would be better coordinated. Comrade Gorbachev recommended discussing this question in the Politburo of the SED CC or in an even smaller circle.

2. It was also important to consider the relationships within this triangle very carefully. The Soviet Union was trying to bring the FRG as a partner into a closer relationship. Then the GDR would also be in a more favorable position within this triangle. Efforts in this direction were being made in the FRG. [The FRG] was ready to cooperate with the Soviet Union on a broad set of issues, but expected that the Soviet Union would lend support with regard to reunification. There was talk that the key to this lay in Moscow. The Americans stated this as well. This was a very convenient excuse for them. In their talks with the FRG, they spoke of their support for reunification, but always pointed to Moscow's key role. Moscow was to be handed the "black Peter."⁹⁹ On the other hand, the US was not pleased by the rapprochement between Bonn and Moscow in the economic and political field. In practical terms, not much had happened thus far. And one should not rush anything in this area either because the FRG representatives needed time.

For the GDR it was important to maintain and continually develop its relationship with the FRG. One had to be careful to prevent the ideological enemy from gaining positions—which he could exploit. Thus the GDR would continue to receive raw materials from the Soviet Union, and at the same time cautiously develop its relationship with the FRG, avoiding a total embrace by the FRG.

3. It was important for the GDR to develop its relations with other nations besides the FRG. Here, too, they could work closely with the Soviet Union. Hungary and Poland were already very active in this field. They, after all, had no choice in this matter. It was often asked what the USSR would do in this situation. But it could do very little in economic terms. It was an absurdity to think that the Soviet Union could support 40 million Poles. The root of the problem lay with [former Polish leader Edward] Gierek who had taken on loans totaling US\$ 48 billion. Meanwhile the Polish comrades had already paid back US\$ 52 billion and still owed US\$ 49 billion.

In 1987 Comrade [Hungarian leader János] Kádár was given an ultimatum by the I[international] M[onetary]

F[und]; in case of non-compliance with the numerous demands a suspension of the loans was threatened.

Comrade Krenz pointed out that this was not our way.

Comrade Gorbachev emphasized that such problems also existed in the GDR-FRG relationship. One was aware in the Soviet Union that GDR microelectronics were based to a large degree on Western components. Comrade Krenz remarked that [State Security Chief] Comrade [Erich] Mielke and his department were partly responsible for this. Moreover, Soviet components were also used. As a result, one had to collaborate more closely today. But it had to be a balanced collaboration with clearly set priorities.

Summing up, Comrade Gorbachev remarked that one had to continue the current policy, which had brought about success. The GDR and its people could be proud of that.

There was no reason to speculate how the German Question would eventually be resolved. The current realities had to be taken into consideration. This was most important.

If the tendency of rapprochement in Europe would continue for several decades, if the processes of integration would develop regardless of social systems, but in recognition of independent developments of politics and culture, development, and traditions, and if the exchange of intellectual and material goods evolved further, then the issue might present itself in a different light some day. But today this was not a problem of actual policy. The established line had to be continued in the current political situation. Comrade Gorbachev asked Comrade Krenz to communicate this to the comrades in the Politburo. There was an understanding about this between the Soviet Union and its former partners from the era of the Anti-Hitler Coalition.

Comrade Krenz pointed out that this policy had to be secured in ideological terms. Comrade Honecker posed the well known five-demands of Gera in the early 1980s.¹⁰⁰ On the one hand, the GDR had concluded numerous mutually beneficial treaties with the FRG since then; the FRG, on the other hand, had not shown any movement on any of these five demands. This had led to certain mistaken assumptions within the GDR. Since many prominent GDR representatives traveled to the FRG, average citizens were also demanding this right. There was a lot of talk about universal human values, but that had created a general German problem. Therefore the issue of de-ideologizing the FRG-GDR relationship was a very difficult question. The issue posed itself differently in relationships between other countries. De-ideologizing relations would mean abandoning the defense of socialism. Questions like the wall or the border regime with the GDR would arise anew. The GDR found itself in the difficult situation of having to defend these somehow anachronistic, but nevertheless necessary things.

Comrade Gorbachev expressed his opinion that this all had to be reconsidered. The time was ripe for this. If the GDR could not find a solution which allowed people to

visit their relatives, then this would be a very dissatisfying state of affairs for GDR society. The GDR would be threatened by new ultimatums. It had to take the initiative in its own hands. The Soviet Union was ready to talk about such measures. The GDR would have a better feel for what had to be done. It was certainly necessary to take some concrete steps which, however, had to be linked constantly with certain obligations and actions by the other side. It was time to exert greater pressure on Chancellor Kohl, now that he had established contacts with Comrade Gorbachev and Comrade Krenz. In the FRG, the national question was heavily exploited in politics. There were people in the government parties who wanted to get rid of Kohl. He, however, had put his bets on the nationalist issue. There were even more extreme demands from the right wing. The CDU [*Bundestag*] delegate [Jürgen] Todenhöfer had issued a letter to the US and Soviet Union demanding the immediate reunification of Germany. There was wild speculation about this subject in the FRG.

Comrade Krenz explained the envisioned measures to be taken by the GDR with regard to this set of issues:

1. The GDR will try to prevent any use of firearms along the border. The border guards had been instructed accordingly. They would only fire if there was acute danger to the life and health of the border guards.

2. The draft of a new travel law had been adopted by the Politburo and had been sent to the Council of Ministers, which would put it up for public discussion. [The draft law] was to be adopted by the *Volkskammer* [GDR Parliament] before Christmas.

According to this law, every GDR citizen had the opportunity to receive a passport and a visa for travel to all countries. The circle of those who would be excluded from this for security reasons would be kept very limited.

3. Unfortunately, the GDR was unable to provide travelers with sufficient foreign exchange. One could not continue to live over one's means. The publication of the travel law would be accompanied by a commentary which would explain that the foreign exchange generated by the FRG citizens travelling to the GDR would not be sufficient to provide GDR travelers with foreign currency.

Comrade Gorbachev suggested that one option would be the gradual achievement of convertibility of the GDR mark. This would be an incentive for workers to work harder, to strive for higher productivity and quality, by means of which such goals would be obtained.

Comrade Krenz explained further steps by the SED leadership over the next few days and weeks. On 8 November 1989, the 10th Plenum of the CC would be convened. It was to find an answer to the question of the GDR's future. If there was no serious answer to this question, the party leadership would continue to come under criticism by the CC.

Comrade Gorbachev repeated that the international reaction about the speech by Comrade Krenz before the *Volkskammer* in particular had been very positive.

Following his speech at the 9th Plenum of the SED CC, skepticism had been pervasive. The reaction had been very cautious. Now it was important to deepen the positive impression further.

Comrade Krenz pointed out that the instructions given to the Soviet ambassadors in various countries had contributed much in this regard.

Comrade Gorbachev informed [Krenz] that he had received positive responses from all the important statesmen to which he had turned.

Comrade Krenz reported that he had received congratulatory telegrams from them all, including Chancellor Kohl. He had had a brief phone conversation with the latter. Kohl pointed out his constant contact with Comrade Gorbachev and recommended that this would also be done with Comrade Krenz. Comrade Krenz responded that it was always better to speak with each other than to talk about each other. Kohl immediately brought up concrete proposals with regard to transit traffic, environmental issues, relations with West Berlin, etc [...] Comrade Krenz agreed to explore all concrete questions with the Chancellor's representative. Kohl above all wanted to speak about questions on which agreement was possible, not about those on which both sides disagreed. Comrade Krenz pointed out to Kohl explicitly that both the GDR and the FRG had their own interests. He [Kohl] had to expect that he [Krenz] would represent GDR interests more consistently than had heretofore been the case. Kohl had been very excited during the conversation. He frequently did not finish his sentences.

Comrade Gorbachev stated that Kohl was not an intellectual heavyweight, but rather a petit-bourgeois type. It was these classes that understood him best. But he was nevertheless a talented and stubborn politician. After all, even Reagan had been popular and had stayed in power relatively long. This also applied to Kohl.

Comrade Krenz predicted that the 10th Plenum of the SED CC would be a very stormy session. Many comrades were preparing for it and wanted to take the floor. The discussion had not been officially prepared. The times of deference toward the Politburo were over. The question was sharply raised as to the responsibility of the Politburo collective for the current situation. This also concerned his own personal responsibility. He hoped that they would find a smart answer to the question.

The Plenum was to adopt an action program. The reason was that the 7th and 8th Plenums of the CC had been overtaken by the events. The envisioned action program was to briefly outline the direction of future work. They would try to answer the question as to what constituted a better, more modern and attractive socialism, which socialist values had to be defended and which ones were questionable.

The Plenum would discuss radical economic reforms. The government would obtain the task to formulate the main directions. It was clear that the answer had to be found in socialism, not in the free market.

The second question concerned the broad development of socialist democracy. A series of new laws were in preparation. Elections posed a big problem. It had already been stated that we would use all experiences of previous elections and wanted to prepare a new election law. One would deal with constitutional issues, such as freedom of the press, *glasnost*, and freedom and dignity of the individual. The issues of the leading role of the Party under the new conditions had to be discussed. They had to further develop criticism and self-criticism in order to avoid subjectivism. The changes ranged as far as the proposal to set a term limit on the official tenure of the office of general secretary and other high officials.

Comrade Krenz informed [Gorbachev] that the Plenum would also deal with cadre issues. Those who had asked for relief from their functions included Comrades Mielke, [Politburo member Alfred] Neumann, [Politburo member and chairman of the SED *Volkskammer* faction Erich] Mückenberger, [Council of State member Kurt] Hager, and [Politburo member and foreign policy expert Hermann] Axen. Comrade [President of the *Volkskammer* and Politburo member Horst] Sindermann justified his intention to stay in office until the Party Convention. But the demands from the Party [rank-and-file] went even further.

Comrade Gorbachev had a very high opinion of Comrade Stoph. He had been in a difficult situation in recent years. He had maintained his dignity when he was forced into a corner by Comrade Mittag. He had consistently taken a very principled position in decisive situations. One must not throw all old comrades into one pot.

Comrade Krenz expressed his regret about the case of Comrade [Free German Union League (FDGB) Harry] Tisch. He was now forced to resign. The reason was that he had made a major political mistake during a TV broadcast. He had blamed responsibility for the current situation above all on the lower functionaries. According to him, the union officials had not fulfilled their duties because they had listened too much to the party secretaries in the factories. This had evoked great outrage among the union members. In the Politburo they agreed not to decide the matter here in order not to diminish the independence of the unions. For now the FDGB leadership had postponed its decision on this issue until 17 November. But even that was not accepted by many union members. There was even talk about the possibility of a split of the union if Comrade Tisch did not resign. Meanwhile Comrade Krenz had received a call to the effect that Comrade Tisch would resign immediately.

On the subject of the still on-going demonstrations, Comrade Krenz stated that the situation was not easy. The composition of the demonstrators was diverse. Some real enemies were working among them. A large part were dissatisfied [citizens] or fellow-travelers. The SED leadership was determined to resolve political problems by political means. The demonstrations would be legalized, and there would be no police action against them.

The situation, however, was developing according to its own dynamics. For the weekend, a large demonstration with possibly half a million participants was planned in Berlin. It had been initiated by artists and some of their associations.

Comrade Gorbachev provided the following information in this regard: Prior to his visit, he had received a letter from the GDR League of Culture through Raissa Maximovna Gorbachev in her function in the Soviet Culture Fond. [The letter] described the situation in the GDR and pointed out that the League of Culture would address an appeal to the GDR people if they had not received a response from the Party leadership by the time of the anniversary of the [GDR].

Comrade Krenz confirmed that if Erich Honecker had given a different kind of speech on the occasion of the anniversary [of the GDR], the situation might have taken a different course. With regard to the demonstration, the Politburo had decided to call on party members to participate. Comrade Schabowski would be among the 17 speakers in order to prevent the opposition from remaining among itself at this demonstration. They wanted to do everything to assure a peaceful event but had to take certain precautionary measures. One measure was to prevent the masses from attempting to break through the Wall. This would be bad because the police would have to be deployed and certain elements of martial law would have to be introduced. But such a development was not very likely, but one had to be prepared.

They expected the following slogans at the demonstration:

- Naming those responsible for the current situation
- Resignation of the senior Politburo members
- Changes in the composition of the government
- Travel opportunities
- Changes in the status of the union and the youth organization
- New electoral law
- Recognition of the opposition
- Abolishment of privileges
- Freedom of the press and thought
- Improvement of the living standard and continual production.

They were currently trying to avoid any criminalization of the demonstrators and to proceed very carefully. The question of recognizing the [opposition movement] "*Neues Forum*" had not yet been determined. So far they were unable to evaluate fully their political orientation. One had to avoid any developments similar to that of Solidarity in Poland.

Comrade Gorbachev shared Soviet experiences on these questions from the first phase of *perestroika*. Back then, many informal organizations and other movements were created. The leadership had watched them with skepticism. Good and bad [movements] were thrown into one pot. That way time was lost in certain republics. They

failed to integrate these movements into the activities of the Party, which in turn created polarization. Some of these forces developed into an opposition against the policy of *perestroika* and represented separatist, nationalist and anti-socialist views.

One should not waste any time with regard to these questions. Anti-socialist and criminal elements were one thing. But one could not generally consider the people as the enemy. If it rose against [the political leadership], one had to consider what political changes had to be made so that it accorded with the interests of the people and socialism. One should not miss the [right] point in time so that such movements would get on the other side of the barricades. The Party should not shy away from such problems, it had to work with these forces. They were now doing this in the Soviet Union, but it was already very late. These organizations had brought about their own leaders and worked out their own principles.

Where anti-Sovietism was involved, communists had no business being there. But for the most part they [these opposition groups] were concerned workers who worried about numerous neglected questions.

Comrade Krenz confirmed that the SED would approach the problem in this manner. But this would be a long process.

With regard to the remarks by Comrade Gorbachev, Comrade Krenz asked to check if the exchange of experience with the CC departments of the CPSU on a number of questions, with regard to which the Soviet Union had already accumulated many years of experience, could be expanded. This related to the fields of party organizations, security questions, and others. Generally, the exchange of know-how between the departments of the Central Committee should be intensified again.

Comrade Gorbachev welcomed this suggestion.

Comrade Krenz stated that the SED would again send cadres from training to Soviet party schools in the near future.

Comrade Krenz pointed out some currently unresolved problems in the field of economic cooperation. They included:

- an improved usage of the ferry connection Mukran-Klaipeda, which was of great significance for imports and exports;
- mutual improvements in living up to contractual obligations;
- examination of the possibility of a further increase in natural gas deliveries from the USSR, which the GDR would greatly appreciate;
- an agreement on further deliveries of the "Lada" automobile to the GDR, given that at the moment questions about the supply of consumer goods for the population, among others with cars, play a crucial role in the debate. This was a result of the extraordinary high savings in the GDR and the enormous budget deficit. Liquidity among the

population was very high. Add to this a systematic demand of goods, in particular by Polish citizens.

Comrade Gorbachev confirmed this in the case of the Soviet Union as well.

Comrade Krenz emphasized that, for the SED, the decisive issue was to restore the harmony [of hearts] with the CPSU and the USSR which was vital for us. The Soviet side had always been ready for this, but on our side there had been certain impediments. He wanted to declare on behalf of the Politburo of the CC of the SED that both parties should return to the method of frankly and honestly raising all questions of concern. The calls for “Gorbi, Gorbi” during the demonstrations in Berlin had shown that it was impossible to destroy the good relationship of the young people and the GDR entire population with the Soviet Union, even if the leadership had failed in this respect.

Comrade Gorbachev reported that the greatest difficulty for him in participating in the 40th anniversary of the GDR had been that he had been aware of the mood, and that he had felt very uncomfortable standing at Erich Honecker’s side.

Comrade Krenz interjected that he had even been accused of organizing this mood, especially among the young people. But it was simply a free expression of the attitude of the people.

Comrade Gorbachev emphasized that the visit of Comrade Krenz so shortly after his election was extraordinarily important for mutual agreement at the beginning of a new era. The point was to demonstrate jointly that they stood with each other, that the development in the Soviet Union was close to the one in the GDR, and vice versa. This was also important for the other socialist countries and for the entire world. In the FRG they were also interested in what Gorbachev and Krenz had agreed upon.

Comrade Gorbachev emphasized that he, in principle, shared all of the thoughts Comrade Krenz had expressed. They were dictated by the actual situation. For the SED it was now very important not to lose the initiative. The processes were developing very dynamically and could accelerate in pace. The party leadership had to react accordingly. It would be a great tragedy if the development would gain in spontaneity or lose its political orientation. This would create a situation, in which there was no other resort. Then it might be possible that mistaken slogans would dominate the situation and the situation could be exploited by other forces. Comrade Gorbachev pointed out that he had made his own experiences in this respect. Due to the hesitation by the [Soviet] leadership some problems had increased sharply; this concerned above all the economy. Comrade Krenz had emphasized correctly that the next plenum had to give an evaluation of the difficult situation. This evaluation had to be balanced but decisive. Comrade Gorbachev recalled in this context the January 1987 Plenum of the CC of the CPSU. There it was stated for

the first time that the Party would take responsibility for the current situation. Simultaneously, a concrete program of *perestroika* was proposed. It was possible that the development in the GDR could take different stages. But for the reputation of the secretary general it was extraordinarily important that he approached the problems with great responsibility and great respect for the truth. Otherwise nobody would believe him.

Comrade Krenz interjected that there already was criticism of the fact that comrade Honecker’s resignation had been explained in terms of bad health.

In Comrade Gorbachev’s opinion, here as well further explanations were necessary.

Comrade Gorbachev commented as correct to indicate at the plenum first outlines of the policy of the next era and adopt a respective action program. A detailed plan was not yet to be made public since this might make the secretary general seem hypocritical as he obviously was not taking the time to study and consider thoroughly proposals and recommendations from all sides. But the main directions of the action program were already becoming evident—more socialism, renewal, democratization. One would carry on what had been good and useful in the past. This, for example, concerned the social orientation of the GDR economy, which had always been its strong suit. This should not be abandoned. This was an asset of the GDR.

In the field of cadre policy, decisive changes were certainly imminent at the plenum. As an old communist, Comrade Mielke certainly wanted to set an example for others with his resignation. This made it possible for Comrade Krenz to separate cadre questions from the substantive question of *perestroika*. Certainly there was no question of a collective resignation of the Politburo or the cabinet but profound changes in the leadership were by no doubt necessary. The plenum had to take the first step. He recommended to elect a few intelligent and innovative figures from the CC to the Politburo and to adopt prominent representatives of culture and academia as members or candidates of the CC as well. This would increase the reputation of the bodies. With regard to Comrade Honecker, he could certainly still be defended within the plenum but it was questionable whether that was still feasible with regard to the people. The people had risen and today stated their opinion frankly. Therefore they had to respond not only to the Plenum of the CC but also to the people. In this respect as well it was necessary not to miss the signs of the times. Society would continue to pose the question of responsibility for the situation, and for this reason profound leadership changes were due, too.

Despite determined policy changes, a complete negation of the past was to be avoided. This would also be disrespectful of the people who had made the previous achievements of the GDR. One also had to find a form of dialectical negation whereby one kept the good that contributed to the strengthening of socialism and added as new what life produced.

Comrade Gorbachev emphasized that Comrade Krenz

had the reputation of being a man of courage. A secretary general could not avoid the problems either but had to face them; he had to act in consideration of the concrete situation and accurately assess changes in society. Coming up with new ideas and implementing them—all this was expected from a secretary general.

Comrade Gorbachev expressed his full agreement with Comrade Krenz on relations with the FRG. It was necessary to revitalize cooperation and coordination between the GDR and the Soviet Union. Each of them was well aware of the other's relations with the FRG. One therefore ought not to make a secret out of it but cooperate and take advantage of it. The FRG, too, had the necessary information and was very interested in cooperating. Comrade Krenz was right in thinking that the parties should increasingly be put in control of cooperation. He therefore welcomed the proposal to intensify again the exchange of experience between the departments of the Central Committees. The same applied to the CC secretaries.

The working-level and close contacts in this field were, however, most important. The joint work of the academies of social sciences ought to be strengthened as well. In this connection, Comrade Gorbachev inquired about the fate of Comrade [Otto] Reinhold. He had always been viewed as working especially closely with Comrade Honecker.

Comrade Krenz stated that Comrade Reinhold had also changed his mind [*Wende vollzogen*]. This had practically happened overnight. He was criticized for a remark he made in a TV discussion during which he apologized for previous statements that had been specifically ascribed to him.

Comrade Gorbachev remarked jokingly that Comrade Otto Reinhold had written about the 10 deviations from Marxism-Leninism by Comrade Gorbachev.

Comrade Krenz also informed about the fate of Comrade Hans Albrecht, the former first secretary of the district leadership in Suhl. He did not cope with his work any longer. In addition, there existed resentment in the CC about an unprecedented statement by him about the secretary general of the CPSU CC. He had remarked at the last CC Plenum that Comrade Gorbachev had not performed in a class-conscious manner during his last visit to the FRG. Comrade Albrecht would no longer be serving as first secretary of the district leadership already in the coming days.

Comrade Gorbachev explained that it was now necessary to revive creative Marxism, socialism in a Leninist way, the humanistic and democratic socialism in which man really felt that this was his society and not an elite society. This process was not easy to implement. Of this he had become aware during his visit to Cuba. There had been a tense atmosphere initially. He himself, however, had explained that *perestroika* resulted from the development of the Soviet Union, and was necessary for the solution of Soviet problems. The question of whether socialism in the Soviet Union would succeed or fail was of importance for the entire world, including Cuba. The Soviet

Union on the other hand welcomed all measures, which the C[ommunist] P[arty of] Cuba thought necessary under its conditions. They trusted its responsibility and its competence. It was important, Comrade Gorbachev explained, that revolutionary *perestroika* could not be forced upon anybody. Even in the GDR the situation had to develop to this point, which now made the process very difficult and painful.

Comrade Gorbachev pointed out that he had always exercised the greatest restraint towards the comrades in the GDR. The objective had been to avoid any ill feeling in the relationship, even though they were well aware of the situation in the GDR. They had been patient because they understood that the Party and all of society had to mature first before making these changes.

Today the important thing in the socialist countries was that each of them had to think on its own. On the other hand there were certain criteria and main characteristics for socialism in all countries.

Comrade Gorbachev reported at the conclusion of his conversation on domestic problems in the Soviet Union. He related that he would continue that same day discussions with leading economists. Very controversial debates on the future development of the Soviet Union were currently taking place in all fields. Some demanded the re-introduction of private property of the means of production, and the employment of capitalistic methods; others demanded the admission of more political parties. There were arguments about whether the Soviet Union ought to continue as a federation or confederation. In the economic field in particular, these debates were increasingly of a principled [ideological] character.

There were already comrades who had a different idea about the economic development and attempted to force capitalistic prescriptions upon the CPSU out of disappointment over previous failures. The workers had realized this immediately and reacted with demands to strengthen the dictatorship of the proletariat. There were also calls for a return to the old administrative command system. This would, however, be a great tragedy for the Soviet Union.

The current arguments illustrated clearly that *perestroika* was a true revolution. Comrade Gorbachev expressed with great determination, however, that he would not let the confrontation develop to the point of civil war or bloodshed. The situation, however, was very tense, and they were dealing with a true political battle. Therefore it was necessary to prove that socialism was capable of constant development, of perfection, and full realization of its potential. It was a weakness of socialism that changes in the leadership could lead to severe shake-ups at any time. The reason for this was that the people were not involved in the decisions [and] that the democratic mechanisms were not fully working. They had to be put in full action. It was important to further consolidate society, to mobilize its creative forces, and to achieve clarity on the kind of socialist society they wanted to build. All concrete proposals and constructive ideas were welcome. A current

problem in the Soviet Union was the debate with those who seriously called for a return to private ownership of the means of production. For this purpose some had even come up with quotes from Marx and Lenin by which they attempted to prove that private property did not have to mean exploitation. To their minds, the main problem was the character of power by which private property could be put to use for or against the people.

Comrade Gorbachev pointed out that there could well exist forms of private property—in manufacture, in the countryside—as it, for example, was the case in the GDR. But this was not individual property. These minor forms were, however, not a major problem for a socialist society. There existed, however, forces in the Soviet Union that wanted to go much further. Comrade Gorbachev predicted that the GDR would also face such discussions, even more so since the capitalist example was so close geographically. In addition, the FRG was a very wealthy capitalist country the existence of which would be ever present in the political debates.

Comrade Krenz expressed that his decision to act had been made when he realized during the conversation between Comrade Gorbachev with the Politburo of the SED CC that Comrade Honecker did not comprehend the statements by Comrade Gorbachev, or did not want to understand them.

Comrade Gorbachev stated that he had had the impression during that conversation that he was throwing peas against a wall. He did not hold any grudge against Comrade Honecker but was only sad that he had not initiated this change of course himself two or three years ago. This period could have been the highpoint of his life. After all, the GDR had achieved very much under his leadership. All this had been achieved together with the Party and the people. Under no circumstances should this [fact] therefore be denied. That would be disrespectful of the people who then would have basically lived in vain. This development had to be viewed in dialectical terms. The progress of society, the prologue for the future, and the great potential had to be considered, as well as the factors that had recently slowed down the development of society.

Comrade Krenz agreed and expressed his thanks in cordial terms for the extensive and profound conversation.

[Source: Stiftung “Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der ehemaligen DDR im Bundesarchiv” (SAPMO-BA), Berlin DY30/JIV2/SA/3255. Document obtained by Christian F. Ostermann and Vladislav Zubok and translated for CWHIP by Christian F. Ostermann.]

DOCUMENT No. 2
Cover Note from Alexander Schalck to Egon Krenz,
6 November 1989¹⁰¹

WITH ATTACHMENT,

“Notes on an Informal Conversation between Comrade Alexander Schalck and Minister of the Chancellery Rudolf Seiters and CDU Board Member Wolfgang Schäuble on 6 November 1989”¹⁰²

Dear Comrade Krenz!

I enclose the notes on the conversations with Federal Minister Seiters and CDU Board member Schäuble.

Seiters will, in the course of this evening have an opportunity, together with Schäuble, to inform the Chancellor [about the conversation]. If this should already result in useful items, he [Seiters] will inform me on 7 November 1989, by phone.

I ask for acknowledgement and determination of further steps.

On the basis of the authority currently given to me for the informal negotiations with the government of the FRG, I ask you cordially that you agree that I should not take part in any public discussions (including television) in order to prevent any informally discussed options from being leaked to the public by potential mishaps on my part. Should these negotiations reach a conclusion, I will, of course, be further available to the media, pending your permission.

With socialist greetings
[Schalck’s signature]

ATTACHMENT

Notes on an informal conversation between
Comrade Alexander Schalck and Federal Minister and Chief
of the Chancellery, Rudolf Seiters,
and CDU Board member Wolfgang Schäuble,
6 November 1989

Continuing the informal conversation of 24 October 1989, I first repeated the GDR’s basic positions on further political and economic cooperation with the government of the FRG and the West Berlin Senate. I emphasized that the GDR was prepared, in implementing the obligations accepted in the CSCE process, to renew societal development. I also emphasized that the SED was prepared to cooperate constructively with the other democratic parties in a manner that served socialism and the interests of the GDR.

Within the framework of the decision to develop laws to guarantee the rule of law, the criminal code of the GDR will be amended to expand personal freedom, freedom of expression, and other issues to meet the new requirements.

To secure tourist and visitor traffic, the GDR is prepared to implement generous regulations for travel between the capital of the GDR and West Berlin via newly opened border crossings.

The implementation of these measures will create significant financial and material costs.

It is assumed that the FRG will cover these expenses to a great extent.

It was pointed out that the GDR is prepared to develop economic cooperation, including new forms like joint ventures and capital sharing in certain branches and sectors. It is assumed that the FRG government will take over the necessary loans in the cases of smaller and mid-sized businesses.

The GDR would be prepared to take out long-term loans up to ten billion VE, backed by collateral [*objektgebunden*] in the next two years that would be financed by the new [economic] capacity that will be created. It is assumed that repayment of the loans will begin after full production begins, and the loans are to be paid out over a period of at least ten years.

Further, the GDR sees the necessity of discussing additional lines of credit in hard currencies beginning in 1991 and totaling DM 2-3 billion to meet the demands connected with the new level of cooperation in a number of areas.

In light of the planned visit by Federal Minister Seiters to the GDR on 30 November 1989 and his official conversations with the General Secretary of the SED Central Committee and Chairman of the State Council of the GDR, Egon Krenz, as well as with Foreign Minister Oskar Fischer, Seiters was informed that the GDR is prepared to make binding commitments in a "protocol of understanding" about the extension of trade and economic relations, further negotiations on the issue of environmental protection, negotiations over the further development of postal and long-distance phone connections, and other plans.

Seiters was asked, in reference to the discussions of 24 October 1989, to give the FRG government's position on the most pressing issue of the moment: the possibility that his government would take over part of the additional expenses the GDR would incur in connection with its planned expansion of tourist and visitor traffic within the framework of the new travel law.

Seiters thanked me for the presentation and stated that these decisions were of great importance to the government of the Federal Republic.

Seiters presented the following thoughts on my proposal that GDR citizens travelling abroad be given the possibility to exchange DM 300 once a year at an exchange rate of DM 1 = East Mark 4.4:

—With the precondition that the minimum exchange requirement be lifted, a travel fund could be established with

foreign currency by the FRG (with 12.5 million travelers, the account would be worth approximately DM 3.8 billion). The FRG's previous annual payment of DM 100 "greeting money" per person would be eliminated. The DM 400 million that the GDR has received in the minimum exchange would also be paid off through the travel fund.

—The amount exchanged by GDR citizens for travel currency (with 12.5 million travelers, approximately DM 16.7 billion yearly) will be earmarked for a fund that the FRG and GDR will control jointly. The FRG thinks these funds should be used for the construction of border crossings, environmental protection measures, or for other projects that are of interest to both sides, such as transportation or postal and long-distance services.

The FRG also assumes that the necessary number of border crossings between the capital of the GDR and West Berlin will be constructed and opened. Provisional measures will be part of the construction, which can then be expanded in stages.

These measures are to guarantee an orderly border-crossing procedure for the increased tourist, visitor and transit traffic.

The FRG's position is that the contributions from the exchanged funds for travel will finance the construction.

The questions associated with the cost of train travel (between the FRG and the GDR/Berlin) can be addressed later.

Seiters stated openly that the domestic political passage and justification of the proposed positions by the GDR would necessarily have certain political consequences.

In this context, he mentioned the possibility for all [East German] citizens who had left the country legally or illegally to return to the GDR, so that all GDR citizens, with the exception of individual cases to be documented, could return to the GDR for visits.

He did not make a secret of the fact that a number of responsible politicians in the governing coalition had reservations after the "Saturday Meeting" in Berlin.

Seiters also made it clear that under no circumstances could he give a final answer immediately, and his comments were to be understood only as his own expression of the first contours of ideas.

Schäuble, clearly acting under careful instructions from the Chancellor, made it clear that a great deal depends on the speech by the General Secretary at the tenth meeting of the SED Central Committee. This speech had to make it clear that the turn toward renewal was credible, that the announced reforms were clear, and that trustworthy people not tainted by their positions in the previous administration would be responsible for their implementation.

Article 1 of the GDR Constitution, which establishes the leading role of the Marxist-Leninist Party, poses a fundamental problem in this context.

Schäuble strongly recommended that the SED, to allow a peaceful transition to a societal development born by all political, societal and religious organizations, make it clear

that it is prepared to change the GDR Constitution to correspond to the current state of societal development and the obligations it accepted under the CSCE treaty. This amendment of the Constitution should transform the leading role of the SED into a constructive, consensus-building cooperation among all democratic forces in the interests of socialism and the GDR.

Schäuble recommended that we give representatives of the Church an important role in the GDR.

In reference to the state border to West Berlin, constructed on 13 August 1961 to protect the GDR, Schäuble also proposed making this border more passable, in accordance with the CSCE process, through the construction of new border crossings.

Schäuble made it clear again that all economic and financial decisions by the FRG government assumed that the GDR would lower its subsidies decisively.

Schäuble also said that many politicians in the FRG did not understand the reticent stance on providing information about the events on 7-8 October 1989. In his opinion, the GDR would be well advised, and it would be in their interests, to name the security officer directly responsible and announce the measures taken.

[He mentioned that] there are occasionally attacks in the FRG that are being investigated.

If the GDR does not take action, the topic will be played up again by certain forces.

Further consideration by the FRG government was necessary for the other issues involved in developing [further] cooperation, particularly in the economic sector and on the question of [extending further] credits. The FRG was not yet in the position to make concrete suggestions for future binding agreements.

The reserved attitude of the FRG government was clear, and it wants to wait until the results of the tenth meeting [of the SED Central Committee] to resume negotiations.

In conclusion, Schäuble again strongly recommended that General Secretary Egon Krenz deal with the aforementioned issues in his speech. If that were not the case, Chancellor Kohl would not be in a position to justify financial assistance from FRG taxes [for the GDR] to the parliament.

[Source: Published in Hans-Hermann Hertle, Der Fall der Mauer. Die unbeabsichtigte Selbstauflösung des SED-Staates, 2nd edition, (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1999), pp. 483-486. Translated for CWIHP by Howard Sargeant.]

DOCUMENT No. 3

Letter from Alexander Schalck to Egon Krenz, 7 November 1989¹⁰³

Dear Comrade Krenz!

After my conversation yesterday with Seiters and Schäuble, Federal Minister Seiters informed me today of the results. The Chancellor transmits the Chairman of the GDR State Council the following:

The course of yesterday's demonstration in Leipzig and the spontaneous exits from the GDR to the FRG which have occurred in the last few hours have produced public demands in the FRG, and increasingly in certain circles of the SPD, for the Chairman of the [GDR] State Council to declare publicly that the GDR is prepared to guarantee that opposition groups will be permitted and affirm that free elections will be held within a period to be announced if the GDR wants to receive material and financial assistance from the FRG. This applies also to the financial arrangements regarding travel [by East Germans to the West].

It should be noted that this path is only possible if the SED relinquishes its claim to absolute power. [The Party] should be prepared to work on equal terms, and in consensus, with all societal forces, churches and religious communities to discuss a true renewal, with the goal of achieving democratic socialism, and with the understanding [that they are] to be prepared to carry out any resulting decisions.

Under these conditions, the Chancellor thinks a great deal can be achieved and every option can be explored.

Federal Minister Seiters is authorized to be available for further informal discussions.

I ask that you take note of this.

With socialist greetings,
[Alexander Schalck]

[Source: Published in Hans-Hermann Hertle, Der Fall der Mauer: Die unbeabsichtigte Selbstauflösung des SED-Staates, 2nd edition (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1999), pp. 486-87. Translated for CWIHP by Howard Sargeant.]



DOCUMENT No. 4

Minutes No. 49 of the Meeting of the SED Politburo, 7 November 1989

[EXCERPTS]

Information by Comrade O. Fischer on the situation regarding GDR citizens departing via the ČSSR.

Report compiled by:

O. Fischer

1. Comrade O. Fischer will make a suggestion, in agreement with Comrades F. Dickel and E. Mielke, for the SED Central Committee which allows for this part of the travel law that deals with permanent exit to be put into effect immediately through an executive order [*Durchführungsbestimmung*].
2. Comrade O. Fischer will inform the USSR's Ambassador to the GDR Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary, Comrade V[yacheslav I.] Kochemassov, and the Czechoslovaks about the proposal and the Politburo's position. At the same time, consultations with the FRG are to be carried out.
3. The mass media should use their influence to help that GDR citizens do not leave their country. They should inform about people who have returned. Responsible: Comrade G. Schabowski.
4. Comrade G. Schabowski is assigned to discuss this problem with the representatives of the bloc parties [Christian Democrats, Liberal Democrats] in order to reach a joint position.

[Source: SAPMO-BA, DY 30/J IV 2/2/2358. Translated for CWIHP by Howard Sargeant.]



DOCUMENT No. 5
Memorandum of Conversation between
Comrade Oskar Fischer and the
Soviet Ambassador V[yacheslav] I.
Kochemassov,
7 November 1989, at 11:45 a.m.¹⁰⁴

The conversation took place at the request of the Minister, Comrade Fischer.

I

Comrade Oskar Fischer stated that the Politburo had discussed the problem of exits by GDR citizens, and the connected problems in the ČSSR (blocking of the border crossings...). [It was the GDR's duty] to relieve the Czechoslovak comrades. The GDR/FRG border would not be opened, because this would have uncontrollable effects. For the same reason, the border to the ČSSR could not be closed.

The following measures were planned:

1. The media campaign aimed at inducing GDR citizens to remain in their country will be intensified. It was being attempted to co-opt certain people (personalities) to join the campaign. At the same time, returnees from the FRG should also be effectively used in this

campaign.

2. The campaign against the FRG's "duty to take care of [the East Germans]" will also be intensified. In this effort the support of our allies is desirable. Our ambassadors in Western Europe have been instructed to work along the same lines.

3. The [implementation of the] part of the travel law that deals with permanent exit of GDR citizens will be put in effect in advance.

4. It is to be discussed with the ČSSR as to whether including its border crossings to Bavaria [Brambach-Vojlanov] as an exit route would bring relief. At the same time the ČSSR would be asked as to whether it could close the border with the GDR. That would mean, however, punishing well-intentioned GDR citizens. If the GDR were to close [its border], a power struggle would ensue.

5. The GDR will inform Bonn about what they can expect as far as GDR citizens traveling to the FRG are concerned. It will demand forcefully that the FRG oppose the entry of GDR citizens. We will take them at their word.

6. Comrade Schabowski will inform the bloc parties about these things today, and Comrade Jarowinsky will talk to the representatives of the churches.

7. Comrade Ziebart will be informed by the Minister immediately, since he has an appointment today in Prague at 1:15 p.m. with Comrade Lenart.

II

Comrade Gorbachev's opinion as to the larger picture as well as to our plans for the travel law is very important to Comrade Krenz. The GDR would appreciate the support of the USSR.

Comrade Kochemassov thanked Comrade Fischer for the information. As an additional measure, he suggested including the former allies (USA, Britain, France) in order to prompt them to put pressure on the FRG.

Comrade Fischer agreed.

Comrade Kochemassov assured [Comrade Fischer] that the request would be forwarded to Moscow at once and promised a prompt response.

[Source: BA, Berlin, DC-20 4933. Translated for CWIHP by Howard Sargeant.]

DOCUMENT No. 6
Material for the Session/For Circulation
in the Council of Ministers,
Draft: Temporary Transition Rules for Travel
and Permanent Exit from the
GDR, Berlin,
9 November 1989

Material for the meeting
 For Circulation in the Council of Ministers
 Berlin, 9 November 1989
Members of the Council of Ministers

It is requested that the attached draft resolution Temporary Transition Rules for Travel and Permanent Exit VVS b2-937/89 by the GDR Chairman of the Council of Ministers be approved through circulation today, Thursday, 9 November 1989, by 6:00 p.m.

[Harry] Moebis¹⁰⁵

Material for the meeting
 Secret
 Council of Ministers Circular b2-937/89
 [11/9/89]
 [40th] copy 4 pages
 V 1204/89

Title of the draft:
 Temporary—Transition
 Rules for Travel and
 Permanent Exit from the GDR

Draft presented by:
 Chairman of the Council of Ministers

signed: Willi Stoph

Berlin, 9 November 1989

Draft Resolution

The attached resolution on the temporary transition rules for travel and permanent exit from the GDR is approved.

Draft Resolution

To change the situation with regard to the permanent exit of GDR citizens to the FRG via the ČSSR, it has been determined that:

1. The decree from 30 November 1988 about travel abroad of GDR citizens will no longer be applied until the new travel law comes into force.
2. Starting immediately, the following temporary transition regulations for travel abroad and permanent exits from the GDR are in effect:
 - a) Applications by private individuals for travel abroad

- b) The responsible departments of passport and registration control in the People's Police district offices in the GDR are instructed to issue visas for permanent exit without delays and without presentation of the existing requirements for permanent exit. It is still possible to apply for permanent exit in the departments for internal affairs [of the local district or city councils].
 - c) Permanent exits are possible via all GDR border crossings to the FRG and (West) Berlin.
 - d) The temporary practice of issuing (travel) authorizations through GDR consulates and permanent exit with only a GDR personal identity card via third countries ceases.
3. The attached press release explaining the temporary transition regulation will be issued on 10 November.

Responsible: Government spokesman of the GDR
Council of Ministers

Press release

Berlin (ADN)¹⁰⁶

As the Press Office of the Ministry of the Interior has announced, the GDR Council of Ministers has decided that the following *temporary transition regulation* for travel abroad and permanent exit from the GDR will be effective until a corresponding law is put into effect by the *Volksammer*:

- 1) Applications by private individuals for travel abroad can now be made without the previously existing requirements (of demonstrating a need to travel or proving familial relationships). The travel authorizations will be issued within a short period of time. Grounds for denial will only be applied in particularly exceptional cases.
- 2) The responsible departments of passport and registration control in the People's Police district offices in the GDR are instructed to issue visas for permanent exit without delays and without presentation of the existing requirements for permanent exit. It is still possible to apply for permanent exit in the departments for internal affairs [of the local district or city councils].
- 3) Permanent exits are possible via all GDR border crossings to the FRG and (West) Berlin.
- 4) This decision revokes the temporary practice of issuing (travel) authorizations through GDR consulates and permanent exit with only a GDR personal identity card via third countries ceases.

[Source: *Bundesbeauftragter für die Unterlagen der Staatssicherheit (BstU), Central Archive, MfS Working Group Nieber 553, sheets 15-19. Translated for CWIHP by Howard Sargeant.*]

DOCUMENT No. 7
Transcript of the Tenth Session of the
SED Central Committee,
9 November 1989,
from 3:47 p.m. - 3:55 p.m.

[EXCERPTS]

Krenz: Comrades! Before Günther¹⁰⁷ speaks, I have to digress from the agenda once more. You are aware that there is a problem that wears on us all: the question of exit [from the GDR]. The Czechoslovak comrades are increasingly finding it a burden, as our Hungarian comrades did earlier. And, whatever we do in this situation, it will be a move in the wrong direction. If we close the border to the ČSSR, then we are basically punishing the upstanding citizens of the GDR, who would not be able to travel, and in this way put pressure on us. Even that would not have led to our gaining control of the situation, since the Permanent Mission of the FRG has already informed us that they have finished with renovations. That means that when they open the building, we will face the same problem again.

And, Comrade Willi Stoph, as acting Chairman of the Council of Ministers, drafted a decree which I would like to read to you here and now. Although the draft has been approved by the Politburo, it has such an impact that I wanted to consult the Central Committee.

Decision to change the situation for permanent exit of GDR citizens to the FRG via the ČSSR.

It is decreed:

1. The decree of 30 November 1988 about travel abroad for GDR citizens will no longer be applied until the new travel law comes into force.
2. Starting immediately, the following temporary transition regulation for travel abroad and permanent exits from the GDR are in effect:
 - a) Applications for travel abroad by private individuals can now be made without the previously existing requirements (of demonstrating a need to travel or proving familial relationships). The travel authorizations will be issued on short notice. Grounds for denial will only be applied in particularly exceptional cases.
 - b) The responsible departments of passport and registration control in the police county offices [VPKÄ] in the GDR are instructed to issue visas for permanent exit without delays and without presentation of the existing requirements for permanent exit. It is still possible to apply for permanent exit in the departments for internal affairs.
 - c) Permanent exits are possible via all GDR border crossings to the FRG and (West) Berlin.
 - d) The temporary practice of issuing (travel)

authorizations through GDR consulates and permanent exit with only a GDR personal identity card via third countries ceases.

3. The attached press release explaining the temporary transition regulation will be issued on 10 November.

The press release reads as follows: “As the Press Office of the Ministry of the Interior has announced, the GDR Council of Ministers has decided that the following temporary transition regulation for travel abroad and permanent exit from the GDR will be effective until a corresponding law is put into force by the *Volkskammer*.”

Then follow the four points that I do not need to read to you again.

I said that however way we do this, it will turn out bad. But it is the only solution that saves us from the problems of having to do everything through third countries, which does not further the international prestige of the GDR. Comrade Hoffmann?¹³

Hoffmann: Comrade Krenz, could we avoid this word “temporary”? It creates a constant pressure, as if people didn’t have any time left and had to get away as soon as possible. Wouldn’t it be possible—I don’t know the entire text—to avoid that or work around it?

Krenz: Yes, we could write: “According to the *Volkskammer*’s decision, the following transition regulation” and simply take out “temporary.” Transition regulation, after all, means temporary.

Dickel:¹⁰⁹ Until the travel law comes into effect.

Krenz: So, until the travel law comes into effect, the following things are valid, OK?

(noise)

Krenz: Agreed? (noise) Comrade Dickel, do you foresee any difficulties? It’s correct as it is, isn’t it? [noise, Chair rings bell]

Dickel: As far as the announcement is concerned—(shout: louder!) it perhaps would make sense for the Press Office of the Council of Ministers to make the announcement rather than the Ministry of the Interior, although we will actually carry out the decree, since it is a decree from the Chairman of the Council of Ministers.

Krenz: I would suggest that the government spokesman make the announcement right away. (shouting) What? (noise)

Banaschak:¹¹⁰ Isn’t it dangerous to adopt such a passage, “temporary”? ... (shouts: louder!) If we adopt such a passage, one that contains “temporary” or “transition solution,” couldn’t that have the effect that people aren’t sure what will come next... (noise, shouts: They just said that! Further noise, shouts)

Krenz: Therefore, we will say that we will avoid “temporary” as well as “transition rule” and say: until the travel law, which is to be passed by the *Volkskammer*, comes into effect, this and that is decreed. Agreed, Comrades? (shouts: yes!) Good, thank you very much. Günther Jahn, you have the floor.

(Quietly, to his neighbor at the presidium table, with the microphone turned off): It is always good to do something like that. (Loudly, with microphone turned on): After Günther Jahn, Günter Sieber will take the floor.

[Source: SAPMO–BA, tape Y 1/TD 738, transcribed in Hans-Hermann Hertle and Gerd-Rüdiger Stephan (eds.), *Das Ende der SED: Die letzten Tage des Zentralkomitees*, 4th edition, (Berlin: Dietz, 1999), pp. 303-306. Translated for CWIHP by Howard Sargeant.]



DOCUMENT No. 8
Günter Schabowski's Press Conference in the
GDR International Press Center,
9 November 1989,
6:53-7:01 p.m.¹¹¹

Question: My name is Ricardo Ehrman, representing the Italian press agency ANSA. Mr. Schabowski, you spoke about mistakes. Don't you believe that it was a big mistake to introduce this travel law several days ago?

Schabowski: No, I don't believe so. (Um) We know about this tendency in the population, this need of the population, to travel or to leave the GDR. And (um) we have ideas about what we have to bring about, (such as) all the things I mentioned before, or sought to mention in my response to the question from the TASS correspondent, namely a complex renewal of the society (um) and thereby achieve that many of these elements... (um) that people do not feel compelled to solve their personal problems in this way.

Those are quite a number of steps, as I said, and (um) we can't start them all at once. There are series of steps, and the chance, through expanding travel possibilities ... the chance, through legalizing exit and making it easier to leave, to free the people from a (um) let us say psychological pressure... Many of these steps took place without adequate consideration. We know that through conversations, through the need to return to the GDR, (um) through conversations with people who find themselves in an unbelievably complicated situation in the FRG because the FRG is having a great deal of trouble providing shelter for these refugees.

So, the absorptive capacity of the FRG is essentially exhausted. There are already more than, or less than provisional (um), that these people have to count on, if they are put up there. (um). Shelter is the minimum for constructing an existence. Finding work is decisive, essential...

Beil: (softly) ... integration...

Schabowski: ...yes, and the necessary integration into the society, which cannot happen when one is living in a tent or an emergency shelter, or is hanging around unemployed.

So, we want... through a number of changes, including the travel law, to [create] the chance, the sovereign decision of the citizens to travel wherever they want. (um) We are naturally (um) concerned that the possibilities of this travel regulation—it is still not in effect, it's only a draft.

A decision was made today, as far as I know (looking toward Labs and Banaschak in hope of confirmation). A recommendation from the Politburo was taken up that we take a passage from the [draft of] travel regulation and put it into effect, that, (um)—as it is called, for better or worse—that regulates permanent exit, leaving the Republic. Since we find it (um) unacceptable that this movement is taking place (um) across the territory of an allied state, (um) which is not an easy burden for that country to bear. Therefore (um), we have decided today (um) to implement a regulation that allows every citizen of the German Democratic Republic (um) to (um) leave the GDR through any of the border crossings.

Question: (many voices) When does that go into effect?... Without a passport? Without a passport? (no, no)—When is that in effect?... (confusion, voices...) At what point does the regulation take effect?

Schabowski: What?

Question: At once? When...

Schabowski: (... scratches his head) You see, comrades, I was informed today (puts on his glasses as he speaks further), that such an announcement had been (um) distributed earlier today. You should actually have it already. So, (reading very quickly from the paper):

- 1) "Applications for travel abroad by private individuals can now be made without the previously existing requirements (of demonstrating a need to travel or proving familial relationships). The travel authorizations will be issued within a short time. Grounds for denial will only be applied in particular exceptional cases. The responsible departments of passport and registration control in the People's Police district offices in the GDR are instructed to issue visas for permanent exit without delays and without presentation of the existing requirements for permanent exit."

Question: With a passport?

Schabowski: (um...)(reads:) "Permanent exit is possible via all GDR border crossings to the FRG.¹¹² These changes replace the temporary practice of issuing [travel] authorizations through GDR consulates and permanent exit with a GDR personal identity card via third countries."

(Looks up) (um) I cannot answer the question about passports at this point. (Looks questioningly at Labs and Banaschak.) That is also a technical question. I don't know, the passports have to ... so that everyone has a passport, they first have to be distributed. But we want to...

Banaschak: The substance of the announcement is decisive...

Schabowski: ... is the ...

Question: When does it come into effect?

Schabowski: (Looks through his papers...) That comes into effect, according to my information, immediately, without delay (looking through his papers further).

Labs: (quietly) ...without delay.

Beil: (quietly) That has to be decided by the Council of Ministers.

Question: (...Many voices...) You only said the FRG, is the regulation also valid for West Berlin?

Schabowski: (reading aloud quickly) “As the Press Office of the Ministry ... the Council of Ministers decided that until the *Volkskammer* implements a corresponding law, this transition regulation will be in effect.”

Question: Does this also apply for West Berlin? You only mentioned the FRG.

Schabowski: (shrugs his shoulders, frowns, looks at his papers) So ... (pause), um hmmm (reads aloud): “Permanent exit can take place via all border crossings from the GDR to the FRG and West Berlin, respectively.”

Question: Another question also: does that mean that effective immediately, GDR citizens—Christoph Janowski, Voice of America—does that mean that effective immediately, all GDR citizens cannot emigrate via Czechoslovakia or Poland?

Schabowski: No, that is not addressed at all. We hope instead that the movement will (um) regulate itself in this manner, as we are trying to.

Question: (many voices, incomprehensible question)

Schabowski: I haven’t heard anything to the contrary.

Question: (many voices, incomprehensible)

Schabowski: I haven’t heard anything to the contrary.

Question: (many voices, incomprehensible)

Schabowski: I haven’t heard anything to the contrary. I’m expressing myself so carefully because I’m not up to date on this question, but just before I came over here I was given this information. (Several journalists hurry from the room.)

Frage: Mr. Schabowski, what is going to happen to the Berlin Wall now?

Schabowski: It has been brought to my attention that it is 7:00 p.m.. That has to be the last question. Thank you for your understanding.

(um...) What will happen to the Berlin Wall? Information has already been provided in connection with travel activities. (um) The issue of travel, (um) the ability to cross the Wall from our side, ... hasn’t been answered yet and exclusively the question in the sense...., so this, I’ll put it this way, fortified state border of the GDR.... (um) We have always said that there have to be several other factors (um) taken into consideration. And they deal with the complex of questions that Comrade Krenz, in his talk in the—addressed in view of the relations between the GDR and the FRG, in ditto light of the (um) necessity of continuing the process of assuring peace with new initiatives.

And (um) surely the debate about these questions (um) will be positively influenced if the FRG and NATO also agree to and implement disarmament measures in a similar manner

to that of the GDR and other socialist countries. Thank you very much.

[Source: Author’s transcript of television broadcast. Translated for CWIHP by Howard Sargeant.]



DOCUMENT No. 9
Verbal Message from Mikhail Gorbachev
to Helmut Kohl,
10 November 1989¹¹³

As you, of course, know, the GDR leadership made the decision to allow the citizens of East Germany unrestricted travel to West Berlin and the FRG. It is understandable, that this decision was not an easy one for the new leadership of the GDR. At the same time, the decision underlines the fact that deep and fundamental changes are taking place in East Germany. The leadership is acting in a concerted and dynamic manner in the interests of its people, and they are opening a dialog with various groups and levels of society.

Statements from the FRG made against this political and psychological background, designed to stimulate a denial of the existence of two German states and encourage emotional reactions, can have no other goal than destabilizing the situation in the GDR and subverting the ongoing processes of democratization and the renewal of all areas of society.

We have received notice that a meeting will take place today in West Berlin, in which official representatives of the FRG and West Berlin will participate. A meeting is planned in the capital of the GDR at the same time.

With the current situation of *de facto* open borders and huge numbers of people moving in both directions, a chaotic situation could easily develop that might have unforeseen consequences.

In light of the time pressure and the seriousness of the situation, I thought it necessary to ask you, in the spirit of openness and realism, to take the extremely pressing steps necessary to prevent a complication and destabilization of the situation.

[Source: SAPMO–BA, DY 30/IV 2/2.039/319. Translated for CWIHP by Howard Sargeant.]

DOCUMENT No. 10
Verbal Message from Mikhail Gorbachev
to François Mitterrand, Margaret Thatcher
and George Bush,
10 November 1989

In light of the rather extreme situation currently taking place in the GDR, its capital city, and in West Berlin, and in reference to what I consider the correct and forward-looking decision by the new East German leadership, I have just sent a verbal message to Chancellor Kohl. I consider it necessary to inform you of the contents of the message as well.

According to our information, a meeting is taking place today in West Berlin in which official representatives of the FRG and West Berlin will participate. A parallel meeting is planned in East Berlin. With the current situation of *de facto* open borders and huge numbers of people moving in both directions, a chaotic situation could easily develop that might have unforeseen consequences.

I have appealed to Chancellor Kohl to take the extremely pressing steps necessary to prevent a complication and destabilization of the situation.

Our ambassador in Berlin was instructed to contact the representatives of the governments of the three Allied powers in West Berlin. I hope that you will also contact your representatives so that the events do not take an undesirable turn.

In general, I would like to emphasize that deep and fundamental changes are currently taking place in East Germany. If statements are made in the FRG, however, that seek to generate emotional denials of the postwar realities, meaning the existence of two German states, the appearance of such political extremism cannot be viewed as anything other than attempts to destabilize the situation in the GDR and subvert the ongoing processes of democratization and the renewal of all areas of society. Looking forward, this would bring about not only the destabilization of the situation in Central Europe, but also in other parts of the world.

I would like to express my hope that you receive this news with understanding.

[Source: SAPMO-BA, DY 30/IV 2/2.039/319. Translated for CWIHP by Howard Sargeant.]



DOCUMENT No. 11
Information about the Content of a Telephone
Conversation between Mikhail Gorbachev
and Helmut Kohl,
11 November 1989¹¹⁴

The conversation took place on 11 November on the Chancellor's initiative.

The Chancellor said he wanted to respond to the verbal message from Mikhail Gorbachev, which he had received at the beginning of the meeting in West Berlin the previous day.

Helmut Kohl stated that the FRG welcomed the beginning of reforms in the GDR and hoped that they could be carried out in a calm atmosphere. He said: "I reject any radicalization and do not wish to see any destabilization of the situation in the GDR."

The Chancellor admitted that the majority of East German citizens that had crossed the borders to the FRG in the last few days did not want to stay in West Germany forever. He also assured him [Gorbachev] that the leadership of the FRG did not seek this either. Kohl said a mass resettlement to the FRG would be an absurd development. "We want the Germans to build their futures in their current homes." Kohl informed him [Gorbachev] that he was preparing for a meeting with Krenz at the end of November. In this context he mentioned that, given the current conditions in East Germany, the new GDR leadership should work dynamically to implement the reforms.

Mikhail Gorbachev emphasized that the current profound changes in the world would take different forms and occur within varying shape and intensities in different countries. It was necessary for all sides to maintain stability and to take a balanced approach.

[Gorbachev:] Overall, the basis for mutual understanding was improving. We were growing closer, which was very important.

As far as the GDR is concerned, the current leadership has a far-reaching program. All those questions, though, have to be worked through carefully, which required time.

I understand that all Europeans, and not only they, are following the events in the GDR. This is a very important point in world politics. But it is also a fact that the FRG and the Soviet Union, for historical reasons as well as due to the character of their current relationship, also have a greater interest in this development.

Naturally, every change is accompanied by a certain degree of instability. When I speak of maintaining stability, I mean that all sides should think through their actions very carefully.

I believe, Mr. Chancellor, that we are currently experiencing a historic change to different relationships and a different world. We should not allow careless actions to damage this change. Under no circumstances should the developments be forced in an unpredictable direction, which could lead to chaos. That would not be desirable under any circumstances.

Therefore I take very seriously what you told me during our conversation. I hope that you will use your authority, your political weight and your influence to keep others within the boundaries required to meet the demands of the time.

Kohl agreed with Gorbachev's statements. According to

him, the FRG government had discussed this question in this spirit.

The Chancellor emphasized his interest in maintaining contact, including with regard to the situation in the GDR.

[Source: SAPMO-BA, DY 30/IV 2/2.039/319, pp. 12-19. Translated for CWIHP by Howard Sargeant]

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¹ The paper is based on the following works by the author: Hans-Hermann Hertle, *Der Fall der Mauer: Die unbeabsichtigte Selbstauflösung des SED-Staates*, 2nd edition (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1999); *Chronik des Mauerfalls*, 8th edition (Berlin: Ch. Links, 1999); Hans-Hermann Hertle and Gerd-Rüdiger Stephan, eds., *Das Ende der SED. Die letzten Tage des Zentralkomitees*, 4th edition (Berlin: Ch. Links, 1999); Hans-Hermann Hertle/Kathrin Elsner, *Mein 9. November. Der Tag, an dem die Mauer fiel* (Berlin: Nicolai, 1999).

² See Raymond L. Garthoff, *The Great Transition: American-Soviet Relations and the End of the Cold War* (Washington, D.C.: Brookings Institution, 1994); John Lewis Gaddis, *We Now Know: Rethinking Cold War History* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997).

³ For the international aspects of German unification, see the seminal work by Philip Zelikow and Condoleezza Rice, *Germany Unified and Europe Transformed* (Cambridge/London: Harvard University Press, 1995); also see Werner Weidenfeld (with Peter Wagner and Elke Bruck), *Außenpolitik für die deutsche Einheit: Die Entscheidungsjahre 1989/90* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1998); Karl Kaiser, *Deutschlands Vereinigung* (Bergisch-Gladbach: Bastei-Lübbe, 1991); and Konrad H. Jarausch, *The Rush to German Unity* (New York: Oxford Press, 1994).

⁴ Mary E. Sarotte, "Elite Intransigence and the End of the Berlin Wall," *German Politics* 2:2 (August 1993), p. 270.

⁵ See Egon Krenz, *Wenn Mauern fallen* (Wien: Neff, 1990); idem, "Anmerkungen zur Öffnung der Berliner Mauer im Herbst 1989," *Osteuropa* 4 (1992), pp. 365-369; Günter Schabowski, *Das Politbüro* (Hamburg: Rowohlt, 1990); idem, *Der Absturz* (Berlin: Rowohlt, 1991).

⁶ James A. McAdams, *Germany Divided: From the Wall to Reunification* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1993), p. 199. Similar arguments may be found in Frank A. Ninkovich, *Germany and the United States: The Transformation of the German Question since 1945* (New York: Twayne Publishers, 1995), p. 163, and Catherine McArdle Kelleher, "The New Germany. An Overview," in Paul B. Stares (ed.), *The New Germany and the New Europe* (Washington: Princeton University Press, 1992), p. 16.

⁷ Charles S. Maier, *Dissolution: The Crisis of Communism and the End of East Germany* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1997), p. 161.

⁸ See Friedrich Schorlemmer, "Frieden vor Einheit sagen," in Peter Neumann (ed.), *Träumen verboten. Aktuelle Stellungnahmen aus der DDR* (Göttingen: Lamuv, 1990), p. 54.

⁹ See *Sunday Times*, 19 November 1989; Don Oberdorfer, *The Turn From the Cold War to a New Era: The United States and the Soviet Union 1983-1990* (New York: Poseidon Press, 1991), p. 363; Michael R. Beschloss and Strobe Talbott, *At the Highest Levels: The Inside Story of the End of the Cold War* (Boston/Toronto/London: Little, Brown, 1993), p. 134; Robert M. Gates, *From the Shadows: The Ultimate Insider's Story of Five Presidents and How They Won the Cold War* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 1996), p. 468.

¹⁰ Mary Fulbrook, *Anatomy of a Dictatorship: Inside the GDR 1949-1989* (Oxford: New York, 1995), p. 259.

¹¹ Timothy Garton Ash, *In Europe's Name* (New York: Vintage Books 1993), p. 345.

¹² See Cordt Schnibben, "Diesmal sterbe ich, Schwester," *Der Spiegel*, No. 42, 8 October 1990, pp. 102-109; Friedrich Kurz, *Die sieben Mythen der Wiedervereinigung* (München: Ehrenwirth, 1991), pp. 165-191.

¹³ See, e.g., Henryk Broder, "Eine schöne Revolution," *Die Zeit*, No. 3, 16 January 1992.

¹⁴ Even Zbigniew Brzezinski, one of the few analysts who predicted the end of communism, considered the GDR a stable state. See Zbigniew Brzezinski, *The Grand Failure. The Birth and Death of Communism in the 20th Century* (New York: Macmillan, 1989).

¹⁵ Bohdan Harasymiw, *Soviet Communist Party Officials: A Study in Organizational Roles and Change* (Nova Science Publishers, 1996), p. IX.

¹⁶ Peter Steinbach, "Deutsche Systemumbrüche im 20. Jahrhundert," *Das Ende der SED: Die letzten Tage des Zentralkomitees*, pp. 13-14.

¹⁷ Pierre Bourdieu, *Homo Academicus* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1992), p. 258.

¹⁸ Reinhard Bendix, *Freiheit und historisches Schicksal* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1982), p. 65.

¹⁹ For an example, see Claus Offe, "Wohlstand, Nation, Republik" in Hans Joas and Martin Kohli, eds., *Der Zusammenbruch der DDR* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1993), p. 296.

²⁰ In the following presentation, aspects of the relationship among the party's leadership, its functionaries, and its members, the analysis of security policy, the development of ideology, the political behavior of the population in the years prior to 1989, and the genesis and policies of the reform and citizen movements will not be emphasized.

²¹ The documents of the government of the Federal Republic, in contrast to the readily available documents of the GDR, still fall under the usual restriction that they not

be released for thirty years. A selection of relevant documents is printed in *Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik. Deutsche Einheit 1989/90*, compiled by Hans Jürgen Küsters and Daniel Hofmann (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1998).

²² Mary E. Sarotte demonstrates the knowledge gained by taking the international context of apparently exclusive German-German relations into consideration in her exemplary study on the international context of the basic treaty negotiations (1969-1973) in *Deutschland Archiv* 6 (1997), pp. 901-911. For her complete study, see Mary E. Sarotte, *The East German Ruling Regime and Ostpolitik in the Context of Superpower Détente, 1969-1973*, New Haven, 1999, dissertation ms.

²³ For an analysis of the decline of the Soviet Union, see Hannes Adomeit, *Imperial Overstretch: Germany in Soviet Policy from Stalin to Gorbachev* (Baden-Baden: Nomos Verlagsgesellschaft, 1998).

²⁴ See Mikhail Gorbachev, *Erinnerungen* (Munich: Goldmann, 1996).

²⁵ *Stiftung Archiv der Parteien und Massenorganisationen der DDR im Bundesarchiv* (SAPMO-BArch), DY 30/IV2/1/658; see Daniel Küchenmeister, ed., *Honecker-Gorbatschow: Vieraugengespräche* (Berlin: Dietz, 1993), pp. 14-15.

²⁶ Anatoli Tschernajew, *Die letzten Jahre einer Weltmacht: Der Kreml von innen* (Stuttgart: Deutsche

Verlags-Anstalt, 1993), p. 245.

²⁷ Eduard Schewardnadse, *Die Zukunft gehört der Freiheit* (Hamburg: Reinbek, 1991), p. 106.

²⁸ See Hans-Hermann Hertle, "Der Sturz Erich Honeckers: Zur Rekonstruktion eines innerparteilichen Machtkampfes," in Klaus-Dietmar Henke, Peter Steinbach and Johannes Tuchel (eds.), *Widerstand und Opposition in der DDR* (Cologne: Böhlau, 1999), pp. 327-346.

²⁹ For a representation of the Federal Republic's *Deutschlandpolitik* in the 1980s, see Karl-Rudolf Korte, *Deutschlandpolitik in Helmut Kohls Kanzlerschaft. Regierungsstil und Entscheidungen 1982-1989*, (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1998).

³⁰ The communiqué is printed in *Ein Erfolg der Politik der Vernunft und des Realismus* (East Berlin: Dietz Verlag, 1987), pp. 37-38.

³¹ Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, "Concluding Document of the Vienna CSCE Conference. Vienna, 15 January 1989," *Deutschland Archiv* 4 (1989), pp. 467-69.

³² The seventh SED Party Convention in 1971 proclaimed the "increasing of the people's material and cultural standard of living on the basis of a high rate of development of socialist production, increasing the effectiveness of scientific-technical progress and increased work productivity as the main task."

³³ M. Rainer Lepsius, "Die Bundesrepublik—ein neuer Nationalstaat?," *Berliner Journal für Soziologie* 1 (1994),

Excerpt from the Diary of Anatoly Chernyaev, 11 October 1989

Wednesday, 11 October 1989

I have read the record of conversation of M.S. [Gorbachev] with Honecker in Berlin. I spoke with him [Gorbachev] about this. [Georgy] Shakhnazarov was present. M.S. [Gorbachev] called Honecker an "asshole" [*mudak*]. He, Gorbachev added, could have said to his [East German] lieutenants: I have undergone four operations, I am 78 years old, the stormy time requires too much strength, let me go, I have done my job. Then he might have kept his place in history.

Shakh[nazarov] and I voiced our doubts that even if he had done so he would have kept his place in history. 2-3 years ago it might have been possible. Today he has already been cursed by his people... The Politburo [of the SED] is in session for the second day in Berlin. [Honecker's future successor Egon] Krenz has promised "to raise a question" about changes to our Ambassador [Vyacheslav Kochemassov] for transmittal to Gorbachev. Honecker warned him: [If you do it] you will become my enemy.

However, Krenz seems to have taken the step. What is about to happen?

[Source: Notes of Anatoly Chernyaev, Archive of the Gorbachev Foundation, f. 2, op. 2. Translated by Vladislav Zubok (The National Security Archive).]

p. 10.

³⁴ On this issue, see Theo Pirker, M. Rainer Lepsius, Rainer Weinert and Hans-Hermann Hertle, *Der Plan als Befehl und Fiktion: Wirtschaftsführung in der DDR* (Opladen: Westdeutscher Verlag, 1995).

³⁵ See Sigrid Meuschel, *Legitimation und Parteiherrschaft in der DDR* (Frankfurt/Main: Suhrkamp, 1992).

³⁶ Heinz Klopfer, *Persönliche Notizen über die Beratung beim Generalsekretär des ZK der SED und Vorsitzenden des Staatsrates der DDR, Erich Honecker*, Berlin, 16 May 1989, p. 42.

³⁷ The Valutamark (VM) was the currency the GDR used for foreign trade with the West. One VM corresponded to one (West German) DM.

³⁸ "Darlegungen Gerhard Schürers zur Zahlungsbilanz mit dem nichtsozialistischen Wirtschaftsgebiet," 16 May 1989, BA, Berlin Branch, E-1-56321.

³⁹ "Communiqué of the Meeting of the Political Advisory Committee of the Member States of the Warsaw Pact," 7-8 July 1989 in Bucharest, *Europa-Archiv* 20 (1989), p. 599; see also Thomas Blanton, "When did the Cold War end?" *CWIHP Bulletin* 10 (March 1998), pp. 184-7.

⁴⁰ Stephen Szabo, *The Diplomacy of German Unification* (New York: St Martin's Press, 1992); Helmut Kohl, *Ich wollte Deutschlands Einheit* (Berlin: Propyläen 1996), p. 74.

⁴¹ See Hannes Adomeit, "Gorbachev and German Unification," *Problems of Communism*, no. 4 (1990), p. 6.

⁴² Tobias Hollitzer, "Heute entscheidet es sich: Entweder die oder wir." Zum 9. Oktober in Leipzig, in *Horch und Guck* 2 (1998), p. 23-37; Elizabeth Pond, *Beyond the Wall: Germany's Road to Unification* (Washington, DC: Brookings Institution, 1993), p. 111-129; Ekkehard Kuhn, *Der Tag der Entscheidung: Leipzig, 9 October 1989* (Berlin-Frankfurt/Main: Ullstein, 1992).

⁴³ Gerhard Schürer, Gerhard Beil, Alexander Schalck, Ernst Höfner and Arno Donda *Vorlage für das Politbüro des Zentralkomitees der SED, Betreff: Analyse der ökonomischen Lage der DDR mit Schlußfolgerungen*, 27 October 1989, SAPMO-BA, DY 30/J IV 2/2A/3252.

⁴⁴ Gerhard Schürer's comments: "We had the idea of bringing the continued existence of the Wall into the discussion. That is the first official document from the former GDR that, to my knowledge, dared bring up the Wall for discussion. Up to this time, Honecker's saying, 'The Wall will stand another hundred years!' was still the official line."

It was clear to me that the GDR's sovereignty could only be maintained in a restricted manner, since it was clear to me that if the FRG was going to give us 8-10 billion, the money would come with political demands attached. As economists, we could no longer have such an illusion because we knew that there was no other possible way out. The only way out was for us to gain access to capital for investments in new technology. If we were not able to do

this, annexation was the only possible result." (Author's conversation with Gerhard Schürer, 21 February 1992.)

⁴⁵ Compare the final version of the Politbüro draft, SAPMO-BA, ZPA-SED, DY 30/J IV 2/2/2356, with the original draft in SAPMO-BA, ZPA-SED, DY 30/J IV 2/2A/3252.

⁴⁶ Gerhard Schürer, Explanatory section of the draft "Analyse der ökonomischen Lage der DDR mit Schlußfolgerungen" (speech text), Berlin, 31 October 1989, p. 9.

⁴⁷ If not stated otherwise, sources and notes for the following section can be found in Hans-Hermann Hertle, *Der Fall der Mauer*, pp. 143-44.

⁴⁸ Memorandum of Conversation between Comrade Egon Krenz, General Secretary of the SED Central Committee and Chairman of the GDR Council of State, with Comrade Mikhail Gorbachev, General Secretary of the Central Committee of the Soviet Communist Party and Chairman of the USSR Supreme Soviet, 1 November 1989 in Moscow, Berlin, 1 November 1989, SAPMO-BA, DY 30/IV 2/2.039/329 (Document No. 1).

⁴⁹ Alexander Schalck's notes on his informal conversation with Wolfgang Schäuble and Rudolf Seiters is documented in Hans-Hermann Hertle, *Der Fall der Mauer*, p. 483-85. (Document No. 2).

⁵⁰ Letter from Alexander Schalck to Egon Krenz, 7 November 1989 (Document No. 3).

⁵¹ *Deutscher Bundestag*, 11th Electoral Period, 173rd Meeting, 8 November 1989, Stenographic Report, p. 13017.

⁵² In German, the chant rhymes, "Visa frei bis Shanghai."

⁵³ See Document No. 4.

⁵⁴ See Document No. 5.

⁵⁵ See Document No. 6.

⁵⁶ Tenth meeting of the Central Committee of the SED, 9 November 1989 (transcription of a recording), documented in Hans-Hermann Hertle and Gerd-Rüdiger Stephan, eds., *Das Ende der SED*, p. 305 (Document No. 7).

⁵⁷ See Document No. 8.

⁵⁸ Tom Brokaw: "I would like to tell you that I knew that the Wall would come down. That was not the case. I did think that there would be a very interesting and important political story. So I went to Berlin simply to be in the midst of that story." (Author's interview with Tom Brokaw, 4 November 1998.)

⁵⁹ Michael E. Geisler, "Mehrfach gebrochene Mauer-schau: 1989-1990 in den US-Medien," in Rainer Bohn, Knut Hickethier and Eggo Müller, eds., *Mauer-Show: Das Ende der DDR, die deutsche Einheit und die Medien* (Berlin: Sigma, 1992), pp. 260-61.

⁶⁰ Author's interview with Michelle Neubert (NBC), 11 July 1995.

⁶¹ See the portrayal by Marc Kusnetz in Robert Goldberg and Gerald Jay Goldberg, *Anchor: Brokaw, Jennings, Rather and the Evening News* (Secaucus, NJ: Carol Publishing Group, 1990), p. 262, as well as Peter Ross Range, *When Walls Come Tumbling Down: Covering The*

East German Revolution, (Washington, DC: The Woodrow Wilson Center, 1991), p. 7.

⁶²NBC Nightly News, Thursday, 9 November 1989, Title: "Berlin Wall is opened for unrestricted travel for the first time since its construction 28 years ago." Hit time: 7:01:47 (NBC News Archives, New York).

⁶³ Ibid.

⁶⁴ A camera crew from the German television station SFB captured this scene with Tom Brokaw. The interview with Schabowski was aired on the NBC evening news shortly after 7:00 p.m. EST on 9 November 1989 (10 November, 1:00 a.m. in Berlin).

⁶⁵ George Bush: "I felt emotional about it. But I did not want to overplay the hand of the United States of America. I did not want at that critical moment for us to gloat, to stick my fingers in Mr. Gorbachev's eyes, which would have been the worst thing you could possibly do. So, restraint was called for." (Author's interview with George Bush, 2 July 1998.) See "Remarks and a Question-and-Answer Session with Reporters on the Relaxation of East German Border Controls," 9 November 1989, *Public Papers of the Presidents of the United States, George Bush, 1989*, Book II: July 1 to December 31, 1989 (GPO: Washington, 1990), pp. 1488-1490. See also George Bush and Brent Scowcroft, *A World Transformed* (New York: Knopf, 1998), pp. 148-151.

⁶⁶ Margaret Thatcher, on BBC Radio 4, 10 November 1989, 2:00 p.m. For the British Prime Minister's approach, also see Margaret Thatcher, *The Downing Street Years* (New York: Harper Collins, 1993), pp. 792-794, and Percy Cradock, *In Pursuit of British Interests: Reflections on Foreign Policy under Margaret Thatcher and John Major*, (London: John Murray, 1997), pp. 102-104.

⁶⁷ Francois Mitterrand, *France 1*, 10 November 1989, 6:00 p.m.

⁶⁸ See Jacques Attali, *Verbatim*, vol. III, (Paris: Fayard 1995, p. 337.

⁶⁹ Author's interview with Helmut Kohl, 25 November 1998.

⁷⁰ Author's interview with Mikhail Gorbachev, 8 December 1998.

⁷¹ Author's interview with Eduard Shevardnadze, 18 December 1998.

⁷² Ibid.

⁷³ Author's interview with Mikhail Gorbachev, 8 December 1998.

⁷⁴ "Schön, ich gab die DDR weg." Interview with Mikhail Gorbachev, *Der Spiegel* (2 October 1995), p. 72.

⁷⁵ Nikolai Portugalov, in: Ekkehard Kuhn, *Gorbatschow und die deutsche Einheit* (Bonn: Bouvier, 1993), pp. 65, 70.

⁷⁶ Ibid., p. 70.

⁷⁷ ADN, 10 November 1989, 6:45 p.m.

⁷⁸ See Yuli A. Kvizinski, *Vor dem Sturm: Erinnerungen eines Diplomaten* (Berlin: Siedler, 1993), p. 15.

⁷⁹ Verbal message from Mikhail Gorbachev to Helmut Kohl, 10 November 1989, in SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV 2/

2.039/319, sheets 15/16 (Document No. 9).

⁸⁰ Verbal message from Mikhail Gorbachev to President François Mitterrand, Prime Minister Margaret Thatcher, and President George Bush, 10 November 1989, in SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV 2/2.039/319, sheets 20/21 (Document No. 10).

⁸¹ Helmut Kohl: "I took Gorbachev's message very seriously. I also believe that this request was fateful for the following days. We now know that GDR State Security and parts of the SED leadership were sending their Soviet friends very threatening scenarios. They told them that order had broken down completely and that Soviet facilities and possibly the troops could be caught up in the chaos, and that their security—that was Gorbachev's concern—could no longer be guaranteed. The KGB had passed on such information from the Stasi to Gorbachev.

I now know from my later conversations with Gorbachev just how decisive this moment was, that he rather believed us than the KGB. Developments certainly would have taken a different path if Gorbachev had, to put it sharply, turned the military loose on 10 November 1989, as the Soviet leadership had in June 1953. That would have had terrible consequences.

We informed Gorbachev that his fears were groundless, that there was no upheaval, but that the people simply wanted to come together, that the mood remained upbeat and things were taking place peacefully. In this decisive hour, Mikhail Gorbachev believed me." (Author's interview with Helmut Kohl, 25 November 1998); Horst Teltschik, *329 Tage: Innenansichten der Einigung* (Berlin: Siedler, 1991), p. 20.

⁸² Ibid., p. 23.

⁸³ Ibid.

⁸⁴ "We wanted to welcome the change diplomatically, almost clinically—and try as best we could not to be overly emotional, so that Gorbachev, Shevardnadze, and other Soviets who saw our reaction would not feel, as the President put it, 'that we were sticking our thumb in their eye'." James A. Baker, with Thomas A. Defrank, *The Politics of Diplomacy. Revolution, War and Peace* (New York: Putnam, 1995), p. 164.

⁸⁵ The chancellery's notes on the phone conversation are documented in Hans Jürgen Küsters and Daniel Hofmann, eds., *Dokumente zur Deutschlandpolitik: Deutsche Einheit 1989/90* (Munich: R. Oldenbourg, 1998), pp. 505-507.

⁸⁶ Information about the contents of the phone conversation between Mikhail Gorbachev and Helmut Kohl on 11 November 1989, SAPMO-BArch, DY 30/IV 2/2.039/319, sheets 17-19 (Document No. 11). Also see Teltschik, *329 Tage*, p. 27.

⁸⁷ Ibid., p. 28.

⁸⁸ See Robert K. Merton, "The Unanticipated Consequences of Purposive Social Action," *American Sociological Review* 1 (1936), pp. 894-904.

⁸⁹ Robert K. Merton, "Die Self-Fulfilling-Prophecy," *Soziologische Theorie und soziale Struktur* (Berlin: de

Gruyter, 1995), pp. 399-413.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 399.

⁹¹ See M. Rainer Lepsius, "Die Bundesrepublik - ein neuer Nationalstaat?," *Berliner Journal für Soziologie* 1 (1994), p. 10.

⁹² See the statement of the "Neues Forum" of 12 November 1989, "Die Mauer ist gefallen", *Die ersten Texte des Neuen Forum* edited for the state press agency for New Forum, (East Berlin: Tribüne Druckerei, 1990), pp. 20-21, as well as the proclamation "Für unser Land," dated 26 November but published on 28 November 1989 (see *Neues Deutschland*, 29 November 1989).

⁹³ See the detailed account in Rafael Biermann, *Zwischen Kreml und Kanzleramt: Wie Moskau mit der deutschen Einheit rang* (Paderborn: F. Schöningh, 1997).

⁹⁴ Also see Dieter Grosser, *Das Wagnis der Wirtschafts-, Währungs und Sozialunion: Politische Zwänge im Konflikt mit ökonomischen Regeln* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Verlags-Anstalt, 1998).

⁹⁵ See Lepsius, "Die Bundesrepublik—ein neuer Nationalstaat?," p. 10.

⁹⁶ From 25 September to 2 October 1989, Krenz participated in the ceremonies on the occasion of the 40th anniversary of the People's Republic of China.

⁹⁷ On Ulbricht's 1971 ouster, see Mary E. Sarotte, *Dealing with the Devil: East Germany, Détente and Ostpolitik, 1963-1973* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001).

⁹⁸ On the Nina Andreeva affair, see Archie Brown, *The Gorbachev Factor* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1996), pp. 168, 172-74.

⁹⁹ Reference to a German card game. The "black Peter" is a card you want to avoid holding at the end of the game.

¹⁰⁰ Reference to Honecker's hardline 13 October 1980 speech in Gera, in which the East German leader had demanded, among other things, the Western recognition of GDR citizenship.

¹⁰¹ Krenz's handwritten note on the address: "Kr. 7 November, 1989."

¹⁰² The note bears a handwritten comment from Krenz on the first page: "Comrade Schalck. 1) Thank you! 2) Please send me relevant material for talks with Seiters. 12 November/Kr"

¹⁰³ Krenz signed off on this letter with his initials "Kr."

¹⁰⁴ The document does not bear a registration stamp and is signed with Stoph's handwritten abbreviation "St."

¹⁰⁵ Head of the Secretariat of the Council of Ministers since 7 November 1989.

¹⁰⁶ Allgemeiner Deutscher Nachrichtendienst, the official GDR press agency.

¹⁰⁷ Günther Jahn, the First Secretary of the SED District leadership of Potsdam, was next on the list of speakers.

¹⁰⁸ Hans-Joachim Hoffmann, born 1929, from 1973 to 1989 the GDR Minister of Culture and from 1976 to 1989/90, he was a member of the SED Central Committee and a Representative in the GDR Parliament. Hoffmann died in 1994.

¹⁰⁹ Friedrich Dickel, Army General, successor to Karl Maron as Minister of the Interior and the head of the People's Police, member of the SED Central Committee and delegate in the GDR Parliament, member of the National Defense Council.

¹¹⁰ Professor Dr. Manfred Banaschak, editor-in-chief of the SED theoretical journal "Einheit" [Unity].

¹¹¹ Author's transcript from the television recording. Schabowski was accompanied to the press conference by three other members of the Central Committee: Professor Manfred Banaschak, Helga Labs, Chair of the Teachers' and Instructors' Union, and Foreign Trade Minister Gerhard Beil.

¹¹² Schabowski at this point at first skipped the words: "and (West) Berlin, respectively," but this point brought a second question. See below.

¹¹³ The Soviet ambassador in Bonn, Yuli Kvizinski, presented the verbal message from Gorbachev to Kohl's advisor Horst Teltschik during the program in front of the Schöneberg Town Hall in Berlin. See Yuli Kvizinski, *Vor dem Sturm* (Berlin: Siedler, 1993), p. 15; see also Horst Teltschik, *329 Tage*. The SED leadership received the written version of this message from the Soviet embassy in East Berlin with the date of 13 November 1989.

¹¹⁴ The document is, like documents 10 and 11, information sent from the Soviet embassy in East Berlin to the SED General Secretary. According to Horst Teltschik, the phone conversation took place around 12:00 p.m. See Horst Teltschik, *329 Tage*, pp. 27-28.

